

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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NO SEX PLEASE - IT'S CHRISTMAS!

An American Farce

by

Michael Parker

Adapted from "Never Kiss a Naughty Nanny" by Michael Parker

CHARACTERS

BEN ADAMS. (Age 25+) A real estate salesman employed by Mr. Broadbent. He is young, naive, and easily persuaded by Mr. Broadbent to pose as someone who has been living in "the House of the Future" for four years. After 'The Closet of the Future' has hauled him inside, and the central trash disposal system has swallowed his pants, he comments, *"I think this house has something against me personally."* It certainly appears that way, as one disaster after another follows poor Ben. *(Likable, always confused and in trouble, but honest and sincere)*

BROADBENT. (Age 50+) Very much a self-made person. Having worked his way up from a construction worker, to site foreman, and now owning a home building business. Unfortunately, the "House of the Future", has remained unsold for four years, probably because all the gadgets of the future fail to work properly. A brief role, which can be doubled with either Cott or Brooks. *(Blunt, rough around the edges)*

CASEY CODY. (Age 25+) Mr. Broadbent's secretary, who has been bribed by him to play the role of Ben's wife in a ploy to sell the "House of the Future." She is very much the 'take charge' type. Her quick thinking saves the day on numerous occasions as she maneuvers the other characters through one disaster after another. *(Competent, resourceful, quick-thinking, with a wonderful sense of humor)*

SUE JOHNSON. (Age 25+) A recent graduate of the local culinary institute hired by Mr. Broadbent to prepare a gourmet Christmas Eve meal for Mr. and Mrs. McNicoll. We are left to wonder how she graduated from anything. She is a walking, breathing, living disaster area. She drops everything, she breaks everything, she trips over everything, she gets tangled up in everything. A charming comedic character, who spends almost the entire play without her skirt. *(Lovable, laughable, endearing)*

MR. COTT. (Age 40+) The central character in the play, and he of course, is Nanny. He is Broadbent's maintenance man, on hand in "The House of the Future" to make running repairs on all the gadgets. He is a comedic character, who is the world's most complete hypochondriac. You name it - he's got it! Of course the McNicoll's are not supposed to know there is a maintenance man in the house. When Mrs. McNicoll hears Casey refer to Mr. Cott, Casey quickly recovers by saying she referred to Miss Turcotte, the children's nanny. SO...he spends the rest of the play as Nanny Turcotte, defending his honor against the amorous advances of Mr. Brooks. *(Down to earth, gruff, but very, very funny)*

GLADYS McNICOLL. (Age 50+) The perspective buyer of "The House of the Future". She totally dominates her poor hen-pecked husband, and indeed all those around her. She is a thoroughly distasteful unlikeable woman with few, if any, redeeming qualities. *(Loud, aggressive, overbearing)*

FRED McNICOLL. (Age 50+) The poor hen-pecked husband of Gladys. He is rarely allowed to have a thought of his own, finish a sentence, or do anything without being criticized by Gladys. Audiences, however, sympathize with him and rejoice when he has his 'moment in the sun', and turns the table on Gladys at the very end of the play. *(Meek, mild, good-natured, and finally in control)*

WALTER BROOKS. (Age 50+) Casey's future father-in-law becomes a surprise visitor, when his car gets stuck in a snowdrift, and he has to spend the night in the house. He develops an almost insane infatuation for Nanny, and will not be discouraged. His relentless pursuit of Nanny lands him in many of the physical comedic sequences. *(Bull headed, single minded, not very likable.)*

THE AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE "HOUSE OF THE FUTURE"

Because no-one knows what "*The House of the Future*" will really look like, directors, producers and set designers have a free hand to use their imagination. Although the gadgets may sound like a set design nightmare, they can actually be created quite simply and should not stop any theatre from being able to produce this show.

For example, if the ion chamber and the trash disposal unit could be constructed to look round and metallic, that might look futuristic, but it is not necessary nor essential. For small theatres, working with limited space and budgets, these sets can be simple and easy to create. The ion chamber can simply be a door. The trash disposal can just be a stool high, wooden box, with a hole in the top attached to the left end of the kitchen counter.

Similarly, "The Closet of the Future" can be nothing more than a louvered door on the right wall above the front door. It must be just wide enough for BEN to be "dragged" into it. It could be hinged on the downstage side and opening into the room in order to conceal the crew member operating the moveable arm. The arm itself can be anything from a store mannequin's arm to nothing more than a long broom handle, or if possible, a clothing "rack" on wheels, borrowed from a local store. The hand can be a stuffed glove that is attached.

The author encourages you to express any innovative ideas you may have in the design and decor of "*The House of the Future*", but above all, hopes you all have fun with it.

TIME

The present.

PLACE

The “House of the future” Somewhere in Wisconsin

ACT ONE: Early Christmas Eve.

ACT TWO: Later the same evening.

The curtain rises on an empty set. It is the living room and kitchen of a very strange looking house. Built some years previously by Broadbent, a developer and building contractor, as “The House of the Future,” it has nevertheless remained unsold. It has not only been a huge white elephant for Broadbent, but has become the laughing stock of the industry in this part of Wisconsin. This is probably because, as we shall see, most of the gadgets and innovations of the future fail to work properly.

Down right is a large front door; and above it, on the right wall is a narrow louvered door to “The Closet of the Future.” Up right is the kitchen with a counter and two stools. There is a pepper-mill on the counter. The back wall of the kitchen consists of cabinets, which extend off right. The right wall of the kitchen is open, leading to the rest of the house. The cabinets on the rear wall end left with a large refrigerator. Immediately to the left of the fridge is a strange looking structure. It is “The Ion Chamber of the Future.” It can be round or square, about seven feet high, and just big enough for a single person to be inside when the door is closed. It should be made to look metallic with some kind of visible locking device on the outside. To the left of the kitchen counter is another tubular shaped object, which is attached to the counter by an “arm.” It is about one foot in diameter and about three feet high. It looks a little like a round stool. It is part of the “House of the Future Central Vacuum System.”

[SEE AUTHOR’S NOTES FOR THE SIMPLE INNOVATIONS FOR THE HOUSE OF THE FUTURE]

The stage should be decorated to represent Christmas time, including a decorated and lit Christmas tree, (The exact location of the tree has not been specified by the author; and may be located anywhere at all in the room dependent on the space limitations of the stage.) and a sign on the wall that says ‘MERRY CHRISTMAS FRED & GLADYS’ surrounded by red and green balloons. Down left is a large stone fireplace with a small vase of flowers on the mantle. Against the left wall above the fireplace is a couch with two small cushions and an afghan. To the left of the couch, is a wall-mounted lamp. Above the left wall is the door to bedroom 1. In front of the couch is a low coffee table and to its right a low back easy chair. Up left is an open archway leading to the master bedroom.

On the upstage wall are two doors. Right is the bathroom, and left is bedroom 2. Between bedroom 2 and the bathroom is a face-plate with two switches. Directly above the bathroom door is a light fixture with a red bulb. Right of the bathroom door is the bathroom cleaning switch.

ACT 1

(As the curtain rises, BEN ADAMS enters from off right in the kitchen. His is a clean-cut, gentle, mild mannered soul, usually dominated by the more forceful personalities of those around him. He is dressed in a shirt, Christmas cardigan sweater, dress pants and shoes. There is a loud knocking on the front door, so BEN hurries down right and unlocks the door. BROADBENT steps into the room. He is a self-made man who has fought his way up from a construction worker, to a site foreman, and now owns his own business. He is wearing a business suit with a Christmas tie, an overcoat, hat, scarf and gloves. He is carrying a large cardboard box, which he sets down just inside the front door.)

BROADBENT. Merry Christmas Ben.

BEN. Merry Christmas Mr. Broadbent.

BROADBENT. It's freezing out there. *(Closes the door.)* Looks like we're in for a snow storm tonight.

BEN. I'm glad you're here, may I have a word with you please.

BROADBENT. Of course Ben, why not be a devil and have two. Heck, it's Christmas Eve, why not go completely wild and try a whole sentence?

BEN. Well, I know I work for you, but I'm very nervous about your plan for this weekend.

BROADBENT. Listen Ben, I get paid to do the worrying and you get paid to sell the houses I build. This is a piece of real estate and this weekend we're going to sell it. I've got all bases covered.

BEN. I know that's what you say but -

BROADBENT. *(Takes off his gloves, hat, scarf, and overcoat and stuffs his gloves into the pockets.)* Listen to me my boy. I built this house four years ago as "The House of the Future." It was my baby, my brain-child. I put my heart and soul into this place, not to mention nearly three hundred thousand dollars. It was supposed to be the first of a whole new series of homes, with a whole new concept of modern living. If this doesn't sell soon, I'll be the laughing stock of the industry. *(He reaches into the cardboard box and produces an instrument that looks like a T.V. remote.)* I just had these remotes fine-tuned so everything should work without a hitch. Watch this. Now, in an ordinary house, I'd have to open a closet door to put my coat away, but not here my boy, not with the "Closet of the Future." All I have to do is press the right number or that switch over there, *(He points to the switch on the wall above the front door. He clicks the remote and the closet door slides open.)* and voila! *(An artificial human arm appears at about shoulder height and moves about 3 feet into the room. It has a hand on the end of it with only the middle finger sticking out horizontal to the ground.)* What's more, you can lower the height of it for children. *(He puts his coat, and scarf on the arm, pauses for a second frowning at "the finger," then covers it with his hat. He clicks the remote again, the arm withdraws and the closet door slides silently shut.)* What do you think of that?

BEN. That's incredible.

BROADBENT. That's nothing. Look at this. *(He goes up to the ion chambers and opens the door.)* This is the "House of the Future's Ion Chamber." It works on compressed air just like the closet.

BEN. What does it do?

BROADBENT. Well, you know about those ion hairdryers in stores today?

BEN. Vaguely.

BROADBENT. Well, I got the idea from that and took it a step farther. When you step into the chamber, the charged particles can benefit the whole body by relaxing your muscles, relieve any tension, decrease your blood pressure and increase your sense of well-being and mental clarity. The women especially love it because it makes their hair all soft and manageable. It'll only takes a few seconds and you'll feel like a new man. Do you want to try it?

BEN. Well sir, everyone at the office tells me that nothing works properly in this house. Isn't it a bit dangerous?

BROADBENT. Not at all. We had one or two teething problems at first, but everything works fine now. Go on, get in. It'll be fine. My secretary Casey will be here any minute and you can tell her all about it.

BEN. Well, if you're sure it's safe. *(He steps into the chamber and **BROADBENT** locks it and clicks the remote.)*

*(The doorbell rings and **BROADBENT** moves down right to the front door and opens it. **CASEY CODY** steps into the room. She is confident in her manner and bearing, and will prove herself to be very much the "take charge type." She is wearing a skirt, Christmas sweater, boots and a winter coat with a hat. She carries a small overnight case, which she puts down by the counter. She takes off her hat and shakes her hair loose.)*

BROADBENT. Casey, I'm glad you made it here safely.

CASEY. Me too. It's miserable out there, and starting to snow again. Is Ben here?

BROADBENT. Yes, he's in the...

*(The door to the ion chamber opens and **BEN** stumbles out as if he has no muscles left and has rubber legs. He attempts to wave at Casey, but loses his balance. **CASEY** rushes over to help support him.)*

CASEY. Ben, are you alright, speak to me.

BEN. *(Attempts to talk, but the words come out in slow-mo.)* I'm fine.

CASEY. Ben, didn't we warn you about this? *(She helps him to the kitchen stool where he tries to sit upright. He gives up and slumps forward.)*

BROADBENT. Oops, guess I'd better have Ed Cott from the maintenance department take a look at it. He's on his way over here, just in case one of the gadgets needs a little TLC. Speaking of which, Casey, let me introduce you to the closet of the future. *(He clicks his remote and the closet door slides open, but this time the arm appears moving ever so slowly. He helps Casey off with her coat and hangs it on the hand.)* Oh dear, that's a bit slow, I guess the air system needs topping off. I'll have Cott check that out too. *(The arm*

moves slowly back into the closet as BROADBENT crosses to the kitchen counter, grabs BEN by the scruff of the neck and has him sitting upright. CASEY follows and sits on the other kitchen stool.) Okay now, pay attention you two. Here's the plan. *(He starts pacing across the room.)* I've decided the reason this house has never sold is because people are afraid of all the gadgets and appliances. Now, I've got this couple who seemed really interested when I told them about the house. Their name is McNicoll. As you know, I've invited them to spend Christmas Eve in this house, in hopes that the holiday spirit will get them in the mood to sign the contract. We are going to wine and dine them. They are going to see what a wonderful house this is. *(He's now "on a roll" and pacing rapidly.)* Your job is to show them how well everything works. I want them to believe that you two are a married couple that have been renting this house. I don't want them to know it's been sitting empty for the past four years.

BEN. Isn't that dishonest sir?

BROADBENT. *(Frowns at Ben.)* Tell you what Ben, we won't tell Santa. Now listen, I just want to create an opportunity to show the McNicolls how all the special features of this house can make their lives better.

BEN. But I don't know how to act married.

BROADBENT. It's easy, just pretend you're the boss and let Casey make all the decisions.

CASEY. Oh come on Ben! We can pull it off.

BROADBENT. Don't forget, you both get a five-thousand dollar bonus if it sells, and incidentally, so does Cott. He'll be here all weekend and available to make running repairs if anything goes wrong.

CASEY. Won't Mr. and Mrs. McNicoll think it's a bit odd if there's a maintenance man here all the time?

BROADBENT. Hmm. You're right, he'd better keep in the background, we won't ever let the McNicolls see him.

BEN. We?

BROADBENT. Well, you two.

BEN. Where will you be?

BROADBENT. It's Christmas, I'll be at home with my family.

BEN. What if something goes wrong?

CASEY. For five-thousand dollars, I'm going to make sure nothing does go wrong.

BROADBENT. Okay you guys, it's time to earn your money. Let me introduce you to the house of the future. *(He picks up the cardboard box he brought with him and puts it on the left end of the kitchen counter.)* I don't have time to go over everything, but here's a bunch of brochures we printed about the house. *(He takes them out of the box and hands them to CASEY who keeps one in her hand and puts the others on the counter.)* And here are all the remotes I could round up. *(He puts four remotes on the counter.)* You can work just about everything in the house with these. All you have to do is look up the number in the brochure.

CASEY. *(Who has been looking at the brochure.)* What's this about a self-cleaning bathroom? I'd love one of those.

BROADBENT. *(Pointing to the bathroom door.)* That's the door there. The switch just to the left automatically seals the door shut, then floods the whole room with jet sprays to clean it. Kind of like a laser car wash.

CASEY. What happens if someone is in there?

BROADBENT. That's why the switch is outside the door and not on the remote. The second you hit the switch the door locks so you can't get in. A red light above the door flashes while it's spraying, and a buzzer sounds when it's finished.

BEN. It's sounds just like Rudolph, when he's guiding Santa.

CASEY. Ben, you're starting to worry me.

BROADBENT. *(A phone rings. BEN and CASEY look around, but can't see a phone. BROADBENT grins at them and crosses down left to the fireplace. He moves the vase on the mantle a little clockwise. The ringing stops as he leans closer to it and talks.)* Hi. What? Okay. Look, do me a favor will you? Stop by the office and pick up a Miss Susan Johnson. It'll save me a trip. Thanks. *(He turns the vase back.)*

CASEY. *(To BEN.)* And I was worried about you? He's talking to a vase.

BROADBENT. This is the house of the future. We don't have phones that look like phones. There are five or six of them in this room. This vase is one of them. I can't remember where they all are. Casey, you've got the brochure.

(CASEY studies it.)

BEN. But what's the point?

BROADBENT. What do you mean, what's the point?

BEN. What's wrong with a telephone?

BROADBENT. You have no imagination my boy. The point is you don't have to go looking for your misplaced cell phone when you've got all these phones, and you don't have to look at an ugly piece of plastic.

CASEY. You know, that actually makes sense. *(Looking at the brochure.)* It says here that the switch next to the bathroom door is a phone.

BROADBENT. Okay now, that was Cott. He's running a little late and says it's snowing real hard. He's picking up a gal from the culinary institute that I've hired to serve a gourmet meal tonight for the McNicolls. There's also some expensive wine in the fridge.

BEN. You're really laying it on aren't you?

BROADBENT. You betcha. I've had too much money tied up in this place for too long. This is my big chance to get out from under. It's 6:30 and the McNicolls were invited for seven, so, study the brochure and be sure to tell Cott to check the air system as soon as he gets here.

BEN. How do you make a call?

BROADBENT. What?

BEN. How do you dial out if you want to make a phone call?

BROADBENT. It's voice activated. You just turn the vase or whatever it is you do to the other things and say the number. It's an intercom as well. Simply open the line and say the number of the extension. You know, one, two, three, four, etcetera and it rings in the appropriate place. It's all in the brochure.

BEN. Mr. Broadbent, don't you think you're asking a bit much from us?

BROADBENT. Is five-thousand dollars too much?

CASEY. He's got a point.

(BROADBENT clicks his remote and moves down right to the closet. The closet works as before, but painfully slow, and this time the index finger sticks up in the classic "finger" pose.)

BEN. I may sound like the grinch here, but I'm not so sure I want Christmas to come. This whole thing is fraught with disaster.

BROADBENT. Well be a good little Whoo-viller and get the McNicolls in the Christmas spirit. *(He takes his hat, coat and scarf from "The Finger". He clicks the remote and watches as it moves slowly back into the closet.)* You know, I don't know what it is, but there's something not quite right about that hand.

CASEY. *(Laughing.)* Can't put your finger on it, eh?

BROADBENT. *(Begins to put on his coat, scarf, and hat.)* Remember now, I'm counting on you two. Do you have the sales contract Ben?

BEN. Of course.

BROADBENT. Excellent. Just make sure that you wine and dine the McNicolls so they feel all nice and comfortable. Then, right after dinner you can try to close the deal before they go to bed.

BEN. Where are we going to sleep?

BROADBENT. Well, you two are supposed to be living here, so you'll stay in the master bedroom. Put Mr. and Mrs. McNicoll in this room. *(He indicates bedroom 2.)* That way, they can use the self-cleaning bathroom. Any other questions before I go?

BEN. I guess not.

BROADBENT. Good. Merry Christmas and get me that sale. *(He exits the front door.)*

CASEY. *(Who has been reading the brochure.)* That pepper mill on the counter is another phone. It's number four, *(She goes behind the counter.)* and that switch in the ion chamber is another one, it's number two. *(She twists the pepper mill and speaks into it.)* Number two. *(The switch in the ion chamber rings.)* Go on, answer it.

BEN. *(Reluctantly enters the ion chamber and flips the switch.)* Hello.

CASEY. That's wild. I can hear you.

BEN. I don't suppose it's occurred to you that we're standing about six feet from each other and you don't need a phone.

CASEY. True, between these two phones, but I might be somewhere else in the house. *(Puts the pepper mill down.)*

BEN. I guess. *(Flips the switch, steps out of the chamber and closes the door.)*

CASEY. Ben, you look like a kid who got a lump of coal in their stocking. Cheer up, it's all going to work out, and for five-thousand bucks each, I think we should give it our best shot.

BEN. I'm sorry Casey. You're right.

CASEY. *(Picks up her case, and still carrying the brochure, heads left towards the master bedroom.)* Good. I'm going to put my things away.

BEN. Where are we going to sleep?

CASEY. Mr. Broadbent just told you. We're....

BEN. No, no. I meant, where are you and I going to sleep. There's only one bed in there.

CASEY. *(Stops and turns.)* Don't you think I'm the one who ought to be worrying about that. I'm engaged and if my fiancé knew I was here pretending to be married and sharing a room with you, he'd have a heart attack.

BEN. Well, what do you think we should do?

CASEY. Tell you what, after the McNicolls have gone to bed, why doesn't one of us move into another bedroom. Okay? *(She exits up left.)*

BEN. Okay. *(The door bell rings and he moves down right to the front door and opens it.)*

(SUSAN JOHNSON steps into the room followed by MR. COTT, as they both brush snow off of themselves BEN closes the front door. SUE is wearing a full length winter coat, scarf, hat and boots over a wrap around skirt, blouse with short sleeves and a "Christmas cardigan sweater." She is carrying a large cardboard box. MR. COTT is wearing a winter parka over a denim work shirt, blue jeans, work boots and a baseball cap. He also is carrying a large cardboard box.)

COTT. Hi Ben.

BEN. Hi Eddie.

COTT. Mr. Cott to you young man. Well, don't just stand there, be a gentleman and help the lady.

BEN. Oh, of course.

SUE. *(As BEN reaches for the box, she just lets go of it and it drops to the floor.)* Oh dear, I'm sorry.

COTT. *(Puts his box on the kitchen counter.)* You know, I'm too old to be carrying loads like this. It's bad for my back.

BEN. *(Picking up Sue's box and putting it on the counter.)* I hope nothing got broken.

SUE. It'll be alright, it's just food.

BEN. Oh, I never introduced myself. I'm Ben Adams.

SUE. Hi. I'm Sue Johnson.

BEN. You must be the cook.

SUE. *(Taking off her scarf.)* Chef actually, but that's alright.

BEN. Here, Let me take your coat. *(He goes to hold her coat from behind, and SUE drops her scarf on the floor. As she pulls her first arm out of the coat, the sleeve is pulled inside out. She reaches to pull it right side in with her other arm, which is still in the coat sleeve. Not only does this not work, but it also farces BEN to let go of the coat.)* Let me get it. *(He reaches into the sleeve, SUE turns and they both end up twisted together, each with one arm in the coat. After a variety of contortions, the coat comes free. BEN, who is now holding the coat, presses the closet button on the wall. "The Arm" appears as before, but this time in really slow motion, with the finger returned to its horizontal position.)* Oh that reminds me, Mr. Broadbent told me to tell you to top off the compressed air system. *(He puts Sue's coat on the arm, picks up her scarf and places it on the finger; then presses the button again. The arm very slowly returns to the closet and the door closes.)*

COTT. Looks like it needs a major overhaul to me. Still, I suppose more air pressure can't hurt. I'll get my cylinder. I'll be right back. *(Exits front door.)*

SUE. *(Closes the front door behind Cott.)* It's really snowing hard now.

BEN. Well fortunately the heating system seems to be the only thing working around here.

SUE. Mr. Broadbent told me all about the house of the future. It sounds terrific.

BEN. I wouldn't get too excited if I were you, it's full of crazy ideas. Very few of which seem to work.

SUE. Well, I've been hired to cook and serve a gourmet meal for a Mr. and Mrs. McNicoll, and as long as I've got a kitchen, I'll be fine. *(She wanders off right into the kitchen and picks up the pepper mill.)*

BEN. *(Rushes over and grabs it from her.)* Be careful, that's a phone.

SUE. Well you could've fooled me. Are you sure? But this is a kitchen right?

BEN. Very funny.

SUE. So, why are you here?

BEN. Casey and I are supposed to be renting this house, she's my wife, well not really my wife, I mean just for today she's my wife, but she's not really a proper wife. I'm Broadbent's salesman, and Casey is his secretary, but we don't know how anything works around here. I'm suppose to sell this house and I'm really not sure about who's sleeping where.

SUE. *(Taking things out of the box and putting them on the counter off right.)* You sound a little confused.

BEN. Oh, I'm always confused.

SUE. Relax, it will all work out. You just need to believe in the magic of Christmas. *(Still unloading groceries, etc.)* Are you really married?

BEN. Oh no!

SUE. *(Mimicking.)* Why "Oh no!"

BEN. What do you mean?

SUE. Why not just - no?

BEN. I don't think I'm ready for marriage.

SUE. Really?

BEN. I really don't understand women. I mean, why are single women always looking for husbands, and married women always trying to get rid of theirs?

SUE. *(Moves left and give him a little kiss on the cheek.)* Well, I think you're cute.

CASEY. *(Enters from up left and crosses right. She still has a brochure in her hand.)* Hi, I'm Casey, Mr. Broadbent's secretary and Ben's wife for the night.

SUE. Hi. I'm Sue Johnson, the chef Mr. Broadbent hired.

CASEY. Did he also hire you to kiss Ben?

BEN. It was only on the cheek.

CASEY. Well you're not under the mistletoe. Ben Adams, I do believe you're blushing.

SUE. Why don't I get the rest of my stuff organized. *(As she exits right behind the counter, she gives BEN a little pinch on the buns.)*

BEN. Ooh!

CASEY. What?

BEN. *(Looking wistfully after Sue.)* Oh, nothing.

CASEY. Okay, lets get organized. Where's Cott?

BEN. He went to get an air cylinder.

SUE. *(Off in the kitchen there is a crash of a plate as it breaks on the floor.)* Oops. *(She enters holding two pieces of the broken plate.)* Never mind, there's lots more. Where's the trash can?

(THEY all look around.)

CASEY. Hold on, let me look. *(She thumbs through the brochure.)* It says here the house has a central trash disposal system and this *(She points to the round object at the end of the counter.)* is it.

SUE. I wonder how it works.

BEN. I wonder if it works.

CASEY. It doesn't tell you where to switch it on. Wait a minute, here we are. It says to just hold the trash somewhere near it and it'll suck it right in.

SUE. Okay. *(She holds a large piece of plate above the unit and lets it go. It falls straight down and breaks on the floor. She just stands there looking at it.)* Oops.

CASEY. Maybe it needs air too.

BEN. *(Picking up the pieces.)* Or maybe you have to activate it with the remote.

CASEY. *(Looking at the brochure.)* That's a point. Right, it's number twenty-seven. Here goes.

(BEN, who has been bending down picking up broken pieces, is right by the trash cylinder as CASEY punches the remote. There is a whining sound and BEN's hands are sucked down the top of the cylinder.)

BEN. Whoa! Switch it off. It's too strong. *(CASEY punches buttons, the noise stops and BEN straightens up.)* Boy oh boy! Someone tell Cott this has too much air pressure.

SUE. Did you say number twenty-seven?

CASEY. Yes.

SUE. Right, that's one number I'd better remember.

COTT. *(Enters through the front door. He's carrying a compressed air cylinder, which he puts down just inside the door and brushing snow off his shoulders.)* Ben, be a good lad and put this cylinder in the control room for me. *(BEN moves down right and picks it up, then exits off right in the kitchen followed by COTT.)* I'd carry it myself, but I had this double hernia awhile back and carrying loads like that puts pressure on my kidneys, and then, on top of that, there's my gall stones... *(Exits off right to the kitchen.)*

SUE. *(Behind the counter readying Christmas napkins.)* How long have you worked for Mr. Broadbent?

CASEY. Oh, about three years. How about you, how long have you been a chef?

SUE. Actually, I just graduated from the culinary institute, so I'm looking for a job.

CASEY. You must have come highly recommended for Mr. Broadbent to hire you. You must be a lucky girl as well. How, in heavens name do you keep that figure working with food all day?

SUE. Well, in high school, I did this terrific exercise called shooting the putt, no, that's not it, putting the shoot, no that's not it either. I know, it was called shot-putt.

CASEY. You don't look like a shot-putter to me.

SUE. Well, I only did it for a little while. You see, you have to throw these steel balls out of a circle, but I kept running out of balls and it just got too expensive.

CASEY. I see. You did graduate didn't you?

SUE. Oh yes, but I did miss the graduation ceremony.

CASEY. Why was that?

SUE. I got on the wrong bus and ended up in Milwaukee.

CASEY. Oh dear.

BEN. *(Enters from the kitchen and heads down right to the closet.)* Okay, Cott says he's fixed the air pressure in the closet, so let's give it a try. *(He flips the switch and the arm moves out ever so slowly until it is right next to his shoulder; then very suddenly and very fast the finger hooks in his armpit and drags him quickly into the closet.)* Oh..Oh..Oh! *(The door closes.)*

CASEY. *(Looking at the brochure.)* I don't think it's supposed to do that. *(BEN is heard yelling for help.)* Sue, can you get Cott in here please.

SUE. Okay. *(Exits right in the kitchen.)*

CASEY. *(Moves cautiously down towards the closet.)* Oh dear, are you alright Ben? *(Muffled sounds from the closet.)* Hold on, I'm going to open it again. *(She clicks the switch and stands back. The door opens and the arm, now in the middle of BEN's shoulder blades, pushes him into the room very fast. He collapses on the floor. The arm returns and the door closes. CASEY helps him up.)* Are you alright?

BEN. I'm beginning to think this house has something against me personally.

(Enter COTT and SUE from the kitchen. COTT has removed his coat and is wearing a blue denim shirt, blue jeans and a tool belt.)

CASEY. The closet seems to be acting up. Can you do anything?

COTT. Well, I just topped off the air, it should be okay now.

BEN. I think maybe it's got too much air.

COTT. That's possible. I'll go and check the pressure in a minute. I adjusted the ion chamber as well. I need one of you to test it.

BEN. Well don't look at me. I'm not going in that thing again. Anyway, why don't you test it yourself. You're getting a bonus as well as us.

COTT. You've got to be kidding. Not even for five-thousand dollars, and anyway, I've got a chronic embolism, any sudden movement and I could go, just like that. *(Snaps his fingers.)*

SUE. Ooh - could I try it?

COTT. Be my guest. *(He opens the door and SUE gets in, closing the door. CASEY hands COTT her remote, which he clicks.)* I would test it you know, but I just can't take the chance. You see I have this nervous condition, and the doctor says if I'm subjected to any stress at all it could trigger a massive heart attack.

CASEY. Don't you think.....

COTT. But that's not the half of it. The real problem is the discs in my lower back which....

CASEY. Don't you think it could all be psychosomatic?

COTT. What does that mean?

CASEY. You know, all in your head.

COTT. No, there's nothing up there. It's all down here. *(Points to his lower back.)*

CASEY. You said it, not me!

(The ion chamber door opens to reveal SUE. Her skirt is round her ankles, and her hair is sticking straight up in the air. She staggers out and collapses momentarily behind the kitchen counter.) [SEE AUTHOR'S NOTES.]

COTT. Are you alright Miss?

SUE. I guess so, that kind of took me by surprise.

CASEY. What happened?

COTT. It looks like it's got too much pressure at the bottom and not enough at the top. I'll try to adjust it, back in a minute. *(Exits right in the kitchen.)*

BEN. Are you sure you're alright?

SUE. I'm fine, thanks for asking. What's this five-thousand dollars he was talking about?

BEN. Oh, we all get a bonus if we sell the house this weekend.

SUE. Wow, that's a lot of money.

BEN. I just hope it's worth it. Do you need any help in the kitchen later?

SUE. That's very sweet of you Ben, thank you. *(She smiles and touches his cheek.)* I think I'd like that. *(She exits right in the kitchen.)*

CASEY. *(Teasing.)* Well Ben, it looks like you're getting into the Christmas spirit, no more Bah Hum Bug?

BEN. I just think she's - nice.

CASEY. Well just remember, we're the ones that are supposed to be married this weekend. *(The front doorbell rings.)* That must be the McNicolls.

BEN. I'll get it. *(Moves down right and opens the front door followed by CASEY.)* Merry Christmas, please come in.

(Enter GLADYS and FRED McNICOLL. GLADYS, as we shall see, dominates her poor hen-pecked husband. She is best described as an "old battle-axe." She is wearing boots, gloves, scarf and a long winter coat over a dowdy, dark colored dress. She has no jewelry or accessories. She carries an umbrella, which she shakes towards BEN to get the snow off, then roles up. She is followed by her husband, FRED, a shy, bespectacled man, who has suffered in silence for many years his wife's overbearing attitude and aggressive manner. He is wearing an overcoat, Christmas Santa hat, and gloves over a conservative business suit, shirt and tie. He is carrying two large suitcases, which he puts down just inside the front door, as he brushes the snow off his coat.)

GLADYS. Fred, take that ridiculous looking hat off. I don't know why you insisted upon wearing it. *(FRED quickly takes off the hat and stuffs it in his coat pocket.)* We're the McNicolls. Who are you?

CASEY. I'm Casey Cody, welcome to the house of the future.

GLADYS. What are you doing here?

CASEY. Well, I - er - I live here.

GLADYS. (*Wandering left across the room, prodding cushions with her umbrella and checking for dust everywhere with her finger.*) What do you mean, you live here? Mr. Broadbent said this house was for sale.

CASEY. Yes, it is. My husband (*She looks knowingly at BEN.*) and I are just renting it.

GLADYS. Renting it! I'm not sure we want to buy a house that's been rented. What do you think Fred?

FRED. Well, I -

GLADYS. Rental house indeed. What does that tell you about the neighborhood Fred?

FRED. That the local deli doesn't have valet parking?

GLADYS. There was an innuendo in that remark Fred. I've told you, I don't like these obtrusive comments. (*Looking around.*) Although I suppose it might be alright, (*Points the umbrella at BEN.*) and who are you?

BEN. Ben Adams, Caseys husband. (*He reaches out to shake hands.*) Hi.

GLADYS. Fred! (*Her look commands FRED to shake hands.*)

FRED. Hello

GLADYS. Wait a minute, I thought you said your name was Casey Cody.

CASEY. Well, it is. Er - Casey Cody Adams. (**GLADYS** looks blank.) Er - Cody was my maiden name.

GLADYS. I see, what do you think of that Fred?

FRED. Well, actually I think -

GLADYS. Try not to think Fred. Now, where is our room?

CASEY. You'll be right here, next to the bathroom of the future.

GLADYS. Good. Now where's that ion chamber Mr. Broadbent told me about?

BEN. (*Points to it.*) It's right here.

GLADYS. Fred would like to try it, wouldn't you Fred?

FRED. Well, actually -

BEN. You can't use it right now.

GLADYS. Why not?

CASEY. It's - er - it needs cleaning.

GLADYS. Not clean! What do you think of that Fred?

FRED. Well actually -

CASEY. Well - er - I - er - we were just in the middle of cleaning it. Weren't we Ben.

BEN. We were?

GLADYS. Good, we like clean, don't we Fred?

FRED. Gladys dear, don't you think we should say thank you to these nice people for having us here?

GLADYS. Are you telling me what to do?

FRED. No dear.

GLADYS. Good.

CASEY. Now, before you go to your room, we should give each of you a remote and one of these brochures so that -

GLADYS. Just give them to Fred. He'll be in charge of all the gadgets.

BEN. Okay, here you are Fred. *(He gets a remote and a brochure from the kitchen counter and hands them to FRED.)* Let me show you how it works. Now, let's say you want to hang your coats up. Look in the brochure under closet and you'll see number twelve. Go on, press twelve. *(FRED looks questioningly at GLADYS who gives him a nod of approval, so he clicks the remote. They watch as the closet works perfectly.)*

GLADYS. Isn't that wonderful. What do you think of that Fred?

FRED. Well actually -

GLADYS. Don't just stand there, take my coat.

FRED. Yes dear. *(He takes her coat, hat, gloves and umbrella and hangs them on the closet rail as GLADYS wanders left again checking for dust, looking behind cushions, etc. FRED then hangs up his own hat and coat.)*

BEN. It actually worked.

CASEY. Shh!

GLADYS. *(Doesn't miss a beat.)* Though I really don't need an automatic closet.

CASEY. Why not?

GLADYS. I've got Fred. Haven't I dear?

FRED. Haven't you what?

GLADYS. Do pay attention Fred.

FRED. I'm sorry I -

GLADYS. Never mind. Fred, I want you to study that brochure and memorize all the numbers so you can work the remote for me.

FRED. Very well dear. Shall I close the closet now?

GLADYS. Yes, go ahead. Now, let's get to our room.

(FRED clicks the remote, the closet slides back into the wall and the door closes. There is a loud crash in the kitchen and SUE enters with pieces of broken dishes in her hands.)

SUE. Oh, hello.

GLADYS. Who are you?

SUE. I'm Sue

GLADYS. Sue who?

SUE. Sue the chef.

GLADYS. Sue Le-cheft? Are you French?

SUE. No, but I nearly got to France once.

GLADYS. What do you mean? How can you nearly get to France?

SUE. Well, I had it all planned. I had my airplane ticket from Chicago to Paris, but I missed the plane.

GLADYS. What?

SUE. You see, I got on the wrong bus and ended up in Milwaukee.

GLADYS. That's all very interesting I'm sure, but you haven't told me what you're doing here.

SUE. I'm here to cook for you this evening.

GLADYS. Fred doesn't like rich food, do you Fred?

FRED. Well, actually -

GLADYS. It gives him heartburn, doesn't it Fred?

FRED. Yes dear.

SUE. I'll remember that.

CASEY. Here, let me show you to your room.

(CASEY exits to bedroom 2, followed by GLADYS, followed by FRED carrying the two suitcases, as BEN and SUE move towards the kitchen.)

BEN. How can he stand living with that woman?

SUE. She is a bit much isn't she.

BEN. A bit much? She's the greatest living argument for euthanasia I've ever seen. *(He points to the dish in Sue's hands.)* Another one, huh?

SUE. I'm afraid so.

BEN. *(Now in front of the refrigerator, opens the door and bends down to look inside.)* Want a drink or something?

SUE. No thanks, I just came to get rid of this dish. Oh, I know. *(She picks up the last remote on the counter.)* Number twenty-seven.

(SUE clicks the remote, we hear the sucking noise and she drops the pieces of the broken dish in the cylinder. She exits right into the kitchen leaving the remote at the extreme right end of the counter as BEN's derriere is sucked backwards onto the cylinder.)

BEN. AIEOOW! *(He contorts and wriggles, but he is unable to stand up.)* Ow - Ow - Ow! *(He tries to reach the remote, but it is just out of reach.)* Sue!

(CASEY, GLADYS and FRED, hearing the noise, appear from bedroom 2 to watch his contortions. He does not see them.)

GLADYS. Does your husband always behave like that?

CASEY. Like what?

GLADYS. Well, look at him. He looks like he's having an argument with his underwear.

CASEY. Ah - well - yes - you see - er - er - he has this disease.

GLADYS. I hope it's not catching.

CASEY. No, no, not at all.

GLADYS. Well, what is it? He looks like he's doing, Fred, cover your ears, (**FRED** *covers his ears.*) a lap dance.
(*She indicates he can uncover his ears, which FRED does.*)

CASEY. It's - er - um - Saint Vitus Dance.

FRED. What's Saint Vitus Dance?

GLADYS. We've read about that, haven't we Fred?

FRED. We have?

CASEY. You have?

GLADYS. Yes, there's no cure you know.

CASEY. No?

GLADYS. No. You just keep on twitching and then you die.

CASEY. Twitching?

GLADYS. Twitching.

(**BEN** *is still trying to get free.*)

CASEY. Listen, I'd better go help my husband. Why don't I give you time to freshen up a little and then I'll show you the rest of the house.

GLADYS. Excellent. We'll be out as soon as Fred does the unpacking, won't we Fred? (*Exits to bedroom 2.*)

FRED. (*Following her.*) Yes dear. (*Closes the door.*)

CASEY. (*Turns down stage and mouths the words "yes dear."*) Ben, for heaven's sakes, stop fooling around and get Cott to check the air pressure in the ion chamber. They're going to want to use it in a few minutes. I'm going to check the bathroom. (*Exits to the bathroom.*)

BEN. Casey -

(**BEN** *wiggles and controls again, then has a brilliant idea. He undoes his belt and zipper and wiggles out of his pants, which remain firmly attached to the cylinder. He stands up for a moment in his Christmas boxer*

shorts, then, with a “whoosh,” his pants disappear down the cylinder. SUE enters from the kitchen as BEN starts to move below the counter to hide. As he moves closer to the cylinder he is instantly sucked onto it again. He sits there, trying to look nonchalant as SUE comes left.)

SUE. Hello. *(She pauses and looks at him.)* You know, I don't think I'm going to ask what it is you're doing.

BEN. Please, this thing is lethal. Switch it off for me will you.

SUE. *(Gets the remote.)* What number switches it off?

BEN. Oh Lord, I don't know. Try twenty-seven again.

SUE. Okay, here goes. *(She clicks the remote and BEN stands up. SUE giggles)*

BEN. Thank you. *(He sees her laughing, looks down at his boxers and moves quickly left to the couch and grabs a pillow, embroidered with “Tis The Season,” large enough for the audience to read, which he holds in front of himself.)* What are you laughing at?

SUE. Your legs.

BEN. What's wrong with my legs?

SUE. *(Still laughing.)* Oh nothing I suppose, as long as you're living on the planet of the chickens.

BEN. That's not fair.

SUE. I'm sorry, but if you don't mind my asking, why have you taken your pants off?

BEN. I haven't taken them off, well, I have - what I mean is that infernal trash machine swallowed them.

SUE. *(Looks down the trash cylinder.)* I don't see them, they've disappeared.

(BEN comes right and bends down to look.)

CASEY. *(Enters from the bathroom.)* Now that's not a pretty sight? *(BEN moves quickly below the kitchen counter so CASEY can't see him and holds the pillow in front of him.)* Have you got Cott to check the ion chamber?

BEN. Well, no - you see I never got the chance...

CASEY. Oh Ben, you're hopeless. Never mind, I'll get him. *(Exits right to the kitchen.)*

BEN. What am I going to wear?

SUE. You don't have any other pants here?

BEN. No, we we're only here for one night.

GLADYS. *(Enters from bedroom 2. Her mouth never stops.)* Now make sure all my things are in the top two drawers. You know I don't like to bend down, then find out where the telephones are and be sure to put all your things away, and don't just throw them in the drawer, I want everything neat and tidy when I get back, and keep studying all those numbers for the remote. As soon as I've finished in the bathroom, we're going to try that ion chamber. *(Exits to the bathroom and closes the door.)*

FRED. *(Off.)* Yes dear.

SUE. You know, if she was my relative, I'd follow Santa's lead.

BEN. What's that?

SUE. Only visit once a year.

BEN. Good one. What....

SUE. Ah well, I'd better get on with dinner. *(Exits right to the kitchen.)*

BEN. What am I going to wear? I can't walk around holding a pillow all night.

(Enter COTT and CASEY from the kitchen. BEN stays below the counter, holding the pillow. COTT steps into the ion chamber.)

CASEY. *(Moves down left and peeks around the corner at BEN.)* I've seen better legs on a table.

BEN. *(Steps out from behind the counter.)* There's nothing wrong with my legs. *(CASEY giggles.)* What's so funny?

CASEY. *(Reading the pillow.)* "Tis the Season" Ben? Really?

BEN. *(Quickly turns the pillow around. It now reads "Ho Ho Ho")* Very funny.

CASEY. Your pillow agrees. Where are your pants?

BEN. The trash disposal got them.

CASEY. Why did you take them off?

BEN. *(He moves behind the counter.)* I didn't - oh never mind, what am I going to wear?

COTT. *(Re-appears from the chamber.)* I've adjusted the pressure at the top, it should work fine now.

CASEY. Let's test this thing before Godzilla gets back here.

COTT. Okay, get in.

CASEY. Why me? Why not you?

COTT. Me? If I could lie down I might. Probably be good for my rheumatism. But it might not be good for my irregular heartbeat, embolism, chronic colitis and two double hernias.

BEN. *(Still behind the counter, teasing.)* Are you sure there's nothing else wrong with you?

CASEY. I don't think we should go down that road.

COTT. As a matter of fact, -

CASEY. Down the road we go!

COTT. *(Looks briefly at her and doesn't miss a beat.)* For your information young man, I happen to be in a very delicate condition because of a hereditary arterial blockage, which effects my inner ear and any sudden movement could trigger uncontrollable convulsions starting in my legs and spreading rapidly to the rest of my body. I'm not going in that contraption.

CASEY. Well, what about you Ben?

BEN. No way. I've already done it once.

CASEY. Alright, then I'll do it.

(She gets in and COTT closes the door.)

COTT. You got a remote Ben?

BEN. Right here on the counter.

COTT. Okay, press thirty-three.

(BEN clicks the remote. There is a bloodcurdling yell from CASEY in the chamber.)

COTT. Quick, open it.

(BEN fiddles for a moment then clicks the remote. The door opens and we see CASEY with her hair straight up in the air [SEE AUTHOR'S NOTES.] and her skirt around her neck. The door closes and there is another yell from CASEY.)

COTT. Get her out of there.

(BEN clicks a button and the door opens.)

CASEY. *(Her hair back to normal, staggers out pulling down her skirt.)* That thing is lethal.

BEN. Sorry, I guess I kept my finger on the button too long.

COTT. That's probably it. Just a touch does it. It's a very delicate mechanism, but it's got too much pressure at the top. I've got to bleed the system, it won't take a minute. *(He steps into the chamber; takes a screwdriver out of his tool belt and fiddles above his head.)*

CASEY. Look Ben, you can't stay behind the counter all night. How in heavens name did you manage to put your pants down the trash disposal?

BEN. I didn't put them down there, they just sort of got sucked in and it swallowed them. *(CASEY laughs and is about to speak.)* And I don't want to hear any more chicken jokes. Mr. Cott, where do things go when they get sucked down that trash disposal?

COTT. *(Puts his head out of the chamber.)* They go to this giant grinder in the control room.

BEN. You don't have a spare pair of pants do you?

COTT. Not me. *(Returns to the chamber.)*

BEN. What am I going to do?

CASEY. Well, you could flap your wings and run around the room.

BEN. That's not funny.

GLADYS. *(Enters from the bathroom.)* You there! Have you finished cleaning that ion thing?

CASEY. *(Softly.)* Mr. Cott, have I finished cleaning the ion thing?

GLADYS. I heard that. Who is Mr. Cott?

CASEY. He's er - er - there is no Mr. Cott.

GLADYS. Young lady, I distinctly heard you say Mr. Cott.

CASEY. No - No. I said, er - er - Miss - er - ter - Cott. Yes, that's it, Miss Turcotte.

GLADYS. Miss Turcotte? Who's she? What's she doing here?

CASEY. Er - er - she's the children's nanny. Yes, that's it, she's the nanny.

GLADYS. I'll be out in a few minutes to meet her. *(She goes into bedroom 2, closing the door.)* Fred, haven't you finished unpacking yet?

BEN. Why did you tell her there's a nanny here?

CASEY. You heard her. We can't let her know Cott is the maintenance man.

BEN. She just said she was coming out to meet Miss Turcotte.

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