# 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

# IN PRAISE OF LOVE

A Play

by Terence Rattigan

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

Copyright © 1973 by Terence Rattigan
All Rights Reserved

*IN PRAISE OF LOVE* 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 978-0-573-11170-9

www.samuelfrench.co.uk
www.samuelfrench.com

For Amateur Production Enquiries

United Kingdom and World
excluding north america
plays@samuelfrench.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 *IN PRAISE OF LOVE* 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 Alan Brodie Representation Ltd, Paddock Suite, The Courtyard, 55 Charterhouse Street, London EC1M 6HA www.alanbrodie.com.

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 Terence Rattigan to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

# THINKING ABOUT PERFORMING A SHOW?

**There are thousands of plays and musicals available to perform from Samuel French right now, and applying for a licence is easier and more affordable than you might think**

---

From classic plays to brand new musicals, from monologues to epic dramas, there are shows for everyone.

Plays and musicals are protected by copyright law so if you want to perform them, the first thing you'll need is a licence. This simple process helps support the playwright by ensuring they get paid for their work, and means that you'll have the documents you need to stage the show in public.

Not all our shows are available to perform all the time, so it's important to check and apply for a licence before you start rehearsals or commit to doing the show.

## LEARN MORE & FIND THOUSANDS OF SHOWS

Browse our full range of plays and musicals and find out more about how to license a show

**www.samuelfrench.co.uk/perform**

Talk to the friendly experts in our Licensing team for advice on choosing a show, and help with licensing

**plays@samuelfrench.co.uk 020 7387 9373**

# *Acting* Editions

## BORN TO PERFORM

**Playscripts designed from the ground up to work the way you do in rehearsal, performance and study**

---

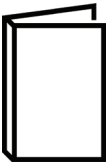
*Larger*, clearer text for easier reading

*Wider* margins for notes

*Performance features* such as character and props lists, sound and lighting cues, and more

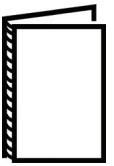
---

## + CHOOSE A SIZE AND STYLE TO SUIT YOU



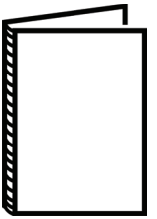
**STANDARD EDITION**

Our regular paperback book at our regular size



**SPIRAL-BOUND EDITION**

The same size as the Standard Edition, but with a sturdy, easy-to-fold, easy-to-hold spiral-bound spine



**LARGE EDITION**

A4 size and spiral bound, with larger text and a blank page for notes opposite every page of text. Perfect for technical and directing use

**LEARN MORE** **samuelfrench.co.uk/actingeditions**

**Other plays by TERENCE RATTIGAN**
**published and licensed by Samuel French**

Adventure Story

Before Dawn

The Browning Version

Cause Célèbre

The Deep Blue Sea

French Without Tears

Harlequinade

Man and Boy

Separate Tables

The Sleeping Prince

A Tale of Two Cities

Variation on a Theme

The Winslow Boy

**Other plays by TERENCE RATTIGAN**
**licensed by Samuel French**

A Bequest to the Nation

Less Than Kind (Love in Idleness)

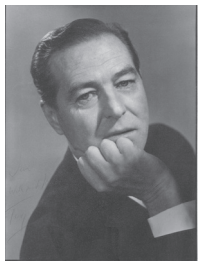
Ross

While the Sun Shines

Who Is Sylvia?

**FIND PERFECT PLAYS TO PERFORM AT**
**www.samuelfrench.co.uk/perform**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



(1911–1977)

Born in London in June 1911, Terence Rattigan was educated at Harrow (Scholar) from 1925 to 1930 and Trinity College, Oxford (History Scholarship) BA to 1933. He served as a flight lieutenant in the Central Command, RAF from 1940 to 1945. In 1934 he had become a full-time playwright.

His many successful plays include *French Without Tears*, *After The Dance*, *Flare Path*, *Love in Idleness*, *While the Sun Shines*, *The Winslow Boy*, *The Browning Version*, *Harlequinade*, *Adventure Story*, *Who Is Sylvia?*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *The Sleeping Prince*, *Separate Tables*, *Variation on a Theme*, *Ross*, *Man and Boy*, *A Bequest to the Nation*, *In Praise to the Nation*, *Cause Célèbre*.

Terence Rattigan still holds the record of being the only playwright to have notched more than 1000 performances for two separate plays, namely, *French Without Tears* and *While the Sun Shines*.

During the war years, he had three plays running on Shaftesbury Avenue: *Flare Path* at the Apollo, *While the Sun Shines* at the Globe and *Love in Idleness* at the Lyric.

He wrote screenplays of *French Without Tears*, *The Way to the Stars*, *Journey Together*, *While the Sun Shines*, *The Winslow Boy*, *The Browning Version*, *The Prince and the Showgirl*, *Separate Tables*, *The Sound Barrier*, *The Man Who Loved Redheads*, *The Deep Blue Sea*, *The Final Test*, *The VIPs*, *The Yellow Rolls-Royce*, *Goodbye, Mr Chips*, *Conduct Unbecoming*, *A Bequest to the Nation* – and collaborated on *The Quiet Wedding*, *The Day Will Dawn*, *English Without Tears*, *Uncensored*, *Brighton Rock*, *Bond Street*. His television plays include: *Heart to Heart*,

*Adventure Story*, *High Summer*. *After the Dance* was shown in the performance series on BBC Two in 1993 and *The Deep Blue Sea* was recorded for the same series. In 1958 he was awarded a CBE, and in 1971 he became Knight Bachelor. Sir Terence Rattigan died in 1977.

For further information on Terence Rattigan, visit www.terencerattigan.com.

To join the Terence Rattigan Society, visit
www.theterencerattigansociety.co.uk.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*In Praise of Love*, and its accompanying play *Before Dawn* (published separately by Samuel French) were originally intended by Terence Rattigan to be performed as a double bill, under the collective title of *In Praise of Love*.

*In Praise of Love* was to be performed first, followed by *Before Dawn*, but events were later to change this order, as an author's note recalls:

"I was then thinking of *The Browning Version* and *Harlequinade* (*Playbill*, 1948), in which the insubstantial play successfully followed the substantial and an audience, moved by the first, seemed to be reasonably diverted by the second.

During previews of *In Praise of Love* (first intended as a collective title to parallel *Playbill* and *Separate Tables*) we experimented with the order of running, and it was proved to the entire satisfaction of the director, John Dexter, and myself that the insubstantial should, on this particular theatrical occasion, precede the substantial. We both of us liked to think that the impact of the substantial on the audience was even stronger than that of *The Browning Version*. It is certain that they seemed in no mood for any subsequent frivolity, as with *Playbill* they had.

As a result the plays are now being performed in the reverse order, with *Before Dawn* serving purely as a truncated curtain-raiser to the play that was always intended to be the main part of the evening's entertainment and which is now, to avoid confusing our audiences, being performed under the original collective title: *In Praise of Love*."

*October 1973* T. R.

Both plays stand on their own and can, of course, be performed independently of the other

## 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.

## IN PRAISE OF LOVE

First presented by H. M. Tennent at the Duchess Theatre, London on the 27 September 1973, with the following cast of characters.

| | |
|---|---|
| **LYDIA CRUTTWELL** | Joan Greenwood |
| **SEBASTIAN CRUTTWELL** | Donald Sinden |
| **MARK WALTERS** | Don Fellows |
| **JOEY CRUTTWELL** | Richard Warwick |

Directed by John Dexter
Setting by Desmond Healey

The action takes place in **LYDIA** and **SEBASTIAN CRUTTWELL**'s flat in North London

**ACT I** A spring evening
**ACT II** The following night

Time – the present

*For*
*BINKIE and JOHN*

# ACT I

*The* **CRUTTWELLS***' flat in Islington. About six o'clock on a spring evening.*

*We see a small hall, large living room and part of a kitchen when the sliding doors are opened. A staircase – probably put in during conversion – runs from the living room: first, up a few steps, to the kitchen (where the* **CRUTTWELLS** *also eat), then turns sharply to lead to the rooms above. No window is needed, nor fireplace. The predominant feature of the room is books, for some of which there is no space but the floor, the bookcases having been stretched to their limit. There is a bookcase even in the diminutive hall, and on top of that, looking incongruous, a man's white hat box, which once plainly contained a top hat, and may still. Other prominent objects are a small table on which some ordinary black and white chessmen are set out, plainly for use and not for decoration, a table bearing a tray of drinks, a sofa and various armchairs. The front door and hall are at the back, and a door leads to* **SEBASTIAN***'s workroom. From this is coming the sound of a typewriter being very intermittently used, with long pauses between short bouts, usually followed by unmistakable sounds of angry erasure.*

**LYDIA** *lets herself in with a latch key. A woman of about fifty, very simply dressed, she shows signs of both physical and mental distress. The physical distress takes the form of utter exhaustion. She sits on a chair in the hall before she can find the strength to move into the sitting room, where she promptly sits again. She has no parcels to carry, and although the flat is two flights*

*up from the street (as we will later learn) the long deep breaths she is taking do not give any impression of someone who has hurried the stairs. Rather the reverse. Her mental stress is shown by the slow unblinking stare which encompasses almost every object in the room, however trivial, and by her expression as, her inspection of the room completed, she stares blankly in front of her while she regains her breath.* **SEBASTIAN** *comes out from his work room, a cigarette between his lips, an empty glass in his hand, and spectacles over his nose.*

**SEBASTIAN** Oh good, darling, you're back. The heating has gone wrong.

**LYDIA** Has it? It seems all right in here. *(She gets briskly to her feet and feels an ancient radiator.)* Yes, it's on.

**SEBASTIAN** *(at the bookcase)* It's icy in my room.

**LYDIA** *goes through the open door of the work room.*

**SEBASTIAN**, *left alone, pulls down a book and begins to search for some reference. Vainly. He puts the book on a pile near him and picks another. Same process.*

**LYDIA** *comes out and quietly takes the glass from his hand.*

Oh thank you so much, darling.

*She fills up his glass, a procedure she can carry out in her sleep.*

**LYDIA** You hadn't turned it on.

**SEBASTIAN** What on?

**LYDIA** The heat.

**SEBASTIAN** *(deep in a book)* Really? *(He says it as if it were a matter of the most breathless interest, a sure sign with him that he hasn't heard a word.)*

**LYDIA** *comes back with his glass.*

Oh thank you, darling. What kept you out so long? Oh, of course, old Doctor Scheister. What did he say?

**LYDIA** Schuster. He's very pleased indeed.

**SEBASTIAN** What did I tell you? And you got held up by the bus strike?

**LYDIA** Not really. I found a new way on the Tube.

**SEBASTIAN** *(worried)* Should you have?

**LYDIA** Oh, it was quite easy...

**SEBASTIAN** I meant isn't it a bit like strike-breaking?

**LYDIA** Your social conscience would have preferred I walked?

**SEBASTIAN** It's not all that far, is it?

**LYDIA** About as far as Fleet Street – to which I notice you've had a hire-car the last three days.

**SEBASTIAN** A hire car is different.

**LYDIA** Why?

**SEBASTIAN** I charge it to the paper, so it's on their conscience not mine. Good. I've got what I'm looking for – which is a wonder. Darling, our books have got in the most terrible mess again. *(He pulls a book out.)* Norman Mailer in the poetry section. Why? *(seeing something)* And – I can't believe it – *Tarzan of the Apes*. How did that get there?

**LYDIA** You must have reviewed it, some time.

**SEBASTIAN** Don't make tasteless jokes... Oh yes. I remember. There was a book on Rousseau called *The Noble Savage*, and I had to research. *(throwing her the book)* Well that's for your favourite charity – what is it? "The Little Sisters of the Poor", or do you think it might give those nuns ideas?

**LYDIA** Hardly give them. Remind them possibly.

**SEBASTIAN** *(pointing to the shelf)* Darling, it's an awful muddle. Couldn't Mrs MacKintyre...?

**LYDIA** Mrs Reedy. It hasn't been Mrs MacKintyre for three months.

**SEBASTIAN** I call her Mrs MacKintyre.

**LYDIA** She's noticed that.

**SEBASTIAN** *pulls out another book, clicking his teeth:* **LYDIA** *takes it.*

**SEBASTIAN** Well couldn't *she*...?

**LYDIA** No. She isn't, oddly enough, a trained librarian. She isn't a trained anything, come to that. She comes three times a week for two hours a day, never stops eating and costs a bomb.

**SEBASTIAN** Is she worth having then?

**LYDIA** Yes.

**SEBASTIAN** I mean, if she costs a bomb...

**LYDIA** *(loudly)* She's worth having.

**SEBASTIAN** A little tetchy this afternoon, are we? *(He reaches up and grabs another book.) Plain Talk About Sex* – next to *Peter Pan.*

**LYDIA** *(taking it)* That's mine.

**SEBASTIAN** For God's sake, why?

**LYDIA** I bought it for a train, sometime.

**SEBASTIAN** *(taking off his spectacles)* That doesn't answer my question. Darling, I mean, with your early life...

**LYDIA** Perhaps it needed a bit of brushing up.

*Pause.*

**SEBASTIAN** *(blowing on his glasses, carefully)* A criticism?

**LYDIA** No. A comment. Where shall I put these books?

**SEBASTIAN** In their proper sections. Where I suggest you might have put the others. You might go through them when you have a little time.

**LYDIA** When I have a little time, it will be high on my list.

**SEBASTIAN** You're in a stinking mood this evening, aren't you?

**LYDIA** Am I?

**SEBASTIAN** Was it what I said about your early misadventures?

**LYDIA** *(smiling)* No, stupid. You of all people have the right to talk about that. I mean, thirty years after – nearly thirty – St George must have occasionally reminded his damsel of the dragon he rescued her from.

**SEBASTIAN** *(embarrassed)* St George! Really! Anyway St George didn't have several ding-dongs with his damsel before he rescued her...

**LYDIA** How do you know he didn't?

**SEBASTIAN** Well, he wouldn't have been a saint, would he?

**LYDIA** I think it was about what you said about "criticism". As if I would...

**SEBASTIAN** But you said 'comment'.

**LYDIA** There can be good comment as well as bad, can't there?

**SEBASTIAN** In theory, yes. In fact, no. Remember, darling, that you're speaking to a critic. You meant something a bit harsh by "comment"! Oh yes. I know. Now, darling you must realize...

**LYDIA** You can't be expected to poke an old skeleton. I know.

**SEBASTIAN** Darling, really! That wasn't very – tasteful, was it?

**LYDIA** It was your taste. You said it.

**SEBASTIAN** Then you shouldn't have remembered it. Not the actual *words. (looking at her)* Did I say skeleton?

**LYDIA** Yes, I know. I've put on four pounds in the last four weeks. That's not an invitation – just a fact.

**SEBASTIAN** *(in "breathless interest" again)* Have you? Have you really? Put on four pounds? *(looking at his book)* Well, that's splendid – absolutely splendid. I mean, it's marvellous news, isn't it. Marvellous.

**LYDIA** You hadn't actually noticed?

**SEBASTIAN** (*looking up from his book*) Of course I'd noticed. I mean, these last few months I've been watching you like a hawk. *(returning to his book)* And I am not so ignorant as not to know that putting on weight is a good sign. Conclusive, in a way...

**LYDIA** Well, here's something even more conclusive. I was told by Uncle Constantin to show you this. *(She takes a paper from her bag.)* It's the result of my last tests.

**SEBASTIAN** Oh? When were they taken?

**LYDIA** Two weeks ago. That's about average for these days.

**SEBASTIAN** Yes, because under the Tories the Health Service personnel were grossly underpaid and even more grossly overworked, so it is hardly unnatural that...

**LYDIA** But we're under the other side now.

**SEBASTIAN** I am aware of which side we are under, madam, but, as you know, in my view there is nothing whatever to choose between either of them. *(flourishing the paper)* In a properly organized state-run Health Service...

**LYDIA** You'd get the results through by special rocket from the Kremlin, I know. Darling, do read that. It makes nice reading – really it does.

**SEBASTIAN** Well, it'll be Greek to me – except that I can read Greek.

**LYDIA** (*pointing, over his shoulder*) That's my wee-wee test...

**SEBASTIAN** Darling, please let's be adult about this. This is your urine test – and this is your faeces test, which no doubt you were going to name your "ka-ka" test...

**LYDIA** I was. And the others are kidney, liver, heart, etcetera. *(pointing)* Don't read the figures, just the words...

**SEBASTIAN** *(reading)* Normal, normal, normal, near-normal, normal, normal – sounds like a very dull party.

**LYDIA** *(eagerly)* And there – under General Remarks...

**SEBASTIAN** *(reading)* "Patient's encouraging progress fully maintained. If the results of the biopsy confirm these tests, as early reports suggest, then further monthly tests may be discontinued and the patient may resume her normal life..." The lab. people wrote that?

**LYDIA** Of course.

**SEBASTIAN** *(nodding)* Of course. Oh darling, I *am* glad. Isn't that marvellous for you! Marvellous. For me too, of course. *(He kisses the top of her head, absently, and picks up a book.)* I bet old Schuster is pleased.

**LYDIA** Delighted! Imagine, no dieting, no wagon, late nights– anything in the world I like...

**SEBASTIAN** *(eyebrows raised)* Anything?

**LYDIA** Practically anything. He wants me to have a holiday, anyway.

**SEBASTIAN** Well, where are we now? April. Well, in a couple of months' time I'll take you to Italy, if there isn't a revolution.

**LYDIA** I thought that was what you wanted.

**SEBASTIAN** *(deep in his book)* Wanted what?

**LYDIA** Revolution.

**SEBASTIAN** *(tetchily)* Darling, not an *Italian* one. It'd be so noisy – tenors blasting off the "Internationale" in every direction... I've lost my place now. Here it is. All right, darling. I'll be about half an hour... *(He turns to his door.)*

**LYDIA** You won't.

**SEBASTIAN** Won't what?

**LYDIA** Be about half an hour. Mark's due here five minutes ago.

**SEBASTIAN** Mark? Mark Walters?

**LYDIA** *nods.*

He's in Hong Kong... No, that's right. He's back. I spoke to him yesterday...

**LYDIA** And asked him to dinner.

**SEBASTIAN** On a *Thursday!* My copy day. I couldn't have.

**LYDIA** You did. What's more, you asked him to be sure and come an hour early.

**SEBASTIAN** *(explosively)* Damn and blast! Why didn't you stop me? I remember now. I remember perfectly. You just sat there, with your vapid smile on, and did nothing – *nothing* – there's loyalty...

**LYDIA** I thought you must have an easy one this week.

**SEBASTIAN** Easy? *Easy?* Two sodding professors on Shakespeare's imagery taking opposing points of view. Where *is* Mark? *(He goes to the telephone.)* In that hideous palace of his in Eaton Square?

**LYDIA** No. The workmen are there, adding something. He's at the Savoy *(taking the receiver from him)* It's far too late, darling. With the bus strike and the traffic he must have started an hour ago.

**SEBASTIAN** Oh bugger!

**LYDIA** *(soothingly)* Leave it to me. When he arrives I'll tell him you've got to meet a deadline. He's a writer too.

**SEBASTIAN** *Too*? A writer is merely a euphemism, but "too" is an insult.

**LYDIA** Why? I wouldn't mind your selling a million copies before your publication date, and the film rights for half a million, sight unseen...

**SEBASTIAN** I see. I see. So that's going to be thrown in my face. My novels sell five thousand and make me about seven hundred pounds in all...

**LYDIA** Oh shut up! You don't write novels. I wish you did, but you don't.

**SEBASTIAN** *opens his mouth to speak.*

Twenty-five years ago you wrote a masterpiece, and followed it up four years later with another...

**SEBASTIAN** No. The second was a mess.

**LYDIA** It was as good as the first.

**SEBASTIAN** It was a mess.

**LYDIA** It was only that they all turned on you for not writing *Out of the Night* all over again. And so you gave up and joined the enemy. If you can't beat them, join them, I know, but you did give up a bit soon.

**SEBASTIAN** Thank you very much.

**LYDIA** My God, if Mark Walters took *his* notices as seriously as you did...

**SEBASTIAN** His research staff and his stenographers and the man who writes the descriptive passages between bashes would all be out of a job. And Mark would still be a multi-millionaire. Oh God, the injustice of it all!

*He holds out his glass for her to refill. She takes it.*

Just take some power-mad tycoon with a permanent hard-on...

**LYDIA** They're not all tycoons. His last one was about a presidential candidate...

**SEBASTIAN** With a permanent hard-on?

**LYDIA** Semi-permanent. His son has the permanent one – he whams it up everything in sight.

**SEBASTIAN** A wham a chapter as usual?

**LYDIA** Sometimes more, but it averages out. Now the son meets a lion-tamer…

**SEBASTIAN** Don't go on. Being fairly familiar with the author's *oeuvre* I can catch the drift. *(He looks towards his workroom)* I'll have to work late, that's all – and you know what that does to my bladder.

**LYDIA** You must finish now. Mark won't mind. I can delay dinner.

**SEBASTIAN** *nods gloomily and goes towards his door.*

Oh – talking of novels…

**SEBASTIAN** We weren't.

**LYDIA** I mean *your* novels. Darling, are those notes for a new novel I came on in there the other day?

*Pause.*

**SEBASTIAN** "Came on" is good. "Came on" is very good. I noticed that they'd been disturbed. *(roaring)* Is there *nothing* I can keep concealed in this house?

**LYDIA** Oh – so you *concealed* them, did you? Why?

**SEBASTIAN** Because I knew that once you got your X-ray eyes on them you'd be bouncing up and down, clapping your little hands and shouting: "Oh goody, goody, he's writing a novel!"

**LYDIA** Well goody-goody, he is.

**SEBASTIAN** No. Not necessarily at all. He may well decide to give it up, because it stinks, or decided that he hasn't got time for it anyway.

**LYDIA** Oh, time isn't important. You can make that…

**SEBASTIAN** What utter balls you do talk sometimes.

*There is a ring at the front door.*

Oh God!

**LYDIA** You go in. I'll explain. *(She goes to the front door.)*

**SEBASTIAN** No. I'd better say hullo.

**LYDIA** *opens the front door to* **MARK**. *He is in the early forties, and physically the exact opposite one would imagine, of any of his power-mad, randy heroes. He has a pleasantly mild expression and a weedy physique. He pants at the mildest physical exertion and is panting now. He carries two parcels under his arm.*

**LYDIA** Mark, darling – this is wonderful. *(She throws her arms round his neck.)*

**MARK** Wonderful for me too. Let me get my breath back. *(Going to the living room)* Don't they have elevators in Islington?

**SEBASTIAN** No.

**MARK** Hell, lifts. As a resident I should remember. Hullo, Sebastian.

*They embrace briefly.*

Still murdering literary reputations?

**SEBASTIAN** Yours is safe.

**MARK** These days no one gives me notices. Even my friends on the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* who used to find me "compulsive" now just say "another Walters!"

**SEBASTIAN** *(snatching a parcel)* Are these presents?

**MARK** You've got Lydia's. This is yours.

**LYDIA** Oh Mark, you shouldn't

**SEBASTIAN** Of course he should. It's his duty to redistribute his wealth. Mine rattles.

**MARK** *(snatching it from him)* Then don't rattle it.

**SEBASTIAN** As good as that, eh? I'll open it later, do you mind? I've got a little work to finish off. Lydia forgot it was my copy day.

**LYDIA** *He* forgot.

**MARK** Look, if I'm a nuisance here why don't I take Lydia out for dinner and leave you to work?

**SEBASTIAN** And how do I get dinner?

**MARK** Couldn't you scramble yourself some eggs?

**SEBASTIAN** Are you mad?

**MARK** Yes, I'm mad. For a moment I was thinking you were a normal husband.

**SEBASTIAN** Oh – talking of normal, Mark. Do you remember that little scare we had about the old girl when you were last here? Not really a scare, of course, but she kept on catching colds and things. You remember how her old throat kept on getting sore?

**LYDIA** Less of this old please.

**SEBASTIAN** Darling, we must face facts.

**LYDIA** I'll face the fact that I'm a year younger than you. Right?

**SEBASTIAN** No need to get ugly, darling *(to* **MARK***)* Well her doctor, some refugee friend of hers from Riga...

**LYDIA** Tallinn.

**SEBASTIAN** Put her in rather a flap suddenly. He told her it might be some obscure oriental disease, due to malnutrition...

**LYDIA** He didn't say oriental. And he didn't put me in a flap – I was as calm as ice.

**SEBASTIAN** *Cool* as ice, dear. Calm as a millpond. And both of them clichés. But malnutrition, Mark – when you think how the old girl tucks it away. Eats like a bloody horse.

**LYDIA** I didn't always, you know. We didn't eat like bloody horses in Estonia between 'thirty-nine and 'forty-six.

**SEBASTIAN** *(mildly)* Darling, not another refugee story – do you mind, I'm sure they bore Mark senseless. *(to* **MARK***)* Now about this little flap...

**MARK** I know about the little flap.

**SEBASTIAN** How do you know? You've been in Hong Kong.

**LYDIA** There's a postal service even in Hong Kong.

**SEBASTIAN** *(genuinely surprised)* You write to each other? How extraordinary! Well, anyway, after a time things got better and better and today she's had her final clearance, a piece of paper with "normal" written all over it. Show it to him, darling.

**LYDIA** *hands* **MARK** *the blood test.* **MARK** *reads it.*

What's more, she's put on ten pounds.

**LYDIA** Four. Three really.

**MARK** Well, that's great, Lydia.

*He hands it to her. She puts it on a table.*

**SEBASTIAN** You saw that note at the end telling her to piss off and not bother them any more? She shouldn't have written to you, Mark, and bothered you.

**MARK** I like being bothered.

**SEBASTIAN** I don't write and tell you about my bladder trouble, do I?

**MARK** No. *(politely)* How is your bladder trouble?

**SEBASTIAN** Absolutely terrible. Sometimes I sit in there, screaming.

**MARK** Screaming what?

**SEBASTIAN** For someone to care. You look terrible.

**MARK** I know. I always do.

**SEBASTIAN** Why don't you look like your heroes?

**MARK** If I did I'd write about heroes who looked like me, and I wouldn't sell.

**SEBASTIAN** *(having laughed)* I often think if you'd had any education you might actually write.

**MARK** If I'd had any education I'd know I couldn't.

**SEBASTIAN** *(kissing his cheek)* I love you a little, do you know that? *(to* **LYDIA***)* Darling, fill this up, would you, and then get Mark a drink.

**LYDIA** *takes his glass again.*

**MARK** How's Joey?

**LYDIA** *(eagerly)* Oh he's doing wonderfully well, Mark.

**SEBASTIAN** Wonderfully well? He has an unpaid job at the headquarters of a crypto-fascist political organization called the Liberal Party.

**MARK** Jesus! You mean the party that Gladstone was once head of? *(He pronounces it to rhyme with "bone")*

**SEBASTIAN** *(pronouncing correctly)* Gladstone. *Gladstone* is the name of a hotel in New York, isn't it?

**MARK** No, seriously. That party that got all those votes in the last election – is *that* crypto-fascist?

**LYDIA** That was a little joke, Mark.

**SEBASTIAN** It was *not* a little joke. The modern Liberal Party is a vote-splitting organization carefully designed to keep the Establishment in power under cosy left-wing labels, and the real Left forever out. And moreover, there is little doubt that the whole movement is clandestinely backed by South African gold...

**MARK** *looks confused.*

**LYDIA** *(to* **MARK***)* That was another little joke. Oh Mark, don't you think it's wonderful Joey getting that job all by himself?

**SEBASTIAN** Unpaid.

**LYDIA** Only now. After the by-election they're going to pay him.

**SEBASTIAN** Thirty pieces of silver, I should think.

**MARK** *(still at sea)* By-election?

*Pause.*

**SEBASTIAN** How long have you lived in England, Mark?

**MARK** Well, now, let's see. I came over first for the English publication of *The Naked Truth*, or was it *Pride of Possession*, so that would be...

**SEBASTIAN** Don't let's see. I should never have brought it up. A by-election is—

**MARK** *(in the nick of time)* —when a member of Parliament dies and they elect his successor. We have the same thing in the States.

**SEBASTIAN** And what do they call them there?

*Pause.*

**MARK** By-elections, I guess.

**SEBASTIAN** *(at length)* Christ. Do you read nothing but *Terry and the Pirates*?

**MARK** It's just that with us by-elections aren't all that important. Are they here?

**SEBASTIAN** In your benighted country you have elections every two years: in our even more benighted one we have ours every five – well, usually that is. With us a by-election is an authentic indication of what the voters are thinking about government policies. Take this by-election at East Worsley, for instance, where my son is currently working for the Liberals. *(The thought of it overcomes him.)* The Liberals, Mark! Helping to split the Left and let the Tories in! My own son, Mark – my own son!

**MARK** Too bad. Go on.

**SEBASTIAN** Well it's a safe Labour seat. Majority never fallen below ten thousand. But with a *Liberal* candidate canvassed for by Joey and by hundreds of other little Joeys, with their clean hair, winning smiles, fetching little turtle-necks, unstained little leather jackets – no. The thought is too awful to be borne – my own son, Mark – my own son – helping the enemy – perhaps putting a Tory in...

**LYDIA** Isn't it awful. *(after a pause – brightly)* You know he's earned three hundred pounds, Mark, for a television play he's written. Isn't that marvellous? *(She gives* **SEBASTIAN** *his drink.)*

**SEBASTIAN** The BBC Two series for which this piece of pseudo-Kafka crap was written, Mark, happens to be limited to plays by authors under twenty-one...

**LYDIA** It's still an achievement – and you ought to be proud.

**SEBASTIAN** Oh I am, very. *(He sips his drink.)* A touch too much water, darling.

**LYDIA** *angrily snatches the drink back.*

**MARK** When's this play being done?

**LYDIA** Tomorrow at seven-thirty.

**MARK** I'll try and get to watch.

**SEBASTIAN** *(in a murmur)* Don't.

**LYDIA** You wouldn't come and watch it here with us, would you? *(She brings the drink back to* **SEBASTIAN**, *having added whisky.)*

**SEBASTIAN** Darling, what a thing to ask the poor man!

**LYDIA** It's only he could see Joey too. He's coming up from his by-election especially to watch it with us. Don't you think that's rather sweet of him, when he could have seen it with his friends?

**SEBASTIAN** I think it's wise. He knows we've got to like it.

**LYDIA** Damn you, damn you! *(She begins to switch lights on.)*

**SEBASTIAN** Forgive her, Mark. She's been a bit hysterical lately.

**LYDIA** Go and work.

**SEBASTIAN** *(soothingly)* Yes, darling, I'm just going. *(He goes to his door.)*

**LYDIA** Would you, Mark? I know it's an awful thing to ask, but Joey would be thrilled out of his mind.

**SEBASTIAN** Out of his what?

**MARK** I'd love to.

**SEBASTIAN** Good God.

**SEBASTIAN** *goes out.*

**MARK** *faces* **LYDIA.** *There is a pause.*

**MARK** Tell me, please, that I've come for no reason.

**LYDIA** You've come, Marcus, and I'm eternally grateful.

**MARK** What you told me in your last letter is true?

**LYDIA** Well, while there's life and Marcus Waldt. *(holding him)* Darling, darling Marcus Waldt – there must be hope...

**MARK** You're goddamn right there's hope. *(He studies the tests.)*

**LYDIA** *goes to the drink table. She pours herself a drink.*

**LYDIA** I'm going to give myself a drink. First in six months. Sure you won't have one?

**MARK** Sure. *(indicating the papers)* These reports are phoney. Is that what you're trying to tell me?

**LYDIA** Yes.

**MARK** How do you know?

**LYDIA** I know Uncle Constantin's typewriter. His Ss and Es don't work.

**MARK** Uncle Constantin?

**LYDIA** The one I wrote you about.

**MARK** Oh. And he typed them?

**LYDIA** Yes.

**MARK** Why?

**LYDIA** A kind of reassuring word sent out to a friend in need. *(a shade wearily)* But not even darling Uncle Constantin could fake or forge the figures on official laboratory paper. Those figures are worse than last month's – and a great deal worse than the month's before.

**MARK** How do you know?

**LYDIA** Oh, I get to see them.

**MARK** How do you get to see them?

**LYDIA** I pinch them, memorize the figures, and then put them back in Uncle Constantin's desk, exactly as they were.

**MARK** I don't believe that.

**LYDIA** Don't. It doesn't matter.

**MARK** It does.

*Pause.*

**LYDIA** I'm sorry, Marcus. Yes, it does. Well, you mustn't forget that in between bouts of concentration camps I did serve a little time in Estonian Resistance – when there *was* any Estonian Resistance – with three invasions, from different sides, it wasn't too easy.

**MARK** *(harshly)* I know all that. Come to the point.

*Pause.*

**LYDIA** I'm sorry. Refugee stories. They bore you senseless…

**MARK** They don't and you know it. But please come to the point.

**LYDIA** Well, I learnt a little about memorizing figures. If you train yourself to do that at eighteen, you don't forget the knack – never mind. You also learn to rifle desks quickly, knowing which are the operative drawers. Well, Uncle Constantin wouldn't have made a very high rank in the Gestapo – poor lamb – or the KGB. You see, each time I go to him I have to spend a penny for a wee-wee – sorry, *urine* test – and I tell him I can't do it with someone in the room, even behind a screen. So he discreetly disappears and I'm into his desk the way I did with that Russian General, remember, I told you.

**MARK** Yes. Go on.

**LYDIA** There's nothing to go on about. You see, I know what they've all been looking for these last six months.

**MARK** How?

**LYDIA** By listening – mainly to student doctors. They're always around at these tests, with their young eager, pretty faces – well, not always pretty – but eager, anyway. I'd address them in fluent Estonian, which somehow seemed to give them the idea that I didn't speak English. So they, sometimes, did between themselves. And that particular word came to stick out.

**MARK** Polyarteritis?

**LYDIA** Darling Marcus – you really must care a bit! You've even learnt the word.

**MARK** Don't be coy. *(He takes out a notebook and begins comparing the figures in the test sheets which he is holding with others in his notebook.)*

**LYDIA** That hurt. Yes, I *am* being. I'm sorry. I'm getting myself another drink.

**MARK** *(sharply)* Allowed it?

**LYDIA** Encouraged, Marcus, encouraged. *(She takes a sip.)* Oh God, how horrible American vodka is! Still, it's better than

prune juice. *(after another sip) Just* better. What are you doing?

**MARK** The minute I read your letter I put my best researcher on to...

**LYDIA** Oh Marcus, I do love you.

**MARK** *(absently)* And I love you too. Do you happen to know your blood pressure?

**LYDIA** With my resistance training, do you think I can't read upside down?

**MARK** What is it?

**LYDIA** High.

**MARK** How high?

**LYDIA** Very.

**MARK** How long has it stayed that way?

*Pause.*

**LYDIA** Your researcher's done his work well, hasn't he? Well I've done some researching too. For far too long to give me any kind of a chance.

**MARK** *(violently)* Don't talk that way!

**LYDIA** *(quietly)* I will, if I want to. To you, anyway. That's what you're here for, Marcus. Cheers!

**MARK** Lydia, if you have got this thing, it's bad. It's even very bad. But – look – it's not necessarily fatal.

*Pause.*

**LYDIA** Your researcher and I seem to have been reading different books. Of course it takes time. It could even take two years. *(She finishes her vodka.)* Hell – it doesn't even taste like vodka. Still – who's caring what it tastes like? *(She pours another.)* It's what it does that matters. And what it does is good. So here's to two years...

# 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**