

## **Titus Andronicus Slept Here**

Let the laughs begin! Total chaos and confusion sets in as Senior Partner lawyer Sam is set to interview a prospect (P.D.) for the firm but is forced to do so at home. Meanwhile, daughter Susan is sending over her boyfriend (Petey) to pick up her C.D.s and meet the family. Sam mistakenly interviews Petey and sends P.D. to the bedroom to retrieve the C.D.s

While this is going on, dear Uncle Luke is sleepwalking while preparing for his role as Titus - sometimes without his toga!

*This one will have your audiences rolling  
in the aisles!*

4M, 2F

**Great Stage Publishing**

## **Titus Andronicus Slept Here**

*A Madcap Comedy*

by  
**C.P. Stancich**

**Great Stage Publishing**

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## ***Titus Andronicus Slept Here***

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### Characters

SAM: The father. 40's, professional, mildly patriarchal; witty, but too harassed to use it as much as he could.

TILDA: The mother. 40's, a sensible, nurturing professional with the quirk of getting stuck in her "elementary school" mode.

LUKE: TILDA's older brother. 45-55, easy-going but very stressed; has a problem with sleep-walking.

ZIP: Offspring of SAM and TILDA (either gender). 15-18, steady: an observer.

PETEY: A suitor: male, 20's, earnest and nervous.

P.D.: A candidate: female, 20's, earnest and nervous.

### Set

Living room or parlor interior. Doors: right (possibly an open doorway, as to a foyer); up-right (study); up-left (patio); left. Minimum furnishings: lounge suite (sofa, chair, coffee table) left; two chairs flanking a small table, right.

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Scene: The living room of the Brantons--Sam and Matilda.

Time: Midday, summer, the present.

At curtain: *The stage is empty. Daylight streams in through the open patio door along with the occasional bird chirp. SAM is in conversation on a cordless phone on the patio.*

SAM

*(Off. To phone.)*

I'll tell you Mirton, I got the awful feeling if I let you get away with this, you're gonna start pushing the envelope.

*(Enter SAM from patio, on cordless phone. He loosens his tie, then absent-mindedly closes the patio door. Birds end.)*

SAM

*(To phone, chuckling wryly.)*

Yeah, well personally, I think we ought to find out who's responsible and fire'm...unless it's me of course. *(Pause, laughs.)* Sure, I suppose we can sell it that way. Hey, if we weren't growing, our offices wouldn't be torn up for expansion. But, as head of the remodeling committee, I would like to point out that--one--the recruitment committee should check the remodeling schedule before it invites a prospect across the state, and two, the committee members shouldn't mess up and then run off on vacation. *(Pause.)* No. *(Pauses, interrupts.)* Sylvia, stop whining, it's all right. I'm a lawyer, I can vamp. I've got the file here, I'll have a look at it, charm the bejeesus out of...what's the dear candidate's name? *(Pause.)* I will charm P. D. Decker and explain the remodeling, then deliver said prospect to you, after your hearing. *(Pause.)* That's fine. No, I'm sure I've got them. Maxine sent them home with me and I put them in my study to review them today. *(Pause. Sigh.)* Don't be a mother hen. All right, I'll check.

*(Exit SAM to study, leaving the door open.)*

SAM

There you go, right on top. Out of the briefcase and ready for review. *(Pause.)* No, I know you can't see it.

*(Enter TILDA, right, tired and bedraggled, holding a pair of muddy boots and wearing rumpled camping uniform shorts and shirt.)*

SAM

So...what do you think, should I take the rookie to the courthouse and meet you there, or would the facade of the office be more impressive?

TILDA  
*(Meekly.)*

Is this where I live?

SAM

I know we can't get in until tomorrow, I just thought a look, you know, at the outside.

*(Enter SAM, stopping at the study door.)*

SAM

No, fine. *(Sees TILDA.)* Oh my god, it's Forest Ranger Tilda, looking like she could use a drink...or an enema.

*(SAM grins as TILDA rolls her eyes and breaths out a soft laugh.)*

SAM  
*(To phone.)*

What? *(Pause, chuckle.)* I'll tell her. *(To TILDA.)* Sylvia says to keep up the good work with Wilderness Explorers two more years, so her Troy will be old enough to take part.

*(TILDA gives SAM and evil look.)*

TILDA  
*(Softly.)*

Monster.

SAM  
*(To phone.)*

She says she can't wait.

TILDA  
*(Softly.)*

Liar.

*(TILDA shuffles to the patio door, opens it. Bird chirping sounds loudly.)*

SAM

No, as far as I know the program is secure. The kids love it, the parents love it and the Park District keeps funding it.

TILDA

*(Looking aloft.)*

Get out of here, you damn birds! And take the natural world with you!

SAM

*(To phone.)*

Yes, you'll have to talk with her about it. She lives to instill respect for nature into the next generation.

*(TILDA drops her boots outside the door and shuts it. The birds cease.)*

TILDA

*(With soft bitterness.)*

Bugger nature.

SAM

*(To phone.)*

All right. I will deliver P.D. Decker to the courthouse at 4:30. And Sylvia...you owe me. *(Chuckles and hangs up.)* This is turning out to be an odd summer.

*(TILDA bleats, and SAM turns to her. He smirks.)*

SAM

Ah, the great outdoorswoman, shimmering with the patina of nature...or is that mud. *(With enforced innocence.)* How was the last day of Wilderness Explorers?

TILDA

Reassure me, my love.

SAM

Absolutely.

TILDA

This is the last day of explorers?

SAM

According to my calendar, it is.

TILDA

And after today the only obligation for the rest of the summer is watching Luke and Zip in their play.

SAM

Mmm. A couple of barbecues somewhere in there, but nothing mandatory.

TILDA

And in just a few days, we'll be off to London.

SAM

London, Edinburgh, Amsterdam. For three weeks.

TILDA

And there will be West End shows, and fine dining, and galleries...and no nature walks with six and seven year olds?

SAM

*(Feigning confusion.)*

So...wait a second. You want me to cancel the all-night East Anglian Badger Watch with St. Cuthbert's Preparatory Academy?

*(SAM crosses and collects TILDA in his arms.)*

TILDA

Yes please.

SAM

Lousy morning?

TILDA

Yes. I broke up two pine cone fights, stepped in a bog, and got little Brandy Senasian unstuck from the cleft of a huckleberry bush...during the course of which I knelt on a nettle. Now, if I can just get through the pizza feed and graduation, I will never again have to explain to a bunch of very insistent children why all the little froggies are going piggy back. Another couple of hours and I will be finished with Wilderness Explorers forever.

SAM

Tilda...you always say that...at the end of July. But you know, when they ask you next January...

TILDA

*(Sighs.)*

Well then, nettle me a few times after New Years...to remind me. Those kids almost make nine months of teaching fifth graders bearable.

SAM

You love it.

TILDA

Then love is over-rated.

SAM

Well...if you can be strong enough, great.

TILDA

I forget the difference between first and fifth grade...you know...what it does to me. Yesterday, when I got home, Zip accused me of 'acting weird.'

SAM

*(Chuckling.)*

Zip? That kid's got a nerve.

TILDA

Said I was talking and gesturing like the host of a TV show for pre-schoolers. Then I caught myself doing it today.

SAM

But you were with kids.

TILDA

After that. We got back to the community center, and dumped...uh, turned over the children to Jenny to finish the decorations. Clive went off to pick up the certificates and I agreed to go order the pizza so I could come home, jump in the shower and change. There I was, at the pizza place, talking to the service guy as if he was six. Then I caught myself and made it worse by gasping. I had to apologize..*(Rolls her eyes.)* Then I over explained.

*(SAM puts an arm around her.)*

SAM

Think of London.

TILDA

I haven't done it at home, have I?

SAM

What?

TILDA

Gone pre-school. *(Waits.)* Sam?

*(SAM smiles, hesitates, then approximates 'a little' with his fingers.)*



TILDA

I knew it. My mind's going.

SAM

No...it's just the day. You know, I was going to take advantage of the remodeling at work to lounge on the patio and look at the files on the candidates for the new associates. I was even going to sneak over to watch you hand the explorers their certificates...and score some free pizza. But now Sylvia and her goofy partners who did the recruiting have landed me in it.

TILDA

What happened?

SAM

They invited one of the candidates down today.

TILDA

Today? There's ten days to go on the remodeling!

SAM

Yep. And of course, Ron and Katrina have both done the sensible thing and gone off on vacation, and Sylvia is at the courthouse this afternoon. So guess who gets to baby-sit?

TILDA

You?

SAM

Sylvia is sending the hopeful directly here, so as not to have them blunder into the remodeling.

TILDA

Great. What does that do to us? I was actually looking forward to a quiet evening tonight.

SAM

With your brother and our youngest spouting Elizabethan verse around the house?

TILDA

No...they have rehearsal tonight. So we could sit outside or in front of the set and eat cold pizza. But now...

SAM

No buts. I hand off to Sylvia Mirton no later than 4:30. So all we have to do it get through the day.

*(SAM gives TILDA a reassuring touch on the chin.)*

TILDA

Right. To getting through the day.

*(They knock fists in a gesture of fortification.)*

TILDA

As long as nothing happens to drive us crazy.

SAM

What chances are there of that?

TILDA

Mmm. It might be too late. I already feel like I'm missing something.

SAM

Mmm?

TILDA

Something I'm supposed to tell you. *(Thinks, then shakes her head.)* I can't get ahold of it.

SAM

It'll come. Don't worry. *(Flashes concern.)* It wasn't urgent, was it?

TILDA

Don't think so. Maybe I'll remember in the shower. *(Sighs.)* Nice hot, relaxing shower. *(Checks her watch.)* Oh god. Nice, hurried, not so relaxing shower.

SAM

No time?

TILDA

*(Shrugs.)*

Splash and dash. Why should the afternoon be any different than this morning?

SAM

Well...go...cleanse.

*(TILDA shrugs and exits, left. SAM watches her go, satisfied with his sympathy. Then he shakes himself.)*

SAM

Read up on the expectant P.D.

*(Exit SAM to the study, closing the door after him. There is a three count, then enter LUKE and ZIP in their Titus Andronicus costumes, right. LUKE carries a prop Roman sword; ZIP carries a gym bag on one shoulder and a back pack on the other.)*

ZIP

*(As Young Lucius.)*

And, uncle, so will I, an' if I live.

LUKE

*(As Titus, holding the sword up.)*

Come, go with me into mine armory;  
Lucius, I'll fit thee; and withal, my boy,  
Shalt carry from me to the empress' sons  
Presents that I intend to send them both:  
Come come; thou'lt do thy message, wilt thou not?

ZIP

*(In character.)*

Ay, with my dagger in their bosoms, grandsire.

LUKE

*(In character.)*

No boy, not so; I'll teach thee another course.  
Lavinia come. Marcus, look to my house:  
Lucius and I'll go brave it at the court;  
Ay, marry, we will sir and we'll be waited on.

ZIP

*(Breaking character.)*

And then exit Titus, Livinia and Young Lucius.

LUKE

*(Fatigued, dropping character.)*

And we'll be waited on. Whatever that means. *(Rubs his eyes.)* Maybe I'm just tired. Most of it makes sense.

ZIP

And the costumes fit. They look cool, too. Well, except for Tamara's. Mrs. Whittensetter went a little crazy there.

LUKE

Holly Whittensetter went a lot crazy...in 1974...and stayed that way. She had a thing for Henry Kissinger, and when Nixon resigned, well...

ZIP

*(Sweetly.)*

Who's Henry Kissinger?

LUKE

Stop it.

ZIP

Stop what, Uncle Luke?

LUKE

Reminding me that you're young. You and Whittensetter have some sort of conspiracy going with your legs. You notice how you, Saturninus and all the young Andronicae got the short Tunics. She would have put Livinia in one if Redbriar hadn't given her that book on Roman costumes. *(Sighs.)* God, I'm bushed. Livinia in a man's tunic! Can you believe it.

ZIP

Mr. Staley at the library wanted to know why in the world the little theatre was doing Titus Andronicus at all. I told him it was cool. I mean, it starts with a parade of bodies, and goes right to human sacrifice and a father murdering his own son...and that's just the first scene. And then...wow...you got Bassanius getting murdered and Livinia getting raped and her hands and tongue getting cut out, then they trick Titus into cutting his hand off, and then he kills Tamara's sons, bakes them in a pie and tricks her into eating them. Coo--el.

LUKE

Yeah, who says Shakespeare isn't relevant today? No, kid, we're not doing it because of the blood or the body count. We're doing it because Ferdy Redbriar is 66 years old and Titus Andronicus is one of the few plays in the Shakespeare cannon he hasn't brought to community theater.

ZIP

Oh...neat.

LUKE

Yes. If only he knew that if he ever tries to do Timon of Athens, the little theatre trustees will murder him. *(Yawns.)* A plague on this giddiness.

ZIP

*(Concerned.)*

You're doing too much.

*(LUKE softly snorts and rubs his head.)*

LUKE

Ya think?

ZIP

Well...you know...a divorce.

LUKE

Mmm...(Yawns.) And trying to get the lake cottage livable.

ZIP

And trying to land that contract.

LUKE

*(Wincing.)*

Don't remind me. At least that bid's in. Now all there is to do is worry.

*(LUKE sits down heavily on the sofa.)*

ZIP

And a play.

LUKE

*(Considering.)*

Yes. You know, that's usually a relief...a different kind of stress. I don't know what's different about this. Maybe all the gore. There's something about blank verse that amplifies the nastiness.

ZIP

But that's fun.

LUKE

*(Making a face.)*

I was forgetting..."coo-el."

ZIP

I meant as an escape...from all the other stuff.

LUKE

*(Shrugs.)*

Right now, the only escape I can think of is sleep. I was up most of the night finishing that bid. It's been either contract or divorce or rehearsal every night for two weeks. I'm not getting much sleep, and even when I do it's not exactly restful. Everything swirls together. I had a dream the other night about crunching the numbers to get a contract out for someone to cut my future ex-wife's boyfriend up into little pieces and bake him into a pie for her.

ZIP

*(Smirking.)*

For Aunt Sarah! Uh...sorry...future ex-aunt Sarah.

LUKE

Yeah...I was going to have Richard baked into a pie for her...except I couldn't, because he wasn't finished rewiring the cabin.

ZIP

Sarah's new guy is an electrician?

LUKE

No. He's banquet manager at the Hairston Towers. But in my dream he was rewiring the cabin so I could move in. I'm sure there's symbolism there...since he's been rewiring my wife for the past two years. *(Sighs, then yawns.)* Anyway...sleep could be better. *(Laughs.)* All the stress recently, it's a wonder I haven't started sleep walking again.

ZIP

Sleep walking?

LUKE

Yeah. I have a history. Started when I was about your age. Scared the bejeesus out of your mother a couple of times. Had a real bad bout of it right before finals my junior year of college. Ended up on the roof of my frat house in a jock strap and one of those "we're number one" mitts.

*(LUKE yawns and fades off into a college reminiscence.)*

ZIP

God, what happened?

LUKE

*(Jolted back.)*

Eh? Oh...nothing. It was a frat house. Hardly any notice taken. I had a couple of pissed off fraternity brothers who wanted to know where I'd managed to find a party and why I hadn't told them.

*(ZIP betrays a hidden agenda asking the next question.)*

ZIP

Was that the last time it happened?

LUKE

Oh hell no. Went through a lot of it my second year of marriage...the business was struggling to get established. Well...Sarah said there was a lot of it. *(Laughs.)* That's the funny thing...if I managed to get back to my own bed, I didn't know a thing about it the next day. *(Shakes head.)* That's all I'd need now. I feel bad enough imposing on you all.

ZIP

Oh stop.

LUKE

Well, I feel like I'm just spreading my angst.

ZIP

*(Laughing.)*

Yeah, right. Like your angst could make a dent in dad's. And it's only for another week, right? The real electrician will be done, and I'll help you finish the deck railing, and then your bachelor pad by the lake will be up and running.

LUKE

*(Beaming.)*

You're a good kid, Zip.

ZIP

*(Considering.)*

More or less.

*(They share a moment of connection. ZIP quickly becomes uncomfortable and turns to the gym bag, pulling out a dummy hand.)*

ZIP

So...wanna practice cutting off your hand in Act III?

LUKE

*(Laughs.)*

No. I wanna get out of this costume and get a few hours sleep. I don't know why I let you talk me into walking all the way back here in this get-up.

ZIP

It was fun.

LUKE

*(Yawn.)*

You're an exhibitionist.

ZIP

I try. I've never done a frat house roof in nothing but a jock strap and giant foam hand, but I try.

*(Study door opens, SAM sets a box around the corner, retreats briefly without noticing the others. He returns, entering backwards and bent over, dragging a heavy box. SAM gives a low grunt. LUKE begins to doze.)*

ZIP

But soft, what wind from yonder doorway breaks?

*(LUKE grunts.)*

SAM

Eh?

ZIP

It is the east, and daddy likes to moon.

*(SAM turns.)*

SAM

Oh good. You can help me with this in a minute. *(Notices the costume.)* Oh, jeeze. I didn't see the notice about the toga party. You think I can still get in?

*(SAM drags the heavy box by the first box, and straightens.)*

ZIP

What are you doing home?

SAM

Trying to goof off. And failing. *(Gives ZIP a once-over.)* Not bad. Another Holly Whittensetter original?

ZIP

Well I don't know about the original.

SAM

Have I lost track of time? You can't be up to dress rehearsal already.

ZIP

No...just trying on the costumes. You've got some time yet.

SAM

Good. I want to read the play. How's it coming?

ZIP

Okay...now that Bassanius and Aaron are finally off book.

SAM

*(To LUKE.)*

And what does the title character say?



*(LUKE snores softly.)*

SAM

That bad?

ZIP

He's out. I'm a little worried about him.

SAM

Who isn't? But he got that damned bid done, right? I delivered it in time?

ZIP

So he says.

SAM

Well, that's one thing down.

ZIP

Half down...he still has to worry about getting it.

SAM

He'll get it. Luke knows how to play his advantages, and on this contract, he's front runner.

ZIP

*(Sighs.)*

But there's so much other stuff going on.

SAM

*(Shrugs.)*

Yeah...he's juggling. It's an adult thing. If you keep your problems in fast motion you avoid having to face any one of them. It's one of the hundreds of wonderful things you have to look forward to.

ZIP

Goody. What about you, dad? You juggle?

SAM

Me? *(Smiles.)* No...not lately. Well, appointments, I guess. But not problems. My elder offspring is a poster child for the university system. My younger child seems to have channeled all adolescent rebellion into a peculiar taste in clothing. And I have high hopes that my wife's penchant for talking to everyone as if they were six years old, ends with Wilderness Explorers this very afternoon. Luke as a houseguest is only a minor disruption, and the remodeling at work has actually given me a little free time. *(Kicks the heavy box.)* So the only juggling I'm doing at the moment is of the physical kind. I had the time to want to shift these papers. *(Grunts a laugh.)* Maybe I have too much free time. I'm baby-sitting a possible associate in a little while, and I decided my office

looked too cluttered. So I thought these old files could go in the guest bedroom.

ZIP

But Uncle Luke's in the guest room.

SAM

Well in your sister's room.

ZIP

But Luke's got his P.C. set up in there.

SAM

*(Rolling his eyes.)*

Well, it's only a couple of boxes.

*(SAM stoops to transfer some files from the second box to the first.)*

ZIP

Whatever.

*(SAM stops, looks to a disinterested ZIP, and sighs.)*

SAM

I could use a hand.

*(As SAM turns back to the box, ZIP contemplates the prop hand with a smile.)*

ZIP

Beauty.

SAM

*(Without looking up.)*

Eh?

ZIP

Nothing. I was just thinking how, when you least expect it, life can slip opportunity into your hand.

*(ZIP sets the hand in the gym bag.)*

SAM

Is that supposed to mean something?

ZIP

Just a private moment. *(Looks to LUKE.)* I suppose having Titus Andronicus passed out in the living room is another thing you'd rather not show your candidate.

SAM

*(Looking up.)*

Uh...oh, god no. *(Straightens.)* Boy, he's out, huh?

ZIP

You noticed that, too. And guess what he was talking about before he passed out?

SAM

What?

ZIP

Sleepwalking.

SAM

Ouch. Does he know?

ZIP

What? That we found him knocking around the kitchen at four this morning? No. I didn't know how to tell him that. And you said you didn't want mom to find out.

SAM

Definitely not. After what happened when they were younger, she'll have a hemorrhage if she get's so much as a hint he's doing it again.

ZIP

*(Looking around furtively.)*

Why? What did happen?

SAM

I don't know. Something ultimately harmless that your mother is too embarrassed to talk about, and that your grandfather was never able to tell me.

ZIP

Too painful.

SAM

No...he couldn't get past the fifth word without going into a laughing jag. Luke won't talk about it because he knows Tilda would be mortified if she knew I knew.

ZIP

But shouldn't we tell him that he's doing it now?

SAM

That'll just add to his stress levels. Right now I just want to get him back to the guest room so I can greet the hopeful Mr. P.D.

ZIP

And you say you're not juggling?

SAM

*(Considering briefly.)*

On reflection...no. I withdraw the statement Your Honor...and ask for a ten-minute recess for a spasm of depression.

ZIP

*(Giggling.)*

Spasm!

SAM

What?

ZIP

*(Composing.)*

Nothing. I just like that word.

SAM

*(Blinking.)*

What...spasm?

ZIP

*(Blurting a laugh.)*

Yes. *(Embarrassed, defensive.)* I just like the sound of it, okay? It's a happy sounding...uh. It isn't used enough... *(Takes a breath.)* And "spasm of depression"...uh...really nice turn of phrase, dad.

*(There is an awkward pause as the two regard each other.)*

SAM

Strange...strange child.

ZIP

*(Looking off, dreamily, down stage.)*

No...quirky, maybe. Strange takes longer. I hope...you know, someday, to become...*(Aware of Sam, shakes away the idea.)* Uh, files.

*(ZIP collects one of the boxes as SAM gazes after.)*

ZIP

I'll just...you know...

*(ZIP picks up the back pack, then moves left, SAM's glare continues. Exit ZIP.)*

SAM

*(Calling after, cheerfully.)*

Spasm!

*(ZIP giggles, off. SAM smiles, then sees the second box. He whines.)*

SAM

Oh, come on! Take them both.

*(SAM rolls his eyes. LUKE give a low moan attracting SAM's attention. SAM approaches LUKE slowly.)*

SAM

*(Gently.)*

Luke.

*(LUKE replies with a soft snore.)*

SAM

Titus?

*(LUKE makes no noise. SAM rolls his eyes and grabs up the gym bag. As he speaks, he plants the bag on Luke's lap.)*

SAM

*(Forcefully.)*

Luke!

*(LUKE awakens with a start.)*

LUKE

*(In a panic, as if catching.)*

Okay! And then I lunge, and Saturninus gets it right in the belly! *(Coming to his senses, sees SAM.)* Oh...oh jeeze. God, forgot where I was. Must have passed out. *(Blinks at SAM.)* Oh Sammy...what are you doing home? How long have I been passed out?

SAM

I've been home all day, remember? Except for running your bid over for you.

LUKE

Oh yeah.

SAM

And you must have just dropped off.

LUKE

Must have.

SAM

I thought you were going to sleep all day.

LUKE

*(Rubs his face.)*

So did I. But all that caffeine from last night hadn't worn off this morning, and then Zip reminded me it was costume day.

SAM

And Zip couldn't have picked yours up?

LUKE

*(Snorting.)*

Holly Whittensetter? let go of a costume without a final fitting and a lecture? *(Checks himself out.)* Oh, jeeze, and I've already started to rumple it.

SAM

Well you look like you're ready to sleep now, anyway.

LUKE

*(After a yawn, nods and smiles.)*

Yep. Give me a few hours and I'll be ready for rehearsal.

*(LUKE starts to drift off. SAM clears his throat.)*

SAM

Yes, well don't spent the few hours here, okay?

*(LUKE rouses.)*

LUKE

Eh?

SAM

I've got someone coming over...business.

LUKE

Sorry.

*(LUKE stands and collects his sword and bag.)*

LUKE

I'll go conk out in my room. I hope I can stay awake long enough to set my alarm and shed these...habiliments. Wouldn't do to be late for rehearsal.

SAM

With ZIP in the cast? You've got an alarm clock in the family.

*(LUKE moves left, then pauses and looks back.)*

LUKE

Incidentally, thanks again for letting me...

*(SAM makes a face and holds up a hand.)*

LUKE

*(Pressing on.)*

No, I know you're tired of hearing it, but I mean it. I could have taken a room.

SAM

Why? You've got a room here...for as long as you need. Why would you want to go off to some little room when you've got family? Divorce is traumatic enough. I know; *(grins)* when I was still doing divorces I made a pretty penny making sure it was traumatic enough. And It's not like you washed up on shore with nowhere else to go. The cottage will be ready any time now, right?

LUKE

Pretty soon, yeah.

SAM

Well I hate to ruin any illusions, pal, but you're not under foot and you're not that irritating...uh...provided of course that the crying jags have stopped.

LUKE

*(Chuckles weakly.)*

Mostly.

SAM

Well, crying jags...drive out to the cottage and shed your tears into the lake. Otherwise, stay as long as you like.

*(LUKE smiles and nods, then sidles up to SAM and nudges him with the gym bag.)*

LUKE

You're a damn nice brother-in-law.

SAM

Ah. That's another thing. Don't get warm and runny. Crying jags and warm and runny, save those for the lake.

*(They share a nod. LUKE sidles back left.)*

LUKE

Right...I'll just...

*(Exit LUKE. SAM looks after.)*

SAM

*(Musing.)*

Hmm. Had sort a moment there. Almost poignant. Narrow escape.

*(Enter ZIP from patio, out of Andronicus costume.)*

ZIP

Oh, you managed to wake up Uncle Luke?

SAM

Barely.

ZIP

I better make sure he makes it to bed.

SAM

What about the files?

ZIP

I put them where you told me?

*(SAM nods toward the remaining box. ZIP gives a look of fatigue, makes a face and moves to collect the box.)*

ZIP

You know, Shakespeare has some interesting things to say about parents...and lawyers.

*(ZIP moves left, SAM toward the study.)*

SAM



Yeah, well refrain from quoting them. And no disruptions when company gets here.

*(Exit ZIP. SAM moves inside the study door, then pauses. His shoulders droop.)*

SAM

Damn.

*(He backs on stage.)*

SAM

Did I put the applicant files in one of those boxes? *(Turns.)* Hey Zip? Damn.

*(SAM hurries off, left.)*

SAM

Zip!

*(There is a pause, then enter ZIP from patio, breathless.)*

ZIP

There. How's that? *(Looks around, checks the study.)* I did it. I did it.

*(Enter TILDA in a crisp scouting uniform.)*

TILDA

Please dear, you're father's a lawyer. Don't stand in the living room proclaiming *mia culpas*. It's a little too Perry Mason.

ZIP

*(With layered innocence.)*

Who's Perry Mason?

TILDA

*(Squinting.)*

Now you really have done it.

ZIP

Ooo, sorry, did I make you feel old.

TILDA

*(Shrugging.)*

You allowed me to make myself feel old, which is almost as bad. I really don't need help today. And just remember...it will come back to haunt you. In fact, if you want to come along to the

graduation and help pass out pizza to six year olds, you can start feeling over the hill right now.

ZIP

No way. I helped out last year, remember? I passed out juice.

TILDA  
(*Smirking.*)

Oh yes. And Shane Billings passed it back.

ZIP

Through his nose. So thanks...but...

TILDA

He didn't mean to.

ZIP

Maybe, but that doesn't mean it wasn't gross.

TILDA

Well, suit yourself. (*Checks her watch.*) I'm incredibly late. Where's your father?

ZIP

He was here a minute ago.

TILDA

And your uncle? You know he was still pacing when I left this morning. Did he ever get to sleep?

ZIP

He is now...cross-ways on his bed with his Roman costume half off and his door wide open.

TILDA

Poor Luke. So much going on. At least that bid thing is over. Not that there isn't still the divorce. I hope he's not dwelling on it. I'd hate to think he's getting bitter about women or anything.

ZIP

Ah. Wouldn't get your hopes up, mom. We're rehearsing Act Five. He's gonna be feeding the Empress of Rome her own sons and then murdering her, so...

TILDA  
(*Not really listening.*)

Oh? Well, good. I'm glad he's got a distraction. (*Checks her watch.*) And now I had better get going.

ZIP

*(Under breath.)*

Speaking of distractions.

TILDA

What?

ZIP

Nothing. You're late.

TILDA  
*(Still distracted.)*

Yes. *(Looks off, left.)*

ZIP

Then a course of action suggests itself.

TILDA

Mmm?

ZIP

Leave.

TILDA

What? *(Comes out of it.)* Oh...yes. It's just I had something to tell your father.

ZIP

Well I'll tell him. What is it?

TILDA

I don't remember.

ZIP

Oh. Then I withdraw the offer.

*(TILDA turns to leave, right.)*

TILDA

If I remember, and it's important, I'll call.

*(TILDA moves off, stops far right.)*

TILDA

Aha!

ZIP

You remembered.

TILDA

Yes.

ZIP

Okay, I withdraw my withdrawal.

TILDA

Your sister called.

ZIP

Oh...so it's not important.

TILDA

Yes it is. She's sending a friend down to pick up her CDs and disk changer. Someone named Pete.

ZIP

She got someone to come all the way down here for that?

TILDA  
*(Smiling.)*

Yes. And I got the impression it was an act of devotion with a double meaning.

ZIP  
*(Rolls eyes.)*

What meaning?

TILDA  
*(Hesitates.)*

Which one.

ZIP

Any one...both.

TILDA

Well, Petey--that's what she calls him--wouldn't, as you say, come all the way down here unless he was pretty devoted. And I think your sister is using this as a first-viewing for us. I got the impression this is "the one" she has avoided talking about since spring...and I think she said it that way deliberately. So tell your father, in case Petey gets here before I get back. Okay?

ZIP

Okay.

TILDA

And tell him to be nice to him.

ZIP

Right.

TILDA

And you be nice to him, too. Just act natural.

ZIP

Okay.

TILDA

Well, not too natural.

ZIP

I'll be a proper sibling.

TILDA

Now I'm worried. I wish I'd remembered sooner.

ZIP

Mother!

TILDA

What, dear?

ZIP

You're late.

TILDA

*(Grimaces.)*

Oh god, you're right.

*(TILDA bolts off right. ZIP shakes head and exits to patio. Enter SAM, left. He stops.)*

SAM

Well now where's everybody gone?

*(Lights down.)*

Act I, Scene 2

Scene: The same, a half-hour later.

At Curtain: *The set is empty. Enter SAM and PETEY, right. They are both nervous--first-meeting-awkward.*

SAM

But you know how that is...too many people getting bright ideas at the same time.

PETEY

*(After a nervous laugh.)*

Oh, uh, sure.

SAM

And, after all, the renovation does show we're expanding. Still, one does have certain expectations, am I right?

PETEY

Well--

SAM

*(Pressing through.)*

I know. One expects the fully-functioning law firm...something for one to size up. And from our point of view, something to intimidate and impress. *(Laughs.)* I mean, let's admit it, there are games of intimidation at times like this. Right? The challenge to make a good first impression. It's one of the rituals of this situation.

*(They share a laugh--SAM half-heartedly, PETEY over-enthusiastically but very nervous. SAM stops first, leaving PETEY to stop, wide eyed.)*

PETEY

Uh, yeah. Yeah, I can see that.

SAM

So...here we are.

(They each breathe out a soft laugh.)

SAM

Both parties feeling nervous and out of place...

(*Another mutual breathy laugh.*)

PETEY

Yeah.

SAM

It's almost like a wedding night, eh.

(*They share another laugh. SAM moves to the study door; PETEY rolls his eyes in leeriness and self-reproach. SAM opens the study door.*)

SAM

I think we'd be better off having our little talk somewhere that at least looks like an office...if you don't mind.

PETEY

Sure.

(*PETEY joins SAM at the study door.*)

SAM

Not that you should in any way think of this as an interview.

PETEY

Oh, no.

SAM

You're getting to know us, we're getting to know you.

PETEY

Right.

SAM

No pressure at all. But, of course, in order to have a mutual starting point for our discussion, we have to know where we are...so to speak. So I thought we could have our no-pressure, non-interview around the desk in my study...if you don't mind.

(*PETEY shrugs and smiles.*)

SAM

Right then.

*(SAM leads PETEY off, into the study, closing the door. There is a two-count and the study door opens again. Enter SAM.)*

SAM

No, no trouble at all. I was brewing a pot as you arrived. Showing my domestic side. Back in a moment.

*(They share a laugh as SAM closes the door. As the door slams shut, Sam's smile snaps off, replaced by one of self-reproach. He moves right.)*

SAM

Like we're on our wedding night? What an opener, Sam. You'd better watch yourself. *(Takes a breath.)* Coffee.

*(Exit SAM, right. Almost immediately, enter LUKE, left, pausing in the doorway. He is wearing a laurel crown and his Roman costume is half-off. He wobbles forward two steps, obviously sleep walking.)*

LUKE

*(Asleep, as Titus.)*

He doth me wrong to feed me with delays.  
I'll dive into the burning lake below,  
And pull her out of Acheron by the heels!

*(LUKE mumbles, lurches right to center stage. Still mumbling, he loses balance briefly and in catching himself, ends up moving off left, exiting the way he came.)*

SAM

*(Off, right.)*

Zip, this isn't a good time.

ZIP

*(Off, right.)*

Well, if you'd talk to each other, I wouldn't have to be the messenger.

*(Enter SAM, right, carrying a tray with two coffee mugs and sweeteners. ZIP follows with a cream pitcher. SAM enforces low tones in the following exchange.)*

SAM

This person is coming...today?



ZIP

That's the message.

SAM

Under the guise of collecting...what?

ZIP

Some of her CDs.

SAM

Typical of your sister not to give us any warning.

ZIP

Well it's not supposed to be a big deal dad...from her point of view. It's mom who put the pieces together. She's the one who has it all figured out.

SAM

Well what does she expect me to do?

ZIP

*(Holds out hands, shrugs.)*

I don't know! Be charming.

SAM

I don't have time to be charming. I'm going to be occupied being bumbling with a would-be hot-shot young lawyer. *(Takes a breath.)* Are you sure this guy...what was the name?

ZIP

I don't know...Peter, Pete, something like that.

SAM

*(Rolling his eyes.)*

Zip! I wish you'd work on your memory.

ZIP

Thanks a lot! You try cramming five acts of Shakespeare into your head and then remember what your mother said as an after thought, over her shoulder, running out the door...especially at an age when it's social suicide to get a reputation for paying attention to your mother at all!

*(ZIP sets the cream pitcher heavily on the tray, leaving SAM to cope with the shift in weight. Zip turns down stage, fold arms, and sulks.)*

SAM

Very nice, very theatrical.

ZIP

*(Shrugging.)*

Theater is the only reality a young person should take seriously.

SAM

Thank you, Lady Bracknell. All I can say, is if your mother wants me to do any vetting of possible fiancée's, she's picked the wrong day. And I expect some help out of you...in crisis management.

*(ZIP turns toward SAM.)*

ZIP

Crisis?

SAM

Well in personnel juggling, then. I have a law-firm candidate who we feel worth cultivating, and someone upon which your sister hopes I will create a good impression. Your mother is out of the house, your uncle is asleep, and you are here. I may need a little family solidarity, okay?

*(ZIP leaves the sulking pose.)*

ZIP

Well...for the family...I'll try not to repel anyone. That good enough?

SAM

That's a start. But I think we'd better add the codicil "other duties as assigned" to your job description.

ZIP

What else is new? So what do you want? Do you want dressed in a page's costume, standing by the door waiting for these people...or can I finish making my sandwich?

SAM

Do you have a page's costume?

ZIP

No.

*(There is a pause as they share glances of mutual enjoyment. They share a precognition of the conclusion, and they know it.)*

SAM

Well then...

ZIP and SAM

Sandwich.

*(ZIP starts off, right.)*

ZIP

Of course, I'd look good in a page's outfit.

*(Exit ZIP, SAM looks after.)*

SAM

Yes, strange child, definitely.

*(SAM glances at the tray, remembers his guest, braces himself and turns to the door. Balancing the tray, he opens the door.)*

SAM

Here we are. Sorry it took so long.

*(SAM exits. The door remains open momentarily.)*

SAM

Oh, thanks; yes, would you. Then I can pull out your file...

*(Study door closes. It remains closed momentarily, then opens again to the sound of SAM, laughing nervously. He hangs in the doorway.)*

SAM

Am I looking prepared, or what?

PETEY

Oh, no, don't worry about it.

*(Enter SAM, followed by PETEY.)*

SAM

I inadvertently moved the files when I was straightening up the office. I started to pull them out and I got side tracked. Not that they're important, but they would give us a starting place. If you don't mind?

PETEY

Oh no, whatever. I'm easy.

SAM

A commendable attitude P.D. Uh, that is what you go by?

PETEY

Oh yeah, Petey, that's me.

SAM

Well do call me Sam. I'll be right back.

*(Exit SAM, left, rolling his eyes. PETEY looks after him, and as soon as he is sure SAM is gone, he pulls out a cell phone and dials, drifting down stage.)*

PETEY

Hello, yes, Susan Branton please. *(Pause.)* Yes, no problem, I'll hold. *(Waits impatiently, then whispers.)* Come on, Susan, I need a little guidance here.

*(Enter ZIP, right, eating a sandwich. ZIP sees PETEY, freezes in mid-bight.)*

PETEY

Hurry up, I getting nervous.

*(Realizing PETEY remains unaware, ZIP crosses quickly up stage, head lowered, and scurries off, left.)*

PETEY

Oh, Susan thank God. *(Pauses, changes tone toward the romantic.)* Well yes, I do often thank the deity for you as a matter a fact, but at the moment...*(Pauses, interrupted.)* I know you're at work, honey. *(Pauses, sighs.)* I know they don't like personal calls, I'm interning, too, remember? *(Pause.)* I'm here now. *(Pause.)* Well your father seems to be the only one around...and he's plenty. *(Pause.)* What?

*(As PETEY continues the conversation, enter LUKE--still asleep--from patio, leaving the door open. Occasional bird chirps are heard. LUKE is now dressed only in laurel wreath and boxer shorts and carries his Roman sword in one hand and drags his toga by the other. He mumbles noiselessly, moving first to the center stage side of the sofa, where he discards the toga. He then moves slowly right, up stage from PETEY, flourishing the sword in weak bad temper. LUKE will exit, right, as PETEY says "Oh very funny.")*

PETEY

Well of course I do, I'm here aren't I? It's just that it's not going well. *(Pause.)* Well I assume so, he didn't seem surprised to see me and he knew my name. *(Pause.)* I don't know, just weird. Very formal, very business like. It's almost like he's going to interview me for a job. *(Pause.)* Oh, very funny. Well maybe it'll be a "job" being married to you. Had you ever thought of that?

*(Enter ZIP, left, pausing at the doorway, remnant of the sandwich in hand. As PETEY continues on the phone, ZIP momentarily listens, then sees the toga, muses on it, sets the sandwich on the back of the sofa, gathers up the toga, and then begins a slow realization that LUKE is sleep-walking. ZIP looks wide-eyed at the guest, looks back off left, then sees the open patio door. At PETEY's line "I'm wearing my suit," exit ZIP to patio.)*

PETEY

Hey, you don't think he took off work when he heard I was coming? *(Pause.)* Well he's not at all like you led me to expect. *(Pause.)* Yes, even considering your perspective might be skewed. *(Pause.)* I'm wearing my suit. *(Brief pause, then sparking.)* Yes the one you picked out. *(Pause.)* I am not being a baby, I tell you something's weird. *(Pause.)* He went to get my file, Susan. You didn't tell me your father was the kind of guy to keep a dossier on his potential son-in-laws. What's he going to do next? Run a credit check? Look for outstanding warrants? *(Pause.)* Yes...way. I'm telling you, he's gone somewhere to get my file!

SAM

*(Off, left.)*

At last!

PETEY

I gotta go, he's coming. *(Pauses, then emphatic.)* No, I gotta go!

*(Enter SAM, left with file as PETEY hangs up and pockets his phone.)*

SAM

Whew!

PETEY

Find it?

*(SAM advances to the couch back and rests his hands on the sofa. He spies the sandwich as he speaks.)*

SAM

Yes...sorry it took so long. Hate to seem disorganized. You know how it is, first impressions.

*(As SAM and PETEY share a nervous laugh, SAM flicks the sandwich onto the sofa seat. SAM hastily crosses to PETEY to cover his tracks.)*

PETEY

I know, job interviews, tell me about it.

*(As SAM speaks, he grows comfortable, and eases himself onto the chair, right or the table. He motions, inviting PETEY to take the chair, left of the table. PETEY sits.)*

SAM

Ah, you know, you never really forget those interviews. College, law school, my first job. (*Smirks.*) Meeting my future wife's parents for the first time. Absolutely frightening. It shouldn't be, of course. It's a nexus of opportunity, after all...something to be explored and revealed in. Don't you think?

PETEY

Well...

SAM

No, of course you don't. You have to become an old guy like me to look at it that way, really...I suppose. (*Laughs.*) Wait until you've been on the other side of the process--conducted a few interviews of your own--you'll see there's anxiety on both sides. Like me, blustering about this file. I'm trying to set an informal tone--my instructions were to do just that.

*(ZIP appears in the doorway, left, sees the others, then hesitates.)*

PETEY

*(Starting to nod, stopping.)*

Instructions?

SAM

*(Winking.)*

For this surprise encounter. Well it was a surprise to me, anyway. I could switch to more standard fare if you prefer--ask questions to discover your likes and fears. You know, have you got big plans, or are you going to end up in divorce like so many?

PETEY

Divorce! I hadn't thought about divorce. I mean, I think it's a little early to, you know...

SAM

Well I don't want to put you off.

*(ZIP gives up waiting and crosses carefully, hesitating when it looks like PETEY might catch on. SAM is left to discover ZIP and pretend ignorance as he listens to PETEY.)*

PETEY

No, no. I appreciate your pragmatism. Divorce exists, doesn't it? It doesn't do any good to pretend it doesn't.

SAM

No indeed.

PETEY

It doesn't have to end in divorce. I suppose nobody expects it to. But just because we don't expect it to, doesn't mean we shouldn't admit the possibility.

*(Exit ZIP, right.)*

SAM

That, if you'll forgive me sounding a little patronizing, is just the attitude one should cultivate when starting out. I, in turn, appreciate your pragmatism...even if it is suitably muted by your youth.

PETEY  
*(Flattered.)*

Oh...thanks.

*(Enter ZIP, right, streaking across and exiting, left, unseen by PETEY. SAM sees and speaks hastily to cover.)*

SAM

But I'm digressing terribly. Old lawyer's foible, introduce a subject under the pretense of banning it. My mission today--such as I understand it--is to put you at ease. The fact that it was a mild surprise, is neither here nor there. I have no idea when this was set up, exactly. How long have you known?

PETEY

Oh...I guess we started talking about it two or three weeks back. Nothing was firm until...well, a couple of days ago she made me pick a day and come down.

SAM

Oh? She made you? *(Musing.)* So you were reluctant to come?

PETEY

Oh no, I wanted to come. I was just nervous. *(Laughs nervously.)* I mean, I've never done this before. And I wasn't sure about the timing.

SAM  
*(Smiling.)*

Well who was? But sometimes you just have to hope for the best and cope. Hell, that's how you grow, isn't it?

PETEY

I suppose it is, yeah.

SAM

Sure. While you're living. You don't just stop everything else and say "okay, shut everything down,

it's time to expand." Where would you be otherwise?

PETEY

Uh--

SAM

*(Pressing on.)*

Full of stops and starts. Life is fluid. Life, career, business--all constantly moving. You know?

PETEY

*(Uncertain, but nodding.)*

Uh...uh, sure. Fluid.

SAM

So, P.D. we'll just cope, eh?

PETEY

Right.

SAM

After all, this isn't a formal...well a formal anything, is it? And you don't need to be nervous. Just relax. You wouldn't be down here at all unless you were pretty impressive. *(Leaning across the table, confiding.)* I don't want to bolster your confidence too much, but I will tell you that you got very high marks for performance.

PETEY

*(Flushed with surprise, then pride.)*

What!

SAM

That's the report I got.

PETEY

She told you that?

SAM

Wouldn't shut up about it.

PETEY

Good god! And you weren't shocked?

SAM

Shocked? Hell, no. I trust her opinion. She's a better judge than I am, after all.

PETEY



Well she didn't go into detail...uh, did she?

SAM

Detail?

PETEY

I mean, that would be really embarrassing.

SAM

Oh come on now, why? If you've done a good job, and incidentally impressed someone who's not that easy to satisfy, why be embarrassed about it?

PETEY

*(Whispering bashfully.)*

Yeah, but she didn't...*(Hesitates.)*

SAM

What?

PETEY

Well, like she didn't mention the Aqualube and the tarp, did she?

SAM

*(Craning for memory.)*

The Aqualube and the tarp...now, she didn't mention that action. Successful, was it?

PETEY

*(Caught up in a lustful memory.)*

Oh, I'll say. *(Catches himself, embarrassed.)* Mr. Branton, I don't know what to say. I'm really surprised that she would bring all that up.

SAM

Well don't be surprised. You should be very proud. She doesn't give out that sort of praise very often. And she can be quite merciless in her criticism.

PETEY

*(Alarmed.)*

Very often? She's given you a lot of reports?

SAM

Oh sure, on every candidate.

PETEY

*(Winded.)*

Candidate? Uh...how many have there been?

SAM

Oh, hell, I don't know. Six or seven since the big push last spring.

PETEY

Six or seven.

SAM

My dear fellow, you didn't think you were the only one, did you?

PETEY

Well...quite frankly, yeah. I had no idea. She didn't let on at all.

SAM

No, well she's very good about that. She wouldn't want to put you off, making you conscious of all the others...it's not the moment in the process for being competitive, is it?

PETEY

*(Softly, close to collapse.)*

Isn't it?

*(PETEY doubles over in torment.)*

SAM

Of course she tells me. *(Laughs.)* Well listen to me being self-important. She doesn't just tell me. She has her committee, naturally, and then she gives reports to everyone. And I must say she's very good about asking for feedback. Some of us have questions...not that I usually bother. I trust her judgement. As long as I know the performance has been good or there's at least a lot of potential, I'm fine.

*(SAM notices PETEY's distress.)*

SAM

Are you all right?

PETEY

*(Breathless.)*

God, why don't you all just come along and watch!

SAM

*(Laughs.)*

That wouldn't do. Look how nervous you are just hearing about it after the fact. Imagine the state you would be in if we were all there. No, no. Everyone has a part to play, and her's is paramount.

Are you all right? You don't look well. I've shocked you, haven't I?

PETEY  
*(Still speaking with difficulty.)*

You can say that again.

SAM  
Mmm. Well I won't accuse you of being naive, not with your file. It's us, isn't it? It's this small-town persona. We project it, we publicize it to find recruits, and in fact we are here because it's what we want, but it does tend to give people the wrong idea.

PETEY  
It does?

*(ZIP appears at the doorway, left, looking alarmed.)*

SAM  
We are just as sophisticated in our wants and thorough in our probes as any of your big city types. Sure, it's a small city and because of it we can't specialize as much as we would want. But it's better to be eclectic, isn't it?

PETEY  
At this point, I don't know.

*(ZIP begins motioning for Sam's attention.)*

SAM  
I admit I don't run around trying everything all the time...and I have my favorites. And there are some things I don't get around to because I have an aversion.

PETEY  
*(Jaded. Defeated.)*  
Are there? Really? Like what?

SAM  
Well...most criminal actions.

*(SAM sees ZIP, waits until the coast is clear and waves off. PETEY, in spite of feeling jaded by all the perceived innuendo, goes wide-eyed at the mention of "criminal actions.")*

PETEY  
Criminal.

SAM  
Of course I keep my hand in. *(Laughs.)* And usually I'm glad I did.. I drag my feet, and then I have

a genuinely good time doing it.

*(ZIP loses patience and crosses, left-right, while PETEY remains oblivious. Exit ZIP, right.)*

PETEY

I can imagine.

SAM

It's a tremendous opportunity for a young man to flex, you know, all of his muscles.

*(PETEY gives a long, uncomfortable sigh.)*

SAM

Oh, god. I've done it, haven't I?

PETEY

What?

SAM

Given you too much to think about.

PETEY

Well...yeah.

SAM

Oh...damn. Well that's it. I'm a dead man.

PETEY

What?

SAM

She'll kill me. I don't know when to shut up.

PETEY

*(Chuckling nervously.)*

Well...you've certainly gone farther than I--

SAM

*(Interrupting.)*

That's from being thrown into this at the last minute. Not that I'm making excuses. The fact is I do have certain tendencies. A secondary fact is I've made you uncomfortable when I was supposed to be doing the opposite. *(Looks at the table, makes a realization.)* And I've even set us up in one room and the coffee in another.

*(SAM stands; PETEY, somewhat startled does the same.)*

SAM

I'll tell you what. Let's start over.

PETEY  
*(With a soft sigh.)*

Start over?

SAM

In the office. You can guide the conversation this time...keep me from trying too hard.

*(SAM ushers PETEY into the study.)*

PETEY

Uh...well, all right.

*(Exit PETEY. Enter ZIP, right, as SAM follows PETEY. The doors closes.)*

ZIP  
*(In a heavy whisper.)*

Dad?

*(ZIP wrings hands, then moves to the study door and cranes to listen. At that moment the study door opens and ZIP steps back. SAM steps out.)*

Oh good, dad--

SAM  
*(Interrupting.)*

Zip, just the one, hang on.

*(SAM leans back into the study.)*

ZIP

But dad--

*(SAM returns with the two mugs and thrusts them into ZIP's hands.)*

SAM

Help your old dad out, would you?

ZIP

What?

*(SAM closes the study door.)*

SAM

Could you freshen these?

ZIP

But dad, something's happened.

SAM

I don't really have time now.

ZIP

*(Insistent.)*

Uncle Luke's not in his bed.

*(SAM pauses for a second, and--utterly blind to the implications of ZIP's statement--patronizes.)*

SAM

Fine, fine. Just freshen these, would you? Thanks.

ZIP

But--

*(SAM opens the door and speaks to PETEY, cutting off and infuriating ZIP.)*

SAM

There, I've enlisted one of my minions to repair the coffee.

ZIP

Dad--

*(Exit SAM, slamming the door on ZIP's line. ZIP growls, and moves off, right.)*

ZIP

*(Mocking bitterly.)*

I've enlisted one of my minions...

*(Exit ZIP, right. There is a two count, then enter ZIP, right, without the mugs but instead with a pad and pen. ZIP moves to the table and writes with simmering anger.)*

ZIP

*(Speaking as writing.)*

Dearest father...Luke...your brother-in-law...my uncle, has gone sleep walking. He is not in the house and it's very possible he's got no clothes on and is loose in the neighborhood. *(Pauses to think.)* Coffee will be ready in a moment...love...Zip. *(Stops writing, then reconsiders.)* P.S. I am

not--underline not--your minion.

*(ZIP tears the letter off the pads, folds it with satisfaction, leaves the pad and pencil behind, moves to the study door and knocks. The door opens.)*

SAM  
*(From within.)*

That was quick.

*(ZIP thrusts in the note.)*

SAM  
Oh.

*(ZIP shuts the door and exits, right. There is a two count, followed by a door bell. There is another two count, the bell sounds again, and the study door opens. Sam steps out, holding the note--still folded in his hand.)*

SAM  
*(To PETEY, within.)*  
Surprising amount of traffic for the time of day.

*(Doorbell sounds again.)*

SAM  
Zip!

ZIP  
*(Off, angry.)*

I'm going!

*(SAM returns to the study, opening the door after a deep breath. He forces a laugh.)*

SAM  
Beginning to remind me of a busy day at the office.

*(Door slams. After a one-count, enter ZIP, leading P.D., right.)*

P.D.  
I hope I'm not late. I was afraid I didn't have the directions to the house down right, but it turn out I almost got on the wrong turn off, instead.

*(ZIP grunts, motions P.D. to halt by the table, proceeds to the study door and knocks. SAM opens*

*the door and looks out.)*

ZIP

The other one is here.

SAM

What, now?

*(ZIP, still miffed, steps aside, letting SAM see P.D. and understand that he has been heard by her. SAM moves forward; he still hold's ZIP's note, and ZIP sees it is still folded.)*

SAM

Oh. *(Brightening.)* Oh, hello.

P.D.

Hello.

SAM

*(Whispering, to ZIP.)*

Zip, could you--

ZIP

*(Interrupting.)*

No.

SAM

*(Startled.)*

Excuse me?

ZIP

I've got coffee to repair!

*(ZIP moves off, right.)*

ZIP

Read your mail!

*(Exit ZIP, leaving SAM and P.D. to exchange vague smiles. SAM leans into the study.)*

SAM

Back in a sec.

*(SAM closes the door and turns back to P.D. He smiles and moves toward her, extending his right hand, which he discovers clasps ZIP's note. He transfers the paper to his left and once more offers the right. They shake hands.)*



SAM

Sam Branton. Sorry about all the confusion.

P.D.

Oh, it's okay, I understand you have a lot going on, what with the remodeling and all.

SAM

Oh...she told you about the remodeling?

P.D.

Yes. She said that's why you'd be here.

*(SAM thinks and hastily accepts the statement.)*

SAM

I see...good. *(Glances to the study.)* Uh...you won't think me rude, will you, but I've got someone in the office. I know we should be seizing the opportunity to get to know one another, but I'm rather pressed.

*(SAM leads P.D. left.)*

P.D.

Oh, no problem. I understand.

SAM

I appreciate it. Now the room you want is first on the right.

*(SAM sends P.D. off, left and turns back to the study door.)*

SAM

*(Aside.)*

Just have her pick up the CDs and save the introductions for later.

*(P.D. reappears in the doorway, left.)*

P.D.

Excuse me.

SAM

*(Tensely.)*

Yes?

P.D.

You appear to have sent me to a bedroom.

SAM

Yes, yes. I'll join you in a minute.

P.D.

*(Rolling her eyes.)*

You've got to be kidding.

SAM

Everything you need is in there. I'll be right with you.

P.D.

*(Under her breath.)*

I'm not sure I want the job this badly.

*(Exit P.D. left. SAM shouts through the study door.)*

SAM

Don't mean to ignore you.

PETEY

*(From within.)*

What?

SAM

Be right back. *(Aside.)* As soon as I'm done making a bad impression on my daughter's boyfriend. *(Freezes, stuck on a realization as he looks off, left.)* Oh my god. Susan's boyfriend is a girlfriend!

*(SAM reels back, stunned.)*

SAM

I can't believe it! I knew there was something funny when she wore that flannel shirt home last spring! Okay, Branton, get a grip. *(Steadies himself.)* You're a modern man and a loving father.

*(The study door open, and PETEY steps out.)*

PETEY

Uh...sorry to interrupt, Mr. Branton.

SAM

*(Distracted.)*

Yes.

PETEY

But I was looking out your office window and I thought I saw a naked man by your back gate.

SAM

*(Still elsewhere.)*

Did you? *(Aside, in soft agony.)* What am I gonna tell her mother.

*(Enter ZIP, right, with three coffee mugs on another tray.)*

PETEY

I thought I should let you know.

*(SAM, bewildered, notices the note in his hand. He unfolds it. ZIP sets the tray on the table and observes SAM.)*

SAM

Uh, yes, thank you. *(Reads.)* Oh my god!

PETEY

Pardon.

SAM

Nothing. *(Checks the note again.)* My god...what next?

ZIP

*(Sweetly.)*

Coffee?

*(Lights down.)*

Perusal  
Only FOR  
NOT FOR  
PRODUCTION