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## **Small Talk**

## Eight Short Plays by Eric Fallen

#### A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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#### PERFECT WEATHER

#### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**PAUL**: In his forties. **JIM**: In his thirties.

**PERFECT WEATHER** was first presented at the 35th Samuel French Off-Off Broadway Short Play Festival at the Lions Theatre on July 16th, 2010. The performance was produced and directed by Eric Michael Gillett. The Production Stage Manager was Russ Weatherford. The cast was as follows:

PAUL	Richard O'Brien
JIM	Nathan Spiteri

(AT RISE: Early morning on a sidewalk along Central Park. JIM sits on a bench at centerstage. He wears camouflage cargo shorts and a T-shirt. There is a large backpack on the ground between his feet. He removes a breakfast sandwich from a paper bag. He peels away some foil and takes a bite. PAUL enters from stage right. He's wearing a simple dark suit and aviator sunglasses. He takes a seat next to JIM. He leans back and stares up into the trees.)

**PAUL.** This weather is perfect.

(JIM does not respond. He takes a coffee out of the paper bag, opens and sips.)

What do you think? Am I right?

JIM. It's nice.

PAUL. I just love it.

JIM. It is nice.

**PAUL.** I mean, some people enjoy the heat. (*pause*) Not me. I can't function when it gets too hot.

JIM. Yeah.

**PAUL.** Some people can just deal with it. The heat. It's in their blood. (*long pause*) What about you?

JIM. Me?

**PAUL.** Yeah. Can you function in the heat? I can't function in the heat.

JIM. I prefer this weather.

PAUL. Yeah. This weather really is perfect.

(PAUL takes out his Blackberry and types a message. He puts it away.)

So what ya got there, an egg and cheese?

JIM. Uhm, it's an egg, cheese and sausage.

**PAUL.** Nice. I love the breakfast sandwich. Beats the hell out of a bowl of dry flakes, right?

JIM. Yeah.

PAUL. I used to eat those things like they were going out of style. Just egg and cheese...with ketchup, salt and pepper. (pause) But, no more. (pause) I was on the Atkins. Ever try that? The Atkins diet?

JIM. No.

PAUL. No. Well, you're a pretty skinny guy. Naturally skinny, right? (pause) I've been battling the bulge since I was a kid. It's in the genes.

(There's a long silence. PAUL takes out his Blackberry again and sends another message.)

So, I'm Paul, by the way.

JIM. Jim.

**PAUL.** Nice to meet you. (*pause*) So hey, what's that accent you got there?

JIM. Accent?

PAUL. Yeah. I detect an accent.

JIM. I didn't know I had an accent.

**PAUL.** Really? I thought I picked up on something there. Just faintly.

JIM. No. I mean, Long Island...

**PAUL.** No. Never mind. It must just be my ear. I thought I picked up a foreign accent.

JIM. No. That's funny. No one's ever said that before.

PAUL. It's my ear.

(Long pause.)

So, I don't mean to be nosey, but what do you do, Jim?

JIM. What do I do?

**PAUL.** Yeah. I mean, it's eight o'clock in the morning, you've got your egg and cheese on a roll...and your big backpack there. (*pause*) Do you work in the neighborhood?

JIM. I'm kind of between jobs right now.

PAUL. Oh yeah?

JIM. I mean, I do have a job, but it's just...you know...

**PAUL.** It's temporary.

JIM. Right.

PAUL. A stepping stone...to the real job.

JIM. Exactly.

PAUL. So, where is it? This temporary job?

JIM. I work at Starbucks.

**PAUL.** Oh. Very cool. I like the Americano. The Americano is my drink. Do you like the Americano?

JIM. Yes. I actually do. I like the iced Americano.

PAUL. Oh yes. Yes. The iced Americano...very yummy.

JIM. Yes.

PAUL. So good.

JIM. So good.

PAUL. The flavor.

JIM. Strong.

PAUL. Yes. Just perfect. A perfect drink. (pause) So you're a "Barista."

JIM. Well...

PAUL. I mean, for now, you're a Barista.

JIM. Yeah. For now.

PAUL. Where does that word come from, anyway? Barista.

JIM. I'm not sure.

PAUL. It's Spanish. Right?

JIM. I think so.

PAUL. Are you Spanish?

JIM. No.

PAUL. Where are you from?

JIM. Long Island.

PAUL. No. I mean...you know...who are your people?

JIM. Who are my people?

PAUL. What's your background?

JIM. I'm Irish.

PAUL. Get the fuck out of here.

JIM. What?

PAUL. You are not Irish.

JIM. I am.

PAUL. What's your last name?

JIM. Kelly.

PAUL. Fuck off.

JIM. What?

PAUL. Fuck off.

JIM. What?

(PAUL stares at JIM for a moment.)

PAUL. You don't look Irish.

JIM. I'm black Irish.

PAUL. You look more...like...

JIM. More like what?

PAUL. You don't look Irish.

(PAUL takes out his Blackberry and sends another message. He chuckles to himself.)

So where is this Starbucks?

JIM. Sorry?

PAUL. The Starbucks. Where is it?

JIM. It's over on Madison.

PAUL. Madison and what?

JIM. Madison and seventy-fifth.

**PAUL.** So this is kind of your morning ritual before work. (*pause*) You have your egg and cheese, enjoy the scenery...

JIM. I don't know if I would call it a ritual.

PAUL. No? (long pause) This isn't a ritual?

JIM. Not really.

**PAUL.** But you do come here in the morning. I mean, you do regularly come here...to this bench...

(Long pause. They stare at each other.)

JIM. I guess I've been here before.

**PAUL.** You guess? (*long pause*) I always get confused when people say that.

JIM. What?

PAUL. "I guess."

JIM. I guess?

PAUL. Yes. (pause) It confuses me. I mean, if it's something that you do...or you did do...or you have done...I mean, your answer should just be yes...or no. Yes?

JIM. Uhm...Yes.

**PAUL.** Let me ask you something. You see the building across the street?

JIM. Yes.

PAUL. That is where I work. I work in that building.

JIM. OK.

PAUL. Do you know what goes on in that building?

JIM. No.

**PAUL.** I'll give you a clue. Do you see that big flag hanging from the façade?

JIM. Yes.

**PAUL.** It has something to do with that flag. (*pause*) Do you recognize that flag?

JIM. No.

PAUL. Really? That flag doesn't look familiar?

JIM. No.

**PAUL.** Come on, Jim. You seem like a bright guy. You do not recognize that flag?

JIM. Uhm. (long pause) Is it Turkey?

PAUL. Give the man a prize. Yes. It's the Turkish Embassy.

JIM. You work at the Turkish Embassy?

PAUL. Yes.

JIM. Are you Turkish?

PAUL. Do I look fucking Turkish, Jim?

JIM. No.

PAUL. I'm Irish, Jim. Just like you.

JIM. Oh.

PAUL. Unless you're not telling the truth.

JIM. Why would I lie about being Irish?

**PAUL.** I don't know. I mean, you said this egg and cheese on the bench thing was not a ritual, right?

JIM. Right.

(PAUL stares at JIM for a few moments.)

PAUL. Listen, Jim. I'm going to tell you something. OK? (pause) I'm really not so crazy about these Turks, but I'm sort of their security guy, and they are a very nervous bunch. (pause) Do you know why they're nervous?

JIM. No.

**PAUL.** Some people would say that they have a lot of blood on their hands.

JIM. Blood?

**PAUL.** Yeah. There are some people who really don't like the Turks.

JIM. Really?

PAUL. Have you heard of the Armenian Thing?

JIM. The Armenian thing?

**PAUL.** Yes. It happened a long time ago, but...how can I put this...some *things* tend to resonate.(*pause*)

JIM. They resonate?

**PAUL.** Yeah. Some things just...they resonate. You know? (*long pause*) If you had any idea how many hours I've spent watching videotape of you eating egg sandwiches. Jesus. (*pause*) You're OK, though. You're OK.

(PAUL stands and takes a few deep breathes. He looks at the sky.)

But listen, from now on, this bench is off limits, OK? (pause) You're making the Turks nervous.

(PAUL does a few final stretches. He straightens his tie and brushes off his pants.)

OK?

јім. ОК.

**PAUL.** Good. Now where did you say that Starbucks is? **JIM.** Uhm. Madison and 75th.

**PAUL.** Right. I'm going to come down there one of these days for an Americano. OK?

JIM. OK.

PAUL. An iced Americano. (pause) God, I love this weather.

(PAUL walks offstage left. JIM remains on the bench. He stares across the street. After a few moments, he stands and puts on his backpack. He remains standing there, staring across the street.)

(blackout)

#### THE MERRY-GO-ROUND

#### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**CLAIRE**: In her twenties. **PHIL**: In his twenties.

(AT RISE: A typical motel room somewhere in suburban America. CLAIRE lies diagonally on a rumpled bed centerstage. She wears a bathrobe and her hair is wet. She stares up at the ceiling. There is a dresser with a mirror stage right. Next to the dresser, there is a video camera on a tripod. A door to the bathroom is stage left. It is slightly ajar and the sound of a man humming to himself in the shower can be heard. After a few moments, the shower stops and PHIL enters the room with a white towel around his waist.)

**PHIL.** I like your work.

CLAIRE. Oh, thanks.

(PHIL goes to the dresser. He takes a tube of hair product from a bag and begins working it into his hair. CLAIRE sits up and faces him.)

PHIL. Are you joining the crew?

**CLAIRE.** I don't know.

PHIL. They ordered lunch from Vinny's.

CLAIRE. Vinny's?

PHIL. Yeah. The place across from the mall.

CLAIRE. OK. Which mall?

PHIL. The one near exit six...off the Interstate.

CLAIRE. Exit six...

PHIL. The big one.

**CLAIRE.** The big exit?

PHIL. No. The big mall.

**CLAIRE.** The big one...

PHIL. Yeah. Near exit six.

**CLAIRE.** The one with the ride? The horses?

PHIL. The horses.

**CLAIRE.** Yeah. What's it called? The ride with the horses.

PHIL. Horses?

**CLAIRE.** Fuck. What is it called?

PHIL. Oh. Yes. I know what you mean.

**CLAIRE.** The thing with the horses...

PHIL. Right. It spins around.

**CLAIRE.** Yeah. What the fuck is it called?

PHIL, Shit, Yes.

CLAIRE. You know what I mean. Right?

PHIL, Yes, Shit,

CLAIRE, Fuck.

PHIL. It's a...uhm...

**CLAIRE.** It's not a ferris wheel.

PHIL. No.

**CLAIRE.** It's not a...shit...what's the other thing?

PHIL. What?

**CLAIRE.** You know. That playground thing. You lie on it. It spins.

PHIL. Oh right. It has like...the bars.

**CLAIRE.** Yes.

PHIL. Other kids spin it.

CLAIRE. Yes. Yes.

**PHIL.** Other kids run around in a circle...holding the bar...pushing...

CLAIRE. Right.

PHIL. What is that thing called?

**CLAIRE.** I totally forget.

PHIL. Shit. Well, it's not that thing.

**CLAIRE.** You don't see those things in malls.

PHIL. No. You don't.

**CLAIRE.** This is the ride with the horses.

(PHIL takes out some moisturizer and begins spreading it over his chest. CLAIRE takes some mascara from a makeup bag and begins applying it.) PHIL. Merry-go-round.

CLAIRE. Yes! Thank you. A merry-go-round.

PHIL. Thank god.

**CLAIRE.** A merry-go-round.

PHIL. A merry-go-round.

CLAIRE. Yes. With the horses.

PHIL. Yes. And the ring.

**CLAIRE.** The ring?

PHIL. Yeah. The ring. The brass ring.

CLAIRE. I don't remember that.

PHIL. You don't remember the ring?

CLAIRE, No.

PHIL. Maybe the ring was something else.

(CLAIRE puts away her mascara and begins applying lipstick.)

**CLAIRE.** You know, I totally forget what we were talking about.

PHIL. Um...what were we talking about?

**CLAIRE.** No fucking clue.

(PHIL walks over to the window and looks out.)

PHIL. What do you think of Donny?

**CLAIRE.** Donny?

(PHIL turns to her.)

PHIL, Yeah.

**CLAIRE.** What do I think of him?

PHIL. Yeah.

CLAIRE. I think he's nice.

PHIL. Yeah?

**CLAIRE.** Why?

PHIL. I don't know. Just wondering.

**CLAIRE.** You don't like him?

PHIL, No. I like him.

CLAIRE. Do you think he's weird?

PHIL. Yeah. Kind of.

**CLAIRE.** He's nicer than Louis Brown. Have you worked with Louis Brown?

PHIL. Yes. That guy is fucked up.

**CLAIRE.** I did this blow job thing with him a few years ago.

PHIL. Yeah. So did I.

**CLAIRE.** It was called like...Oral...something.

PHIL. Oral Exams.

CLAIRE. Right. Exactly. Oral Exams.

PHIL. Yeah. I worked on Oral Exams.

CLAIRE. You worked on Oral Exams?

PHIL. Yes. Oral Exams 4.

CLAIRE. OK. I worked on the first one.

PHIL. Right.

**CLAIRE.** I think he won an AVN award for it.

PHIL. Best blow job series.

CLAIRE. Right. Anyway, he totally freaked out on this guy.

PHIL. I'm not surprised.

**CLAIRE.** He freaked out.

PHIL. He's a nut-job.

**CLAIRE.** This sweet kid...totally new to the business... showed up late to set.

PHIL. Brown is a freak.

CLAIRE. The kid was like ten minutes late.

PHIL. He's such an ass-hole.

**CLAIRE.** ...and Louis starts yelling at the kid...calling him a little fag.

PHIL. He's such an ass-hole.

CLAIRE. The kid starts crying.

PHIL. Really?

**CLAIRE.** He's bawling his eyes out.

PHIL. Christ.

**CLAIRE.** The kid's sitting on the edge of the bed...Frank Cipriani is there...behind the camera.

PHIL. Cipriani is another jerk.

**CLAIRE.** I hate that guy.

PHIL. He's a jerk.

**CLAIRE.** What is it with the camera guys in this business?

PHIL. I don't know. They're all jerks.

**CLAIRE.** So Louis is screaming at this kid. Cipriani is laughing. The lights are like a million degrees.

PHIL. Shit.

**CLAIRE.** I'm lying on the bed in this like latex bodysuit.

PHIL. Jesus.

**CLAIRE.** I feel like I'm in a microwave.

PHIL. Jesus Christ.

**CLAIRE.** And the kid is sitting there on the edge of the bed...naked...his whole body is red.

**PHIL.** His body's red?

**CLAIRE.** Yeah. It's like he's blushing. His whole body is blushing.

PHIL. Christ.

**CLAIRE.** And he's fucking bawling.

PHIL. Wow.

CLAIRE. What a prick.

PHIL. Yes.

CLAIRE. I'm just glad he's not directing this thing.

**PHIL.** I know.

CLAIRE. Donny's OK.

PHIL. Donny is good.

(PHIL turns and looks out the window.)

PHIL. I think the food is here.

CLAIRE. Oh yeah?

PHIL. Yeah. (pause) Oh. Vinny's.

**CLAIRE.** Vinny's?

PHIL. That's the place they ordered from.

CLAIRE, Oh.

**PHIL.** That's how we started talking about that ride...with the horses.

CLAIRE. Oh. Right.

PHIL. The...uhm...shit...what's it called again?

**CLAIRE.** The merry-go-round.

PHIL. Right. The merry-go-round.

CLAIRE. Right.

PHIL. Right.

(blackout)

#### **COMMUNION**

#### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

**ABBIE**: In her fifties.

JIM: In his fifties. Abbie's husband.

NURSE: Offstage voice.

(AT RISE: JIM reclines in a hospital bed at centerstage. His head and back are raised. His hospital gown has come untied and barely covers him. He looks weak and haggard. Stage left of the bed there is a table cluttered with newspapers, several half drunk strawberry milkshakes, scissors, medical tape, a bag of chips, pens and pencils, a note pad and a phone. An I.V. stand is on the other side of the bed. A bag of fluid is dripping into him. He has a nurse button close by. He has a newspaper in his hand, but his head is back and his eyes are closed. ABBIE, his wife, enters from stage right carrying a grocery bag and a sandwich. She looks tired and disheveled.)

**ABBIE.** Hey, what are you doing?

JIM. What?

ABBIE. What are you doing still in bed?

JIM. Where the hell have you been?

ABBIE. You know where I've been.

JIM. I have no idea where you've been.

(JIM notices how exposed he is and pulls a sheet over himself.)

**ABBIE.** Think, Jim.

JIM. I have no idea. How am I supposed to know?

ABBIE. I went to the deli.

JIM. What deli?

ABBIE. The one across the street.

(ABBIE removes a bottle of soda and a few packs of gum from the bag. She puts them on the bedside table.)

JIM. The Dairy Barn?

ABBIE. No. The Dairy Barn is in Hudson.

IIM. Hudson?

ABBIE. Yes. Hudson...where we live.

JIM. We live in Hudson?

ABBIE. Yes, Jim. You're not thinking straight.

JIM. I thought we lived in Vermont.

ABBIE. We used to live in Vermont...a long time ago.

JIM. Jesus. Are you sure?

ABBIE. Yes. You need to think. You're confused.

JIM. Did you grab me a milkshake?

ABBIE. You have three milkshakes right there.

(JIM looks over at the milkshakes. He picks one of them up and sips it.)

JIM. It's melted.

**ABBIE.** Well, that's what happens when you leave it sitting there all morning.

JIM. Will you get me a fresh one, Abbie? I can't drink this.

**ABBIE.** No. I've gotten you three milkshakes already. Just drink what you have.

JIM. Jesus Christ. I can't drink this. It's fucking melted.

ABBIE. It's not melted.

JIM. It is.

ABBIE. No it is not.

JIM. Well, it's not thick. I like it thick.

ABBIE. I don't care.

JIM. Oh, nice. Thanks a lot. Here I am wasting away...

**ABBIE.** Boo-hoo-hoo. Stop being a baby and get washed up. **JIM.** What?

**ABBIE.** Get out of that bed and get into the bathroom. You look terrible.

**JIM.** I have a better idea. Why don't you get your ass to the Dairy Barn and get me a large strawberry milkshake... and the *Times*.

ABBIE. It is NOT the Dairy Barn. The Dairy Barn is in Hudson.

JIM. Really? It's in Hudson?

**ABBIE.** You have three milkshakes right next to you and the *Times* is in your hand.

(JIM looks at the newspaper in his hand. He unfolds it and looks at the date. He puts his hand to his head.)

JIM. Jesus Christ. I am out of it.

(ABBIE begins tugging at his sheet.)

ABBIE. Let's go. You need to clean up.

JIM. Do NOT do that.

ABBIE. You are getting out of this bed right now.

JIM. Do not do that.

(ABBIE tugs harder on the sheet.)

ABBIE. Get up.

JIM. Get your hands off me, woman.

ABBIE. You look like crap, Jim.

JIM. Well, I feel like crap.

ABBIE. You need to wash up.

JIM. I am not getting out of this bed.

**ABBIE.** Father Mike will be here to give you communion in a half an hour.

JIM. What the fuck are you talking about?

ABBIE. Father Mike is coming to give you communion.

JIM. Who the fuck is Father Mike?

ABBIE. I'm not going through this with you again.

(ABBIE rips the sheet off of him. JIM grabs the nurse button that is attached to the wall by a cord.)

JIM. You get your hands off me, woman. You get your fucking hands off me.

ABBIE. Put down the nurse button.

JIM. I will not. Now, back off!

**ABBIE.** Drop it.

JIM. Get the hell out of here. Go get me a shake.

**ABBIE.** Drop the nurse button.

JIM. Get me a damn milkshake, woman.

**ABBIE.** I swear, Jim, if you disturb those poor nurses one more time, I am going to rip that thing out of the wall.

**JIM.** I will have you removed from this room if you do not back off.

(ABBIE grabs his ankles. JIM screams and presses the button. A bell rings once and a red light goes on behind the bed.)

**ABBIE.** Jim! You stop it with that button. The nurses have more important things to do than...

(The NURSE's voice comes from a speaker behind JIM's bed)

**NURSE.** (offstage) Yes?

JIM. I need some help, please.

NURSE. (offstage) Are you in pain, Jim?

JIM. Yes. It's my wife. She is abusing me.

**ABBIE.** Sorry Marie. Don't listen to him. He's just being a jerk.

NURSE. (offstage) Oh. OK then. You stop being a jerk Jim.

(ABBIE grabs the nurse button out of JIM's hand and drops it behind the bed where he can't reach it.)

JIM. You give me that fucking button.

(ABBIE grabs him by the wrists and begins pulling him out of the bed.)

Jesus Christ, Abbie. Get the fuck off me.

**ABBIE.** No. I will not. You are getting in that shower right now.

(ABBIE forces him out of the bed. He's on his feet now with his arms around her neck, holding on for balance, but still fighting her.)

JIM. You get the fuck off me, woman. You get the fuck away from me.

ABBIE. I will not.

JIM. Jesus, I'm in pain. I'M IN PAIN!

ABBIE. I do not care. Do you hear me? I do not care!

(JIM's legs begin to buckle. ABBIE tries dragging him, but he's heavy and she struggles to keep him up.)

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