

# THE VISITING PROFESSOR

A Play

By

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EXTRACT

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# CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR EDGAR SAMPSON

BRIDGET

HIS SECOND WIFE

SUSAN

HIS FIRST WIFE

POLICE SERGEANT CAROLINE FORTINBRAS

OF THE LOCAL CONSTABULARY

# THE VISITING PROFESSOR

*SCENE; THE MAIN LIVING ROOM OF A FAMILY HOME, FULL OF LARGE COMFORTABLE FURNITURE, PHOTOGRAPHS IN FRAMES, ONE OR TWO PAINTED PORTRAITS. INTO ALL THIS THE SMALL RATHER FLUSTERED WOMAN SPEAKING ON THE PHONE DOES NOT QUITE FIT.*

**BRIDGET** Mrs. Conway? This is Bridget Samson here. Listen, you know I don't like to be always complaining - but your Tommy is at it again - he's throwing stones across the fence at the small apple tree - he's knocked half a dozen apples off just today, and they'll be - yes, I know he's highly spirited, that goes without saying, but it's just wanton destruction - well, who's going to teach him right and wrong if you don't - my tone of voice, what about my apples - he wouldn't have dared - how can you blame someone who's dead - Hello? Hello. Oh, dear. Such a waste.

*(SHE SITS DOWN DEJECTEDLY. THE FRONT DOOR RINGS. SHE GOES OUT AND RETURNS IN A MOMENT WITH CAROLINE FORTINBRAS, A VERY LARGE YOUNG WOMAN IN THE UNIFORM OF A POLICE SERGEANT.)*

**BRIDGET** My husband -

**CAROLINE** - won't be back for a while yet, I know that, my business is with Professor Samson but I need to see you first.

**BRIDGET** Won't you sit down?

**CAROLINE** No, I won't, but you may soon feel the need. Right now, Mrs. Samson, let's come straight to the point. My name is Caroline Fortinbras, I'm at the Police Station on Coniston Street, and I'm going to have a baby.

**BRIDGET** How - nice for you.

**CAROLINE** It's all planned. I'll be at the station another four months, then I'm on a course in management technique, two months, then paid leave while I'm getting ready for the Inspector's Exam, which will take me up to nine months.

**BRIDGET** As you say, all planned.

**CAROLINE** There's just one detail to be settled and it's a very minor one. I need your husband.

**BRIDGET** Need him, need him for what?

**CAROLINE** Do I have to spell out? I'm ovulating. I need the Professor to impregnate me. Today, now.

**BRIDGET** What - but -

**CAROLINE** Won't take a moment, then you never have to see me again.

*(SHE TAKES A TURN ROUND THE ROOM, LOOKING AT THE PHOTOGRAPHS)*

Just a moment -

**BRIDGET** You can't just -

**CAROLINE** Who's the large woman in all these pictures?

**BRIDGET** Mrs. Samson.

**CAROLINE** But -

**BRIDGET** *(RESENTFULLY)* The first Mrs. Samson. She died eighteen months ago. I am the second Mrs. Samson.

**CAROLINE** Figures.

**BRIDGET** Now really -

**CAROLINE** Just a moment. Do you know some brat is throwing stones at your apple tree?

**BRIDGET** That's Tommy Conway. He does it all the time. I've complained, but his mother just laughs and says he's high-spirited -

**CAROLINE** I'll give him high-spirited. Tommy Conway, you're about to encounter a bitch in heat -

*(SHE RUSHES OUT THROUGH THE FRENCH WINDOWS. A SERIES OF FRIGHTFUL SCREAMS ARE HEARD, THEN A WOMAN'S VOICE SHOUTING. BRIDGET WATCHES INCREDULOUSLY. CAROLINE RETURNS)*

*(SHOUTING OVER HER SHOULDER)* I am the Police, you stupid cow.

Oh, that did me good.

**BRIDGET** You -

**CAROLINE** And there won't be any repercussions, trust me. Where were we? Ah yes-

**BRIDGET** You want my husband -

**CAROLINE** Listen, Mrs. Samson. I'm only going to have one baby. There simply won't

be time for any more. Your husband is totally brilliant. Nobel prizewinner twice, intellect the size of a small planet, and a string of offspring all leaders in their own fields. Including Jane Peters and Harry Ledbury.

**BRIDGET** Oh, you know about them.

**CAROLINE** Down at the station we have a set procedure about the Professor's little ways.

**BRIDGET** I rather thought you might have.

**CAROLINE** But while his wives and lady friends continue to punch out corks -

**BRIDGET** Wife. Wife One. Wife two hasn't been included.

**CAROLINE** How do you come to be Wife Two anyway?

**BRIDGET** Well - it was almost two years ago now - just after my first husband died - Susan Samson asked me to come over - then she said, Look here, Simpkins -

**CAROLINE** Simpkins?

**BRIDGET** My maiden name. We were at school together. She always called me Simpkins - even after my first marriage -

*(SUSAN SAMSON ENTERS. SHE IS A LARGE FORCEFUL WOMAN IN TWEEDS)*

**SUSAN** *(LOUDLY AND ROBUSTLY)* Look here, Simpkins - no point in beating about the bush - I'm for the chop. Just back from Harley Street. Quack tells me I've got just six months if I'm lucky. Time enough to get things organised. Edgar has to have a wife, and you've been selected.

**BRIDGET** You're - dying -

**SUSAN** I've sounded out the children, they're onboard, and Edgar will do as he is told. And you're going to need somewhere to live, your Stephen and that Valkyrie he married will have you out of the family nest within weeks. Unless you fancy growing old alone in a tiny cottage.

**CAROLINE** What did she mean by that?

**BRIDGET** Stephen is my only child. He and his wife are both Captains in the Royal Artillery. My first husband was barely cold in his grave before they were on at me to pass the house on them.