

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

The Jack Plays

The House That Jack Built

Appoggiatura

Miranda

Three plays by
JAMES STILL

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXVIII by
JAMES STILL

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(THE JACK PLAYS)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:
Bret Adams Ltd
448 W. 44th St.,
New York, NY 10036 • Phone: (212) 765-5630

ISBN: 978-1-61959-177-6

© Dramatic Publishing

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of any play in this anthology *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Preapproved biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgments on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the plays and on all advertising and promotional materials:

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

The House That Jack Built was originally produced by the Indiana Repertory Theatre, Indianapolis, Janet Allen, Artistic Director; Steven Stolen, Managing Director.

The House That Jack Built was developed in part at a retreat at the Weston Playhouse Theatre Company, Weston, Vt.

The House That Jack Built was further developed as part of The New Harmony Project conference.

The House That Jack Built was the winner of the Todd McNerney Playwriting Prize and given readings at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival.

APOGGIATURA

Appoggiatura was commissioned, premiered and originally developed by the Denver Center Theatre Company, a division of The Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Kent Thompson, Artistic Director.

Appoggiatura was developed as part of the LAUNCH PAD Preview Production Program at University of California, Santa Barbara - Department of Theater and Dance, Risa Brainin, Director.

Appoggiatura was developed at Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp, Steamboat Springs, Colo.

MIRANDA

Miranda was commissioned and first produced by Illusion Theater, Minneapolis, Michael H. Robins and Bonnie Morris, Producing Directors.

Miranda was developed by Illusion Theater as part of Fresh Ink.

Miranda was further developed as part of the New Harmony Project conference.

Foreword

I have had the great good fortune to closely observe nearly 25 years of James Still's playwriting career. The breadth and depth of that career continue to leave me breathless. In our 2017-18 season, we honored James' 20th year as playwright-in-residence at the Indiana Repertory Theatre (IRT), celebrating the vast diversity of his work as well as the close relationships he has developed with our artists and audience. It is the rare playwright who can excel in so many forms, and for so vast an audience. From three-year-olds to 103-year-olds, James' work continues to charm audiences not only in Indianapolis but also across the country.

The IRT produced the world premiere of *The House That Jack Built* in 2012 and was the first theatre to produce all three plays in the trilogy (albeit not in order). We created those all-important second productions of *Miranda* in 2017 and *Appoggiatura* in 2018. Our audiences have enjoyed the conversation about how the plays are both separate and interlinked, giving them wonderful insight into the mind of a playwright in intersection with story and character.

Perhaps most important to the casual reader or producer, these plays stand alone beautifully, with no diminution in their impact by seeing or reading them alone or in any order. For those who see more than one, however, the accumulation of detail is delightful, with the introduction of new characters in each and the appearance of oft-discussed offstage characters appearing in the second and third plays. The plays pass the proverbial baton of family and generation from one to the next, focusing in one play on the middle generation of adults (Jules and Lulu), in another on the split generations of grandparent and grandchild (Helen and Sylvie), and in a third on Miranda, who has pulled herself out of the familial

centrifugal force for reasons only she can reckon with. In each play, James creates a unique social surround for these family members, illuminating their resiliency, their curiosity, their yearning for connection and their zest for life.

James has told me that he actually began writing the trilogy in what turned out to be the middle—with characters taking a trip to Venice as they do in *Appoggiatura*. He soon realized that he didn't know enough about the characters—which is how he began on *The House That Jack Built*, its chronological predecessor. *Miranda* came later, as an exploration of a character about whom much is said but little is known. *Miranda* also reveals a key piece about the polestar character of the trilogy, Jack, who remains an elusive offstage mystery, haunting all three plays. Thus, we watch a playwright's mind at work in deep discovery of character and story. I hope he writes one more play about this family before he finishes with them—I would love to see what fireworks ensue when Helen, Lulu, Miranda, Jules and Sylvie all end up in one temporal plane!

The plays all share an exploration of this extended and unusual family and their journeys to reconnect or escape one another, the magnetic polar opposites of intention. Three generations are united and separated by loss—loss created by divorce, death, dementia and the dislocation of self both geographically and psychically. Each play expands the reach of the family and extends location as a character. In *The House That Jack Built*, several are at home in Vermont on Thanksgiving; in *Appoggiatura*, a different group decamps to Venice for a holiday; and in *Miranda*, we experience the toll taken by Miranda's work in the war-torn Middle East—far from her family. This vast reach of place, particularly in our 21st-century global landscape, speaks to a deep yearning for home: Where is it? Is it a chimera? Is

it possible to find it by searching? Can one be lost and find one's way home? The characters all yearn for a sense of belonging while being deeply distrustful that such a sense is even possible in today's fractured world.

The plays are also united by a theatrical commitment to explore (and explode!) time. It's as if the past is always present, just outside our field of vision, waiting for us to hold still and experience it. In each play, the past overlaps and competes with the present—you might storm out of the house into your own childhood in Vermont, or turn a corner in Venice and find yourself 50 years ago, or re-experience an explosion from years ago as you quietly sit in your apartment today. These sequences don't work like typical flashbacks, but more like seamless and instantaneous jump cuts from one temporal plane to another. The past sometimes soothes and sometimes intercedes like a case of PTSD, but always it is vivid and simultaneous with the present, as can only happen in the theatre. And always it creates profound wonder in the characters who slip back and forth through the time barrier.

Ultimately, the plays exist in very different styles, making the trilogy a delightful collective act. Where *The House That Jack Built* is Albee-esque in its fractured revelation of family dynamic, *Appoggiatura* is Chekhovian in its wistful humor and longing, while *Miranda* is almost a John le Carré action thriller. This experimentation with form awards the reader or audience member with insight into the jazz riffing of a master playwright as he rotates the lens on a set of characters, gaining dimension, depth and diversity as the trilogy progresses.

The hallmark of James' work, both in this trilogy and in all his work, is a deep sense of humanity. While there are social issues in all the plays, the characters' open hearts and their yearning to connect are what drive this writer. In our

technology-driven era, where media so often overwhelms us, James reminds us that human beings must connect and be heard, understood and loved, with all their many differences and flaws, in order for all of us, artists and audiences alike, to deeply experience our humanity.

—Janet Allen
Executive Artistic Director
Indiana Repertory Theatre

Appoggiatura

Appoggiatura: *uh-poj-uh-toor-uh*

Noun.

From the Italian *appoggiare* meaning “to lean”

Or “to prop”

Or “to support”

In music, *appoggiatura* is a note of long or short duration sometimes creating a dissonance before resolving into a main note.

Also: a note of embellishment preceding another note and taking a portion of its time.

Appoggiatura was originally commissioned and developed by the Denver Center Theatre Company, a division of The Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Kent Thompson, artistic director. The play opened in The Ricketson Theatre on Jan. 16, 2015.

CAST:

Helen Darrie Lawrence
Aunt Chuck Rob Nagle
Sylvie/Young Helen Lenne Klingaman
Marco/Young Gordon Nick Mills
Old Italian Man/Tour Guide/Older Gordon Paul Bentzen
Vivaldi/Tour Guide/Gondolier Julian Remulla
Kate/Tour Guide..... Mehry Eslaminia

PRODUCTION:

Director Risa Brainin
Set Design David M. Barber
Costume Design Meghan Anderson Doyle
Lighting Design Charles R. MacLeod
Sound Design Tyler Nelson
Musical Direction and Arrangements Michael G. Keck
Projection Design..... Charlie I. Miller
Dramaturgy Douglas Langworthy
Voice and Dialect Coaching..... Kathryn G. Maes
Movement Coaching..... Robert Davidson
Casting Elissa Myers Casting, Paul Foquet
Director of Production Jeff Gifford
Stage Manager Rachel Ducat

Appoggiatura was developed through the LAUNCH PAD program at the University of California, Santa Barbara - Department of Theater and Dance, Risa Brainin, director.

Appoggiatura was also developed at the Perry-Mansfield New Works Festival, and further developed at the Colorado New Play Summit, Denver Center Theatre.

“Youth is a given; age is achieved.”
—May Swenson

“The course of true love never did run smooth.”
—William Shakespeare,
A Midsummer Night's Dream (1.1.134)

“Rome is your wife;
Florence is your mistress;
and Venice is your lover.”
—Graffiti in Venice

Appoggiatura

CHARACTERS

HELEN: in her 70s.

SYLVIE: in her early 20s. Also plays YOUNG HELEN in her early 20s.

AUNT CHUCK: in his 50s.

MARCO: in his mid-20s. Also plays GORDON in his mid-20s and again in his early 50s.

TRIO OF VENETIAN STREET MUSICIANS: also play all the other characters including:

KATE: in her mid-20s.

OLD ITALIAN MAN: also plays GORDON in his 70s.

ANTONIO VIVALDI: a violin-playing, red-headed priest.
And TOUR GUIDES, a WAITER, two DOGS named Sophia and Loren, a GONDOLIER and others.

PLACE: A makeshift guest room in a crumbling Venetian hotel. And various spots around Venice.

TIME: June, recently. And another June, not so recently.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The various Tour Guides and the different languages they speak are flexible to fit your production.

The dogs Sophia and Loren are not intended to be played by actual dogs. Possible suggestions for your production include puppets or rigid suspended leashes that are voiced by actors.

Appoggiatura

ACT I

1

(Nothing but darkness.

A breath of black, black darkness.

Then a sliver of moonlight on a masked, red-headed ANTONIO VIVALDI playing his violin. “Summer” movement three: “Presto” [aka: “Storm”].

Suddenly, big wooden window shutters push open toward us, and VIVALDI’s music instantly stops.

At the open window:

HELEN looks out at us, her face glowing with expectation, free of suspicion ... Even though she’s in her seventies and wears false eyelashes, it is as if she’s just been born.

HELEN looks left to right, right to left, searching ... for ... something ... something ... something more than the awful stubborn silence. Something.

HELEN slowly pulls the wooden shutters closed and—

In faint moonlight, VIVALDI instantly begins again. The wooden shutters explode open—

And VIVALDI instantly stops.

HELEN resumes her search for the source of the music.

Only silence.

HELEN slowly pulls the wooden shutters closed—

VIVALDI resumes—

HELEN tries a fast fake-out, open-and-close—

Right on cue, VIVALDI stops-and-starts-and-stops when—

HELEN again pushes the wooden shutters open.

*Now it's a game: HELEN closing and opening the shutters,
VIVALDI starting and stopping ...*

Fast

and slow

and FASTER—

*Until HELEN pulls the wooden shutters closed one last
time with a loud BANG!*

And VIVALDI instantly begins again—the apparent winner.

*But the wooden shutters suddenly burst open again, and
VIVALDI is caught with his musical pants down ... playing
on ...*

*VIVALDI steps into HELEN's view, serenading her,
romancing her, promising her ...*

HELEN begins to LAUGH.

Church bells begin to ring.

More ringing church bells.

*VIVALDI's "Summer"/"Storm" gives way to a Venetian
summer storm:*

Rain and thunder and winds.

VIVALDI rushes away to escape the storm.

*Unafraid, HELEN looks up at the night sky then pulls the
wooden shutters closed one last time.*

Everything is darkness again.

The raging storm grows louder ...

And louder ...

And louder.)

2

(A gorgeous, tacky, falling-down, makeshift guest room inside the Palazzo della Fortuna.

Middle of the night.

The only music now is the sound of more rain. Lots of it.

HELEN reads by candlelight.

AUNT CHUCK generously fills a chaise lounge and restlessly listens to an iPod with earbuds.

SYLVIE unceremoniously paints AUNT CHUCK's toenails.)

AUNT CHUCK *(practicing per iPod, loudly)*. “Buongiorno!”
(Listens, repeats.) “Buongiorno!” *(Listens, repeats.)*
 “Come stai?” *(Listens, repeats.)* “Come stai?”

HELEN *(reading from her book)*. “It is illegal to be a prostitute in Siena if your name is Mary.”

SYLVIE. Good to know.

(AUNT CHUCK rips out the earbuds.)

AUNT CHUCK. What?

SYLVIE. It's illegal to be a prostitute in Siena if your name is Mary.

(SYLVIE continues painting AUNT CHUCK's toenails.)

HELEN *(reading from her book)*. “An Italian town near Naples once outlawed the act of DEATH until the town built a new cemetery.”

AUNT CHUCK (*per iPod*). “*Molto bene, grazie, e tu?*”
(*Listens, repeats.*) “*Molto bene, grazie, e tu?*”

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “In Florence there is a medical condition caused from being overcome by the beauty of Italian art.”

AUNT CHUCK (*per iPod*). “*Io mi chiamo Aunt Chuck.*”
(*Vacillating.*) Charles. Aunt Chuck. (*With more flourish.*)
“*Io mi chiamo Charles!*” (*More “Italian.”*) “Charles!” (*To SYLVIE.*) How do you say “Charles”?

SYLVIE. Stop moving your toes.

HELEN (*absorbed in the book*). Ah! “VENICE is the city of invention ... giving the world everything from opera to bleached hair to roof terraces.”

AUNT CHUCK (*to SYLVIE*). How do you say “Charles” in Italian?

SYLVIE (*flat*). Charles.

AUNT CHUCK (*bad Italian accent*). Charles!

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “... platform shoes and assembly lines and italics—and mirrors!”

SYLVIE. Who calls you

“Charles”? Nobody calls AUNT CHUCK. Charles is
you “Charles.” my name—

SYLVIE. “Charles.” “Charles.” (*Dismissive.*) No.

AUNT CHUCK. No what?

SYLVIE. I don’t like it, it’s weird—

AUNT CHUCK. What’s wrong with “Charles?”

SYLVIE. What’s wrong with “Aunt Chuck?”

AUNT CHUCK. It isn’t my real name.

SYLVIE. It is to me.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “In 1902 when the Campanile in Piazza San Marco collapsed into rubble, the only fatality was a cat who happened to be named after Casanova’s dog.”

SYLVIE. “Charles.” (*Disturbed.*) Weird, don’t like it.

AUNT CHUCK. Stop saying it’s weird.

SYLVIE. Stop moving your toes.

(*HELEN is drawn to the window, opens the shutters and looks out at the rain.*)

AUNT CHUCK (*to SYLVIE*).

Just look it up—

look it up in that, that SYLVIE. OK, OK! Jeez.
google-thing.

(*SYLVIE types on her phone.*)

SYLVIE. I forget how bossy you are.

AUNT CHUCK. I just want to know how to say “Charles”
in Italian!

SYLVIE. “Aunt Chuck”—it’s you, it fits.

AUNT CHUCK. Maybe I left your dear old Aunt Chuck
back in Vermont. (*Darker.*) Back where he belongs.

(*HELEN clocks this.*)

SYLVIE (*reading from her phone*). Wait ... wait ... yup, got
it: “*Gettare.*”

AUNT CHUCK (*trying it out*). “*Gettare.*”

HELEN & SYLVIE. *Gettare!*

AUNT CHUCK. I like it. Does it mean “Charles”?

SYLVIE (*reading*). *Gettare*: a verb meaning “to throw” or
“to CHUCK.”

AUNT CHUCK (*with gusto*). *Io mi chiamo Gettare.*

(*SYLVIE kisses AUNT CHUCK, her tenderness disarming him.*)

HELEN. Mia ZIA Gettare!

(SYLVIE studies her phone, distracted.)

AUNT CHUCK. Is that a message from Kate?

SYLVIE. ...

(HELEN and AUNT CHUCK look at each other and clock SYLVIE's silence.)

AUNT CHUCK. Are you going to call your mother?

SYLVIE. Done.

AUNT CHUCK. When?

SYLVIE. Airport.

AUNT CHUCK. Oh.

SYLVIE. While you were having your meltdown about the luggage.

AUNT CHUCK. What a nightmare. *(Off HELEN's look.)*
Don't say it. *(To SYLVIE.)* You either.

SYLVIE. I didn't.

AUNT CHUCK. You thought it—

SYLVIE. I wasn't.

AUNT CHUCK. But you are now—

SYLVIE. Yeah, because you're talking about it!

AUNT CHUCK. Which reminds me of the tiff I had with your mother the other day.

SYLVIE *(laughing)*. Who uses the word "tiff"? Why not just call it a fight?

AUNT CHUCK. Did your mother call it a fight?

SYLVIE. She didn't call it anything, I don't even know what you're talking about.

AUNT CHUCK. Because it wasn't a fight, it was a tiff.

SYLVIE. You mean like an argument—

AUNT CHUCK. No, I mean like a tiff.

SYLVIE. A disagreement—

AUNT CHUCK. A TIFF. Like the one we're having now!

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “In 18th-century Europe, false beauty marks were all the rage—and in VENICE they were the language of amorous intrigue.”

AUNT CHUCK. How'd she sound?

SYLVIE. Mom?

AUNT CHUCK. On the phone.

SYLVIE. OK. I guess. She's working on her book. For real this time.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “A beauty mark on the nose, called the *sfrontata*, meant the lady was feeling bold.”

AUNT CHUCK. She tell you anything about it? About her book?

SYLVIE. She didn't want to talk about it which was all she wanted to talk about: how she didn't want to talk about it.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “A beauty mark on the corner of the eye, the *passionata*, meant the lady was burning with passion ... ”

SYLVIE. You never said what your fight was about, with Mom. Your tiff.

HELEN. Books-on-tape.

SYLVIE. What's a “tape”?

AUNT CHUCK. A tape!

A DVD, audiobook,
whatever you want to
call it!

SYLVIE (*laughing*). Hey,
hey, hey ... I'm teasing.

AUNT CHUCK. Oh. (...) If you listen to a book on tape do you have the right to say you've read the book?

SYLVIE. What do you mean?

HELEN. That's it.

SYLVIE. That's what? That was the tiff?

AUNT CHUCK. That was the pre-tiff.

SYLVIE. Wow.

AUNT CHUCK. I say listening to a book on tape isn't the same as actually *reading* the book and your mother called me a snob—

SYLVIE. I gotta agree with Mom on this one—

AUNT CHUCK. Which I took as a compliment.

SYLVIE. Oh God!

AUNT CHUCK. And THAT was what our tiff was about—the fact that I consider being called a snob a kind of compliment.

HELEN (*reading from her book*). “A beauty mark worn on a dimple was called the *civetta*—and implied that she was feeling flirtatious.”

AUNT CHUCK. What time is it back home?

SYLVIE. It's still yesterday.

(*AUNT CHUCK restlessly paces.*)

HELEN. “And when a Venetian woman placed the beauty mark by the corner of her mouth, she was ready for anything: it was the *assassina*.”

(*HELEN digs in her purse.*)

AUNT CHUCK (*practicing per iPod, tensely*). “*Mi scusi, io non parlo italiano ...*” (*Frustrated.*) Why would I want to say “I don't speak Italian” when the entire point is TO SPEAK ITALIAN???

(*AUNT CHUCK tears out the earbuds and goes to the window, looks out at the downpour.*)

HELEN produces a compact mirror from her purse, begins carefully drawing a beauty mark at the corner of her mouth.)

AUNT CHUCK (*cont'd*). Rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain, rain ...

HELEN (*genuine*). Isn't it wonderful?

(The storm seems to have suddenly moved inside the room.)

AUNT CHUCK. OK. I think we've all been terrifically good sports—you most of all, Helen—which is admittedly impressive for all kinds of reasons but also highly irritating since any complaining from me or Sylvie would only seem petty now considering how you've mysteriously met every conceivable DISASTER with complete and annoying cheerfulness.

HELEN (*bright and cheerful*). Charles, please! Shut up!

(HELEN puts the finishing touches on her new beauty mark.)

AUNT CHUCK. What are you doing? What is she doing?

HELEN. When a Venetian woman places a beauty mark by the corner of her mouth it means she is ready for anything: it is the *assassina*.

AUNT CHUCK. It sounds like you're calling yourself an assassin. (*To SYLVIE.*) Look up "*assassina*"—

HELEN. It's a metaphor!

AUNT CHUCK. "Charming accommodations featuring unique frescoes, antique furnishings and paintings by Venetian artists ... ???"

HELEN. ...

AUNT CHUCK. That was the description! Not to mention we had a reservation, a RESERVATION for three rooms! Three SEPARATE rooms, paid in full AND confirmed.

HELEN. ...

AUNT CHUCK. Sylvie and I want to change hotels!

HELEN. Fine.

SYLVIE. I never said that.

HELEN. Let me know where you end up.

SYLVIE. Grandmama—

HELEN. We can all have lunch sometime.

SYLVIE. I never said anything about wanting to change hotels—

AUNT CHUCK. Helen, be honest: this place looks nothing like the photos—

HELEN. Of course not! It's the middle of the night and we're without electricity!

AUNT CHUCK. Sylvie, back me up.

SYLVIE. I am not your swing vote.

(HELEN throws open the shutters again and one of the handles comes off in her hand.)

HELEN. Shit! So maybe the *Palazzo della Fortuna* is a little rough around the edges—

AUNT CHUCK. Your optimism is killing me! It is ASSASSINATING me in ways I have never been assassinated. *Assassina!*

HELEN. Where is your sense of adventure?

We're in Venice!

AUNT CHUCK. Yes, which just seems, I'm very sorry to say—old and dark and run down.

HELEN. It's Venice!

AUNT CHUCK. And it's raining—

It's theater! The night is its muse, the rain its soliloquy—listening to it gives us time—

... Muse?

... Soliloquy?

... Time???

HELEN. TIME to adjust to all this beauty—

AUNT CHUCK. This is not beauty—

HELEN. TIME to remember our dreams, to reset our HEARTS.

AUNT CHUCK. OK, OK, now you're just spewing purple bullshit.

HELEN. You look pale, Chuck.

AUNT CHUCK. I'm always pale around purple-spewing *assassin*s.

HELEN. Seriously. People have been known to pass out from being overcome by the beauty of Italy—

AUNT CHUCK. "Reset our hearts???" Really? (To SYLVIE.) You heard her, right?

HELEN. It's a medical condition called the Stendhal Syndrome.

AUNT CHUCK. The what???

HELEN. The Stendhal Syndrome, which is caused from being overcome by too much beauty.

AUNT CHUCK. What beauty???

HELEN (*very real*). What beauty?

AUNT CHUCK. Seriously.

HELEN. We're in Venice.

AUNT CHUCK. Yes. We arrived late, it hasn't stopped raining, and we've seen nothing but the inside of this hotel which looks nothing like the photos on the internet—

SYLVIE. You do look a little pale.

AUNT CHUCK. I live in Vermont! Everyone's pale in Vermont.

HELEN. Sylvie's right.

AUNT CHUCK. And this is what? Some kind of intervention?

HELEN. Hallucinating, hysteria and general bitchiness are just a few of its symptoms.