

BEAU. I thought you said he won't mind.

SYLVIA. I thought you stopped smoking!

Beau extinguishes his cigarette. More knocking.

MARJORIE. (From off.) Beau?

Beau and Sylvia both look to the door.

(From off.) Beau, I know you're in there. Let me in.

BEAU. (Whispered and unhinged.) Marjorie? But how is she here?!

SYLVIA. (Sheepishly.) I may have sent a telegram to her as well.

BEAU. Oh, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. As your mother always says: "Best to kill two birds with one stone."

BEAU. My mother says a lot of things, Sylvia!

SYLVIA. Yes, but I'm the only one who listens.

BEAU. You've really upset the apple cart, haven't you?

SYLVIA. (Dramatically.) It needed upsetting, Beau.

MARJORIE. (Cross knocking.) Beau?! Open this door!

SYLVIA. (Gently.) Do you think she's cross?

BEAU. It's quite possible.

SYLVIA. I do hate confrontation.

BEAU. Love sending telegrams though, is that it?

More violent knocking interrupts.

MARJORIE. (Over her knocking.) I say, open this door!!!

SYLVIA. (Desperate.) Where shall I go?!

BEAU. Upstairs.

SYLVIA. So far away?

BEAU. The kitchen then.

SYLVIA. I won't be able to hear!

BEAU. Fine!

Beau opens the window seat to reveal a perfect hiding spot.

SYLVIA. Oh! How convenient!

BEAU. In you go.

MARJORIE & BEAU &
SYLVIA

Beau shoves her in gracelessly.

SYLVIA. Thank you, darling. (Just before being closed in.) Be brave!

The window seat cover slams shut. More knocking.

MARJORIE. (From off.) Beau!

More knocking.

Open this door. The charade is over.

BEAU. (Calling off—perhaps pretending to be farther away than he is.) Coming dear.

SYLVIA. (Muffled, but clear, from within the window seat.) I love you, Beau!

Beau deliberately places his wedding band (from his robe pocket) back on his finger, then opens the door. Wind blows, birds chirp. Marjorie enters. She is hugely pregnant.

MARJORIE. Thank you.

BEAU. Pleasure.

MARJORIE. Good morning.

BEAU. You're looking well.

MARJORIE. I feel well. What a smart robe.

BEAU. Thank you.

MARJORIE. (Taking off her hat and gloves.) I thought I'd find you here. This place always looks cheerful in the summer.

BEAU. Indeed it does. Did you walk here from the train?

MARJORIE. I hired a cab.

BEAU. Ah.

MARJORIE. (Handing Beau her things.) I always love it here.

BEAU. As do I.

MARJORIE. (Touching her belly.) It's a perfect family home.

BEAU. It is.

MARJORIE. Reminds me of our wedding day.

BEAU. Mmm.

MARJORIE. Now that was a beautiful day at the cottage, wasn't it?

BEAU. Indeed.

MARJORIE. S'pose that's all water under the bridge now.

BEAU. Is it?

MARJORIE. (*Finding Sylvia's undergarment.*) I'd say.

BEAU. (*Grabbing it from Marjorie—perhaps dusting off the seat with it.*) Have a seat.

MARJORIE. (*Pointed.*) I think I'll stand.

BEAU. Right. (*Tosses it—perhaps even into the crowd. Then.*) So, I understand you've received a telegram.

MARJORIE. Indeed.

A British moment.

BEAU. Would you care for a cup of tea?

MARJORIE. Lovely.

Beau starts to go.

Where is Mrs. Lorrey?

BEAU. Considering *my guest*, I couldn't very well have the servants here, now could I darling?

MARJORIE. Of course. (*Noticing Sylvia's robe.*) And where is... *your guest?*

BEAU. (*A moment and then a choice.*) Hiding in the window nook.

SYLVIA. (*Strained from within the nook.*) Beau?!!

BEAU. (*Loudly.*) Might as well come out and kill the first bird, Sylvie.

Marjorie opens the window seat and peers down.

MARJORIE. Yes, Sylvie, please do come out.

Marjorie allows the seat cover to slam. Sylvia harrumphs from within. ("Ouch!") Beau helps Sylvia out.

BEAU. Careful, darling.

MARJORIE. Good morning, Sylvie.

SYLVIA. (*Sheepishly as she climbs out.*) Good morning.

Sylvia, once out, notices and AUDIBLY GASPS at Marjorie's belly!

MARJORIE. Quite.

SYLVIA. You're expecting?!

MARJORIE. July.

SYLVIA. Next month?!

MARJORIE. July is the very next month, yes.

SYLVIA. Beau! Did you know about this?!

BEAU. I should say so!

SYLVIA. But *I* never knew!

BEAU. You never asked.

SYLVIA. I...

MARJORIE. You should come for tea when I invite you.

SYLVIA. I suppose I should, but I worried it might be awkward.

MARJORIE. How sensitive of you.

SYLVIA. Does your mother know?!

BEAU. Hard to know what she knows these days.

MARJORIE. (*Handing her the robe.*) Lovely negligee darling.

SYLVIA. (*Putting her robe back on.*) It is, isn't it?

BEAU. Will you take tea, Sylvie?

SYLVIA. (*Still shocked.*) Yes, please.

As Beau exits to get tea...

MARJORIE. Your telegram was rather startling, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. I'd say we're both a bit startled this morning.

MARJORIE. "I love Beau. Stop. Beau loves me. Stop. Sorry Marji."

MARJORIE and SYLVIA. (*With opposing intentions.*) "Stop."

Beau pops his head back in.

BEAU. Milk? Sugar?

The ladies respond intensely and then resume conversation.

MARJORIE and SYLVIA. Black.

BEAU. Of course.

Beau retreats to the kitchen.

SYLVIA. Well, I wanted to get to the point.

MARJORIE. (*Pointedly.*) So you did.

I shall sleep well for once. It's been awful. Sneaking away at every chance we could. Loving in secret these long seven years.

SYLVIA and BEAU. Seven years?!

BEAU. (*Keeping a lid on it.*) I'm getting some ice.

Beau moves toward the kitchen.

MARJORIE. Why?

BEAU. I think I'll have a scotch. Sylvie?

SYLVIA. (*Truly in need of one.*) Yes, please.

Beau exits.

MARJORIE. At nine in the morning? How daring! (*Calling off.*) You know, I think I'll have one too!

CLARKE. (*Calling off.*) Make that four. (*Nuzzling Marjorie.*) It's a bit of a celebration isn't it?

SYLVIA. Seems debatable. (*To Marjorie.*) Sneaking away at every chance you could? As in—often?!

MARJORIE. No more often than you and Beau, I'm sure.

SYLVIA. We limit ourselves to one night per year.

A beat and then Clarke and Marjorie burst out laughing.

MARJORIE. One night?!

CLARKE. That's quite disciplined!

SYLVIA. (*With seething incredulosity.*) Yes, well, we're married, you see, so we felt the impropriety was best handled in a moderated capacity!

Beau enters with ice.

BEAU. (*Still heated.*) Ice!

Beau fixes drinks at the bar.

MARJORIE. (*With a twinkle in her eye.*) We weren't able to have that kind of self-control.

SYLVIA. Weren't you?

MARJORIE. I've never felt so alive as I do when I'm with Clarke.

BEAU. Lovely.

CLARKE. It has been rather exciting.

SYLVIA, MARJORIE, CLARKE, BEAU

Clarke and Marjorie canoodle.

SYLVIA. (*To Clarke.*) And here, I thought you spent your spare time at the library.

MARJORIE. Mm, yes. The library, the study... (*With an extra twinkle.*) ...the stables.

SYLVIA and BEAU. The stables?!

Marjorie and Clarke revel in the memory.

SYLVIA. (*Disgustedly.*) Where did you do it? Were the horses watching?

MARJORIE. Oh, what difference does it make where? Whether one night or every night, an affair's an affair, isn't it?

SYLVIA and BEAU. Every night?!

CLARKE. (*Utterly casual, to Sylvia.*) Well, not every night, darling. Some nights I really *did* have to work.

MARJORIE. Perhaps God simply got mixed up and put the wrong brother with the wrong wife.

BEAU. (*Handing out drinks.*) Let's not bring God into this, shall we?

CLARKE. And why not? With the way I feel about Marjorie, I see no other explanation!

MARJORIE. Oh Clarke.

CLARKE. (*Another proclamation.*) A higher power has brought us together!

MARJORIE. How glorious!

Clarke and Marjorie kiss.

CLARKE. Cheers!

They clink glasses.

ALL. (*Emotionally diverse.*) Cheers!

They sip. Then...

SYLVIA. (*To Beau.*) Beau, if my husband and your wife have been together every evening, where have you been? You told me we couldn't see each other but once a year or Marjorie would suspect you.

Beau pours himself another.

But if Marjorie's...in the stables...then it seems to me you should be the one suspicious of her. When Clarke's not home, he tells me he's at work. What excuse does Marjorie give you?

MARJORIE. I don't.

SYLVIA. What?

MARJORIE. I don't need to give an excuse, Sylvie. He's never home either.

SYLVIA. He's never...

A knock at the door. All look out.

DIERDRE. *(From off, with doubtless hope and unrelenting romanticism.)* Beau?!

They all look at the door.

Beau! It's me, darling! Please open the door!

A small beat.

BEAU. Damn.

Beau drinks. Dierdre knocks more.

DIERDRE. *(From off.)* Beau, I have the most wonderful news! Are you there?

SYLVIA. Who's that?!

BEAU. That will be Dierdre.

MARJORIE. Who?

BEAU. Dierdre. My lover.

SYLVIA. *(Floored.)* Your lover?! Then who am I?

MARJORIE. *(Nearly giddy from the scandal.)* Who indeed?

BEAU. You are my sister-in-law and we share one night a year together.

SYLVIA. What?!

MARJORIE. *(Ever the detective.)* I knew you had a lover! I knew it.

BEAU. I'm so glad you're pleased, dear.

CLARKE. My my, Beau, this does come as a bit of a shock. I didn't know you had it in you.

MARJORIE. You speak of it as though it's something to be proud of Clarke!

CLARKE. No, no. I'm just surprised, that's all.

SYLVIA. Well that makes two of us!

MARJORIE. I'm surprised too. So really, it's three.

DIERDRE. *(Still at the door.)* I have a *surprise* for you!

MARJORIE. Oh goody. A theme!

DIERDRE. *(Still at the door.)* I can hardly wait another moment! Please open the door!

SYLVIA. *(Imitating.)* Yes, "please."

Beau deliberately takes his wedding ring back off, then opens the door. Wind blows, birds chirp. Dierdre, a sweet young optimist, enters with more bags than she can comfortably carry. As they talk, Beau helps her with her bags, hat, etc.

DIERDRE. Beau, I had to see you! Oooh, what a lovely robe!

BEAU. Thank you, darling.

DIERDRE. *(Delighted.)* I didn't expect a costume! I've got my kimono in one of these bags. We can play "all aboard the Orient Express" later.

BEAU. Brilliant.

DIERDRE. *(Breathing in the day.)* I'm so glad to be here! Without you leading the way, I got a bit lost on the walk from the train! Oh! I love this cottage!

BEAU. As do I.

DIERDRE. It always feels a bit naughty.

She kisses him naughtily.

Your secretary told me you'd be here.

SYLVIA. You told your secretary?!

DIERDRE. *(Suddenly noticing everyone.)* Oh! Hello, everyone. I didn't expect a party. Will there be games?

MARJORIE. Seems we're in the middle of one.

DIERDRE. *(Genuine.)* What a lovely negligee.

SYLVIA. Thank you.

Sylvia pointedly gets a cigarette from another unlikely spot.

SYLVIA. (*Whispered.*) My husband.

RICHARD. (*Whispered.*) I see.

CLARKE. (*Calling from off.*) I'm coming down!

SYLVIA. (*Calling off.*) No! No Clarke! Not yet. I'll let you know!

CLARKE. (*Calling from off.*) Well alright then, Sylvie, but let this be a warning!...

Beat.

SYLVIA. (*Calling off.*) Is that it dear? Was that the warning?

CLARKE. (*Calling from off.*) Right then.

Their dialogue continues hushed.

RICHARD. Is your husband *hiding* upstairs?

SYLVIA. Well, now you know he's there so I suppose he's done a poor job of it—can this be true? William Pierce? I was only just now talking of you! It's as if the universe heard me.

RICHARD. How grand!

SYLVIA. I thought I'd lost you forever!

RICHARD. And I you.

SYLVIA. How'd you find me?

RICHARD. I didn't.

SYLVIA. What?

RICHARD. I mean I'm not looking for you.

SYLVIA. But you've found me.

RICHARD. Thank God!

SYLVIA. Well if you're not here to find me, whatever are you doing here?

RICHARD. (*Remembering his mission—returning to his hunt.*) My wife has left me for another man and I've come to find him.

SYLVIA. (*Not hushed.*) You're Richard!

RICHARD. (*A gentle confession.*) It's my pseudonym.

He's back to the hunt.

SYLVIA. You're married to Dierdre!

RICHARD. (*Genuine surprise.*) You know her?

Richard / Sylvia

SYLVIA. Yes.

RICHARD. (*Pathetically emotional, despite unconsciously pointing the gun toward Sylvia.*) She's decided to leave me.

SYLVIA. Would you mind terribly putting your gun down while we determine why any woman would decide to leave you?

RICHARD. (*Politely.*) Oh! Sorry. Of course.

He sets his gun down.

SYLVIA. There now. A breath of relief.

They breathe in unison. Dialogue resumes hushed.

RICHARD. This is a lovely cottage.

SYLVIA. It belongs to my mother-in-law.

RICHARD. (*Sincere.*) I didn't mean to frighten you, Sylvie. Lord knows, in a million years, I never thought I'd find you here. God. You look ravishing.

SYLVIA. (*Flattered.*) Thanks. (*Back on task.*) But, that's quite besides the point. (*With joy.*) William, you're alive?!

RICHARD. I am!

SYLVIA. (*With despair.*) But your wife says...

RICHARD. (*Interrupting.*) Ex-wife.

SYLVIA. Most people do choose to divorce murderers, darling.

RICHARD. (*Confused.*) Murderers?

SYLVIA. I never would have thought it, William. You were always gentle as a lamb.

RICHARD. (*Hurt.*) But you can't think I've actually killed anyone?

SYLVIA. Haven't you?

RICHARD. (*Offended.*) Sylvie!

SYLVIA. Dierdre says there's a bloke buried in your back porch steps!

RICHARD. (*A realization.*) She really is gullible isn't she?

SYLVIA. And Gavin at the local pub?

RICHARD. (*A decision to explain.*) My ex-wife is a bit of a free spirit, Sylvia. I thought—

SYLVIA. What?

RICHARD. (*Not quite finding the words.*) Well, I thought—

SYLVIA. Yes?

RICHARD. (*Ashamed.*) I made up stories to frighten her into staying with me.

SYLVIA. You fabricated murders?

RICHARD. (*Apologetically.*) Wellll...

SYLVIA. But you're here, aren't you? With a rather large gun, I might add.

RICHARD. (*Matter-of-fact.*) It's not loaded.

SYLVIA. So, you're not a murderer?

RICHARD. (*With pride.*) I'm a fantastic storyteller.

SYLVIA. You always did have a way with words.

RICHARD. (*Humbly.*) I'm thinking of becoming a writer.

CLARKE. (*Calling from off.*) Sylvia?!

SYLVIA. (*Calling up the stairs.*) Still fine, Clarke!

CLARKE. (*Calling from off.*) Just checking.

SYLVIA. (*Calling off.*) Right darling.

Sylvia returns to Richard.

RICHARD. He seems nice.

SYLVIA. Bit of a philanderer.

RICHARD. Ah.

SYLVIA. My mind is all in a jumble.

RICHARD. It's wonderful to see you, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. What were you going to do with that gun then?

RICHARD. Hm? (*Remembering his mission.*) Oh. Scare the fellow.

SYLVIA. Beau Van Kipness?

RICHARD. (*Surprised once more.*) You know him?

SYLVIA. Indeed.

RICHARD. (*Back to the hunt.*) Is he here?

SYLVIA. He is.

RICHARD. (*Curious.*) Where?

SYLVIA. Hiding.

RICHARD. (*Impressed.*) Successfully.

SYLVIA. I suppose so.

RICHARD. (*Bravely.*) Coward.

SYLVIA. Quite.

RICHARD. (*Back to a fool in love.*) You're looking so lovely.

SYLVIA. Your eyes haven't changed a bit. Warm. Gentle.

RICHARD. I've dreamt of this moment. (*Re: the gun.*) Well, not this moment exactly...but—seeing you again.

SYLVIA. I always thought it unsettling that your body wasn't found. All these years I've mourned you. You've got a tombstone. Your parents think you're dead. All of Shrewsbury thinks you're dead.

RICHARD. How are my parents?

SYLVIA. Dead!

RICHARD. How awful.

SYLVIA. Oh, William.

RICHARD. Oh, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. How I've longed for you.

RICHARD. And I you.

They rush to each other. In their haste, Richard's gun drops to the ground. It goes off with a very loud bang.

They scream, and screams are heard throughout the house. (Perhaps the bullet strikes a china figurine, or some such object, creating a Rube Goldberg-ricochet effect.)

SYLVIA. I thought you said it wasn't loaded!

RICHARD. I thought it wasn't! I've never been good with guns! Perhaps it was slightly loaded.

SYLVIA. That leads to slightly dead doesn't it?

Richard takes the gun, clearly not an expert, and examines it.

RICHARD. It's empty now. For certain.

SYLVIA. Let me see it.

She expertly examines the gun.

Gate. Cylinder. Chamber. Hammer. (*Then.*) Right. Good then.