

THE COTTAGE

BY SANDY RUSTIN

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The original Broadway production of THE COTTAGE was produced by Broadway & Beyond Theatricals, Cornice Productions, Martian Entertainment, Paige Price, Scott Mauro, Malcolm Gosling/Dan Gottfried, Gayle Seay/Tony Nation, Cornice Productions Fund 1, Michael Saperstein, Rick Costello, Jonathan Demar, Paul Jungquist, Tom & Judy Kleinman, Marjorie Morrissey, Mark Reardon, Shapiro Jensen Productions, Nina Tassler, Dale & James Young, and 7Sennotts LLC, opening in July 2023. It was directed by Jason Alexander, the scenic design was by Paul Tate dePoo III, the costume design was by Sydney Maresca, the lighting design was by Jiyoung Chang, the sound design was by Justin Ellington, the wig and hair design was by Tommy Kurzman, the dialect coach was Jerome Butler, and the production stage manager was lark hackshaw. The cast was as follows:

SYLVIA Laura Bell Bundy
 BEAU Eric McCormack
 MARJORIE Lilli Cooper
 CLARKE Alex Moffat
 DIERDRE Dana Steingold
 RICHARD Nehal Joshi
 UNDERSTUDIES Michelle Federer, Matthew Floyd Miller,
 Tony Roach, Jamie Ann Romero

CHARACTERS

SYLVIA

A lovely and rash romantic.

BEAU

Perhaps the best-looking man in Britain.

MARJORIE

Eight months pregnant, pragmatic, and a tad spicy.

CLARKE

A distinguished gent with a lover's spirit.

DIERDRE

An awfully pretty, sometimes wise, nincompoop.

RICHARD

A murderous, yet gentle soul.

THE COTTAGE companies should strive to support a cast and crew of diverse theater workers. This diversity includes, but is not limited to, gender identities, ethnic and racial backgrounds, sexual orientations, body types, ages, and ability.

TIME

The play begins just before 9 A.M. Monday, June 4, 1923.

PLACE

A quaint family-owned cottage in the English countryside, about ninety minutes outside of London.

SET

The interior of the cottage.

NOTES

THE COTTAGE is a romantic and (not quite) murderous comedy of manners. The pacing is intended to be very swift. This script maps out suggested physicality in some cases, but casts are encouraged to embrace the style and find their own moments of doors swinging, cigarette lighting, and a general air of farce, while maintaining a truthful intention throughout.

Characters are often on separate wavelengths, experiencing the same moment in dramatically different ways. Discovering the abrupt beat changes is all part of the fun. Some are clearly marked, others are to be found as you go.

In this script, only the drawing room and staircase are visible. Designers should, however, feel free to imagine a visible foyer, bedroom, guest room, upstairs hall, kitchen and bathroom doors, etc. Space can be defined by budget and imagination.

Standard British dialect should be adhered to. Actresses playing Dierdre (Deer-drah) have the liberty of slowly descending into a lower-class dialect (Deer-dree). The words “Mama” and “Papa” should be pronounced per the French pronunciation, with accent over the final “a.”

THE COTTAGE may be performed without an intermission, however no cuts may be made to the script.

*“It is discouraging how many people are shocked by honesty
and how few by deceit.”*

—Noël Coward

THE COTTAGE

ACT ONE

It's a glorious Monday morning in June 1923. Lights rise on a lovely cottage in the English countryside. Sunlight streams through the large bay windows. Remnants from an obviously passionate, desperately romantic evening (articles of clothing) are scattered across the set. Music plays on the Victrola.

Sylvia enters with a breakfast tray and sets it perfectly. Beneath her flowing, dramatic robe, she wears a glamorous negligee.

The sound of water running is heard from the bathroom offstage.

SYLVIA. *(Calling up hopefully.)* Beau, are you nearly through?

No answer.

No matter.

Sylvia continues to ready the breakfast and herself.

She notices the window boxes and gets an idea. She quickly crosses and plucks a small yellow tulip. She fixes it behind her ear. Yes! Now she looks quite perfect!

The water shuts off.

Quickly, she finds a romantic posture and lies intentionally draped and gorgeous on the sofa. Perhaps she even dangles some grapes from the fruit basket above her mouth.

Moments pass. It becomes difficult to hold her pose.

The water turns back on.

Frustrated, Sylvia breaks her pose...

(Calling up.) Beau are you nearly through?

BEAU. (*From the bathroom.*) What?

Buoyed, now that he's responded, she runs to the bottom of the stairs (or to the wing) and calls off to him more pointedly.

SYLVIA. I say (*Water shuts off—less loudly.*) are you nearly through?

BEAU. (*From off.*) Quite.

SYLVIA. Good.

Hopeful that his entrance is imminent, she races back to her pose as she calls off romantically...

(*As the water turns back on.*) I miss you!

Just as she gets back to her pose...

BEAU. (*From off.*) What?

He can't hear her at all! She starts back to the bottom of the stairs...

SYLVIA. (*Calling off, loudly.*) I say (*Water shuts off—less loudly.*) I miss you!

The sound of a door shutting is heard. He's on his way!

In seemingly one leap, Sylvia lands miraculously back on the sofa in her original pose, grapes and all, albeit slightly less perfect than originally intended.

Just missing Sylvia's perfect leap and return to casual elegance, Beau appears. He is tall, charming, and handsome. He wears a deep red silk robe and towels his hair.

BEAU. Ah—just as I left you. Gorgeous. My gorgeous tulip.

SYLVIA. (*Regaining composure.*) Am I?

Beau enters fully now.

BEAU. You know you are, darling. Why just now you've set yourself up perfectly to look coy and lovely, so that it would be exceedingly difficult for me to get properly dressed without distraction.

SYLVIA. Ah, darling. How well you know me.

BEAU. Do I?

SYLVIA. I love it when you call me Tulip.

BEAU. (*Oozing sex.*) Tulip.

SYLVIA. (*Euphorically.*) Ahhh.

He turns to go. Sylvia quickly shifts from orgasmic to desperate.

(Pleading.) Don't.

BEAU. Don't what?

SYLVIA. *(With renewed come-hitherness.)* Please don't get dressed. We've only just begun.

BEAU. Just begun? Good Lord, Sylvia, if that was just the beginning I'm afraid I'm not quite up to the task of making it to the end.

SYLVIA. Let's test you and find out.

They kiss passionately.

I wish you were my husband.

BEAU. No you don't.

SYLVIA. Yes I do.

He kisses her (neck, ears, etc.), continuing foreplay throughout their dialogue.

BEAU. If I were your husband you would despise me just as you despise Clarke and you would spend your evenings wishing to make love to him and not me.

SYLVIA. Do you really think so?

BEAU. I do.

SYLVIA. Well that's not very romantic, is it?

BEAU. Romance, my dear, is for fairy tales. This is not a romance. *(Getting sexier.)* This is sex.

SYLVIA. Passionate, wildly erotic sex.

BEAU. *(Sexier still.)* Un-wifely sex.

SYLVIA. Haven't you ever had wild sex with Marjorie?

The moment's now ruined. He breaks out of her embrace, releasing her haphazardly.

BEAU. Marjorie's not in the mood for wild sex.

SYLVIA. Ever?

BEAU. Well, I suppose once when we were in the South of France, she let me...

SYLVIA. *(Interrupting.)* Never mind, darling, I don't want to know. *(Then.)* Do you feel guilty?

BEAU. For sleeping with you?

SYLVIA. Yes.

BEAU. No.

SYLVIA. (*Elated.*) Neither do I! I feel like I deserve to make love like I make love to you. And Clarke certainly doesn't do it, so I have no other choice but to turn to you.

BEAU. Is that a compliment?

SYLVIA. I'd say. If I really want to be made love to, Beau, I must come to you. And so I have—for one night, every summer, for seven summers.

BEAU. Has it been seven already? (*Distracted by the food.*) This looks lovely. Thank you Sylvie.

SYLVIA. Coffee?

BEAU. Please.

Sylvia pours and sugars the coffee demonstratively. Beau goes about his breakfast.

SYLVIA. Somehow it lasts me, you know? This one night of spectacular (*Raises the spout spectacularly.*) lovemaking will see me through another year of rare and mediocre sex with Clarke.

She plops a sugar cube in the cup.

BEAU. I don't take sugar.

SYLVIA. Don't you?

BEAU. 'Fraid not.

SYLVIA. (*As she quickly removes the sugar from his cup, putting it back—now wet—in the sugar bowl.*) Of course. Sorry. It's been so long.

She hands him the coffee, sans sugar.

BEAU. You were saying?

SYLVIA. (*Back on track.*) Ah, yes. That our one night together will make up for all our nights apart.

BEAU. Will it?

SYLVIA. Of course. When I've no choice but to lie in bed with

Clarke, I simply close my eyes and imagine *us*—here, at this perfect cottage. My most favorite place in all the world.

BEAU. You sound like Mama.

SYLVIA. Do I? (*Then.*) Oh, I *love* it here. I always feel like I belong.

BEAU. As do I.

SYLVIA. I picture us in that bed of satin sheets, with window boxes of tulips; and that alone will bring me to climax.

BEAU. Will it?

SYLVIA. (*Dropping the sexy playfulness.*) Will you stop saying “will it” like that? You make me feel foolish.

BEAU. Not at all. You’re not a bit foolish. You’re wonderful and beautiful. When did you put that flower in your hair?

SYLVIA. (*Restoring the sexy playfulness.*) While you were washing up. I thought it would make me look fetching.

BEAU. It does. What else do you do while I’m washing up?

Spinning on a dime, brandishing a cigarette, Sylvia deflects the question without missing a beat.

SYLVIA. Ciggy?

Note: Cigarettes, lighters, and ashtrays are always found throughout the cottage in the most unexpected places. (Think of a flower vase that’s actually a cigarette holder, or a ceramic statue of David that’s actually a cigarette holder—with a removable penis that’s actually a lighter.) People are always taking one puff and then putting their cigarettes out to make a point.

Note about the note: It isn’t that cigarettes are hidden in unusual places, but rather, that typical objects have been unusually fashioned into cigarette holders.

BEAU. No thank you, darling, I’m through with smoking.

SYLVIA. But you smoked last night.

BEAU. I know, but this morning I’m through with it. It’s exhausting as a practice.

Beau lights Sylvia’s cigarette.

SYLVIA. Exhausting how?

BEAU. Just the planning of it all. Do I want one now or later—or now *and* later? Have I brought enough with me? Will they have them where I'm going? Do I have enough lighter fluid?

Sylvia laughs.

God, I love it when you laugh.

Sylvia laughs more pointedly.

No, my sweet, I love it when you really laugh. A sincere laugh. Without pretense.

SYLVIA. (*Defeated.*) Good Lord, Beau, you make me self-conscious.

BEAU. Sorry, sweetheart.

SYLVIA. (*Ever hopeful once more.*) Am I?

BEAU. What?

SYLVIA. Am I your sweetheart?

BEAU. Indeed.

They kiss. The music that has been quietly playing on the Victrola has petered out.

SYLVIA. Do you ever wonder what would have happened had I met you first?

BEAU. I don't need to wonder. I know.

SYLVIA. Oh good! I'm so curious! Tell me.

BEAU. We would have married.

SYLVIA. I knew it! If we had married, we'd be the picture of happiness!

They are snuggled side by side and look the very picture.

BEAU. (*After a thought.*) I don't know.

SYLVIA. (*Hurt, though hard-pressed to break the tableau.*) Don't you?

Church bells ring to claim the hour. Nine A.M. As the distant bells ring, dialogue continues.

BEAU. Well, it could be that if we'd married, you'd be here now having this conversation with Clarke instead of me.

SYLVIA. You think I was destined to have a lover?

BEAU. Anything's possible I suppose, though I'm not one to speak of destiny; too magical a topic for the likes of me.

As they speak, Beau gathers up articles of clothing that are strewn about.

SYLVIA. But isn't that what we're discussing now? Destiny? Fate?

BEAU. Ah, my lovely Tulip, I haven't a clue about fate, really. I do however, (*Referencing the last bell.*) know about late.

SYLVIA. Late?

Beau tosses Sylvia one of her unmentionables found draped across the set. (A brazier, a stocking, etc.)

BEAU. Yes, darling, you're late.

SYLVIA. Oh!

BEAU. You were supposed to be aboard the train half an hour ago. Sooner or later, I've got to get to work.

SYLVIA. But I don't want our night to end!

BEAU. And yet it has, darling.

SYLVIA. I've been having such fun pretending to be your wife.

BEAU. Is that what you're doing?

As she speaks, she flips the record over and begins the quiet underscore of music again, with a romantic flourish.

SYLVIA. I've been imagining us forever happy in this cottage, making love every night like husbands and wives.

BEAU. (*Genuine.*) Do you make love to Clarke every night?

SYLVIA. Heavens no! I mean happy husbands and wives.

BEAU. Ah. I see. You're sweet Sylvie. Come here.

He drops his pile of clothing deliberately. They embrace and kiss passionately.

SYLVIA. Oh, what a perfect Monday!

Beau releases Sylvia haphazardly once more.

BEAU. I really must get dressed.

SYLVIA. (*Recovering.*) Alas. So you must.

Beau collects his clothing, towel, etc., and exits to get dressed. Sylvia finds confidence.

(Calling off with gusto.) Beau, I've made a decision, darling.

BEAU. *(From offstage.)* Mmmm?

SYLVIA. *(As she stops the music.)* A decision about us.

BEAU. *(Popping his head back in.)* Is it so serious we must have silence?

SYLVIA. *(A joyful declaration.)* I'm leaving Clarke!

Beau chuckles and moves to exit again.

Don't laugh. I'm leaving him, Beau. I can't bear it another moment.

BEAU. Oh, Sylvie. You are adorable.

He exits.

SYLVIA. *(Calling off passionately.)* I love you, Beau!

His door slams shut.

Sylvia drops her robe and calls off with great expectation.

I've sent him a telegram.

He's back.

BEAU. *(With sudden real interest.)* Sorry?

SYLVIA. Last night, after supper, you went to take a bath.

BEAU. Yes.

SYLVIA. I sent a wire.

BEAU. You really are busy while I'm in the loo.

SYLVIA. Kiss me!

She runs to him! He pecks her cautiously.

BEAU. Saying what, precisely?

SYLVIA. What?

BEAU. The telegram?

SYLVIA. Ah yes. I said, "Clarke. Stop. In love with Beau. Stop. I'm leaving. Stop. Sorry, darling. Stop."

BEAU. What?

SYLVIA. *(Repeating her action precisely.)* It said, "Clarke. Stop. In love with Beau..."

BEAU and SYLVIA. *(She's reciting, he is not.)* Stop.

BEAU. (*Continuing on—cutting her off from continued recitation.*) No, no, I heard you the first time I just...

SYLVIA. (*On her own track.*) I feel so free! Haven't you noticed how free I've been? Last night? (*Coquettishly.*) And this morning?

BEAU. Yes, but I attributed that to my new cologne.

SYLVIA. (*Inhaling him.*) It is rather divine.

BEAU. Thank you. A telegram?

SYLVIA. (*Still breathing him in.*) Mmm-hmm.

BEAU. Really?

SYLVIA. (*Unable to get enough of him.*) It's true.

BEAU. You know, I think I will take a cigarette.

He breaks away from her and lights himself a cigarette. They are on opposite ends of an emotional spectrum.

SYLVIA. (*Adoringly.*) I love it when you smoke. You look the picture of health.

BEAU. What time was it when I took that bath?

SYLVIA. Nearly ten, I'd say.

BEAU. So you think Clarke's received the telegram by now?

SYLVIA. I'd say so.

BEAU. He'll see red, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. Will he?

BEAU. A Baldwin Conservative. A believer in convention, finance, and God...

SYLVIA. I'm not sure he'll really mind.

BEAU. You're rather apathetic.

SYLVIA. No. I don't feel apathetic. I feel alive!

BEAU. You don't think your husband will mind that you've declared your love for another man—his *brother*?

A slight beat.

SYLVIA. Well, when you put it like that.

BEAU. Is there another way to put it?

SYLVIA. Look, he might be a bit miffed, I'll give you that. But I doubt he'll truly mind.

BEAU. Doesn't he love you at all?

SYLVIA. Isn't it all or nothing?

BEAU. (*Turning away.*) I'm not sure.

SYLVIA. (*Turning away.*) Well then neither am I.

BEAU. (*Back into her.*) Still, darling...a telegram?

She goes to him. They're on different emotional tracks.

SYLVIA. I can't live without you, Beau. I don't want to go another three hundred and sixty-four days dreaming of you, only to have one short-lived night over all too soon.

BEAU. How poetic.

SYLVIA. I know you want more than just one day with me per year.

BEAU. How well you know me.

SYLVIA. Beau, darling, you and I have been stuck in the wrong marriages.

BEAU. That may be so, Sylvie, but they are marriages nonetheless.

SYLVIA. True, but they needn't be an obstacle.

BEAU. You seem so sure.

SYLVIA. We're in love! What could be surer than that?

BEAU. Even still, a telegram's a rather cold way to make such an announcement, Sylvie.

SYLVIA. Oh I could never *face* Clarke. He gets all sweaty and pathetic-looking when he's upset.

BEAU. Ah! So you admit, he'll be upset.

SYLVIA. Perhaps a trifle. But darling, really it's you I can't bear to see upset.

Beau begins to clear the table, Sylvia at his heels. (If there's a swinging kitchen door, they are back and forth through the door. If no door, then they are back and forth through the exit as dialogue swiftly continues.)

BEAU. Well, darling, then perhaps you could have mentioned this telegram to me before you'd sent it.

SYLVIA. You told me last night you like it when I “take charge.”

BEAU. Context darling.

SYLVIA. This is perfect context! I’m taking charge of my life! I’m starting our lives anew!

BEAU. I’d argue that when Clarke arrives, our lives will be quite ended.

SYLVIA. But Clarke won’t come here.

BEAU. Won’t he?

SYLVIA. How could he? He’s no idea where we are.

BEAU. Hasn’t he?

SYLVIA. (*Smartly.*) I told him I was going to my aunt’s in London.

BEAU. Ah. Did it occur to you that perhaps I speak to Clarke occasionally.

SYLVIA. (*This has not occurred to her.*) Sorry?

BEAU. I speak to my brother, occasionally. For example, Friday. He phoned to tell me about Mama’s condition...

SYLVIA. Poor dear...

BEAU. (*Nearly an aside.*) Awful. (*Immediately moving on.*) And as we were hanging up he inquired about my weekend plans.

SYLVIA. Well surely, you didn’t...

BEAU. “I’ll be at the cottage,” I told him. I assume he assumed I meant with Marjorie.

SYLVIA. I see. So you think that means he’ll...

A knock at the door. Sylvia and Beau look out.

BEAU. I do.

SYLVIA. Oh dear.

BEAU. And the pair of us still in our skivvies.

Sylvia desperately looks for a nook. Beau, tense, lights another cigarette.

SYLVIA. (*And now a panic.*) Hide me! Where shall I hide?

BEAU. But why should he be upset if he doesn’t love you?

SYLVIA. Because he’s a man!

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.

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.

SYLVIA. I didn't know you were pregnant!

MARJORIE. (*A bit of a confession.*) Not to worry, dear, this is actually quite convenient.

On the heels of the word "convenient," Beau enters with a tea tray from the kitchen AND there's a knock at the door. They all look out.

Who's that?

Beau sets the tray down. More knocking.

CLARKE. (*From off.*) Sylvie?

They all look at the door.

MARJORIE. (*Gobsmacked.*) Clarke?

CLARKE. (*From off.*) Beau, I know you're in there. Open the door.

SYLVIA. Perhaps telegrams weren't such a grand idea after all.

BEAU. Delayed logic is consistently disappointing.

Beau wipes his brow with his hanky, then opens the door. Wind blows, birds chirp. Clarke enters.

Good morning, Clarke.

CLARKE. Morning.

BEAU. How was your walk?

CLARKE. Lovely. (*Genuine.*) What a smart robe.

BEAU. It's from China.

CLARKE. (*Handing Beau his hat/umbrella.*) I didn't see any robes like that when I was in China.

BEAU. Well, next time you go I'll give you the name of the tailor.

CLARKE. Yes, please, I'd like that (*Feeling it.*) —silky, smooth... (*Noticing Marjorie and Sylvia.*) Darling?!

MARJORIE. Clarke!

SYLVIA. Clarke.

CLARKE. Darling, what are you doing here?

SYLVIA. Darling, you knew I was here. You came looking for me.

CLARKE. No, not you, darling. (*To Marjorie.*) You, darling.

MARJORIE. Did you get a telegram from Sylvie too then, darling? We must have been on the same train. What a relief, isn't it, dear?

CLARKE. Quite!

Sylvia and Beau look at each other, then back to Clarke and Marjorie.

SYLVIA and BEAU. Sorry?

CLARKE. We haven't known how to tell you.

SYLVIA. Tell us what?

CLARKE. (*Genuine.*) That's a lovely negligee, Sylvie.

SYLVIA. Thank you, Clarke.

BEAU. Tell us what, Clarke?

CLARKE. (*Soaking in the place.*) I always love it here.

BEAU. As do I.

CLARKE. It's so tidy and well kept.

BEAU. Mother wouldn't have it any other way.

CLARKE. That's what *I'm* saying.

SYLVIA. Tell us what, Clarke?

CLARKE. Ah, yes. Simply put... (*Not at all simply.*) Marjorie and I are in love!

Clarke and Marjorie revel in their love.

Note: Wherever Marjorie and Clarke can steal a kiss, a look, a grab, they ought to. There's nothing "mediocre" about what they have together.

BEAU. With each other?

MARJORIE. Quite. In fact, Beau, darling, well, I suppose considering *your* news it will come as a comfort to you now. This child is not yours!

CLARKE. (*With enormous pride.*) I'm the father, Beau! (*Breathes deeply, now joyous.*) God, it feels good to get that off my chest! I was dreading having to act the uncle to my son.

MARJORIE. Or daughter.

CLARKE. (*A throwaway.*) Right. (*Now a proclamation.*) I want the child to call me Papa!

MARJORIE. What a favor you've done us, Sylvie! I know tonight,

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 incredulousness.*) 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.

The play doesn't end here...

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