

Scene Eight
The History Professor and the Mystery Novelist

(Projected: Harry's Place. The PHOTOGRAPHER walks into the next scene. The HISTORY PROFESSOR and The MYSTERY NOVELIST enter while PHOTOGRAPHER speaks and they sit at a table.)

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. The History Professor and the Mystery Novelist sit in silence. They have been sitting for quite a while. Hours? It feels like hours. I'm not good with time any more. It's probably not hours. They sit. They sit. They sit more. One of them will have to say it. Neither wants to be the first.~~

HISTORY PROFESSOR. *(Noise of clearing throat.)* Ahem.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. What's that?

HISTORY PROFESSOR. Just clearing my throat.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Oh. I thought you were going to say something.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. No.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Me either.

(Pause.)

Beautiful day.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. It's really temperate.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. How are things?

HISTORY PROFESSOR. Oh, you know. Okay.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Me too.

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. They miss each other with an ache more painful than when they were first dating. They are both miserable. But he doesn't think she feels the same way. She does. She thinks he's screwing his teaching assistant. He isn't. She thinks she loves her empty house. She didn't for a day or two. She thinks he loves his backdoor life. He doesn't. They are so desperate it's aching in their mouths.~~

HISTORY PROFESSOR. How's the house?

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Good. Good.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. If you want, I could come over, take care of some chores. Change a few light bulbs.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. That would be nice. If it's not too much trouble. I'm sure you got a lot going on.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. I wouldn't want to intrude.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. It would be nice.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. If you want. Just for a few minutes.

I don't have to stay long if you don't want.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. It's quiet in the house.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. You like it like that.

MYSTERY NOVELIST. I do. Sometimes.

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. He thinks about the red couch. He thinks about her. He thinks about her on the red couch. He sighs. She doesn't recognize this sigh. She thinks he is impatient to get away.~~

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Sorry if I'm keeping you.

HISTORY PROFESSOR. Not at all. How's the novel?

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Getting there. How's the research?

HISTORY PROFESSOR. Frustrating.

(Beat.)

I miss you.

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. She didn't expect that.~~

MYSTERY NOVELIST. You do? What do you miss?

HISTORY PROFESSOR. Everything.

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. And he means it. She thinks she might miss everything about him too. Almost everything? Everything. Last night she found his fingernail clipping on the rug and almost cried. But she doesn't say that. Instead she says -~~

MYSTERY NOVELIST. You can move back in if you want.

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. She says it herself. Why say it this~~

HISTORY PROFESSOR. I'd like that. Do you mean -?

MYSTERY NOVELIST. On a trial basis.
 HISTORY PROFESSOR. Yes.
 MYSTERY NOVELIST. We try. Again. Us.
 HISTORY PROFESSOR. We. Our marriage?
 MYSTERY NOVELIST. Our life. Are you in agreement?
 HISTORY PROFESSOR. I am.
 MYSTERY NOVELIST. What will we tell the children?
 HISTORY PROFESSOR. We'll think of something.

(They kiss.)

MYSTERY NOVELIST. Okay then.
 HISTORY PROFESSOR. Right.
 MYSTERY NOVELIST. I'm glad.
 HISTORY PROFESSOR. I am too.
 MYSTERY NOVELIST. We should come here more.

~~PHOTOGRAPHER. Of course, it's a seasonal restaurant and the season is almost over. A cold wind blows in. The first of the leaves turn and fall from the trees. The maples always succumb first.~~

Scene Nine The Photographer and the Gravedigger

(Projected: the graveyard. The PHOTOGRAPHER finds herself there. GRAVEDIGGER appears. He holds the bouquet of flowers, larger now because he has also picked up the flowers that the FLORIST dropped.)

GRAVEDIGGER. It's time now.

PHOTOGRAPHER. Time?

GRAVEDIGGER. It's time to go -

PHOTOGRAPHER. But I have - there are so many -

GRAVEDIGGER. When it's time, it's time. You can feel it, can't you?

PHOTOGRAPHER. But can't. I'm not ready.

GRAVEDIGGER. You can't argue with me about it. I mean it won't do any good. When it's time, it's time.

PHOTOGRAPHER. I won't do it.

GRAVEDIGGER. You're fading.

PHOTOGRAPHER. I know.

GRAVEDIGGER. You've stuck around a while. They don't usually, but you're different.

(He hands her the flowers. She accepts them.)

PHOTOGRAPHER. Thank you, Earl, for...everything.

GRAVEDIGGER. It was nothing.

(The PHOTOGRAPHER kisses him on the cheek.)

PHOTOGRAPHER. There's just one thing I have to do.

(The GRAVEDIGGER looks at her but says nothing. The projection changes. He leaves.)