

## **Sebastian, Mark & Lydia**

**LYDIA.** Sebastian, Mark wants to take me down to Monte Carlo for ten days or so -

**SEBASTIAN.** What for?

**LYDIA.** A holiday. A rest - like the doctor said -

**SEBASTIAN.** Well, can't you have a rest here?

**LYDIA.** Since you ask - no. Unless you go to Monte Carlo instead.

**SEBASTIAN.** Well that might be an idea. I doubt if my Editor would scream with joy though, seeing he's away too.

**LYDIA.** In Tangier.

**SEBASTIAN.** Yes. How did you know? Well, can you get Mrs Maccreedy to come in every day?

**LYDIA.** Not a chance.

**SEBASTIAN.** Just as well. It'd be very expensive.

**LYDIA.** But I've got a better idea. I haven't asked her, but I think I might just get Prunella to look after you.

**SEBASTIAN.** Prunella? Prunella Larkin?

**LYDIA.** Yes. Just for that little time.

*Pause.*

**SEBASTIAN.** There is no such thing as a little time with Prunella Larkin. An hour is an eternity. Ten days - ten consecutive days with her and I'd be a gibbering lunatic.

**LYDIA** (*not displeased*). Oh. It's just that you did seem to have been seeing quite a lot of her recently -

*Pause.*

**SEBASTIAN** (*carefully*). Mrs Larkin and I do, I grant, have certain interests in common, but they are interests that can usually be shared in well under thirty minutes of fairly concentrated converse. If after those brief encounters I should choose not to plod back to Islington but to sleep in my Editor's flat, to which I have a key, that is a matter for my conscience but not for your prurient suspicions. If you insist on skipping off on this extravagant jaunt, I shall go to the Savoy and send the bill in to Mark. If he doesn't pay I shall sell these chessmen. Now, does that settle the matter?

**LYDIA** (*a shade breathlessly*). Yes. Oh yes. Oh yes, it does.

**SEBASTIAN.** Good.

*Gravely.*

Your move, Mark.

*LYDIA suddenly bursts into a peal of slightly drunken laughter and kisses his head.*

Darling, please. This game needs concentration. Bobby Fischer won't have a camera click ten yards away - much less a hyena screeching tipsily in his ear.

**LYDIA.** Sorry. I was trying to kiss you.

**SEBASTIAN.** There is a time and a place.

**LYDIA.** Yes. I know both.

*Trying to be very silent, she puts down her glass, fumbles in her bag and takes out two pills from the familiar bottle. In doing so she knocks a glass over*

**SEBASTIAN.** Darling, go and cook dinner.

**LYDIA.** Yes.

*She swallows the pills with a sip of vodka. MARK sees her*

**MARK (sharply).** You've already had two of those -

**LYDIA.** Yes, but I missed two after lunch.

**SEBASTIAN.** What's she had two of?

**LYDIA.** My tonic pills.

**SEBASTIAN (deep in thought).** Oh yes, those iron things. Very good for her, Mark. Put on eight pounds -

**LYDIA (shouting).** Two!

*MARK castles.*

**SEBASTIAN.** The move of a coward.

*After a pause.*

How did we get to know each other, Mark? It was in California when I was lecturing at UCLA, but I don't remember exactly how - was it chess?

**MARK.** No, it was Lydia. I came to hear the new Tolstoy lecture and sat next to the new Tolstoy's wife.

**SEBASTIAN.** Oh yes, of course. You thought for a moment you were in love with her or something, didn't you?

**MARK (looking at LYDIA).** I think I still am - or something -

**SEBASTIAN (deep in the game).** Extraordinary.

*LYDIA picks up her wrap to have another go, but is warned by MARK with a gesture.*

How long ago was it that we had that fantastic scene?

**MARK.** Twenty-five years -

**SEBASTIAN.** Pissed as newts in a topless joint in downtown Los Angeles -

**MARK.** They didn't have topless joints then.

**SEBASTIAN.** Where was it?

**MARK.** Just a bar.

**SEBASTIAN.** It seemed rather topless, but I suppose everything did in those days. Did you ever tell Lydia about it?

*LYDIA has set herself firmly down again. The conversation is interesting her*

**LYDIA.** No, he didn't.

**SEBASTIAN.** Well he should have. It was all very funny, really. (*To MARK.*) Knight to King's Bishop four, Mark.

**MARK** (*savagely*). I can see -

**SEBASTIAN.** Well you couldn't see anything that night. I suppose I couldn't either, come to that.

(*To LYDIA.*) It was about four in the morning and Mark suddenly threw his arms around me, shattering all the glasses at the bar -

**MARK.** We were at a table, in a corner - and I shattered no glasses.

**SEBASTIAN** (*sternly*). We were at the bar, you broke at least six of their best glasses, and you startled an elderly hooker almost to death -

**MARK.** A *topless* elderly hooker, of course. Don't listen to him, Lydia, his memory's going rapidly.. . It's very sad -

**SEBASTIAN** (*to LYDIA*). You get the picture, darling. Mark has thrown his arms around me and the cutlery has gone flying -

**LYDIA.** Get to the dialogue.

**SEBASTIAN.** The dialogue. . . Yes. Well, suiting words to his astonishing action, he said: 'Oh, what a pity it is that I admire you so much more than any writer on earth, and that I love you so very, very passionately...'

**MARK.** I never said 'passionately'-

**SEBASTIAN.** Well whatever the word was, it put that hooker out like a light