

FOR THE LOVE OF FRITZ

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CHARACTERS

LEANORA: indulgent, nostalgic, oblivious, late 50s

BOOBY: ruffled, beaten down, early 30s

POLICEMAN: mid 60s

SENOR CLAVET: Portuguese undercover detective, early 60s

FRITZ: loud, rude, mid 60s

MADAGASCAN HOT AIR BALLOON INSTRUCTOR – dead, presumed to be Fritz.

BABY REGINALD GORDON

STAGING NOTE

As The Madagascan Hot Air Balloon Instructor and Baby Reginald Gordon do not speak, both can be doll figures.

The policeman of Act 1 and the character of Fritz who appears in Act 2 can be played by the same actor allowing for three male actors instead of four.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

A double bed in a palatial room. Paintings, dresses, jewellery and shoes cover the setting. Leanora is sitting up in bed eating sponge cake, drinking rum and smoking with the aid of a cigarette holder.

LEANORA: It doesn't seem that long ago that I was spending German summer evenings in the fine parks of Cologne with my third husband, the forlorn and highly abrupt banker Fritz; listening to Shostakovich and Schubert with some sauerkraut and sausage for oral accompaniment. Fritz, darling Fritz, what is his surname? Mullenheimerspiegelshafts or something to that effect. Boo, Booby, where are you? What use is a fifth husband one must continually holler out for? Boo Boo, Booby...

Leanora bites angrily into her sponge cake and drinks more rum.

Look at these paintings, valueless: antipodean pretenders whose light shone brightly for only a matter of months, the gormless Dutch under the weight of Van Gogh and the remains of that ill-fated collecting trip to Argentina with Guillermo who I was only engaged to. Oh the shame in arriving in Buenos Aires to discover the man had a virtual harem of slinky beauties. Booby, Boob, Boob, where are you? Coffee, coffee, Booby. He knows how well it goes with my rum at this hour! Boo Boo!

Booby's head appears from under the bed. He looks exhausted and apprehensive.

BOOBY: I'm sorry Leanora. I was tired. I fell asleep. It's been a long hot day painting the roof of the house Atlantic blue.

LEANORA: I married someone young so that they wouldn't fall asleep at the supper hour Booby. I need companionship of an evening; companionship of a non-competitive kind that I don't receive from my female acquaintances.

BOOBY: I would be companionable at the supper hour Leanora if I wasn't rising at 4am each morning!

LEANORA: But you're a mere thirty-four.

BOOBY: My energy levels are depleted tonight Leanora. Physical labour demands more than my current diet of white bread and leftover cocktail frankfurts.

LEANORA: You'd be at the soup kitchen if it wasn't for my philanthropy.

BOOBY: You never told me I was your fifth husband. I thought second...possibly third.

LEANORA: I cannot help my number of marriages Boo Boo. Ideally it would have been just one, an eternal romantic fairytale but nature has been against me. I have never pretended to enjoy my time as a single woman or as a separated woman or as a divorced woman. My happiness has been found in partnerships. It's true I've made some hasty decisions. It's true also that I cannot tolerate a man who won't spend lavishly on me and that when financial problems have proved insurmountable then my tenure as wife has come to a swift conclusion. In my younger days I made no qualms about looking elsewhere. It all may seem selfish and old worldly to you but my childhood was ghastly and I had to find some way to lift myself out of the possibilities of hairdressing or the office pool. I never ever wanted a life of routine and struggle to pay the bills.

Leanora returns to her cake and rum. Booby can be heard snoring as Leanora continues.

LEANORA: Ah, when I think back to Paris, the late 60s with Eric, my first love and husband: nights sipping wine by the Seine, quail, mussels, the little Indian cricket player I visited for bridge in the long shadowed afternoons. Eric may have been my eternal if his mother hadn't have tried to poison me with snails! *(Pause)* Booby, wake up and stop that snoring! Your only misconception surrounding me Boo Boo is that you thought you were marrying into a financial rescue plan when I myself am only managing on divorce settlements.

BOOBY: I'd just like a comfortable night's rest more than anything. Can I sleep beside you in the bed tonight?

LEANORA: Certainly not. I need to luxuriate and spread my continually heartbroken limbs across these bereft and disappointed sheets. Booby, remember please, you threw yourself at me at a time when you couldn't have even afforded a tent!

BOOBY: I was with a friend as you were. They both departed leaving us together. Before I could leave, you squashed me into that velvet booth at the rear. You were practically ripping my shirt within minutes of meeting me.

LEANORA: Fabricated nonsense Booby! We began with you begging for a drink and nothing has changed.

BOOBY: I didn't beg.

LEANORA: Enough. Your facts distort. Now, Boo Boo, I want you to drive me around town tomorrow. There are six apartments in the centre I'd like to peruse, if my financial luck changes.

BOOBY: Not on a Friday, Leanora. The traffic will be gridlocked.

LEANORA: We'll begin at two and be home by five. You can have twenty minutes rest then before starting on my toenails.

BOOBY (*horrified*): Oh no, not those tough tommies again.

Blackout

SCENE 2

Leanora and Booby return to the bedroom. Leanora is in a rollicking mood. Booby trails behind her looking bedraggled. Leanora grabs Booby and throws him onto the bed. She then begins removing her make-up.

LEANORA: Take five minutes on the bed Booby while I remove my make-up. What a charming real-estate agent! And to think you went to school with him!

BOOBY: Did a friendly chat about an apartment have to turn into ten hours at a Japanese restaurant with a singalong.

LEANORA: I sang *These Boots Are Made For Walking* with such remarkable vigour this evening.

BOOBY: You may have gathered that I paid for everything tonight.

LEANORA: We were entertaining your old friend.

BOOBY: Old friend! Frankie La Fontaine's no old friend.

LEANORA: He was impeccably dressed. I adore a man in a raspberry-lemon tie! Now tomorrow morning Booby, and I want no protests, we're going water-skiing and you'll guide the powered boat.

BOOBY: Water-skiing! Oh no, first the toe-nails and now the dreaded, uncontrollable speedboat.

Leanora holds out her arms. Lights flash on and off highlighting different water-ski manoeuvres.

LEANORA: How glorious it will be, those triumphant lessons in Monte Carlo holding me in good stead. The years pass but the skills don't diminish. And remember Booby, when we're out on the water tomorrow, allow for my pirouettes!

Blackout

SCENE 3

Leanora is stuffing numerous odds and ends into a suitcase. Booby rushes in with an axe.

BOOBY: Your energy is incredible Leanora. For days you loll in bed giving orders and I think of you as a beautiful (if you'll pardon the term) semi-invalid, and then suddenly, I cannot keep up the frenetic pace. Water-skiing all day yesterday, and now a hiking expedition to Fritz's, the third husband's forest hideaway.

LEANORA: I'll sip cognac under the stars tonight Booby and you'll operate the telescope on the decking to inspect Mars and Jupiter. I haven't spoken to Fritz in some months, but from memory, he is always understanding about an unannounced sojourn. What's more, he hardly ever has time for a visit to the hideaway; the *Bundesbank* in Frankfurt consumes him. I'm ready Boo Boo. Warm the car and remember we have to hike those last six kilometres to the hideaway.

Blackout

SCENE 4

Walking to the hideaway, Booby is heavily hampered by luggage and an axe. Leanora bounds along in front of him with cognac in hand. On entering Fritz's country hideaway, Leanora notices a man lying dead on the floor. She screams.

LEANORA: It's Fritz, my third, the forlorn and highly abrupt banker. Oh Fritz, darling Fritz, so much stress at the *Bundesbank* in Frankfurt. Who can possibly manage a life spent with three mobiles constantly on the go?

BOOBY: It looks like it just happened, within the last few hours anyway.

LEANORA: He was forlorn, my Fritz, but not a quitter. What murderer would track him here? Not that I should discount his cholesterol problem brought about by the steins of beer, the bratwurst and his gluttonous penchant for heavy full-cream desserts.

BOOBY: I imagine Fritz's demise leaves a spare bed on the premises Leanora?

LEANORA: No there's only one bed Boo Boo. Fritz and I learnt the platonic art of sleeping in the one bed even after our divorce, and tonight Fritz will return to sleeping beside me. I need to keep him warm. You, Boo Boo, can find a patch of floor.

BOOBY: What on earth do you mean?

LEANORA: We'll have to prop him up as well. Oh I feel bereft and terrible. Generous at times but mostly forlorn and always highly abrupt, that's how I'll remember him. C'mon Booby, let's get him into bed. You take the feet. I'll hold the head.

Leanora and Booby prop Fritz up into bed with Leanora putting blankets over him.

How beautiful our Bavarian wedding was, full of pageantry and bird shooting competitions, and dancing, oh what dancing! I was told throughout the evening how heartbroken so many of those German bankers were that I had attached myself solely to Fritz.

BOOBY: I don't suppose you've ever shared a bed with a deceased man before.

LEANORA: Only once. It was the early 60s after a folk festival somewhere. I can't remember his name. It was ghastly. *(pause)* Oh how Fritz loved this place with all his best German restraint. Maybe, he wouldn't wish to return to Frankfurt for burial. Maybe, his wish is to be buried here in the back garden of this forest hideaway we lovingly built together.

BOOBY: I can't imagine you building anything Leanora and I am certainly not burying Fritz!

LEANORA: Now Booby, there's a good set of spades and pitchforks beside the summerhouse and the soil at this time of year is moist and easily lifted.

BOOBY: I am not burying Fritz! Do you realize we could be accused of murder? We'll be interrogated. This is a terrible time to arrive.

LEANORA: It's so long since I've seen my Fritz, so terribly long. I'm tired now and must jump into bed with him. Now Booby, go to sleep elsewhere. I need quiet time with the man who kept the *Bundesbank* ticking.

Blackout

SCENE 5

Next morning, dawn.

Booby is dragging and lifting Fritz along the trek back to the car as Leanora admires the morning.

LEANORA: A wise decision Booby to leave the luggage and the axe behind. After such a traumatic evening, it's lovely just to be out and about with nature.

BOOBY: I'm going to have to put Fritz down Leanora.

LEANORA: Booby, we don't want to be on this forest trail all morning. I've got a hair appointment booked for this afternoon. You knew from the outset your place in this marriage Booby. I admit this situation is one of the more extreme you'll have to deal with, and yet, think of tonight, after my hair is done. We'll be resting in the beautiful house, Little Edith steaming your asparagus while diligently preparing my bouillabaisse. Last night in that hot bed of death, I was sure I heard Fritz's commanding voice tempting me *(in German accent)*: 'Leanora, I am resting. This is no end. Take me to your house with its new Atlantic blue roof and make that new husband

of yours work and work the long hours while we make a party we will not forget.'

BOOBY: Thank God. I think I can see the car through the clearing.

Booby continues to drag Fritz. On reaching the car, Leanora puts her arm around Fritz as they get into the back of the car. Their pose in the back resembles a couple comfortably dating. Booby takes the front to drive and they travel a brief distance.

BOOBY: Oh my God, it's the police!

LEANORA: I'll deal with this Booby. Policemen can't help be seduced by me. I remember a lover I had many years ago who had a car that was pulled over for going too slow up a steep busy bridge. He was alarmingly rattled but I relaxed the situation and the same will apply here. Morning officer, you're looking terribly spiffy!

POLICEMAN: You were travelling extremely quickly around that bend sir. Any particular reason for the rush?

Leanora steps out of the car as Fritz falls across the seat.

LEANORA: Can I be of assistance officer?

POLICEMAN: I don't think so madam. This is a simple speeding enquiry. You might be best to return to your seat. Step out of the car please sir. You're the driver. I want to have a word with you.

Leanora moves back to her seat trying to unobtrusively shift Fritz.

BOOBY: Sleeping off a very heavy hangover officer.

LEANORA: Rest on me darling. We'll be home soon. Our cheaply hired driver has just lost a little bit of control of the car. Rest there and we'll make sure we hire somebody else next time.

POLICEMAN: I'm afraid, sir, that a ticket is the order of the day. Your licence.

Booby hands over his licence. The policeman takes the details.

POLICEMAN: I'd like to inspect the car as well sir, if you don't mind. It's a routine inspection. We have to be stringent around these parts. Madam, would you and your male companion please step out of the car?

LEANORA: Officer I'm a very tired invalid this morning and as I've already made one entrance out of the car, could this inspection just go ahead around the both of us?

POLICEMAN: I'm afraid not Madam, that would be inexact on my behalf.

LEANORA: But officer...

POLICEMAN: Madam, step out of the car!

Leanora steps out with Fritz flopping in the back.

POLICEMAN: Could you wake the male beside you Madam? He can't just lie around in the back!

LEANORA: Quick Booby start the car.

Booby complies. Leanora then throws a big right-hand punch that knocks the policeman flat to the ground. She then jumps in the back, props Fritz up again and they hurry off.

BOOBY: What in the name of...

LEANORA: Foot on the floor Booby, we don't want to get involved in explanations. Quick, quick, I know a secret back way out, turn right here, turn left, turn right again, quick.

BOOBY: That was an incredible punch!

LEANORA: My grand pa pa was a boxer. He taught me a ferocious uppercut. He knew it wasn't lady-like but he also knew it might be necessary.

BOOBY: Water-skiing, boxing. What's on the agenda this afternoon – nude abseiling?

LEANORA: Concentrate Booby. You're a terrible driver even at the most relaxed of times. Can you hear sirens?

BOOBY: We might be in the clear unless they're setting up roadblocks.

LEANORA: No-one knows this track back. I'm sure of it.

BOOBY: I hope you're right.

LEANORA: I'll plead provocation and my lawyers can probably dig up something sordid about that inspector.

BOOBY: We'll have to dispose of the car. It can't sit outside the manor any longer.

LEANORA: Get me home Booby and then dispose of the vehicle. I can't quite remember which interim lover gave it to me. A Moroccan card shark with a sex toy business in Marseille possibly. Ah Booby, Booby, look out, it's a police barricade. How could they know? How could they set it up so quickly? Fritz, Fritz, look alive! Drive through them, drive through them!

Booby speeds up and they crash through the police barricade both screaming as Fritz's arms start flailing about knocking both Leanora and Booby.

Blackout

SCENE 6

Back at home. Leanora's bedroom is lit by two candles. Sitting on the bed, she is wearing a balaclava. Fritz hangs on a chair with a newspaper over his head. Booby also wears a balaclava and baggy winter pajamas while acting as a guard at the door.

LEANORA: Every light off Boo Boo?

BOOBY: Yes Leanora.

LEANORA: And little Edith has been taxied to the train station to begin her early vacation?

BOOBY: Indeed.

LEANORA: And Fritz is comfortable there on his chair?

BOOBY: I've never seen a man look more relaxed.

LEANORA: So from an outsider's point of view, this house looks empty.

BOOBY: I'd say so. One question. Do you think, given the unusual summer temperatures, that the balaclavas are necessary inside?

LEANORA: Don't question my precautions Booby. We have to sit this out.

BOOBY: Does Fritz?

LEANORA: You'll have to bury him tonight beside the vegetable garden. I see no other option.

BOOBY: I've told you that I am not burying Fritz.

LEANORA: I'll supervise with a small torch. It will be over within an hour. Oh it will be lovely to have him so close to me – forever. After the burial, we'll sleep by day Booby and remain vigilant of a night. Now Booby...not another word.

Blackout

SCENE 7

Fritz is sprawled out on the ground beside Booby. Leanora supervises with the torch. She informs Booby where to dig and he grudgingly begins.

BOOBY: This soil is rock hard.

LEANORA: It's one minor gripe after another with you Boo Boo. Dig!

BOOBY: Are you just going to lower Fritz in like that, in his suit with nothing else over him?

LEANORA: Would you prefer he wore something else?

BOOBY: No, I mean, some further covering...

LEANORA: Oh Booby, thank you for reminding me, how remiss, how cruel. Of course, of course, but what shall we do?

BOOBY: I have a sleeping bag from my budget European travels.

LEANORA: Yes, warmth and softness.

BOOBY: I also had to resort to it on our honeymoon during that surprise cold snap in Cardiff.

LEANORA: That's a lie Booby, but quick, grab it from the bedroom. Don't keep me or my beloved Fritz waiting.

Booby departs to grab the sleeping bag as Leanora inspects Fritz's teeth with the torch. On returning, he and Leanora attempt to stuff Fritz into the bag. Suddenly, another torch appears in their faces. It's the policeman from earlier in the day. One side of his face is wrapped in white bandage. Leanora screams.

POLICEMAN: Good evening. We've met before I believe.

LEANORA: Oh quite possibly officer but it would have to be many years ago as my short-term memory is highly unreliable. Would you care for an evening drink, an aperitif perhaps? Little Edith, the maid, has taken an early vacation but I could fix you something welcoming.

POLICEMAN: Could you explain this man to me? I believe I saw him with you this morning in the back of the speeding vehicle.

BOOBY: It's a sad story officer. Ah, ah, his hangover turned into alcoholic poisoning.

LEANORA: We're just concurring with his forceful wishes for a nocturnal home burial. Now inspector, I've got some beautiful cucumber and carrot sandwiches waiting upstairs...

POLICEMAN: Madam, you are charged with assault of a policeman, a serious charge that could be upgraded to grievous bodily harm. Your driver...

LEANORA: Husband.

POLICEMAN: I'm sure I overheard when I pulled you over that he was just hired help. Regardless, he's charged with numerous driving offences. We also have the small matter of this dead man...

LEANORA: Would you like to do an inspection of the body?

POLICEMAN: There's a lot I'd like to do Madam and will do. You'll have to follow me down to the station.

LEANORA: Couldn't that inconvenience wait until morning?

POLICEMAN: No Madam. I'll call an ambulance to take the body away and you and your...

LEANORA: Husband.

POLICEMAN: Husband, yes, will have to answer a few questions at the station. Many questions actually. I expect then you might have to spend the rest of the evening detained there in separate cells.

LEANORA: How did you find us?

POLICEMAN: I drink regularly of a late afternoon with Frankie La Fontaine, the real-estate agent who doubles as a police informer. He had all your details. Frankie's never one to keep a secret. You could say I got lucky but with a friend like Frankie, it rarely gets down to mere luck.

LEANORA: I see. Well I'm determined to remain extremely cordial during all this commotion so I will make another pleasant offer. Are you sure you don't require a warming drink or beetroot sandwich?

POLICEMAN: Madam no. I'll just inspect the body and write down a quick description before we go to the station together. His name?

LEANORA: Fritz.

POLICEMAN: Second name?

LEANORA: Bodo.

POLICEMAN: Surname?

LEANORA: Mullenheimerspiegelschafts.

POLICEMAN: I beg your pardon.

LEANORA: Mullenheimerspiegelschafts.

At Leanora's suggestion, Booby quietly grabs the shovel as the policeman hovers over Fritz.

LEANORA: Mullenheimerspiegelschafts. He was from Frankfurt. We lived there...

POLICEMAN: Yes, yes, right, and his...

LEANORA: Now Booby, now!

Booby crashes the shovel over the policeman's head knocking him out and killing him.

LEANORA: Quick Boob, put Fritz into the sleeping bag, then we'll have to throw the inspector on top. There'll be no wrap over him though. He's going under in what he's got on!

Leanora and Booby try stuffing Fritz into the sleeping bag unsuccessfully before throwing it away. They bury Fritz. Then they grab the policeman and throw him on top of Fritz.

LEANORA: Oh my God, to think Fritz and that man will rot together! But what choice do we have? I certainly wasn't going to waste an evening in a police lock-up. Now Booby, pack your clothes, throw a few of my sunniest summer dresses into a suitcase, find our passports with the false names and we'll taxi to the airport. We'll get on any plane that's going. By tomorrow, we'll be untraceable fugitives. We'll need to be. Quick, go, don't just stare at me. It's off-putting in the extreme. Go, go and don't forget to pack all my lipsticks!

Blackout

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

Leanora and Booby are seated at an outdoor café sharing a bottle of wine. Leanora has a large glass almost full while Booby has a tiny glass with just a drop in it. Both are wearing sunhats and sunglasses. Leanora is singing Begin the Beguine as Booby watches on admiringly. When she finishes singing, she lounges back with her glass of wine.

LEANORA: Some things were meant to be Boo Boo. Two days ago mourning over and burying dear Fritz, who would have thought we'd now be in the bottom of Portugal with all these pasty bottomed English tourists, miles and miles from any scandal? Always hold a fake passport. That's been my motto from husband one onwards. The sweet sensation of dipping my toes into that glorious Atlantic Ocean this morning has elevated my mood tremendously - though it must be stated Boo Boo - that the blue paint you erratically splashed across my manor roof is not quite authentic. You'll need to rectify that in time.

BOOBY: I'm miles from that roof now Leanora. Look at all these cafes and bars. It seems the Germans and the Austrians and the Swiss are all devouring the Portuguese sun as well.

LEANORA: Ah yes, starved of warmth.

BOOBY: Oh no look, police!

LEANORA: Will you settle down Booby. They are nowhere near us. They're merely arresting those young boys. It has nothing to do with our little mishaps of the last few days.

Leanora breaks into a short rendition of Fascinating Rhythm by Mel Torme with a glass of wine in hand.

LEANORA: It's only now I realize how stifled I'd become in England. To be in Portugal where nobody knows your whereabouts is extremely delicious. *(Leanora continues with Fascinating Rhythm but is stopped in her tracks when she notices a baby)* Oh my sweet Lord, what are you doing here, all by yourself? *(Leanora rushes over and picks up the child and rocks it tenderly)*. Where are your guardians little one? *(Leanora looks around while holding the baby)*. Waiter, the bill. No I'll just leave the money on the table. Quick Booby, let us vacate this table at once!

BOOBY: Leanora, let that baby be, it's not our problem.

LEANORA: Are you demented? I'm not going to trust somebody else to deal with this beautiful, exuberant and needy child. I can see in its eyes that this child requires a loving, mature step-mother.

BOOBY: You are demented. Hand the baby over at once. Just hand it to somebody else and they can deal with it. We want no dealings with the police.

LEANORA: I think the baby's been left behind by selfish tourists.

BOOBY: Leanora, I'm not interested in the added burden of step-fatherhood.

LEANORA (to baby): Would you like a pair of raspberry booties? Yes you would, wouldn't you, my goeey duckling.

BOOBY: We're going to get life for murder and then another thirty for child abduction! Throw away the key now. I won't get out until 2030!

LEANORA: Shoosh shoosh Booby, don't be childishly melodramatic. The baby has gone to sleep. Shoosh shoosh. Oh to finally be a mother. Denied, denied, denied all these barren years. Quick Booby, let's get back to the hotel with the little one. I want to bathe him. You'll have to buy a stroller this afternoon.

Leanora now charges, baby in arms, through the streets with an exhausted Booby barely able to keep up. Bruce Springsteen's Born To Run plays. They see a vacant stroller along the way and Leanora puts the baby into it and continues charging. They continue moving quickly and arrive back at the hotel where Booby collapses onto the bed as Leanora dotes on the baby.

BOOBY: We're done for. Done for. Bring out the bi-lingual lawyers.

LEANORA: Will you be quiet Mr. Doom and Gloom. This is a momentous day in my life - motherhood in Portugal and if you can't step up to the responsibility of step-fathering, may I suggest then that a sixth husband might be imminent. (To baby) Reginald, that's what we'll call you, Reginald, and as a second name, Gordon – Reginald Gordon – doesn't it roll off the tongue splendidly Booby?

Booby starts to hold his heart and gasp and convulse.

LEANORA: Booby, not a heart attack surely, not with your lean frame. Don't be a quitter Boo Boo. I'll need you...or will I, now that I have Reginald Gordon? (Booby drops to the floor) My fifth husband, gone! A man who wasn't very adaptable I'd have to say. Widowed twice in the same week! But where there's death, there's life, and my scrumptious and unexpected little addition Reginald Gordon stands testament to that.

A middle-aged man with a moustache bursts into the room.

LEANORA: Yes what do you want? Oh, sir, I can see you're a fine gentleman, forgive my brusque greeting. Can I be of spectacular assistance?

SENOR CLAVET: I'm sorry Madam. I have mistaken the room number I fear and you look very pre-occupied.

LEANORA: Well yes, we've only been in Portugal less than twenty-four hours and it seems my husband has, ah, ah, developed strange sleeping habits due to low blood pressure. I've also just become a mother.

SENOR CLAVET: I do not want to judge Madam but would you mind me saying that your new-born is rather an old looking baby considering he has just entered the world.

LEANORA: This is only my first and I'm looking to add brothers and sisters to this little accomplishment. You're a wonderfully attractive man, but now, if you'll excuse me, I must attend briefly to my husband and child.

SENOR CLAVET: Allow me to introduce myself.

LEANORA: My dear sir, I'm simply too preoccupied for any more convivial exchange at present.

SENOR CLAVET: Madam, please allow me to invite you to the town square this evening and allow me to apologize for my indiscreet entrance. Money is no impediment for a woman as dazzling as you. I am Senor Clavet, a local wine merchant. *(Kisses her hand)* Let us say 10PM. I'll be at the café in the far corner, The Pessoa, the famous one of endless chandeliers. I gather your husband and baby can sleep soundly while you are in my company.

LEANORA: Oh indeed. What charm. 10PM it is.

SENOR CLAVET: Until this evening.

Senor Clavet departs. Leanora puts the baby into bed. She then drags Booby around the room.

LEANORA: Oh what to do with you Booby.

Leanora with much difficulty shoves Booby into the clothes cupboard.

LEANORA: We'll work out what to do with you tomorrow Number 5. That wealthy looking man, a potential number 6, must have spotted me in the foyer on my arrival. Oh it feels so long ago since I had such devoted attention. I do love a bit of chivalry and razzamatazz, and now widowed, how exhilarating it will be to step out into some martini soaked nightlife as a single woman, or should I now say, as a proud pioneering single mother. I must dress!

Blackout

SCENE 2

That evening Leanora is in a highly gregarious mood laughing uproariously at Senor Clavet's jokes.

LEANORA: Oh I do love a double entendre. Are you interested in my extreme radiance Senor Clavet?

SENIOR CLAVET: Oh yes, I am.

LEANORA: After this wonderful champagne I'm tingling at the prospect of your warm paws painting my cool Goya-esque back.

SENIOR CLAVET: We will therefore have to make some plans.

LEANORA: Forward planning is always so appealing in a man. Furthermore, I've always demanded it!

SENIOR CLAVET: Now let me refill your glass Madam.

LEANORA: Senor, I must tell you how irresistibly amorous I can become with champagne. Throw in a martini and you will feel like you have never made love before.

SENIOR CLAVET: Let me bring both champagne and a martini to the table most swiftly then madam if that is the case. (*Senor Clavet rises from the table and begins massaging Leanora*) And your current accommodation, is it to your liking Madam?

LEANORA: It's a fine hotel certainly. I feel I may stay for at least another month; the hot weather is so reassuring for my proppy ankles.

SENIOR CLAVET: Perhaps you would consider being my guest for the next few weeks in my penthouse apartment; the only one of its kind in the whole of Portugal.

LEANORA: Oh I...well I am still officially a married woman but my current marriage has been unrewarding for many years. I accept your offer as long as you don't mind my child accompanying me.

SENIOR CLAVET: I have often dreamed madam about the joys of step-fatherhood. It would be a privilege to have your son enter my penthouse.

Blackout

SCENE 3

Later that evening, Leanora returns to her room. On entering, she immediately checks on Booby. To her disbelief, he has disappeared from the cupboard.

LEANORA: Booby, Boo Boo, where are you? Oh Booby, Who has removed you? Could you still be alive? Am I not a widow for the second time this week after all? Reginald Gordon, you may still have your original stepfather! Where could my fifth have possibly gone?

Blackout

SCENE 4

Leanora is admiring the view beside the bed. Senor Clavet is lying on the floor.

LEANORA: The invitation into your penthouse was a grand idea Senor Clavet. A finer view over the sea I could not imagine and such a comfortable little side room for Reginald Gordon.

SENROR CLAVET: Considering the cost of the penthouse madam, I was hoping to be sleeping somewhat closer to you, and in the bed.

LEANORA: Every man, no matter how charming, must pay his dues in the romantic stakes and you...

The door opens and a bedraggled Booby arrives.

LEANORA: Booby! Booby! How are you alive?

BOOBY: Never mind that now. I got the news about you moving into this penthouse from our hotel concierge. Who is this scheming interloper?

LEANORA: Senor Clavet, a local wine merchant.

BOOBY: And where's the baby?

LEANORA: Your stepson is sleeping soundly. Booby, what in God's name happened?

BOOBY: In brief, I was struck by a heavy and rare fit of narcolepsy. I woke in the cupboard scared out of my mind and in a fever of indiscretion decided to try and leave Portugal. Then I realized I didn't really have anywhere to go.

LEANORA: Yes, yes, how could you? I have the house keys, the passports and the traveller's cheques.

SENIOR CLAVET: Although we haven't yet been formally introduced, would you care for a drink sir?

LEANORA: A drink, oh most definitely. Sweet sherry for me and tap water for Booby.

SENIOR CLAVET: Yes madam.

Senor Clavet gets up and goes to prepare the drinks.

LEANORA: A fifth husband back from the dead, a new stepson, and a new admirer very taken by my alluring ways. Booby, you have gone from my main focus to being only thirty-three and one-third percent of the package!

BOOBY (*quietly*): We've got a big package waiting for us in jail if we don't act. I've been listening on the wireless. We're in huge trouble back home. The search is on for the missing body of the policeman. My German is hopelessly inadequate but even I could sense from the Frankfurt newspapers that the word is also out about Fritz's disappearance.

LEANORA: Newspapers move swiftly Booby. Today's front page is tomorrow's kitty litter.

Senor Clavet returns with the drinks.

SENIOR CLAVET: All is well madam.

LEANORA: Oh yes. Booby and I were just getting up to date.

SENIOR CLAVET: Very well madam. But I'd still like to ask you a few questions, a few serious questions now that your much younger husband has arrived (*releases a police badge*) I might have kept up the debonair and entertaining persona a little bit longer madam...but the prospect of sleeping on the floor in the penthouse did not fill me with much pleasure. Let me truly introduce myself: Senor Clavet - Portuguese Crime Squad.

LEANORA: Tricked again. And to think I thought you were only interested in my undeniable beauty.

SENIOR CLAVET: What are you doing in Portugal? Why have you arrived here?

LEANORA: Oh Senor, I'm simply recuperating with my husband after a long working year.

SENOR CLAVET: And the child? The child looks nothing like you or him. I thought I heard the baby speak earlier. The baby was muttering in Dutch. Have you a birth certificate?

LEANORA: Senor Clavet, I believe very heavily in future generations being trilingual at the very least. Booby, dearest Boo Boo, do go to the kitchen for a moment. This questioning with this charming officer may take some time before you need to become involved. Place some water in a pot. Senor Clavet may require a delicious boiled egg as he gets to know us more intimately.

BOOBY: Yes Leanora. Right away.

Booby departs

SENOR CLAVET: I think some official questioning at police headquarters will be more in order madam. Your husband can remain here with the child and then he'll be taken down to the station for questioning.

Booby tiptoes into the room holding an enormous cooking pot in both hands and at Leanora's prompting knocks Senor Clavet out.

LEANORA: Well done Booby, well done. Now quick, bring Reginald Gordon and collect the fake passports and traveller's cheques as well. Quick, quick, wrap up Reginald Gordon for the night-air while I gather my possessions, and for heaven's sake, warn him not to mutter in Dutch! The worldwide hunt will be on for us, the shovel and pot killers! Now Booby, be a good young father and speak to Reginald Gordon in grammatically correct Somerset Maugham inspired English and let's get the blazers out of Portugal!

Blackout

SCENE 5

Bruce Springsteen's Born To Run plays. Leanora and Booby (who has Reginald Gordon in his arms) are running, looking back for signs of Senor Clavet. They finally stop from exhaustion.

BOOBY: We've got to hand the kid over. He's a liability. He's slowing us down. Here take him.

LEANORA: That is completely out of the question Boo Boo. Casablanca is where we must go now, south, south Booby, into a new maze of humanity. There must be boats on a regular basis. I believe the heat is terrible but Reginald Gordon will get a chance to develop at least another language or two.

BOOBY: At this rate, he'll be running the *United Nations* by the time he's seven.

LEANORA: How effective do you think that pot was?

BOOBY: I don't think it would have killed him. I'd say it buys us half-a-day before the chase is on. We've got to hide somewhere. Our money will run out the way we've been travelling. Casablanca won't solve our cash flow problem.

LEANORA: There's another option: Fritz's hideaway. That is the peaceful, inexpensive solution. That is where we can all be one united and safe family.

BOOBY: Yes, yes. Brilliant Leanora. Brilliant.

LEANORA: Healthy hermits, that's what we'll be Booby. I'm longing for forest airs now anyway; a touch of dew in the crystalline dawn.

BOOBY: Beautifully described Leanora. Even in desperate times there must be a moment for poetry. Now, hide out in a laneway with Reginald Gordon. I'll go to the travel agency. We'll get away tonight by any means we can.

LEANORA: Oh Booby.

BOOBY: Yes Leanora.

LEANORA: You will never have the industriousness of Fritz or the challenging groin of my second husband, Leroy 'Babyface' Womack, but right now, you are a rock of marriage stability, a jewelled hand to guide me through these treacherous waters. At this perilous moment, you are all a husband could be and more!

Booby and Leanora embrace and kiss with Reginald Gordon between them.

BOOBY: That was incredibly tender Leanora. Now I must get to work and search for that cheap travel deal. Do not move from the laneway under any circumstances.

Blackout

SCENE 6

Leanora (holding Reginald Gordon) and Booby are swaying and vomiting. A freight ship was their only passage back to the forest hideaway. Leanora cannot suppress her displeasure. Both she and Booby look extremely ill.

BOOBY: This freight ship was the safest and cheapest passage back. Not many hours to go and no questions asked.

The sea starts to get very rough. Reginald Gordon flies out of Leanora's hands and is luckily caught by Booby. But then the baby flies out of Booby's hands and is missed by Leanora. The baby falls overboard.

LEANORA: Booby, Reginald Gordon, aaaaaaaah, jump in, jump in, jump into the ocean, rescue my baby, rescue Reginald Gordon, rescue him!

BOOBY: But Leanora...

LEANORA: Jump in or I'll throw you in myself.

Booby jumps in. Leanora looks over the edge of the boat.

LEANORA: Booby, Booby, take control, take control.

BOOBY: I, I, I, ah, oh God, no, no, aaaaaah!

LEANORA: Oh no...oh no, gone, poor dearest Booby. Widowed again, grief stricken once more with a double whammy. The loss of Reginald Gordon makes me inconsolable. I see nothing but damaging years ahead of alcoholism and valium and heaven forbid... bingo! May Booby and Reginald Gordon rest peacefully with the flotsam and jetsam. All is so swift in this cruel world! May I somehow find the strength to carry on. But how? But how?

Leanora pulls out a black veil and hankie and waves to them both.

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SCENE 7

Approaching Fritz's forest hideaway. Leanora is wearing a black coat. Her balaclava has reappeared. She is walking very slowly and constantly looking around for the possibility of intruders. She enters Fritz's forest hideaway and removes the balaclava. The door opens. Fritz appears in a business suit with a paper under his arm, a large cigar coming out of his mouth. Leanora has her back to the door and is oblivious to Fritz's presence. Fritz remains still and silent and is gradually growing with fury.

FRITZ (*in a loud German accent*): What are you doing here? This is preposterous!

Leanora turns around. She sees Fritz and faints. He rushes to her attention then gets a bucket of water and throws it over her face.

FRITZ: The arrangement has always been the same since our divorce. No visits without my permission and no visits when I intend to have one of my rare holiday weekends. I come here for peace, peace in the head and how can

I get this peace with you in my rooms. This is preposterous. I ask again and for the last time. Why are you here?

LEANORA: Fritz, darling darling Fritz. It can't be you. I must be unwell. You are dead. We found you here dead on the floor only last week. We buried you and a policeman at the manor. It can't be you. Fritz, Fritz darling. I must be hallucinating terribly.

FRITZ: Dead! That is not possible. I am working harder than ever at the *Bundesbank*. I am killing myself slowly that is for sure but I am not dead. You must be crazier than before, crazier even than our marriage years.

LEANORA: It does look like you.

FRITZ: Of course it looks like me. I am Fritz, the badminton champion of Cologne in 1959, the only man to eat seventy-three bratwurst in under one hour at a fourth division German soccer fixture; this is Fritz...Fritz...Fritz Bodo Mullenheimerschaftsspiegel.... your unstoppable workaholic German ex-husband! What has happened to you? I demand answers now or get out of my hideaway. I pay money still to keep you like all the other husbands before and after but it is not to keep you here. You have the English manor.

LEANORA: Fritz, Fritz, please wait for one moment while I collect my thoughts. My memory, my catastrophic and confused and overworked memory. Yes, yes, now, now, that man, who was he, the man with the unpronounceable surname akin to yours. (*pause*) Oh no, oh no, my memory, my appalling memory...between you, my third and my second, the American college basketballer, Leroy 'Babyface' Womack, there was a day in a Madagascan registry office, the hot air balloon instructor who wanted his citizenship papers for a new life. I said use our hideaway anytime. I didn't remember or recognize him when I found him here – dead. Even though he was Madagascan, to me he looked uncannily like you. In the culmination of my shock and grief at least I thought so. Fritz darling, I suddenly feel so much better that it was only him and not you. Kiss me, kiss me Fritz and take this grieving widow back into our old marital brass bed!

FRITZ: One moment please. I need to get some official information. So with the Madagascan Hot Air Balloon instructor now on your marriage list, you've officially had six marriages, not five.

LEANORA: Officially yes. Let me rest in your arms now Fritz. I will tell all tomorrow.

FRITZ: I don't care about tomorrow. I want some sauerkraut and sausage cooked to perfection now and some steins of beer and for you to get into that kitchen and start preparing me big full-cream desserts!

LEANORA: Well you'll have to open a tin of whatever's there tonight Fritz. It's help yourself around here bucko! I'm not married to you any...

Booby and Reginald Gordon rush through the door. Booby collapses from exhaustion. Reginald Gordon is swept up from the floor by Leanora.

BOOBY: You could have halted the ship!

LEANORA: Halted the ship! I thought you both drowned. Reginald Gordon! RG, RG, you're alive!

BOOBY: Yes, Reginald Gordon and I had to swim five kilometres after being smothered in the white wash of the vessel and at the point I thought we couldn't go on any longer, a second freight approached us and hauled us to safety.

FRITZ: Who is this man in my hideaway and what is a baby doing with him?

LEANORA: This is Booby, my fifth, no, sixth husband now that I've remembered the little Madagascan. And this is my child, Reginald Gordon who speaks numerous European languages but seems to have a real fondness for Dutch. However, German is not beyond him my darling Fritz.

FRITZ: And he's the father - impossible!

LEANORA: No, the father, we assume, was a careless Portuguese tourist.

FRITZ: And what of my policies on visitors? Did you read the sign on the front door as you passed: NO CHILDREN, NO PETS and NO LIGHT BEER.

LEANORA: Fritz, Fritz, my darling, be tolerant. I will confess all when Booby is asleep and Reginald Gordon is dreaming tri-lingually. Now, let's drag Booby to bed for his recuperation. Oh how the roles reverse! He will have to share the bed with us tonight, a surprising threesome I have to say!

FRITZ: I do not go to bed with other men no matter what their physical condition and I certainly do not go to bed with your current husband. This is preposterous. I want you out of my hideaway. Out out! But first, show me the child. (*Fritz carefully inspects the child*) A fine looking *herr*. I demand custody!

LEANORA: But we're divorced.

FRITZ: Let's re-marry. Divorce this Boo Bottom Boo on my floor immediately and come back to me as official paperwork only. I only want the marriage certificate for one reason as I deserve a son and if you do this then I assure you there will be no more financial problems for you until death. I can see this boy already at business school in Stuttgart and running the *Bundesbank* by the time he is twenty-five!

LEANORA: And what will become of Booby?

FRITZ: Odd jobs and life in a tent in the forest if he wants it. I throw him a cocktail frankfurt once a month.

LEANORA: Well that won't be much change for him. You wouldn't accept a well-thought out compromise?

FRITZ: A compromise, certainly not.

BOOBY (*waking*): After what I've been through this week, the fight's on Fritz and I don't fear a thing. You can have a divorce and the quicker the better. She's an uncontrollable monster who can only ruin a man... but the child, the child I rescued in the Atlantic is half-mine. I want Reginald Gordon three and a half days a week.

LEANORA: For a father that isn't even the father! A day and a half a fortnight.

FRITZ: I suggest harder, harder... a weekend a month not that any of this will happen.

BOOBY: You won't have a leg to stand on in the courts Fritz.

LEANORA: I wouldn't worry about the courts in regards to child custody Booby. There will be murder charges to deal with once you're exposed. Have you conveniently forgotten? I am merely an innocent bystander in those acts of extreme violence. You killed a policeman and you also may have killed a Portuguese undercover detective.

FRITZ: Murderer! Murderer! Murderer!

BOOBY: You're in as deep trouble as me Leanora and you know it.

Fritz begins to get wobbly. He holds his chest. He has a heart attack and keels over.

LEANORA: Oh no, Fritz, Fritz Bodo, gone again, well not really, but you know what I mean Boo Boo - or Boo Bottom Boo - as Fritz just called you. Help Fritz! Rescue him from this heart attack Booby!

Booby is too weak to be of assistance. Leanora goes through Fritz's pockets and finds pockets full of traveller's cheques.

LEANORA: I have always had every husband's signature memorized. I'll need these new additions as well for help with Reginald Gordon. Booby, I want a divorce and full custody of the boy. I must learn to be alone, to be my own heroine, to shy away from my emotional reliance on unsuitable husbands. This must be a new chapter. Alone and strong. I was the one who swept Reginald Gordon up into my loving arms. You didn't give him a passing thought when you first saw him and you won't again in the future. Full custody Booby. I demand it! It is a time for true independence. I might possibly have to join the workforce!

BOOBY: And those same loving arms you praise hold very slippery hands...

LEANORA: Don't blame me for the child overboard incident on the freight ship!

BOOBY: Only I could save him. I deserve dual custody.

LEANORA: Let's ask him then.

BOOBY: He can't decide something like this.

LEANORA: We'll hire a top notch Dutch interpreter. It is only fair Reginald Gordon makes his decision in Dutch regardless of his tender age.

Police sirens begin to wail.

BOOBY: We're goners. We could never last. The handcuffs will be on shortly. We'll see each other behind bars Leanora.

LEANORA: You're the goner Booby. I know a quick escape route out of here that is mine alone and was not even known to Fritz. I'm taking Reginald Gordon to Holland now!

BOOBY: Holland!

LEANORA: Reginald Gordon and I will settle in loose living Amsterdam. The policemen and detectives there are completely befuddled.

BOOBY: You're hallucinating!

LEANORA: The time has come to turn out the lights of the hideaway and put on my balaclava. But before I go I want to give you a little taste of your own medicine Boo Boo.

BOOBY: No Leanora, no no please, not Fritz's favourite quail stew saucepan. No! No!

Leanora picks up the big cooking pot and clobbers Booby on the head knocking him out. She grabs Reginald Gordon and tucks him under her arm.

LEANORA: That won't kill him but will merely destroy his short-term memory. I have just done him an enormous favour. The police will get nothing on me or him. So now, it's just you RG and your devoted go-it-alone mother, you and I bound for a wet and grey Dutch summer.

Leanora puts on her balaclava and covers up Reginald Gordon.

LEANORA: Away! Away now!

Booby remains on the floor. Helen Reddy's 'I Am Woman' plays. Leanora puts one of Fritz's cigars in Booby's mouth and lights it. Lights begin to fade and Leanora departs the hideaway.

The End