

Dead Lovers

SETTING: *An intimate restaurant. A white tablecloth adorns the table, on top of which sit a selection of appetizers and glasses of wine.*

AT RISE: *Wendell, a nebbish, 30-something taxidermist, and Kathleen, a beautiful but domineering young woman, are seated at the table. Wendell is impatiently reading the menu.*

Wendell

Do you think we could go ahead and order now, dear?

Kathleen

Oh no, Wendell. That wouldn't do at all. Let's just wait a little while longer.

Wendell

I think the waiter's given up on us. I haven't seen him around for the longest time.

Kathleen

I believe that mostly has to do with the way you were looking at him when he served us the most recent plate of hors d'oeuvres.

(Beat)

You see, Wendell, you have a way of looking at people sometimes that makes them think you're coming on to them, even if you're not.

(Chuckling)

Not that you ever could, mind you—come on to them, I mean—but how are *they* to know that? You must know that you're the reason my ladies bridge club stopped coming over on Wednesday evenings.

Wendell *(Sadly)*

Because I crawled under the table.

Kathleen

We didn't even know what you were *doing* down there. Not for the longest time!

Wendell

I got off to a very bad start.

Kathleen

Well, you're not to do the same thing tonight. Sylvia is my oldest and dearest friend.

Wendell

She's nearly an hour late.

Kathleen

Yes. Yes, she *is* late. As I recall, Sylvia always had a problem with that sort of thing. But she has a lovely personality.

Wendell

You don't need to convince me. I'm sure I'll like her. I like *all* of your friends.

Kathleen

Yes. Yes, you do, don't you? And without any encouragement from me.

Wendell

I rarely like anyone *but* your friends.

Kathleen

Wendell, you don't *know* anyone else but my friends.

Wendell

That's not exactly true. I became rather well acquainted with the milkman the Christmas before last.

Kathleen

But we don't even *have* a milkman. No one has a milkman anymore!

Wendell

That's what I told him, Kathleen. I said that he was an anachronism. I told him quite candidly: "Why can't we just pick up the milk at the store, while we're doing the rest of the shopping, like everybody else? What do we need you for?" and Kathleen, you should have seen his face. He was humiliated in the realization that he no longer performed a useful function in society.

(Beat)

That's when he stopped coming over. That's when he stopped giving me his ... special favors.

(Kathleen shoots him a look)

Sour cream at 50% off. Buttermilk for next to nothing.

Kathleen

Wendell, you need to get out of the house more often.

Wendell

I'm here now, aren't I?

Kathleen

Yes. Yes, you *are* here. When you learned you'd finally get the chance to meet Sylvia, it sure didn't take you long to decide to join us here this evening.

Wendell

Kathleen, you're not implying, are you, that my motives are in any way dishonorable?

Kathleen

Of course not, dear. Well, I mean, all my friends are lesbians anyway, so it hardly matters what *you* may have had in mind.

Sylvia (*Entering*)

Kathleen?

Kathleen

Yes?

Sylvia

Kathleen, it's me—Sylvia!

Kathleen

Don't be ridiculous.

Sylvia

Kathleen, I swear, it's me.

Kathleen

Sylvia? Sylvia, it is you! Oh, I'm sorry. It's just that... I hardly recognized you.

Sylvia

You haven't changed a bit!

Kathleen

Well.... I'm wearing a different dress.

(They both laugh, a little too loudly)

Sylvia

What about me, Kathleen? Do you think I've changed?

Kathleen

Yes. Yes, I *do* think you've changed. You've gained some weight, haven't you.

Sylvia

Oh, it's probably just this dress. It makes me look larger than I am.

Kathleen

Mmm, no, it's not the dress, Sylvia. It's you. You're simply bigger than you used to be. There's no getting around it.

(To Wendell)

You see, Wendell, Sylvia has always had some kind of... hormonal imbalance.

Sylvia

So... how long has it been since we last saw each other?

Kathleen

Oh, Gee, I don't know. What's today? Wednesday? Uh... this morning, I think—at the hairdressers.

Sylvia

Right, right. Well, great to see you again. So, Wendell, is it? I hear you're a taxidermist.

Wendell

Yes. Yes, I am. What's more, I'm proud of what I do. There is a small minority who think the work I am doing is unethical, but did you know, the precise opposite is true. My work helps to immortalize these creatures, and in so doing, provides a constant reminder of each animal's relevance to our fragile eco-system.

Sylvia *(Aside, to Kathleen)*

Uh... Kathleen. Is this really the guy you've been telling us so much about? I mean, are you sure it's really him?

Kathleen

Well, yes, of course. I ought to know my own husband.