

MARJORIE: (CONT'D)

I wasn't brave enough to make such a drastic change on my own, but... with my dearest friend? The thought of being able to begin again in such a thriving and unaffected new world?... Being able to leave all that behind?...

Well?...

I'd already managed to give everything I had to my country. My God! I sacrificed every shred of my dignity and almost lost my life in the process. Not to mention, like you, I'd also lost my husband.

The war was over, Nora! It was over! And I was completely used up. I'd had enough!

Coming here... With you... Was my salvation!

We've been here for... how long now? And, only now you begin to question my reasoning? Why? I don't understand.

I can't help but sense there's much more to all this. What is it? What's disturbing you so?

NORA:

(Sighs, appearing stressed)

Oh, Marjorie! Please forgive me. I suddenly find myself immersed in all my memories and I can't seem to find a way to climb out of them.

It's taken all this time for me to finally begin to try to sort everything out. The war!... Losing Richard!... Losing my eyesight and crawling back to health after the... accident!

Then moving to another country and realizing the magnitude of all the business responsibilities Richard left me with...

It's all suddenly hit me and I can't seem to come to proper terms with it. I feel so overwhelmed.

MARJORIE:

(Showing compassion and understanding)

Of course! I should have realized you'd, one day, reach this moment.

You must, only now, be coming out of the shock of it all. Honestly!... After all this time, I don't know how you've done it.

NORA:

Done what?

MARJORIE:

Waded your way through all that you had to deal with, and... doing it all alone... I think I would have gone mad.

NORA:

Sometimes I do believe I have gone mad.

NORA and MARJORIE each gulp down their drinks and ponder a moment.

May I ask you a rather... personal question?

MARJORIE:

Of course! What is it?

NORA:

You've just mentioned what you had to endure. I've always wondered... Did you ever actually find yourself in love with any of those German Officers you'd... "associated" with?

MARJORIE:

(Stiffening)

No! But, I heard the talk. All the rumors. All they've proven is that I should have been showered with multiple awards for my acting prowess.

MARJORIE: (CONT'D)

(Becoming bitter)

Having to listen to all their braggadocio regarding their military conquests and their egotistical feelings of power, all the while realizing they were planning to continue on to include the destruction of my beautiful England, not to mention the rest of the world...

Speaking of wanting to go mad!

I positively despised what I was doing, but... it had to be done.

(Reviving)

However, my reward came when I returned home and found John! He knew what I did for my country... and he didn't care. He loved me and I truly loved him. And for one brief moment in time, I had the love of a wonderful man. An English man. And that memory keeps me whole.

Pause.

Now! May I ask you a question?

NORA:

After that willing baring of the soul, how can I possibly refuse?

MARJORIE:

You must tell me. What has occurred recently to cause all this emotional upheaval in your life?

NORA:

What do you mean?

MARJORIE:

I don't know. I thought, perhaps, you might suddenly be remembering things that somehow escaped you throughout all that trauma.

Are you recalling details of the accident or the events leading up to it?

NORA:

(Stiffening)

No! That whole experience continues to remain lost to me. I suppose that's what stresses me so. It's because I can't remember that I feel so... exposed!

MARJORIE:

(A little suspiciously)

You will let me know the moment you remember anything, won't you? I wouldn't want you going through anything like that... alone. I want to be there for you.

Enter WAITER with a tray containing two more martinis.

WAITER:

Here you are, ladies! Refills!... Per your instructions!

NORA:

Thank you so very much, Eric! And, I believe we're ready for dessert now.

MARJORIE looks at NORA quizzically, noticing that she never actually answered her question.

WAITER:

I'll see to it right away!

WAITER exits.

MARJORIE:

Nora?... You haven't answered my question.

NORA:

(Looking innocent)

Haven't I?

MARJORIE:

(Sighs)

Very well. I give up.

MARJORIE: (CONT'D)

(Rooting in her handbag)

Well?... Never mind all this. Perhaps I can bring a little sunshine into your day. I bought you a gift!

NORA:

(Innocently receptive)

Really? What kind of gift?

MARJORIE:

You'll have to open it to find out.

MARJORIE hands NORA the package and NORA opens it with a little brighter look on her face.

NORA reveals a new pair of sunglasses. (Glasses #2) They are very fashionable.

NORA:

New glasses!

NORA studies them with her fingers to try to gain a picture of what they look like.

My! These are quite stylish, aren't they?

MARJORIE:

They most certainly are! I've grown weary of seeing you in those depressingly unattractive... things!

Honestly, Nora!... You've always been one to do everything at the height of fashion. I never understood why you made such a choice.

NORA:

(Pondering)

I didn't, actually. I received these when I was in hospital. They were delivered in a plain package with no card. An anonymous gift, if you will.

NORA: (CONT'D)

I just automatically began wearing them. It never occurred to me to do otherwise.

(Continuing to ponder)

That's not really like me, is it?

MARJORIE:

I should say not! I believe someone was playing a cruel joke to give you such horrid looking things.

Every time you put those on they seem to say, "Look at me! I'm blind! Feel sorry for me!"

NORA removes the old glasses and puts the new glasses on. MARJORIE beams when she sees how much better NORA looks in them.

Brilliant! Now those say, "I may be blind, but I'm gorgeous!"

NORA begins to choke back tears. She reaches across the table, finds and tenderly holds onto MARJORIE'S hand.

NORA:

Oh Marjorie, darling. Please don't ever prove to be anything other than the one I know you to be. You truly are my dearest, dearest friend. I would simply die if I ever lost you.

MARJORIE:

(Thoroughly confused)

Nora! Dear one! What is it that's got such a hold of you? Why can't you tell me what it is that's consuming you like this?

BLACKOUT.

END SCENE

**FX: (TRACK 12) Scene change music -
PRETEND by Nat King Cole**

ACT II, SCENE 2 - WE STILL DON'T KNOW ANYTHING!

*Scene: NORA'S Park Avenue
apartment. Late afternoon.*

*The light in the window is
"afternoon".*

Pause. (TRACK 12)

NORA enters from the "entrance"
side, escorted by DEMPSEY, and
wearing her new glasses. They are
returning from NORA'S lunch with
MARJORIE.

As they are entering, STEPHEN
enters from the "interior" side as
if coming from the kitchen to
answer the door. As usual, he
takes NORA'S wrap.

NORA:

(To Dempsey)

I did my best!

DEMPSEY:

You did great. But, her answers didn't give us any more than
we had before.

And so... once again, we're back to square one. It's still
all about remembering that game.

NORA:

(Becoming frustrated)

Well, I can't remember! I've tried! I simply can't
remember!

NORA makes her way to her usual chair next to the sofa and sits.

Enter SELMA.

SELMA:

(Seeing the new glasses)

My, my! What lovely new glasses! They truly do you justice! What prompted those?

NORA:

(Snapping)

The woman that I truly hope is still my life long friend and not my secret enemy gave them to me as a very thoughtful gift.

SELMA:

(Rushes to show compassion)

Oh, Mrs. Swan! This is all so much for you to deal with. I wish there were something more I could do for you.

SELMA sits on the sofa next to NORA and takes her hand in an effort to console her.

NORA:

There's nothing anyone can do, Selma dear. Apparently, the only thing that might actually help is for me to be able to remember the events of a day that, in fact, I'd truly much rather forget.

NORA throws her head back in frustration and sighs.

Oh GOD!

NORA sighs again and then begins to stand up.

I'm exhausted! I'm going to my room to have a lie down. Perhaps if I'm able to get some rest... I haven't been able to sleep since this whole thing began.

NORA exits.

STEPHEN:

(To DEMPSEY)

I do hope we're able to solve this soon. I don't much care for the toll this stress is taking on Madam.

I must tell you, I've been desperately sorting through my own memories to see if, perhaps, there might have been something I may have seen or overheard that might provide some answers to all this. Mr. Swan took such great care to have these "mystery" conversations in private. If I'd only realized their importance, I might have tried to...

(Sighs, defending his position)

A butler is trained to respect the privacy of his employers. It was simply not my place to eavesdrop.

DEMPSEY:

(To STEPHEN)

Nobody's blaming you, Stephen. Stop torturing yourself.

SELMA:

(Rising from her seat, going slowly to her desk)

Forgive me, gentlemen, but it has just occurred to me. We've been concentrating on Mr. Swan's actions in all this. Perhaps we should begin to consider who Mrs. Swan might have spoken to.

DEMPSEY:

(Perking up)

You just might be on to something there, Selma.

SELMA:

(Walking back to hold onto the back of NORA'S chair)

If she understood those games to be nothing more than a simple amusement, she might well have mentioned them in casual conversation with her close friends.

STEPHEN:

(From behind the bar)

Quite right, Selma!...

STEPHEN pours himself a Scotch.

She would most certainly have flaunted that pearl necklace to Mrs. Remington-Smythe and, I dare say, I can only imagine how she would have taunted Mrs. Swan to reveal what it was that she'd done to deserve it.

SELMA:

(Also perking up, walking back to her desk and then back to NORA'S chair)

Then again!... It's quite plausible that she would have revealed them to Mrs. Wentworth while they were tending to their duties together at hospital. Mrs. Swan often referred to the fact that their casual conversations managed to ease the pain of the daily onslaught of the war wounded.

DEMPSEY:

What about Bingham? Those two tell each other everything.

SELMA:

(Sitting in NORA'S chair)

If Mr. Swan neglected to impress upon Mrs. Swan that she should use discretion and keep those games between them, I see no reason why she should feel any hesitation to divulge them to almost anyone.

STEPHEN:

(Sitting on the chair "entrance side")

No doubt! All that means is that we now find ourselves right back at square one once again. It still could have been any one of them.

STEPHEN drinks his Scotch.