Side 1 – Peter & Suzy

CHARACTER NOTES: Peter – war-scarred, guarded, volatile beneath charm. Suzy – spirited, affectionate, yearning for stability.

[Peter re-tunes the wireless, listening intently. He switches it off and returns to his breakfast. The stable door rattles and Suzy Hinchcliffe enters, younger than Peter, waif-like.]

PETER I thought we were supposed to be economizing. You know how much it costs to fuel that generator?

SUZY What brought this on?

PETER You left the lights on when you went to work.

SUZY I did not.

PETER They were on when I got up.

SUZY Well … perhaps I did. I overslept, had to run most of the way.

PETER Christ! What a miserable, unfeeling bastard I am.

SUZY I do wish you wouldn't swear.

PETER Can't help it, it's enough to make a saint spit blood. You going off in the early hours to clean up other people's messes.

SUZY That's the way hotels are run.

PETER Hotel? It's a pension with pretensions.

SUZY Darling, we need the money.

PETER I know, and that's what tears me up, you having to work, while I…? I just wish I could provide better for you.

SUZY I'm not complaining.

PETER No, you never do. You're Number One on my list. Mind you, it is a very short list.

SUZY I hope so.

PETER C'mon, sit down, I'll make you some breakfast.

SUZY No, thanks. Tell the truth, I've been feeling a bit queasy. Anyway, I had a croissant up at the hotel.

PETER Mean buggers are feeding you now, are they?

SUZY No, that was Antoine. The breakfast chef.

PETER Antoine? You haven't mentioned him before.

SUZY He's new. Only been there the last month.

PETER And taken a shine to you, has he? You'll have coffee at least? [He lifts the kettle and starts to make coffee.]

SUZY I think he'd be more likely to take a shine to you.

PETER Oh, he's like that, eh? I better be careful, then.

SUZY He saw you the other morning working in the field— stripped to the waist. He mentioned it. PETER Very careful. Entranced by my manly body, was he?

SUZY Saw the scars on your back, and said a very curious thing.

PETER Oh?

SUZY Said they looked more like they'd been made by barbed wire, than in a car accident. [

Peter almost slops the coffee he is pouring.] PETER And what would he know! Stupid, snooping...! He should mind his own damned business!

SUZY He was only offering an opinion.

PETER He should keep his blasted opinions to himself and stop poking his nose where it doesn't belong!

SUZY Peter!

PETER [calming down] Sorry, but I've told you before how that accident affected me. I don't like to be reminded. You sure you wouldn't like a bit of breakfast?

Side 2 – Suzy & Josef

CHARACTER NOTES: Josef – eccentric, childlike yet unsettling, prone to sudden shifts from whimsy to menace. Suzy – patient, firm, but rattled by his unpredictability.

SUZY You stole an apple. Do you remember who brought those apples? Do you? You brought them, Josef, do you remember that? You brought them to us as a gift. So you were stealing from yourself. You silly, silly man. Why do you do it, Josef?

JOSEF I… I don't know why… I think it's to… SUZY Yes?

JOSEF It's to show me that I can! To stay … alert. In … trim. [He seems pleased to have remembered this]

SUZY Well, it has to stop, understand? And you have got to start knocking on that door or one day you'll give me a heart attack.

JOSEF I'm sorry.

SUZY I'm sure you are.

JOSEF I didn't mean to frighten you…

SUZY I know you didn't, but you still keep on doing it. You know you're always welcome here, Josef, I've made that clear many times. So has Peter.

JOSEF Peter. He's my friend.

SUZY And you are ours. But you must try to behave like one.

JOSEF Peter's done a lot for me. So have you.

SUZY We would like to do more. Why don't you leave that old hovel of yours and move into our barn? It's not the Ritz, but the roof doesn't leak, and it would be a great deal more comfortable than where you are now. And warmer.

JOSEF I… I feel … safer where I am. Divide and conquer. (He giggles) I think Peter said that. I think.

SUZY I've no idea what you are talking about, and I doubt you do either. Would you like some breakfast?

JOSEF I already have. I found a toad.

SUZY Don't tell me you ate a toad?!

JOSEF They eat toads here.

SUZY No, Josef, they eat frogs. Never toads. You shouldn't kill toads.

JOSEF I didn't kill it. I've got it in my pocket. Would you like to see it?

SUZY I think not. Just take it back to where you found it. Josef, we never begrudge sharing what little we have, you know that. All you have to do is ask. Knock on the door and ask. Will you do that in future? And no more sneaking about like a thief in the night.

JOSEF But it's daylight…

SUZY Promise me.

JOSEF I'll… I'll try.

SUZY I'm just about to drive over to Digne, would you like to come along? Peter gave me enough to treat us both to lunch.

JOSEF Digne? SUZY I'd like the company, and to tell the truth, I'm always waiting for that old car of ours to break down and leave me stranded. Having someone along - even if it's only you— would make me feel more comfortable. I mean, if the worst comes to the worst, you can at least push, can't you?

JOSEF Digne?

SUZY And this is a special day for me, Josef, I can't tell you why yet, but it is. What do you say? You can even bring your toad.

JOSEF I don't like to be "off watch" too long.

SUZY Off watch? All you do it sit on that hill waiting for a hare or a fox or something, I've never known you shoot anything, and I don't think you ever could. Well?

JOSEF I'll … think about it.

SUZY Well, don't think too long, I'll be off in a couple of minutes. Divide and conquer? What did that mean?

JOSEF I dunno. I forget things. Take care of each other! Yes. Like … like family.

SUZY Have you got family, Josef?

JOSEF Not anymore. I think. I think I was married once. Yes!

SUZY Married? Do you have children?

JOSEF Children?

Side 3 – Josef & Peter

CHARACTER NOTES: Josef – probing, slyly menacing, mixes eccentric humor with unsettling insight. Peter – defensive, hiding guilt, trying to control the situation.

PETER Josef? J

OSEF What have you been up to?

PETER Up to?

JOSEF (he lifts the shovel) I found this outside the door.

PETER That's because I left it there. I haven't finished yet.

JOSEF Finished what?

PETER I've been digging out the cesspit.

JOSEF (pointing at the sack) What's that?

PETER This — it's quick-lime.

JOSEF Quick-lime? What's it for?

PETER It's in the interests of sanitation, Josef. It cleanses.

JOSEF Gets rid of bad things?

PETER Yes, you could say that. [Josef moves back to stare at where the body was.]

PETER Josef, why are you here?

JOSEF I wanted to make sure.

PETER Sure of what?

JOSEF That you were still here. You won't go away, will you, you won't leave me?

PETER Only if someone made me, and that isn't likely any more

JOSEF If someone tried to make you leave. I'd stop them.

PETER I know, old fellow.

PETER What's wrong?

JOSEF I don't know. I seem to remember… something.

PETER You're having one of your memory lapses again. Well, let's try this one — you brought these flowers, didn't you?

JOSEF For Suzy. She's kind

PETER And when did you bring them? Was it this morning?

JOSEF I... don't remember. (He stares at where the body was.) There's lots I don't remember.

PETER That can be a blessing.

JOSEF It was this morning! I saw Suzy. She gave me an apple... or did I take it?

PETER Don't try too hard, old son. Now, do you want to hang on and make yourself some coffee? I have to finish up.

JOSEF She gave me an apple, and it was nice. I brought the flowers... and then... then... Why can't I remember?

PETER If it's important, it'll come. You know where the coffee is...

JOSEF Let me help you!

PETER No. Josef, this is something I must do alone. Anyway, it's messy and... well, I'm almost done anyway. Do you understand?

Side 4 – Ross & Suzy

CHARACTER NOTES: Ross – cold, authoritative, manipulative, takes pleasure in unbalancing others. Suzy – torn, anxious but strong-willed, trying to defend Peter while fighting her own doubts.

ROSS Hallo. Hallo? Is there anybody here? Hallo?

SUZY Who is it?

ROSS Ma'am, I do beg your pardon. Unforgivable I know, but I knocked and called, and the door was open…

SUZY Who are you, what do you want?

ROSS My name is Ross, Arnold Ross. Forgive me, ma'am, but have we met before? Do I seem at all familiar to you?

SUZY No, should you?

ROSS I was just hoping. Whom do I have the pleasure of addressing?

SUZY Suzy Hinchcliffe.

ROSS Well, Mrs Hinchcliffe…

SUZY Miss.

ROSS I see. Miss Hinchcliffe, you asked what I want—at this moment I would be most obliged for a glass of water.

SUZY You're a complete stranger, come barging into my home…

ROSS The door was open. I assure you I mean you no harm, I am just a weary, thirsty traveler, but I can see your point, I had no right … excuse me.

SUZY Oh, for heaven's sake, the water is there. Help yourself.

ROSS Thank you. Most kind. I am staying at the hotel up on the hill there, you must know it?

SUZY I know it, I used to work there.

ROSS Ah.

SUZY What are you doing here?

ROSS Do you have a moment, Miss Hinchcliffe?

SUZY I'm running out of patience.

ROSS I understand, quite so. Let me explain. I have been staying at the hotel for several days now, and each day I have set off to walk north, south, east… today my direction was west… which brought me to your cottage.

SUZY Are you making a map, conducting some kind of survey?

ROSS In a manner of speaking, I am making a survey. Of the immediate area.

SUZY Would you please get to the point?!

ROSS My brother.

SUZY Your brother?

ROSS He has disappeared, gone missing. After a great deal of effort, I traced him to the station here, then to that charming little bistro on the square.

SUZY The Montmartre.

ROSS The Montmartre, yes. After that the trail goes cold, no sign of him since. You appreciate that I am very concerned. Hence, I have been back-tracking in all directions, but so far, have accomplished nothing. I've knocked at doors, questioned along the way, but he seems to have vanished altogether. Into thin air.

SUZY How long has he been missing?

ROSS Almost exactly five months. He was last seen on Tuesday the eighth of April. I know it is a long while ago, and it is unlikely, but you might have seen something—I suppose you wouldn't happen to recall just what you were doing that day?

SUZY I recall exactly. At around ten thirty that morning, I drove to Digne.

ROSS That's remarkable, in a place as timeless as this, that you can exactly remember one particular day…

SUZY I was going to see my doctor. He confirmed my pregnancy. A woman doesn't forget a thing like that.

ROSS Serendipity. But wait a moment, if you drove to Digne you would take the top road towards the town, wouldn't you? You might have seen him en route?

SUZY I might, but how on earth would I have known it was him?

ROSS Miss Hinchcliffe, I asked if I seemed familiar to you, because my brother and I are twins, identical, see me you've seen him. Well?

SUZY No. I don't think I passed anyone along the way…

ROSS He would have been conspicuous, he was wearing city clothes.

SUZY City clothes?

ROSS Yes, you know, dark suit, tie, hat.

SUZY No, I saw no-one like that. But...

ROSS But?

SUZY Peter might have seen him. Si

Side 5 – Peter & Ross

CHARACTER NOTES: Peter – desperate, cornered, masking fear with bravado. Ross – calculating, relishes control, dangerous even when calm.

PETER How can I help you?

ROSS Well. First, I took a stroll in the woods, in the jolly old bois, then I got lost, and then I got very thirsty … saw your little cottage and … I could kill for a glass of water.

PETER Killing won't be necessary, I hope.

ROSS Damned silly of me to start walking at all, in these clothes. Didn't expect to get so hot at this time of the year.

PETER That's Provence for you. The climate can be full of surprises.

ROSS Getting lost too, I usually pride myself on my sense of direction. I'll need you to point me back to the town. After I've sat for a spell, if you don't mind?

PETER Not at all. If you would prefer a glass of wine?

ROSS Just the old H_2O for the dried-out old bod. I'm absolutely parched. Adam's ale. Do you mind?

PETER Oh, but my manners, old boy. Name's Ross.

ROSS Peter Meredith.

ROSS Used to know a Meredith at Stowe. Damned fine fly half. You wouldn't be…?

PETER No relation I'm afraid. We were more Grammar School.

ROSS Oh, well, never mind, takes all sorts. Charming little place you have here, Mr Meredith, and of course, when it's properly done up…

PETER It is done up.

ROSS Ah, I see. Commune with the rustics, eh? Back to dear old Mother Nature.

PETER I don't really see that it is any of your business.

ROSS Quite so, old boy. Absolutely right.

PETER But actually, this is all I can afford just now.

ROSS I understand, and if you are happy here, eh? That's the main thing.

PETER I've always felt … secure here.

ROSS Admirable criterion, security in these uncertain times. Yes, I approve of that "Englishman's home is his castle" and all that. Funny how people differ though, how they settle for one thing and not the other. I once knew a man who was offered fifty thousand sterling—or was it Reichmarks? Whatever, it was a large sum of money, small fortune in fact, and all this man had to do was co-operate with the authorities and point them towards a fugitive. Blighter turned it down flat. What do you think of that?

PETER I imagine he had his reasons.

ROSS Yes, though damned stupid if you ask me. What do you do, Mr. Meredith? Out here in isolation and, if you will forgive me saying so, obviously not of independent means. How do you survive?

PETER I... help out during the fruit and grape season, do a bit of driving for a local farmer.

ROSS That's odd. I bumped into a peasant type on my way here, and he seemed to think you were some kind of artist. A painter.

PETER Oh, I dabble. A Sunday painter, more for my own amusement.

ROSS Apart from that little hotel on the hill there appears to be nothing and no-one for miles. You must like your own company? Or do you have a... companion?

PETER There is a woman.

ROSS Yes, my peasant type told me that too. A woman, and conveniently she appears to be out at the moment. Does she know that your name isn't really Meredith?

PETER She knows nothing, do you hear, nothing! She is not involved in any way.

ROSS Hmm, well, we'll see. Hate to doubt your word, understand, but you have to admit, you have been a bit of a naughty old fibber in the past. I am, of course, armed.

PETER You won't need that.

ROSS Shall I not? You are a dangerous and callous man. But you're right. Took you once, and I can take you again. Eh, Giles? Giles Hudson. You have changed a great deal since you left my tender care. But that was to be expected. Losing the beard, changing the color of your hair, yes, I anticipated that. But your face...? There has been some subtle facial surgery. Quite transforming, I don't think I would have recognized you. Who arranged it, that doctor friend of yours? It's quite brilliant, the signs of a broken nose is a particularly splendid touch.

PETER If you recall, I broke my nose while in your "tender care".

ROSS You only have yourself to blame, you were a very recalcitrant prisoner … but you've come far, you must have had some expert assistance along the way. You wouldn't care to tell me? No? Never mind, we'll find out who helped you to escape, etcetera, etcetera, and of course, they will be caught and punished too. Yes, we'll get it right this time.

PETER We? Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Which one are you?

ROSS Does it matter?

Side 6 – Miriam, Ross & Suzy

CHARACTER NOTES: Miriam – intelligent, calm, precise, persuasive. (Note: Arnold is Ross's first name, and Hudson is Peter's real name.)

SUZY I'm so, so sorry.

MIRIAM So am I. Poor Arnold, you must be mortified—but now it is imperative that we remember why we are here, and that we re-capture Hudson and take him back to where he belongs.

ROSS You are right, of course, can't let personal emotions intrude. You are not sure when he's due to return?

SUZY Some night over the next few days.

MIRIAM At night? It's always at night?

SUZY It always has been. They work while there's daylight, until the last moment.

MIRIAM It's as we thought, Arnold. We discussed this eventuality already.

ROSS Hudson must be taken, with no possibility of him getting away again.

MIRIAM We can't stake out this place twenty-four hours a day, for goodness knows how long. For one thing, he might detect something, be alerted.

ROSS We can't take that chance. When we make our move it has to be sure, swift, and final!

MIRIAM You will have to help us, my dear. Are you up to it?

SUZY Help betray Peter?

MIRIAM I'd hoped to spare you the details of his crime! But now I fear I must tell you—so you will understand what kind of beast you may have qualms about betraying. Giles Hudson took a kitchen knife and didn't just stab his wife. She was, like you, heavily pregnant. He stabbed her many times—in the belly—killing their unborn child too.

SUZY Why would a man do that?

MIRIAM Our medical team had a theory—jealousy.

SUZY Jealous of what?

MIRIAM The child she was carrying; somehow in his diseased mind it had become a threat, a competitor for her undivided love.

SUZY But that's insane.

ROSS We think he is.

MIRIAM Well?

SUZY What would I have to do?

MIRIAM We can see this place from our hotel. The door, and the window. This window. When he returns, the electric light will not be functioning.

SUZY But how?

MIRIAM Arnold will disable the generator, so the only light will be that of these oil lamps. You must behave normally— how do you usually welcome him?

SUZY With a drink. Coffee, or wine.

MIRIAM Could not be better. Right, you will bring him that drink, but before you do, you will slip one of these pills into it.

SUZY They won't—

MIRIAM Kill him? No, my dear, that would defeat our purpose. But it will disable him, render him incapable. And then… Arnold?

ROSS Make sure the curtains are drawn back, and place the lamp here. One of us will be on watch, up there throughout the hours of darkness. As soon as we see your signal, we will drive down and deal with him. We will take him away, and you will never have to see him again.

MIRIAM Do you think you can do it?

SUZY I can try.

ROSS You have to be damned sure!

MIRIAM Arnold! So long as you keep calm and make sure he suspects nothing, you won't be in any danger—and after you have given him the pill it won't matter, he will be helpless.

ROSS I'll say!

MIRIAM You will do this for us, won't you, dear?

SUZY Peter's the father of my child. Are you sure he's the man?

MIRIAM After all we have discovered here tonight, yes, we are sure. And, although you can't bring yourself to admit it, I think you are too.

SUZY Yes.

MIRIAM I know what we are asking is hard for you.

SUZY I'll do it. I'll do exactly as you say.

ROSS Remember, as soon as we see a lamp in that window, we'll be on our way.

MIRIAM She understands, Arnold. She is a very brave young woman. Just hold on a little longer, my dear, until he returns, then it will be over.

ROSS And we'll have our man at last.

SUZY Don't you mean, my man?