

LOVE IS A DOTTY FISH

Kaj Himmelstrup

A radio play.

But you can easily stage it.

It participated in an international radio play competition launched by BBC World Service in 2009. It didn't win, but it was among the best which were presented at BBC's home site same year.

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MEL - What do you think dying is like?

LEN - Dying?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - What dying is like?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Odd question.

MEL - No.

LEN - You are well, aren't you?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - So, what's your problem?

MEL - I'm just asking.

LEN - And I'm supposed to answer?

MEL - Why not?

LEN - I don't know what dying is like. I've never thought about it.

MEL - You haven't?

LEN - No.

MEL - You're lying.

LEN - No, I'm not.

MEL - Everybody's lying about death.

LEN - I'm not.

MEL - Nobody will admit they are thinking about it. That's a fact.

LEN - Okay, okay, I admit, death is now my neighbour, like Morse said, and I'm very well aware that the clock is ticking away and some day in the future I'll be dead, but why think about it? Why worry?

MEL - I'm not worrying.

LEN - I think you are.

MEL - Not about death.

LEN - You'll be crying, won't you?

MEL - Crying?

LEN - At my funeral? When I'm dead.

MEL - Stop joking, please.

LEN - I think I deserve it.

MEL - I'm not talking about funerals and not about death or being dead. I'm talking about dying.

LEN - Dying. And you want to know what I'm thinking about that.

MEL - Yes. And I'm not caring about your funeral. Not yet.

LEN - It's a consummation, you know.

MEL - A consummation?

LEN - A consummation devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep, no more, and by a sleep ..

MEL - Nonsense.

LEN - It's Shakespeare.

MEL - I asked you to stop joking. I'm serious. Dying is not like going to sleep. And dying is certainly not to be wished. .

LEN - I agree.

MEL - Not the dying I'm thinking of.

LEN - There are more ways of dying?

MEL - Of course there is, don't be stupid. A car crash, choking, poison, fire, war, not to mention the worst ... being shot ...

LEN - Stop it.

MEL - By a bullet from a hand gun.

LEN - You've seen too many movies.

MEL - You won't talk about it, will you?

LEN - Rather not. It doesn't make sense.

MEL - You're right. It doesn't make sense. Not yet. Anyway

...

LEN - Why the hell should we be talking about it? You aren't ill, you said.

MEL - No.

LEN - Think of living, then. Life is wonderful, Mel.

MEL - It could be.

LEN - Could be?

MEL - It should be.

LEN - It is. Certainly. Living is wonderful.

MEL - You insist?

LEN - Yes.

MEL - Always?

LEN - At least compared to dying. So why worry about death?

MEL - I'm not worrying.

LEN - Yes you are.

MEL - Well. I admit.

LEN - But?

MEL - I'm not worried about my death.

LEN - You know someone who ...

MEL - Yes.

LEN - A near relation?

MEL - I wouldn't say so.

LEN - A friend?

MEL - Yes. And no. He was a friend. For a very long time.

LEN - Who?

MEL - I won't tell you.

LEN - It might be William?

MEL - No.

LEN - Norman?

MEL - No.

LEN - Who else? You haven't got any other friends.

MEL - Yes, I have.

LEN - Come on, Mel, I've known you all my life.

MEL - We became friends - once. Didn't we?

LEN - And so what? What the hell are you driving at?

MEL - You haven't guessed?

LEN - No. I haven't the slightest idea.

MEL - You need help?

LEN - No. You are talking nonsense.

MEL - I'll help you anyway, Len. You see, a month ago something happened.

(Sound from a hoover. Then a telephone rings.)

MEL - *(shouts)* Turn off!

(The hoover stops. The telephone rings once more.)

MEL - Mel speaking. - *(A short lull)*. Anybody there?
(Another short lull. Sound of a receiver put back.)

SUE - Nobody there?

MEL - No. Some idiot. Were you waiting for a call?

SUE - No.

MEL - I think you were.

SUE - No.

MEL - No?

SUE - Who should call me? On a rainy Saturday morning?

MEL - Your lover.

SUE - I haven't got a lover.

MEL - I think you have.

SUE - You're crazy.

MEL - I know him.

SUE - You know him?

MEL - I recognized his voice.

SUE - You did?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - How could you?

MEL - Well ...

SUE - Mel, he didn't say anything. He just hang up, didn't he?

MEL - Yes, this time he did.

SUE - This time?

MEL - Yes. Last time he didn't hang up.

SUE - Has he called before?

MEL - Yes, my dear.

SUE - When?

MEL - I don't remember. But he talked.

SUE - You've never told me.

MEL - Why should I?

SUE - I'm your wife.

MEL - My unfaithful wife.

SUE - Mel, this is not funny.

MEL - No.

SUE - You're dreaming.

MEL - No. Listen, -

(The Hoover begins again.)

MEL - *(shouts)* Listen, Sue - *(The Hoover goes on.)* - Stop it

-

(The hoover goes on for a few seconds, then fades away.)

MEL - You see.

LEN - No.

MEL - It's evident.

LEN - What's evident?

MEL - She has a lover.

LEN - Sue?

MEL - Yes. He called that Saturday morning, he wanted to talk to her.

LEN - She's your wife, Mel.

MEL - Yes, it's awful.

LEN - She has no lover.

MEL - Yes she has.

LEN - Don't be stupid. You've lived together for .. how many years?

MEL - Seven, but she won't talk about it.

LEN - It's not to wonder about. Sue is not that sort of a girl.

MEL - That sort? Unfaithful wives, should they be a particular sort of women? No, Len.

LEN - I didn't say that. Everybody could be tempted beyond their power, that's obvious, even you and me. What I'm saying is that I'm quite sure, Mel, that Sue hasn't got a lover.

MEL - You're trying to convince me, Len, that is quite understandably, but I know better. The other day I found something in the waste paper basket. You know what?

LEN - No.

MEL - Small pieces of paper.

LEN - Well, that's what the basket is meant for.

MEL - Do you know what it was?

LEN - No.

MEL - Guess.

LEN - Some advertising stunt?

MEL - It was a love letter.

LEN - A love letter! How do you know?

MEL - I just know.

LEN - Small pieces of paper?

MEL - Yes. A lot of small white pieces, no colours, no glazed paper. It was writing paper with small blue letters upon it written in hand.

LEN - What did they say?

MEL - I don't know. I didn't put them together. Try to imagine. A big heap of small pieces. I could have spent hours.

LEN - What did you do?

MEL - I waited until she came home. - (*A bell is heard.*) - I got up and opened the door.

(Sound of a door being opened.)

SUE - Hi! - (*Sound of a door being closed.*) - Your beloved wife is back.

MEL - Where have you been? With your lover?

SUE - My lover? I've been away for twenty minutes. It wouldn't have been a lot of lark, would it?

MEL - Who knows?

SUE - In twenty minutes! I deserve a kiss, Mel, I've bought cakes for the tea.

MEL - Cakes?

SUE - Your favourites.

MEL - Why?

SUE - I felt for it, and I thought you wouldn't mind. Now that you're no longer on a diet. Am I right?

MEL - Oh yes, cakes are okay.

SUE - Do I get a kiss?

MEL - Sue?

SUE - Yes?

MEL - I'm rather upset.

SUE - Upset?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - About what?

MEL - You see, I found something in the waste paper basket.

SUE - And now you are upset? Was it a bomb?

MEL - It was something I hadn't expected. It came as a big surprise. Like a bolt from the blue.

SUE - In the waste paper basket?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - I dare say.

MEL - It was a love letter.

SUE - A love letter?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - You read it?

MEL - No. It was torn into small pieces.

SUE - Mel, it is seven years since I wrote you a love letter.

MEL - I know.

SUE - If you've still got my love letters they are definitely not in the waste paper basket torn into small pieces.

MEL - It was not a love letter for me.

SUE - How do you know?

MEL - I just know it.

SUE - You read those small pieces?

MEL - No, but I know who it was for.

SUE - Who then?

MEL - It was either for you ...

SUE - For me?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - Mel, you never wrote me a love letter.

MEL - I know. It might be from somebody else.

SUE - Mel, I never get love letters.

MEL - It might also be a letter that you have written.

SUE - I don't write love letters any more. Perhaps I should
some day when you deserve it. But I don't, and if I
did I wouldn't tear them into small pieces and drop
them into the waste paper basket.

MEL - Perhaps you wrote it for someone else.

SUE - Don't be stupid.

MEL - Perhaps you sent it?

SUE - How could I send it when it was still in the basket?

MEL - It might be a draft. Perhaps you scrapped it and
wrote a better one.

SUE - You're crazy.

MEL - It may well be that I am wrong, but it might also be a
letter from your lover.

SUE - I have no lover.

MEL - How can I be sure?

SUE - It's easy. Just trust me.

MEL - Trust me, that's what all unfaithful wives say. Do you
still love me?

SUE - What do you think? I bought you a cake and asked for
a kiss. Remember?

MEL - Yes. Unfaithful wives feed their husbands on cakes.
It's very common.

SUE - Mel!

MEL - Do you think I'm an idiot?

SUE - No, but just now you're behaving like one. I ought to
be angry, but I'll rather like to think that you're
joking.

MEL - Just joking?

SUE -Yes, but I'm not amused, said the queen. When did you find those pieces?

MEL - Today.

SUE - Where do you keep them?

MEL - They are still in the waste paper basket.

SUE - Show me, please.

MEL - Here you are.

SUE - Mel. Those pieces .. it's yesterday's shopping list.

MEL - It is?

SUE - Yes. And I didn't make love at the supermarket.

MEL - You didn't?

SUE - No, Mel.

MEL - So everything is okay?

SUE - Yes, Mel, except that I'm no longer in the mood for kissing. But I'll make you a tea.

(Sound of steps and a door being closed.)

MEL - She turned the back to me and went into the kitchen and closed the door.

LEN - And you didn't get a kiss?

MEL - No. Not until later. In the evening.

LEN - She forgave you?

MEL - No. I forgave her.

LEN - You forgave her??

MEL - Yes. I love her.

LEN - It's hard to believe.

MEL - I do. I really do. Trust me.

LEN - What did you say to her?

MEL - I didn't say anything. I couldn't find the right words, you know, so ... you see, in my mind I forgave her.

LEN - In your mind?

MEL - Because I love her.

LEN - But you didn't tell her?

MEL - Love is a dotty fish, Len. I forgave her in spite of the fact that she wouldn't confess.

LEN - Mel, she had nothing to confess. There was no love letter.

MEL - Not that day.

LEN - And no lover either.

MEL - You have to say so, Len. I know. But some day ... soon, very soon ... we've been friends for a long time, Len, haven't we?

LEN - We still are.

MEL - We went to school together. Remember?

LEN - Yes, we sat there, side by side.

MEL - Bored to death.

LEN - And coming alive again at the football field.

MEL - Yes, those days long ago. We grew up, said goodbye to the school.

LEN - But we kept together.

MEL - Crawling the pubs. Chasing the girls.

LEN - Without catching them.

MEL - We couldn't see any future, but we didn't care.

Having fun was everything. Those days were good.
By the way, I forgot the beer, just a moment. -
(Sound of beer cans being put on a table and opened.) - Happy days.

LEN - Cheerio.

MEL - But then ... what happened to us, Len?

LEN - Well, we got jobs and left home, we had to make money, that's how life is, no reason to be depressed over that, you can't go on sharing school desks when school is over, can you? Nevertheless we kept seeing each other, didn't we? And we still had fun.

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Of course we didn't meet that often. We had to work hard and we didn't have many hours off, due to the fucking slavery, but that became better, didn't it? As time went by.

MEL - Yes, especially after I met Sue.

LEN - Yes, you were lucky, Mel, you got married. But you were still my best friend. Sue didn't come between us.

MEL - No. You're quite right. We began to meet more often, Len. I have thought about why. Those pieces of paper ...

LEN - The shopping list?

MEL - I tried to put them together.

LEN - You what??

MEL - Not the whole jig saw puzzle, of course not.

LEN - But why, Mel?

MEL - You see, I thought that I might get a few of them to fit together.

LEN - Mel, do you know what you're saying?

MEL - Of course I do.

LEN - I don't believe my own ears. You distrust her. It's disgusting, Mel.

MEL - It wasn't easy.

LEN - To distrust her?

MEL - No, to make them fit together.

LEN - You did it?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Mel, I don't want to hear about it.

MEL - You have to, Len.

LEN - You didn't succeed.

MEL - That's what you hope. But yes, I did.

LEN - What did you find?

MEL - Well ... the words I found were not from a shopping list.

LEN - What words?

MEL - Guess.

LEN - I won't guess. Sue said it was a shopping list. Why shouldn't I believe her? What the hell were those words?

MEL - Calm down, Len.

LEN - Let's stop it, Mel. This is ridiculous. Sue hasn't torn up a love letter and left it in your waste paper basket. Who would do that with a love letter? Either you keep your love letters in a safe place where nobody can find them or you burn them.

MEL - That's what you do? Keep them?

LEN - I never get love letters.

MEL - You haven't got love letters lately?

LEN - No. I wish I had, but who should send them?

MEL - Your mistress.

LEN - I haven't got a mistress.

MEL - Haven't you?

LEN - Mel. Could we talk about something else?

MEL - You find it hard to talk about your love affairs?

LEN - I don't have love affairs, not for the last three or four years and especially not lately, and I would rather not talk about Sue in the way you're talking.

MEL - Why not?

LEN - I think she deserves better.

MEL - You adore her?

LEN - No. I respect her.

MEL - And adore her.

LEN - No. Well, I might admire her for the way she is able to stand you. If I may say so. Your distrust, Mel ... I think you're doing her wrong.

MEL - You said so.

LEN - I mean in this particular situation. Accusing her for adultery. It isn't fair, and it doesn't make sense.

MEL - We'll see.

LEN - We'll see??

MEL - Yes.

LEN - I'm sorry to say that I don't understand you, Mel. You haven't the slightest reason to distrust her.

MEL - Sure?

LEN - Mel, let's stop talking about it. I haven't come to argue. And I'm quite sure you didn't invite me because you wanted to quarrel over Sue. We're old friends, aren't we?

MEL - Oh yes, we've always been.

LEN - So why are we arguing?

MEL - You're right, Len, we shouldn't argue. What I had in mind when I called you -

LEN - Yes?

MEL - That was something else.

LEN - Something else?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - What?

MEL - You'll never guess.

LEN - Most likely you wanted to revive our old common memories, didn't you? And drink a bottle or two? As we used to do? Am I right?

MEL - Yes, that was one part of it.

LEN - One part?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - You sound as if you had a plan? Part one, part two.

MEL - Yes. I had a plan.

LEN - What's the second part?

MEL - Well, Len, I wanted to see you today because I thought that the time had come.

LEN - The time for what?

MEL - Talking about it.

LEN - About what?

MEL - Well, let me put it this way: we've never talked much about our love life, and that's okay, why should we? It has been .. how do I say it ... it's hard to find the right words, you know.

LEN - It has been too intimate?

MEL - Yes, too intimate. That's the word. I think that both of us have felt ... well ...

LEN - There was a limit we shouldn't pass?

MEL - You're right, Len. Privacy wasn't something we were completely wrapped up in, but that part of our life ... you know ... what we did behind the closed doors ... it had to be respected.

LEN - Yes, of course. Especially since you got married.

MEL - Yes, it came natural to us I think.

LEN - Yes.

MEL - That's the problem now when I want to talk about it. ... My love life ... To say it as it is ... in one way everything is okay, but there is ... as I said ... something else. ...I need to talk about it. I need someone who will listen. Someone who'll help me.

LEN - Someone who will talk to you about Sue?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - And the lover she hasn't got? Is it that?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - And this someone to talk to, that's your old friend Len?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Stop it, Mel. Don't start it over again. We have talked about Sue for half an hour and it didn't do any good,

neither to you nor to me. Did it?

MEL - No. I made you upset. I didn't mean to, but I did.
Sorry, Len. I do very well understand that the thought of Sue and I making love is rather unpleasant for you. But please listen. I love Sue, trust me ... it is difficult to talk about it ... but since my suspicion was aroused ...

LEN - By stupid telephone calls and small pieces of paper?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Mel.

MEL - No, Len. There's more to it than that.

LEN - More to it?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - What?

MEL - You see, you may be right when you say that I shouldn't distrust her. But I can't help it. That's a fact. A fact I can't get rid of. It haunts me. It has become a nightmare I can't escape. So I thought that I had better talk to someone about it, but not a shrink, I'm not insane. I should talk to you about it. You're my closest friend. It might be the best way to find out what to do. Also I thought that you and I would be able to talk about it in an atmosphere of confidence, you know ... and understanding ... what I'm trying to say is that I had a hope that you might help me to find the truth behind all this. I'm serious, Len. Do you understand?

LEN - I think so. But if you'll excuse me ...

MEL - I will, I will.

LEN - I'm afraid that I find it hard to use the word serious about the waste paper incident.

MEL - I can see your point, Len. I have had my doubts too. I can assure you. But nevertheless ... I can't get rid of the thought of a lover.

LEN - Sue said you were crazy.

MEL - Yes.

LEN - I'm afraid I agree, Mel.

MEL - Well. I can't blame her. As long as I haven't got a damning evidence ... I know it ... I must look like a fool.

LEN - You said it.

MEL - Yes.

LEN - The telephone calls and the jig saw puzzle, Mel, that's not much of a proof.

MEL - No. But you will listen, won't you?

LEN - I think I shouldn't.

MEL - I won't talk about telephone calls and love letters. I promise.

LEN - I'd rather revive old memories.

MEL - So would I.

LEN - And drink a beer.

MEL - But it means a lot to me, Len. I want to make sure what's happening. So please, I beg you, listen to me.

LEN - Okay Mel, okay.

MEL - So?

LEN - Go on.

MEL - You will listen?

LEN - Yes.

MEL - Thank you. Some weeks ago ... on a Friday ... she had said it some days before ... she would go and visit an old schoolmate in the evening. I asked why, but she didn't really give an answer. She just looked at me and said ...

SUE - We have an agreement, Mel, haven't we? You can see your buddies any time you want. At the pub or here or wherever and I won't mind.

MEL - I know.

SUE - And I?

MEL - You?

SUE - I've got the same rights, Mel.

MEL - The same rights?

SUE - Haven't I?

MEL - Yes of course.

SUE - I'm your wife, but we don't live in the Middle Ages,
so you can't order me to stay behind these walls, can
you?

MEL - No.

SUE - And never go out unless I'm followed by you, my very
protective and very suspicious husband.

MEL - No. Of course not.

SUE - One more thing. You never tell me who you're going
to see at the pub, and I never ask. But I ... I told you
I'm going to see Shirley and Catherine. At Shirleys
place. I didn't have to tell you, but I did. Isn't that
enough?

MEL - Well ...

SUE - Do you also want to know what we'll be talking
about?

MEL - No.

SUE - Or what we're going to eat and drink?

MEL - No. I just wondered ...

SUE - You wondered?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - About what?

MEL - You know, it'll be late in the evening and dark, won't
it? I'm not quite happy about it.

SUE - So the stone age man wants to protect his wife?

MEL - I wouldn't put it that way, but yes, Sue.

SUE - Thank you Mel, but Shirley doesn't live in a gloomy
place, electric light was invented years ago and it is
only three bus stops from here and I'll ride the bus
together with Catherine so take it easy. I can handle
it. I'm a grown up woman, not a child. Understood?

MEL - Yes.

SUE - Any further questions?

MEL - No. Anyhow ...

SUE - There's something more you want to know?

MEL - Why did you shower?

SUE - Shower? Why do you ask?

MEL - Shower on a Friday evening?

SUE - Don't you shower when you're having an evening off?

MEL - Well. Yes. Sometimes.

SUE - So what?

MEL - You also put on deo.

SUE - And lip stick. And I cut my toe nails. What are you hinting at?

MEL - I just wondered.

SUE - You're not going to talk about a lover again, are you?

MEL - I just said I wondered.

SUE - You're crazy, Mel.

MEL - You also put on your new knickers.

SUE - And so what? I couldn't go on a visit without knickers, could I?

MEL - The fancy ones.

SUE - What's wrong with fancy knickers? They make me feel comfortable. And I'm not dressing to be undressed by a lover. That's what you're raving about, isn't it? Mel, you've got a dirty mind.

MEL - Sue ...

SUE - No, I won't listen. If you feel that you can't trust me you may turn up at Shirley's door at eleven thirty and ride the bus back home together with me and Catherine.

MEL - Sue.

SUE - I mean it.

MEL - I can see that, yes. I'm sorry.

SUE - Do you think you'll come?

MEL - I love you.

SUE - If you're standing there at eleven thirty at Shirley's door I'll smack you.

MEL - You will?

SUE - You bet your life, Mel. So long. - (*Sound of a door being closed.*)

MEL - She didn't understand me, Len.

LEN - Are you sure?

MEL - I wanted to protect her.

LEN - No you didn't, Mel.

MEL - It is a gloomy place. You can't deny it. It goes well with that broad Shirley. Do you know her?

LEN - No.

MEL - She's a tart.

LEN - She may well be, but Mel, is that the point?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - No. The point is that you distrust her.

MEL - For good reasons.

LEN - Which reasons?

MEL - She's seeing a lover.

LEN - You might have met that lover.

MEL - How?

LEN - You didn't go to Shirley's place at eleven thirty?

MEL - No. Why should I?

LEN - As I said, if you had gone ...

MEL - She would have smacked me.

LEN - I hope so, Mel, you deserve it, but you would also have seen that she was right, she was together with Shirley and this other girl. There was no lover.

MEL - You're too credulous, Len.

LEN - And you're too distrustful.

MEL - You know what?

LEN - No.

MEL - She wouldn't have smacked me.

LEN - She wouldn't?

MEL - No. If I had gone there and rung the bell, do you know what would have happened?

LEN - Yes, Mel, Shirley would have opened.

MEL - And said what?

LEN - Hi, I suppose.

MEL - And what more?

LEN - Come in and say hello to Sue and Catherine.

MEL - No Len, she wouldn't say that. She would say something quite different. You know what?

LEN - How the hell should I know?

MEL - I can tell you. She would say that Sue wasn't there. There were no Sue and no Catherine at that place at eleven thirty, and they had never been there that evening. That's the truth. ... Well, what do you say?

LEN - Mel, you were not there, where you?

MEL - She's a sly fox, Len.

LEN - You're out of your mind, Mel.

MEL - Don't say that. I love her. I adore her. But I'm not blind to her weaknesses. She hasn't many, I'll be the first to admit that, but she's cunning.

LEN - Sue? Cunning?

MEL - Yes. Sometimes she is.

LEN - Mel, you are out of your mind.

MEL - I wish I were, but I'm not. I'm quite sane, Len. All this doesn't make me hate her. I'm not even reproaching her.

LEN - Yes, you are.

MEL - No, I'm not. I'll go so far as to say that in some way

I'm able to understand her ... the seven year itch, you know, it is seen before and she could very well have been tempted ...

LEN - Stop it, Mel.

MEL - Tempted beyond her power, Len. Do you remember what you said ten minutes ago? Everybody can be tempted beyond their power, even you and I. You're right. It's only human and none of us are perfect. If she has a lover ... and believe me, I'm fully convinced that she has, I know him ... I just want that there's put an end to it. That's all. I hope that you understand that, Len.

LEN - I'm trying to, Mel, but ...

MEL - But?

LEN - Yes. You think that for old times' sake I ought to say that you are right, Sue has a lover. But I can't, Mel.

MEL - You can't?

LEN - No.

MEL - Or you won't?

LEN - Mel, I might pat you on your shoulder and say okay, Sue is unfaithful, but if I did so it would be for only one reason. I would do it because I was afraid that it would be the end of our friendship. That's not a fair reason, is it?

MEL - Nothing can spoil our friendship, Len, not as long as you are honest and open.

LEN - Haven't I been that all the time? - (*A short lull.*) - Don't you trust me? - (*Another short lull.*) - Do you, Mel? - (*And one more short lull.*) - Haven't I spoken straightly to you all the time since I came? And spoken openly?

MEL - I think so.

LEN - You think so? You aren't sure?

MEL - Oh yes, yes, I am.

LEN - Then, what's the problem?

MEL - There might be things that you are silent about.

LEN - Mel, you've gone nuts. I won't go on talking about

Sue. I'm sorry, but this twaddle has to stop.

MEL - You mean it?

LEN - That's flat, Mel.

MEL - Okay, Len.

LEN - By the way, you didn't tell me why she isn't in?

MEL - Sue? She's gone.

LEN - Gone?

MEL - Shopping I think.

LEN - So she'll be back?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Good, I was looking forward to seeing her.

MEL - It is not to wonder at.

LEN - What do you mean?

MEL - I mean it is not to wonder at. You like her, don't you?

LEN - Yes I do. She's a nice girl.

MEL - But you won't talk about her.

LEN - No. Not in that way. What's she buying?

MEL - I don't know.

LEN - She didn't tell you?

MEL - Biscuits I think. For the tea.

LEN - Biscuits?

MEL - We've run out of biscuits.

LEN - And Sue can't do without biscuits?

MEL - She has a sweet tooth. She would also buy something
for supper. You're staying, aren't you?

LEN - You invited me.

MEL - Yes, I thought ...

LEN - You thought what?

MEL - Forget it. I didn't think anything. You said we
shouldn't talk more about her, so what else are we

going to talk about? What would you propose?

LEN - Those good old days.

MEL - And old memories?

LEN - What else have we got? And we never get through them, do we?

MEL - No, we've had the happiest time of our lives there, in the past, I think.

LEN - When we were still boys.

MEL - Yes. Do you remember when Johnson's storehouse was demolished?

LEN - Of course I do. That big building pulled down in a few hours by some big machines. And bricks and everything carried away by those big lorries. Nothing left but dust.

MEL - It became a fine playground.

LEN - They put up fences, I remember.

MEL - But we crept in anyhow.

LEN - Yes, a fox always finds a hole.

MEL - Do you remember Brian?

LEN - Brian Curly-hair? Yes.

MEL - He had an air gun. Some times he took it to the playground and we spent some hours shooting at tin cans. It was great fun, wasn't it?

LEN - He was a fine fellow. We were all free to try it.

MEL - I still remember the feeling in my finger. You know, the finger resting upon the trigger while you look at the tin can with eyes screwed up and a head full of anger and hatred, as if you were aiming at somebody you had good reasons to kill.

LEN - Yes, we were like cowboys then. Now we're just boring plumbers. No horses, no shot guns, no wild west.

MEL - And no playground. They put up a stupid supermarket.

LEN - Yes, they buried our childhood in concrete. No more

air guns. No more shooting.

MEL - No. ... And Yes.

LEN - Yes?

MEL - I have a gun.

LEN - You have?

MEL - Yes, I've bought one.

LEN - So you're going to be a boy again shooting after tin cans?

MEL - It's not an air gun.

LEN - It's not?

MEL - It's a hand gun. I bought it some time ago.

LEN - Mel!

MEL - Do you want to see it?

LEN - No. I can assure you. A hand gun, Mel! Why?

MEL - I just bought it.

LEN - How did you get a license?

MEL - I didn't.

LEN - You can't buy a gun without a license.

MEL - Oh yes.

LEN - How did you get it then?

MEL - It's easy, Len. It's a Beretta, 9 millimeter.

LEN - Where? You can't just buy a gun.

MEL - I bought it a pub.

LEN - Illegally?

MEL - I also got a pack of cartridges.

LEN - Why the hell have you bought a gun, Mel? You have nothing to use it for.

MEL - No.

LEN - So why, Mel?

MEL - That question is hard to answer.

LEN - You don't need a gun.

MEL - You're right. There was no purpose. I didn't go to that pub because I wanted to buy a gun. It was not a decision I had made. And I know very well that it might be possible to live happily without it, Len. Perhaps even easier. I just sat in a corner booth when somebody came up to me and asked if I were interested. I said I was not. But then ... he put it into my hand and suddenly I got the same feeling in my finger as I had when we were on the site where Johnson's storehouse had stood and we were shooting at the tin cans. I had to buy it, Len. There was no way out. I was tempted beyond my powers.

LEN - I wonder what is going on in your head, Mel.

MEL - So do I.

LEN - That feeling in your finger ...

MEL - I know. It's also a feeling somewhere else. In the heart, in the brain, in the guts ... you name it.

LEN - Don't tell me it is anger.

MEL - It's not.

LEN - Or hatred.

MEL - Who should I hate, Len?

LEN - But you felt something?

MEL - I can't deny it.

LEN - But what?

MEL - I don't know.

LEN - But you bought the Beretta.

MEL - Yes.

LEN - I hope you put it away?

MEL - Yes. But sometimes I take it out and hold it in my hand.

LEN - What do you feel then?

MEL - As a matter of fact, I feel powerless, Len.

LEN - Powerless?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - Mel. This gun ... has it anything to do with ...

MEL - With what?

LEN - I'm afraid I dare not say it, but ... You have talked a lot about Sue having a lover?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - And?

MEL - I've asked myself that question.

LEN - Mel, you said you knew him?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - But you have never met him?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - You have?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - What happened? ... Did you talk to him?

MEL - Yes.

LEN - What did he say?

MEL - He didn't want to talk about Sue.

LEN - And then ...

MEL - Well ... I ...

LEN - Mel, look at me. What have you done? You haven't killed him, have you?

MEL - No. I couldn't.

LEN - You couldn't?

MEL - No.

LEN - Thank God, Mel.

MEL - You may say so.

LEN - You came to your senses?

MEL - No. It wasn't so.

LEN - Was it because you knew him?

MEL - I don't think so.

LEN - What happened?

MEL - Nothing happened. It was just that I couldn't kill him unless he had confessed. It wouldn't be fair.

LEN - And he didn't confess?

MEL - No.

LEN - Of course not. He had nothing to confess.

MEL - That's what you insist on.

LEN - Yes. I can't help it, Mel. But I'm glad to know that you didn't use that Beretta.

MEL - Of course you are. But I didn't say that I didn't use it.

LEN - What do you mean?

MEL - Guess.

LEN - You've just said that you didn't kill that man. What else could you use it for?

MEL - I said guess.

LEN - ... Mel!! ... Don't tell me that you've shot Sue!! ... She hasn't gone shopping, has she? ... You've shot her!! ... Mel!! You are raving mad!

(A short lull. Sound of a key put into a keyhole.

Sound of a door being opened.)

SUE - Hi, Len. - *(Sound of the door being closed behind her.)* - How are you?

LEN - I ... I'm fine.

SUE - Sorry I am late. I bought something for an Irish stew, Mel. - You are staying for supper, Len, aren't you?

LEN - Yes, thank you.

SUE - I also bought a six-pack. I thought you might have dry throats.

MEL - We always have.

SUE - You have talked for nearly an hour.

MEL - It may well be.

SUE - About what?

MEL - Those days long gone. Mostly.

SUE - Sailing over a sea of nostalgia?

MEL - Something like that, yes. That was what we talked about, wasn't it, Len?

LEN - Yes. Oh yes.

SUE - You haven't talked about me?

MEL - No.

SUE - You're lying, Mel.

MEL - No.

SUE - Isn't he, Len?

LEN - Need I answer?

MEL - No.

SUE - No? You promised, Mel.

MEL - I'm a gentleman, Sue. I don't talk to other people about my wife.

SUE - You ... a gentleman?

MEL - I'm trying to be.

SUE - Since when? ... I'm sorry, Len, but Mel had a reason or two to talk about me.

MEL - Had I?

SUE - You still have. At least one. And Len is not other people. He's your friend.

MEL - Yes, Honey.

SUE - You promised, Mel.

MEL - You've got meat in the trolley, haven't you?

SUE - Mel?

MEL - I think I'll behave like a gentleman and take it to the kitchen.

SUE - You will?

MEL - Don't look surprised. It is not the first time, is it?

SUE - No. But it's not much of a habit, is it?

MEL - There you are, Len. You are looking at the perfect husband. Putting the meat in the fridge.

SUE - You can't avoid it, Mel.

MEL - So long. You may keep the six-pack. - (*Sound of steps. Sound of a door being closed.*)

LEN - Excuse me for asking, Sue. What did Mel promise?

SUE - You talked about me, didn't you?

LEN - Well, I can't deny it.

SUE - What did he say?

LEN - I'd rather not talk about it, Sue. It's too unpleasant.

SUE - He talked about a lover, didn't he?

LEN - He's my friend, Sue.

SUE - I ought to respect that. Nevertheless. The matter is that for some time he has been a little queer in his head. He accuses me, you see ...

LEN - Of being unfaithful.

SUE - He said that?

LEN - Yes.

SUE - It's awful.

LEN - I can imagine.

SUE - I don't think you can, Len.

LEN - Is it that bad?

SUE - It has become more and more ugly. It's getting on my nerves. What did he say about that lover?

LEN - Nothing much. I don't think there is a lover.

SUE - Of course not. But Mel persists.

LEN - He said he knew him, yes, but ...

SUE - But?

LEN - He also said he had talked to him and tried to make him confess. I didn't believe him, I said. I'm sure

there is no lover. You haven't got the slightest proof
I said ... Anyhow, I couldn't convince him.

SUE - That's the problem. Did he say he's angry with me?

LEN - He didn't say that and I don't think he is. He said that
he loves you. He said it several times. It may well
be that he's annoyed for some reason and then he
blames you, but it's not that simple. To me it looks
like he's a bunch of mixed feelings. It's not only
anger, it's also disappointment I think. He feels let-
down and powerless. Has he been rude to you?

SUE - I wouldn't say rude. Oddly enough he hasn't been
furious. Has he been rude to you?

LEN - No. I think that he is more heart-broken than furious.

SUE - So you are not afraid?

LEN - Afraid?

SUE - Yes.

LEN - Of what?

SUE - He might hurt you?

LEN - What do you mean?

SUE - Resort to violence.

LEN - Why should he?

SUE - You haven't guessed?

LEN - No.

SUE - He might think he had a reason.

LEN - What are you talking about?

SUE - Mel thinks ... he said it some days ago ... that you and
I ... you know....

LEN - No!

SUE - Yes.

LEN - That's nonsense.

SUE - Of course it is, but that's what he thinks. And that's
why I made him invite you to talk about it. I
couldn't stand his mistrust. He had become more

and more desperate. So I made him promise that you would talk about it. And now you've talked for an hour, but he hasn't said anything about us?

LEN - No.

SUE - Not a single hint?

LEN - Well ... He said something that I didn't quite understand. But there was something behind the words. Something odd or peculiar.

SUE - Like what?

LEN - He said that this lover was one of his friends. I wondered who it could be. I think I know all of his friends. He hasn't that many, has he? So I decided it couldn't be true.

SUE - What else did he say?

LEN - He asked me what dying is like. He talked about it as if he wanted someone to die.

SUE - Die?

LEN - Yes. ... Sue! He has bought a hand gun.

SUE - A gun? You're kidding.

LEN - No. He told me.

SUE - It can't be true. Have you seen it?

LEN - He wanted to show it to me. But I said no. I wouldn't see it.

SUE - Mel! A gun! That's nonsense, Len. Where should he buy a gun? Tell me that. It's something he made up.

LEN - Why?

SUE - To scare you.

LEN - You said he had become more and more desperate?

SUE - Yes.

LEN - Is it possible, you know ...

SUE - No, Mel isn't violent. Don't be afraid. It's something he made up, Len. He has no gun. I'm sure. Where should he keep it? Look around. There's no place in this flat where you can hide a gun.

LEN - Anyhow ...

SUE - No. But you do understand why I'm getting more and more worried about him, don't you? He's out of his senses.

LEN - I'm afraid you're right. (*Sound of a Beretta being fired.*)

SUE - My God!!!

LEN - He has shot himself! - (*Sound of chairs being pushed, sound of rapid steps and a door being torn up.*)

MEL - Hi.

SUE - Mel?

MEL - Yes, Honey?

SUE - What the hell are you doing?

MEL - I fired this Beretta.

SUE - Have you gone mad?

MEL - Take it easy, Sue. Nothing happened. No harm done.

SUE - So nothing happened? Come to your senses, Mel. You can't stand there and say that everything's okay. You fired a gun!

MEL - Yes.

SUE - Ordinary people do not fire guns in their kitchens, Mel. Not if they are normal.

MEL - I said no harm done. I opened the window ...

SUE - And shot after the birds?

MEL - No. I aimed at the flower bed and made a small hole. It's nothing to be upset over. Your roses survived.

SUE - You're not funny, Mel.

MEL - Are you angry?

SUE - I am upset. For good reasons.

MEL - Calm down, Sue.

SUE - Where did you get that gun?

MEL - It doesn't matter. I just bought it.

SUE - Why?

MEL - Why?

SUE - What for? - (*A short lull.*) - Mel, put it on the table. -
(*A short lull.*) - Please. You make me afraid.

MEL - Sorry. - (Sound of the Beretta being put on the
kitchen table.) - I didn't intend to.

SUE - That gun belongs to some loony thriller, Mel. Not to a
kitchen. And definitely not ours. Why did you buy
it?

MEL - Why do you want to know?

SUE - I love you, Mel. I want to understand.

MEL - You do?

SUE - Yes.

MEL - I can't tell you why. It just happened. I sat in a corner
booth at the Swan. I was alone. I had a pint of lager.
I felt down. I didn't know what I should believe.
Nor did I know what to do. I felt lost. I felt that I
was given up by you. Suddenly a man came up to
me and put it into my hand. Very discreet. He asked
if I would buy it. I don't know what I thought. Most
likely I didn't think at all. It was this odd feeling in
my hand ...

SUE - You suddenly felt full of power.

MEL - In a way, yes. I think I did.

SUE - And decided what?

MEL - I didn't decide anything. I just bought it.

SUE - For what?

MEL - I don't know. Nothing, I think.

SUE - But ...

MEL - I know what you think. But I had no purpose. My
head was empty.

SUE - This lover you've been talking about ... you thought
you might catch us in the act?

MEL - It may well be so, I can see that.

SUE - And then you prepared to ...

MEL - No! ... I didn't prepare anything. I knew very well that if it came to that I wouldn't be able to harm anybody. I wouldn't be able to do anything at all. I ...

SUE - No shooting?

MEL - No.

SUE - Mel, there is no lover. I've said that every time you began raving about him. He's a phantom, a made up story. I've been worrying about you, what has happened, has my husband gone mad? Do you understand?

MEL - I think I do. Now.

SUE - And when you started to talk about Len ... You frightened me, Mel. You really did.

MEL - I'm sorry.

SUE - Look at him, Mel. He's your friend. Can you imagine him in bed with me? Can you?

MEL - Sue, I can't answer. It's just that ... I was so afraid, Sue.

SUE - Of what?

MEL - Afraid of loosing you.

SUE - Mel, say that you believe me. I have never had a lover.

MEL - I know. I've been a fool. Sue. Tonight, in the dark, I'll go down and bury that monster gun in your flower bed. I've been stupid. I know. I can see that. I have hurt you. I'm sorry. I promise I'll bury that monster lover together with the gun. You'll forgive me, won't you?

SUE - I love you, Mel.

MEL - And you, Len? Are we still friends?

LEN - Of course we are.

MEL - I'm sorry.

LEN - No hard feelings, Mel.

SUE - So everything is okay now?

MEL - I think so. Everything is okay.

SUE - Nothing more to say?

MEL - No. ... You bought a six-pack?

SUE - Yes.

MEL - I could need one.

THE END