

BOB. He got rid of the aspersions, still has the limp handshake. Truett just became engaged. To his Colombian housekeeper.

JIM. What a convenient, timed and utterly implausible romance.

BOB. Isn't it, though? I called Truett in, congratulated him on his impending nuptials, and reminded him of the heightened scrutiny over at Immigration and Naturalization. Told him I could make a few calls to smooth that over for his blushing bride. Well, this wave of relief washes over him. And then I said, "Truett, do you recall last year's Christmas party, when Dale Ramsey made that pass at Barbara Grant, and she slapped him right in the face?" And he says, "No, Bob, I must have missed that." And I said, "Think hard about it, Truett. Are you *certain* you remember that? It would be so helpful if you did." Lo and behold, he *remembered*.

JIM. (sighs) I'm gonna have to do this.

BOB. So. A sworn affidavit from Truett will be on my desk tomorrow, proving little's complaint was nothing more than the rantings of a jilted suitor, I will close out that investigation, and Barbara Grant will be off the hook and on her way to Geneva, maybe that bitch fall off an Alp.

JIM. Holy cow, the girls are gonna love this.

BOB. I said I'd take care of it. I took care of it.

JIM. Yes you did. You're so handy. Look at you in your overalls. I wanna go next door and play handyman?

BOB. I should finish up in the kitchen.

JIM. Oh, come on, babe. What's the use in hiding the fact that we're deviants if we never...deviate?

(JIM pushes BOB onto the sofa. Romance ensues. The door buzzer. JIM goes to look.)

JIM. Sunderson.

BOB. Party?

JIM. (sighs)

(BOB, JIM, THEODORE)

(ILLUMINATING. BOB opens the door; revealing THEODORE.)

BOB. Mr. Sunderson! This is a surprise.

THEODORE. Hello, Martindale. I was hoping I'd catch you at home.

BOB. Please, come in.

THEODORE. I'd meant to speak with you before you left for the day.

BOB. Sorry, sir. Forgive my appearance, Millie caught a lark and decided we needed to paint our kitchen.

THEODORE. Yes, Kitty's already heard about it. She'd like to see your color choice, wants to freshen up our lake house.

BOB. Well, we'll have an unveiling when it's all done. Can I get you anything? A highball? Bound to be five o'clock somewhere.

THEODORE. No, I'm quite fine, thank you son.

BOB. Alright.

THEODORE. I suppose it's best I speak with you out of the office. Too many prying ears, you understand?

BOB. At the State Department? You'd think that'd be the safest place in the world.

THEODORE. Nonsense. We might as well speak directly into the potted plants around there. I need to consult with you on a matter that has left me a trifle – discombobulated.

BOB. What is it, sir?

THEODORE. A fellow pulled me aside this afternoon, in the sauna. Said he had filed a concern with Personnel over a week ago, but had not been approached for an interview. I was under the impression your office was handling these cases in a timely manner.

BOB. Well, due to the sheer volume of concerns being filed, it can take some time, sir.

THEODORE. You told me we were in a two-day turnaround.

BOB. On average. Some cases require more inquiry than others.

THEODORE. Of course, Martindale. I'm not questioning your efforts. They've been top drawer for years, I wouldn't expect anything less from you now.

BOB. Thank you, sir. It's likely an active investigation, what's the fellow's name?

THEODORE. Dale Ramsey, over in Translation. Filed a concern on –

BOB. Barbara Grant. Yes sir, we'll be closing that out in the morning, just waiting on an affidavit. Appears Ramsey's a bit of a skirt chaser, Miss Grant rebuffed an advance, and he's a just sore over the whole thing. Wounded pride, nothing more.

THEODORE. We brought Mrs. Grant home from overseas on this, did we not?

BOB. Yes sir. And her passport was flagged. But as I said, there's nothing here to pursue.

THEODORE. Yes, I heard you. Have you reinstated her passport?

BOB. I'll be lifting the stay tomorrow.

THEODORE. You don't have the file here, do you? The complaint? The travel records?

BOB. No sir. I never allow confidential documents out of the office.

THEODORE. And that's what's unsettling. See, I told Ramsey that I'd personally look into his complaint, and I asked Mrs. Baxter to pull the paperwork. She couldn't locate it. I suggested it might have been misfiled in General Personnel, but it wasn't there either.

BOB. That is odd, sir. But with all the documents we process, some things are bound to fall through the cracks. That's why we file in triplicate –

THEODORE. Ramsey's concern on Barbara Grant was not in Grant's file, Ramsey's file, or in pending investigations. And her passport is no longer flagged. There are only three people who would have security clearance to make that happen. One of them is me. Who are the others?

BOB. Myself and Mrs. Baxter.

THEODORE. Correct.

BOB. This is the first I've heard of this, sir.

THEODORE. I'm sure it is, Martindale. It's quite clear your secretary has become involved in subversive behavior.

BOB. Norma? Sir, she's been with me for nearly five years. I would put my own reputation on the line for –

THEODORE. I've seen these things before, son. It's not uncommon when you give a woman responsibility – emotions eventually interfere. Mrs. Grant knows Mrs. Baxter socially, they just went to the opera with Kitty the other night.

BOB. Yes sir, Millie mentioned it.

THEODORE. My assumption is that Mrs. Baxter is merely trying to protect her friends, which is admirable in the abstract, but in doing so she's saying she's a more efficient judge of character than the U.S. State Department.

BOB. I understand completely, Mr. Sunderson. I will speak with her tomorrow –

THEODORE. I'm sure you understand why we can't have your secretary working on these matters in the future. She's proven she struggles with impartiality. Ramsay says there are other concerns which may have gone unheard. We don't know how much damage has been done.

BOB. I'm certain if you allow me to discuss the matter –

THEODORE. There are many other areas where Mrs. Baxter's talents can be put to use, Martindale. George Davenport's in need of an experienced girl in his office. And he's basic level clearance, just travel arrangements and such.

BOB. Sir, if I may —

THEODORE. No, you may not. The decision has been made.

BOB. Of course. Norma will understand.

THEODORE. Absolutely. We'll of course take her husband into consideration, give them plenty of time to get settled.

BOB. Settled, sir?

THEODORE. In New York. George Davenport's based out of Manhattan.

BOB. Manhattan? You're going to send Jim and Norma out of town? But, Jim's a teacher, sir, he can't —

THEODORE. It's May, perfect time to secure employment for the fall.

BOB. Mr. Sunderson, I don't mean to belabor the point, but —

THEODORE. *Bob.* Norma Baxter deliberately sabotaged a government investigation. If it were anyone but your secretary, she wouldn't be going to New York, she would be going to jail. Can you appreciate that fact?

BOB. Yes sir. Thank you, sir.

(The front door opens. It's MILLIE, with grocery bags.)

MILLIE. Oh! Hello darling! Mr. Sunderson! What a delightful surprise.

THEODORE. Mrs. Martindale, you're looking lovely as always.

BOB. Can I help, darling?

MILLIE. Oh, no, it's just — but I can manage if you'll get the door.

(BOB closes the door.)

Mr. Sunderson, how's Kitty?

THEODORE. Ruining me into the poorhouse thanks to that new hat shop you girls introduced me to.

MILLIE. Oh, you sound just like Bob. Heavens, darling, you didn't even get Mr. Sunderson a drink? You'll expire from thirst. Let me set these parcels down and —

THEODORE. Don't trouble yourself, my dear, I'll best be off.

MILLIE. So quickly?

THEODORE. I'm afraid so. Beulah's making a pot roast tonight. And Kitty has us doing the most damnable memory exercises three nights a week. Something about her Aunt Regina, I didn't really follow.

MILLIE. Well, send her my best. I'm going to get our dinner started. Though I doubt it'll hold a candle to your Beulah's pot roast. So long, Mr. Sunderson.

(She walks to kitchen.)

Oh, Bob, the kitchen looks divine! I can't wait to show Norma and Kitty! I love you!

BOB. Heh heh. I love you, too!

THEODORE. Fine wife you've got there, Martindale.

BOB. I'm a lucky man.

THEODORE. Wouldn't say anything to her about this whole transfer business, you understand. You know how hens can cluck.

BOB. All too well.

THEODORE. I'll be in Arlington tomorrow. Send Mrs. Baxter to the Hill. I have her do transcription in the hearings. It'll keep her out of office until I speak to her personally on Friday. No need for this to rest on your shoulders. I know your families are close.

BOB. That's very kind of you, sir.

THEODORE. And then we'll prepare a proper auditing of all your files. We'll get to the bottom of this. Good afternoon.

BOB. Good afternoon, sir.