

Richard and Sylvia

RICHARD. I left the Navy.

SYLVIA. Without dying?

RICHARD. I was...discharged.

SYLVIA. Honorably I hope.

*Richard shakes his head slowly, no.*

Oh no. *(Then.)* Assault?

*He shakes his head no.*

Treason?!

*He shakes his head no.*

Espionage?!!

RICHARD. *(A desperate confession.)* I was cold! All the time! The blankets were uncomfortable and I had terrible blisters. I was miserable, Sylvia. And...and...I missed you.

SYLVIA. Oh, William.

RICHARD. For two years, I'd been stationed at Rosyth in Scotland in readiness to stop any large-scale breakout attempt by the Germans.

SYLVIA. My hero!

RICHARD. My commanding officer was having me transferred to Scapa Flow in the Orkneys.

SYLVIA. How decidedly foreign.

RICHARD. He gave me a weekend leave between deployments.

SYLVIA. Generous.

RICHARD. *(Skirting the issue.)* Rather.

SYLVIA. *(Putting two and two together.)* Ah. So you never made it to the Orkneys?

RICHARD. *(The admission.)* Never did.

SYLVIA. *(With total understanding.)* Huh.

RICHARD. I couldn't take it anymore. When I got to London, I burned my uniform, rented a one-room flat with the money I'd saved working for your father, and hid out for a while.

SYLVIA. You poor dear.

**RICHARD.** It was a dark time, Sylvia. I waited out the war. Two long years I lived like a hermit, picking up odd jobs at the shipyards. Finally, when the war ended, I found my courage. And the way back to your parents' house.

**SYLVIA.** But I was married by then.

**RICHARD.** Yes.

**SYLVIA.** Tragic!

**RICHARD.** I hid in the bushes outside your parents' home.

**SYLVIA.** Romantic!

**RICHARD.** I saw you, you know? You'd come for dinner with your husband. And so I knew I was too late.

**SYLVIA.** But, William, why didn't you say something?

**RICHARD.** You were married, Sylvia. I'd lost you forever. And I was forever a traitor. There was no use.

**SYLVIA.** So you bought a beard and changed your name to Richard?

**RICHARD.** It was an impossible situation, Sylvie. Stay myself, and risk a lifetime of shame, or reinvent myself, and start anew.

**SYLVIA.** There is something refreshing about starting anew.

**RICHARD.** I thought so.

**SYLVIA.** You know, I thought I was starting anew this morning.

**RICHARD.** Did you?

**SYLVIA.** But it all went dreadfully wrong.

**RICHARD.** I'm sorry to hear that.

**SYLVIA.** Don't be! Now you're here and I...I...

*It has become too intimate.*

I could do with a cup of tea. You?

**RICHARD.** Certainly. Thank you.

**SYLVIA.** ~~Yes, I would like a cup of tea, but I must go. I have to go to the kitchen to get a cup of tea.~~

*Sylvia exits to the kitchen. Church bells begin to ring to claim the hour. Ten minutes. As the distant bells ring, Sylvia pops her head back in.*

~~Complete William?~~