

Richard CB

"The Cottage" by Sandy Rustin 11/4/2017

82.

RICHARD removes his beard.

SYLVIA

Oh!

RICHARD

Things aren't always what they seem.

SYLVIA

No?

RICHARD removes his mustache.

SYLVIA

Oh!

RICHARD

I can't say I'm proud.

No? Start

SYLVIA

RICHARD removes his hat/fake hair.

SYLVIA

Oh. (beat). William - please. Tell me the truth.

RICHARD

I left the Navy.

SYLVIA

Without dying?

RICHARD

I was discharged.

SYLVIA

Honorably I hope.

RICHARD shakes his head slowly, no.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Oh no.

RICHARD

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 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 new husband. And so I knew I was too late.

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

RICHARD
You were just 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.

End

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.