

FEE

by

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Characters:

MARTINE: mid 50s, African American, CIA agent

THEODORA: 22, Martine's daughter, mixed race, student at Cambridge

ARTHUR: 60s, white, Deputy Director of Operations at the CIA

TERRY: mid 20s, white, Martine's assistant

Setting:

London, UK and Langley, Virginia, USA

Late winter 2007

Author's note about the set:

At its most basic level, the play can be staged with one table and two chairs and a bed. Props can be carried on by the actors, if necessary. Other setting can be established by projections.

Prologue

The stage is quite dark. A man runs towards the audience, his face is in shadows. A gunshot from behind him. He falls. High heels click towards him, his body is kicked over so that he's lying on his back. He tries to speak, but is shot again before he can. The music playing through his headphones can be heard faintly, then it stops.

Scene 1

Projection:

Front page of The Independent March 7th, 2007 JOGGER SHOT IN REGENT'S PARK IDENTIFIED with blurry photo of a middle aged Argentine man, (this is EDWARD) next to a photo of police around Regent's Park crime scene.

A flat in London. There is a chair, a desk, and piles of books around the desk. MARTINE is leaning against the desk. She is wearing a black pantsuit; hair tied back, neutral makeup. THEODORA enters with two cups of tea. She is wearing a sweater dress over jeans.

MARTINE

(pointing to a painting)

This one's new.

THEODORA

He picked it up at an auction. Some trendy new painter.

MARTINE

I'm not sure I like it.

THEODORA

It's art.

MARTINE

Still, he could have asked me about it.

THEODORA

Why? You're never over here anymore.

MARTINE

I'm here now.

THEODORA hands a cup of tea to MARTINE and warms her hands with the other.

MARTINE

What's this?

THEODORA

Fortnum and Mason.

MARTINE

Tea?

THEODORA
Green Earl Grey. I bought it for him last year when he gave up coffee.

MARTINE
Better than that Yerba Maté nonsense?

THEODORA
Much.

MARTINE
Smells nice.

THEODORA
I'm addicted to it.

MARTINE
Must be an expensive habit.

THEODORA
Dad doesn't mind. Didn't mind.

MARTINE
He was good at that sort of thing.

THEODORA
What?

MARTINE
Lavishing.

THEODORA
Jesus.

MARTINE
What?

THEODORA
Just leave him in fucking peace.

MARTINE
I can't.

THEODORA
Why not?

MARTINE
Free-lance investigation.

THEODORA
Can't you leave that to the police?

MARTINE
I don't really trust them.

THEODORA
Why? Because they're British?

MARTINE
Because I'd rather do it myself.

THEODORA
You're a diplomat, not an investigator.

MARTINE
I'm smarter and have access to a hell of a lot more resources.

THEODORA
Than Scotland Yard?

MARTINE
Yes.

THEODORA
The almighty United States coming to the rescue.

MARTINE
No.

THEODORA
We'll send in the soulless widow cop to handle this one.

MARTINE
Fee.

THEODORA
Think you'll be able to blame this one on him?

MARTINE
What?

THEODORA
He shouldn't have been running outside. He could have joined that lovely gym around the corner. If his music hadn't been so loud he could have heard it coming.

MARTINE
Why would I do that?

THEODORA
It's what you do best.

Silence.

THEODORA
Have you see the papers?

MARTINE
On the flight from Paris. I don't know why they care so much.

THEODORA
Gun violence, it's uncommon here.

MARTINE

So civilized, here.

Martine takes a sip of tea.

THEODORA

Are you even capable of grief?

MARTINE

Not when I'm drinking such delicious tea. Thank you.

THEODORA

Shut up.

MARTINE

Of course I'm grieving.

THEODORA

Right.

MARTINE

It's all such a shock. I don't even know what to say.

THEODORA

Why haven't I seen you shed a single tear since you arrived?

MARTINE

I didn't cry when your grandfather died.

THEODORA

This is a little bit different.

MARTINE

Is it?

A pause.

THEODORA

Think you'll be in London for awhile? Investigating?

MARTINE

I'm not sure. We will need to have a service back in DC, at some point. Is this a bad time, school-wise?

THEODORA

Are you serious? It doesn't matter. My father's dead and you're worried about whether it's a good time school-wise? It's a shit time. Exams are coming up, I've got job interviews in the City over the next month. So yeah, it was a really inconvenient time to find out my dad's been gunned down in Regent's Park.

MARTINE

I'm sorry. Look, what can I do?

THEODORA

You could try to show some fucking compassion. If you're capable.

MARTINE

All right.

MARTINE walks over to THEODORA, putting her hand on her shoulder, then taking her into a formal embrace. THEODORA's phone beeps. She pulls away, looks at it, types something back.

THEODORA

I'm going out.

MARTINE

Where?

THEODORA

I'm meeting a friend.

MARTINE

I just got here.

THEODORA

Yeah?

MARTINE

I thought—

THEODORA

We could hang out?

MARTINE

No.

THEODORA

Mourn together?

MARTINE

Will you be gone long?

THEODORA

Don't know.

MARTINE

Should I expect you home at all today?

THEODORA

Don't worry. I'll leave you alone to investigate.

She leaves the room, leaving MARTINE standing awkwardly.

Scene 2

An office at CIA headquarters, three weeks earlier. ARTHUR is on the phone.

ARTHUR

Yes darling, I know it's today.

Pause.

Make reservations for wherever you want.

Pause.

Money's no object.

Pause.

This time next year, I promise things will be different. The President's all but promised a cabinet position.

Pause.

Well, *I* trust him, Cindy.

There is a knock at the door. MARTINE enters, dressed the same as before.

MARTINE

Arthur.

ARTHUR puts his hand up to silence her.

ARTHUR

I have to go, dear.

Pause.

Eight at the latest. I love you.

He hangs up the phone.

ARTHUR

Thank you for coming.

MARTINE

Did I have a choice?

ARTHUR

I know how much you love progress reports, Martine.

MARTINE

Highlight of my year, sir.

ARTHUR

You've been doing some very strong work for us over the past 30 years.

MARTINE

I know.

ARTHUR

You're a hard woman to compliment, Martine.

MARTINE

Why's that?

ARTHUR

Because you already know it.

MARTINE

Thank you, sir.

ARTHUR

That one wasn't a compliment.

Pause.

ARTHUR

There have been some complaints, Martine. I hate to be anything but supportive of you and what you represent but—

MARTINE

Represent? What exactly do I represent?

ARTHUR

Breaking the glass ceiling—

MARTINE

First black woman in the agency.

ARTHUR

Yes. You're a force, Martine.

MARTINE

Am I?

ARTHUR

Still, there have been complaints.

MARTINE

Complaints?

ARTHUR

Shall I tell you? Specifically?

MARTINE

Please.

ARTHUR

I'll try to make this painless. Women think you're unemotional and intense. And the men—

MARTINE

All seem to want to fuck me, but are afraid I'll bite their heads off post-coital.

ARTHUR

Martine. Decorum.

A pause.

ARTHUR

Men don't like working with you. They say you don't collaborate well.

MARTINE

And they do?

ARTHUR

You're not a— team player.

MARTINE

I prefer tennis, reminds me of my father.

ARTHUR

The great post-colonialist.

MARTINE

The one and only.

ARTHUR

He was a good man.

MARTINE

He was.

ARTHUR

Best professor I ever had.

MARTINE

That's what Edward always says.

ARTHUR

It was true.

MARTINE

There's no chip on my shoulder, sir.

Pause.

ARTHUR

Martine, I'd like you to look at some new intelligence we have.

MARTINE

Of course.

ARTHUR

It's already been confirmed by our sources and we just need a quick job to eradicate a certain problem.

MARTINE

I can be quick.

ARTHUR

It will be difficult. You'll have to be careful.

MARTINE

You know what I'm capable of, sir. Difficult's not a problem. Neither is careful.

ARTHUR

Of course not. Complete this mission and I will reconsider all the negative feedback. But if you can't, I may have to ask you to step down.

MARTINE

When have I ever failed you before, Arthur?

ARTHUR

The last presidential election.

MARTINE

In the field, sir.

ARTHUR

Never. That's why this assignment's for you.

He hands her a folder.

MARTINE

Thank you.

ARTHUR

I don't want to lose you, Martine; you're good for our numbers and you've been working with us for a long time. But it's a matter of professionalism. And the feedback I've been receiving recently.

MARTINE

Sir?

ARTHUR

Yes, Martine?

MARTINE

There's nothing you can do to intimidate me out of this post.

She stands.

MARTINE

I'll be here long after you're drooling in a wheelchair, kowtowing to the president.

She leaves, without reading the folder. ARTHUR sits, leans back in his chair. He drums his fingers on the desk, rearranges a knick knack, picks up the phone, puts it back down. MARTINE reenters.

MARTINE

Where the fuck did you cook up this?

ARTHUR

Knock, please.

MARTINE

Because you haven't been twiddling your thumbs waiting for me.

ARTHUR

No, Martine. The Deputy Director has more to do than—

Bullshit. MARTINE

We had a leak, from a trusted source. ARTHUR

From whom? MARTINE

Classified. ARTHUR

Classified? If I'm going to carry this out, I sure as hell want to know whose intelligence I'm following. MARTINE

You really shouldn't question your superiors. ARTHUR

My superiors? What are you, my fucking slavemaster? MARTINE

You know that race has nothing to do with this, Martine. Neither does gender, before you say anything. Don't be reckless. ARTHUR

Pause. MARTINE regains control.

It's just that I have a hard time believing any of this. MARTINE

You shouldn't. It's all in there. ARTHUR

I'm sure it's in there, I just— MARTINE

I told you it wouldn't be easy. ARTHUR

Why me? MARTINE

Access. ARTHUR

You're testing me. MARTINE

Please. ARTHUR

You're going to regret this. MARTINE

ARTHUR

Am I?

MARTINE

You don't think I'll do it.

ARTHUR

You know I have the utmost faith in your dedication to our nation's security.

MARTINE

You should.

ARTHUR

I also have faith in your ability to keep this for your eyes only. Terry can't know anything. You and I are the sole recipients of this intelligence.

MARTINE

I'm flattered.

ARTHUR

Can I get you something? Water, coffee?

MARTINE

Maker's Mark.

ARTHUR

Whiskey at 10?

MARTINE

Yes, sir.

ARTHUR

Of course, Martine. You can take the girl out of Hanover...

MARTINE

I'd like it neat, please.

ARTHUR

Anything for my favorite lady-spy.

MARTINE
(standing)

Changed my mind. You're right, it's too early.

ARTHUR

Good girl.

MARTINE

Happy Valentine's Day, sir.

ARTHUR

And you, Martine. Is Edward in town?

MARTINE

Not unless he's surprising me.

ARTHUR

Seems unlikely then.

MARTINE

Precisely. Send my best to Cindy.

ARTHUR

I always do.

MARTINE exits.

Scene 3

Projection:

BBC news broadcast "Two days after Argentine financier Edward Guerra was found dead in Regent's Park, Met police continue to search for the killer. Guerra's wife and daughter made this statement last night: 'We are stunned and deeply aggrieved by this act of unmitigated aggression towards Edward. We are working closely with the London Metropolitan Police and hope that whoever committed this contemptible act is brought to justice in due time.' "

A London Starbucks, morning of March 8th, 2007. TERRY, wearing a CIA hat, is sitting at a table with two cups. Sam Cooke is playing in the background. MARTINE enters, TERRY hands her a cup. She drinks then sits to join him.

MARTINE

Thank fuck for globalization, Terry.

TERRY
(laughing)

Yes.

MARTINE

What are you wearing?

TERRY

I haven't had time to change since getting in.

MARTINE

On your head.

TERRY

I found it at Dulles. Hilarious, right? Honor, Bravery, Integrity!

MARTINE smiles slightly.

TERRY

I knew you'd like it. I got a pink one for you.

MARTINE

You did not.

TERRY

They don't sell pink ones.

MARTINE

Shame.

TERRY

I got this from duty free though!

TERRY produces a large bottle of Jack Daniels and puts it on the table.

MARTINE

Is that for me?

TERRY

Uh, no.

MARTINE

That would have been a good present.

TERRY

Sorry.

MARTINE

First time in England, right?

TERRY

I've flown through Heathrow before, but that's it.

MARTINE

Lovely country. Filled with guilt, hope and inferiority complexes.

TERRY

Charming.

MARTINE

They hate us here.

TERRY

Who do?

MARTINE

The *English*.

TERRY

Why?

MARTINE

We stole their empire.

TERRY

There isn't an empire anymore.

MARTINE

Don't be romantic...

TERRY

I'm not.

MARTINE

I've single handedly overthrown enough dinky Latin American governments to know there's an empire, Terry.

TERRY

You'll be pleased to know you're drinking Colombian Roast then.

MARTINE

And the coke's in the bathroom?

TERRY

Ready and waiting.

MARTINE

Where would I be without you, Terry?

TERRY

Under-caffeinated and morose.

MARTINE

Too true.

TERRY opens the bottle of Jack Daniels, pours some into his and MARTINE's cups.

TERRY

Arthur sends his regards.

MARTINE

I doubt that.

TERRY

Well, I'm here, aren't I?

MARTINE

You are.

TERRY

How're you doing with all this?

MARTINE

All right.

TERRY

Really?

MARTINE

Really.

TERRY

Well, I'm here to talk if you need to.

MARTINE

I don't think that's why Arthur sent you over.

TERRY

You didn't hear? I've been demoted to grief counselor.

MARTINE

Welcome to the post Cold War agency.

TERRY

They've got no use for people like me anymore.

MARTINE

That's not true.

TERRY

Well then what am I doing in London?

MARTINE

You really don't know?

TERRY

I'm waiting for further instructions.

MARTINE

The suspense is killing me.

TERRY

Seriously.

Pause.

MARTINE

My daughter might be joining us.

TERRY

Might?

MARTINE

I'm not sure if we're on speaking terms at the moment. I left a note.

TERRY

Martine Jr.

MARTINE

Oh no. Nothing like me. Naïve daddy's girl...

TERRY

You're kidding.

MARTINE

Perfect state to be ravaged.

TERRY

You forget, Martine.

MARTINE

There's no ring on your finger.

TERRY

Diamond solitaires don't suit me. It looks better on Laura.

MARTINE

Blah, Laura. There must be some kind of "out of country, out of mind."

TERRY

Not for me.

MARTINE

Shame. You'd be a delightful first time. Lots of foreplay, maybe look into her eyes, spoon for a while afterwards. Talk, even.

TERRY

Martine.

MARTINE

Edward and I raided my parents' Motown collection for ours. And then every record skipped. I have to say it ruined the mood slightly.

Pause.

TERRY

I really am sorry about all this. It must be very hard for you.

MARTINE

We'd been together a very long time, Terry.

TERRY

I know.

THEODORA enters. She stands next to the table.

THEODORA

A bit early for Jack Daniels, isn't it?

MARTINE

It's never too early for a stiff drink over here.

THEODORA

Well, should I get mine to take away or are we staying?

MARTINE

Probably take away. Fee, this is Glen, he works with me back in Washington.

THEODORA

Nice hat. Business in London?

TERRY

Yeah, a few meetings, then back to the capital.

THEODORA

Cool.

She goes to get her coffee.

TERRY
I seriously need an alias with your daughter?

MARTINE
She doesn't know.

TERRY
About what?

MARTINE
Me.

TERRY
Your daughter?

MARTINE
It's never come up.

TERRY
That's rich.

MARTINE
Why spoil the illusion?

TERRY
Why not?

MARTINE
It's quite a big reveal.

TERRY
Maybe she's already figured it out.

MARTINE
No.

TERRY
She looks smart.

MARTINE
She is.

TERRY
Should I take this off?

MARTINE
I think that would be more suspicious now, wouldn't it?

TERRY
True.

MARTINE
What do you think?

Of what? TERRY

My daughter. MARTINE

Looks just like you. TERRY

No she doesn't. MARTINE

When'd she come down to London? TERRY

The police called her before they could get to me in Paris. MARTINE

Oh God. Did you hear it from her then? TERRY

No, I already knew when she called me. MARTINE

It's absolutely horrific. TERRY

It is. MARTINE

THEODORA comes back with a venti Starbucks cup.

Sleep well? MARTINE

Not really. THEODORA

Better than the red-eye. TERRY

Sure. THEODORA

They put you in business class though... MARTINE

Not a chance. TERRY

Oh. MARTINE

Do you get to fly business class? TERRY

Of course. MARTINE

And they pay for it? TERRY

I think so. MARTINE

That's ludicrous. TERRY

Why? THEODORA

Because... TERRY

I'm assuming my mother's higher up than you are. THEODORA

Yeah? TERRY

So, shouldn't there be some preferential treatment? THEODORA

For what? TERRY

Years of dedication to our great country. THEODORA

My daughter doesn't approve of our current administration. MARTINE

You don't approve of our current administration. TERRY

The man is my boss. MARTINE

I'd quit. THEODORA

Worse. You defected. MARTINE

I'm a dual citizen, I've merely returned to my birthplace. THEODORA

I've heard great things about Cambridge. Loads of my friends did their masters there. TERRY

I've enjoyed it.

THEODORA

Cool. Must be gorgeous.

TERRY

Looks just like Yale, but without the blight of New Haven.

THEODORA

Hey. Don't knock New Haven.

TERRY

It's produced some of our country's finest leaders.

THEODORA

Pause.

Darling Fee, where shall we take Glen to partake in real live England?

MARTINE

(in mock British accent)

Have you been to the Tate?

THEODORA

Not yet.

TERRY

The Turners are stunning.

THEODORA

The whats?

TERRY

And I'm partial to the Pre-Raphaelites, but they're admittedly a little girly.

THEODORA

Art's not really my thing.

TERRY

Why not?

THEODORA

Never understood the point, I guess.

TERRY

That sounds familiar.

THEODORA
(to MARTINE)

We'd get fired if we admitted to liking art in public.

MARTINE

Especially girly art.

TERRY

THEODORA

Well, if we have to spend the day together we're not going to Madame fucking Tussauds.

THEODORA walks out. MARTINE stands, TERRY after her.

MARTINE

Right. Let's to Pimlico.

TERRY

Enchanting girl, Martine.

MARTINE

I know.

They exit. MARTINE leading the way, TERRY almost forgets the bottle of Jack Daniels and has to go back to get it. Lights.