

SECOND HONEYMOON

by

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Characters:

Cast of 6 (4M 2F)

GEORGE
TANYA
BRADLEY
CRISPIN/DOLORES
THE CROW
V.O. NARRATOR

Synopsis of scenes:

Act 1

Scene 1 – Saturday 5.30 p.m.

Scene 2 – Sunday 9.00 a.m.

Scene 3 – Monday 2.00 p.m.

Scene 4 – Montage over following three days.

Scene 5 – Friday 4.00 p.m.

Act 2

Scene 1 – Friday 7.30 p.m.

Scene 2 – Saturday 12.30 p.m.

Scene 3 – Saturday 8.30 p.m.

Scene 4 – Sunday 9.00 a.m.

Place – The living room of a cottage in Kent.

Time – Present day. June.

Act 1

Scene 1

Saturday 5.30 p.m.

The notable items in the living room are a sofa with a coffee table in front and an armchair. There is a front door DSR. An exit leading to the kitchen USR. An exit to the dining room which also leads through to the garden DSL. There are stairs leading to the upstairs bedrooms USL. There is a door in the stair structure that leads downstairs to the cellar. The source of light comes from the fourth wall windows.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of afternoon birdsong is heard.

V.O. NARRATOR: Second Honeymoon. Chapter one.

GEORGE enters through the front door with his case. He looks about him for a moment or two before crossing to the sofa. He sits and runs his hand over the adjacent seat cushion remembering. He continues to take in the room. CRISPIN enters from the cellar.

CRISPIN: Hello there?

GEORGE: Hello?

CRISPIN: Crispin.

GEORGE: No, George.

CRISPIN: No, I'm Crispin. I assumed you might be George. Good journey?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: London?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: North, East, South, West?

GEORGE: West.

CRISPIN: Ealing?

GEORGE: Gunnersbury.

CRISPIN: Ah, Gunnersbury. How is it these days?

GEORGE: Gunnersbury?

CRISPIN: I was thinking more London as a whole. Still being London? I suppose we couldn't ask it to be anything else really, could we.

GEORGE: I'm sorry, who are you?

CRISPIN: A question I ask myself every day, still haven't got a definitive answer as yet.

GEORGE: Who are you in relation to this place, I mean?

CRISPIN: Here to help out.

GEORGE: Help out with what?

CRISPIN: With whatever's required.

GEORGE: What were you doing in there?

CRISPIN: Checking the meters in the cellar.

GEORGE: Mrs Nichols said they'd be nobody around for the two weeks.

CRISPIN: Don't worry, I'm not here. Not here here I mean. I'm just around... to help out here. You've been before, she says.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Honeymoon.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: But this time it's just you. Well, it looks like you should have some lovely weather – if the forecast is to be believed. What was it like the last time you were here? But I suppose you may not have seen too much of it being your honeymoon – the outside world I mean. Sorry, I don't want to be reminding you of something you'd rather be forgetting... if I am. But I suppose you wouldn't have come here if you're wanting to forget it. Then again, we are hugely complicated creatures us human beings, aren't we?

GEORGE: Sunny.

CRISPIN: Sorry?

GEORGE: The weather, last time I was here.

CRISPIN: Ah. Good. You're a writer, she says.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Novels, she said.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Anything I may've come across?

GEORGE: No.

CRISPIN: Try me, I might have done.

GEORGE: No, you wouldn't, because I haven't had anything published... *yet*.

CRISPIN: Yes, that would make it rather tricky. The writer's art fascinates me. To have that skill to delve into that murky realm of the human psyche and drag to the surface the monsters that lurk there and expose them for our scrutiny on the clear white page... if that's how you see it. It must be extremely rewarding.

GEORGE: Sometimes.

CRISPIN: Got something on the go?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Can you give me a little sneak preview? The title perhaps?

GEORGE: Two Honeymoons.

CRISPIN: Romantic comedy?

GEORGE: Psychological magical realism thriller.

CRISPIN: Ah. Never heard of that genre before. What's it about?

GEORGE: Briefly, it's about a couple who come to a cottage to enjoy their honeymoon.

CRISPIN: Man and woman?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: And...?

GEORGE: And the writer – the man – was so obsessed with writing his book that he neglected his wife who found herself creating an imaginary lover who became real and ended up pushing the husband over the nearby cliffs.

CRISPIN: Goodness! Well, I suppose it could happen in a psychological magical realism thriller. And the wife lives happily ever after with her imaginary – now real – lover?

GEORGE: At the end of part one, yes... *seemingly*.

CRISPIN: There's two parts to it?

GEORGE: Two Honeymoons.

CRISPIN: Of course. Keep up, Crispin. First Honeymoon is part one and Second Honeymoon part two?

GEORGE: Yes, obviously.

CRISPIN: Well you say that, but there's no reason such a genre should obey any logical sequential paradigm.

GEORGE: Well... in this case it does.

CRISPIN: So, what happens in part two: Second Honeymoon?

GEORGE: Briefly, the writer returns to the cottage to fix what went wrong in First Honeymoon.

CRISPIN: But hang on, hadn't he been pushed over the cliffs by the lover?

GEORGE: I didn't say he died.

CRISPIN: True, you didn't.

GEORGE: His coat got caught on a tree branch on the way down. He's been dangling there for three days.

CRISPIN: Three days! Goodness, that can't be fun.

GEORGE: No. But it's given him plenty of time to think.

CRISPIN: Not much else he could do in such a predicament. To think about death and life?

GEORGE: To think about *her*... and *him*.

CRISPIN: *Him* the imaginary – now real – lover?

GEORGE: No, about *him* the writer.

CRISPIN: Ah. A true cliff hanger... if that's how you leave it at the end of part one. Is it?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: So how does he manage to get off the branch and return to the cottage to fix what happened? Briefly.

GEORGE: A bird comes to him and lands on his branch.

CRISPIN: Not a heavy one, I hope.

GEORGE: A crow.

CRISPIN: A crow's good. What does it do?

GEORGE: It speaks to him.

CRISPIN: The crow speaks to the man?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Yes, of course, I was forgetting what genre we were in for a moment. What does it say to him?

GEORGE: It tells him he's caught on the branch of hope or despair.

CRISPIN: Ah, the branch is symbolic.

GEORGE: It tells him he has a choice: he can either surrender to his doom by unbuttoning himself from his coat and plunge down to the rocks below, or he can return to the cottage and try to get her back again.

CRISPIN: But isn't she off into the sunset with her imaginary – now real – lover?

GEORGE: The crow tells him that if *she* had the power of imagination to conjure *him* up – the lover, then *he* – the writer, also has the power of *his* imagination to bring her back again.

CRISPIN: Got it. Without *him*, of course – the lover I mean.

GEORGE: No, the lover too.

CRISPIN: A menage-a-trois. We're straying into classic French cinema genre now.

GEORGE: No, the writer has to see the wife get rid of the lover by pushing the lover over the cliff.

CRISPIN: Ah, nice twist. And presumably the lover's not so fortunate to get his coat caught on the branch of hope or despair.

GEORGE: No. He plunges down to the rocks below.

CRISPIN: And the writer and his wife are now free to enjoy their second honeymoon together.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: And the writer will give his wife the attention she deserves so she won't be forced to create another imaginary lover who becomes real and ends up pushing the husband over the cliff edge once more.

GEORGE: Right.

CRISPIN: Like it. But I'm still unclear how he manages to extricate himself from his serious entanglement on the branch of hope or despair. I mean he's been dangling there for three days, so one would assume he would've done it sooner... if he could.

GEORGE: The crow's words give him the incentive to do it.

CRISPIN: They galvanise his spirit to do the seemingly impossible.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: So where have you got to?

GEORGE: Just started Second Honeymoon.

CRISPIN: How's it going?

GEORGE: At the moment... it's not.

CRISPIN: Oh? Writer's block?

GEORGE: You could say that.

CRISPIN: Do you know what's blocking you?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Can I ask what it is?

GEORGE: I would've thought that was quite obvious.

CRISPIN: Well, you seem to have both your hands and your head, so...

GEORGE: *She's* not with me, is she.

CRISPIN: She?

GEORGE: My wife.

CRISPIN: And that's what's stopping you: her not being with you here?

GEORGE: Not just *here*...

CRISPIN: Ah, not with you at all, you mean. I say, you didn't make the same mistake as your writer in your book, did you?

GEORGE: No, our honeymoon was perfect... more or less.

CRISPIN: So, you weren't writing your book then?

GEORGE: No. Not physically anyway.

CRISPIN: Not physically?

GEORGE: Only in my head... sometimes.

CRISPIN: So, your writer in your book isn't based on you then?

GEORGE: Well, only in as much as he's a writer.

CRISPIN: Of psychological magical realism thrillers.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Who's having difficulties in his marriage.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: What's his name?

GEORGE: George. But he's not going to stay George.

CRISPIN: No?

GEORGE: I'm just calling him that for the time being to help me get into the character while I'm writing him. I'll call him something else when I finish it... *if* I finish it.

CRISPIN: So, George in your book George, unlike you, George, who was only writing your novel in your head –

GEORGE: Sometimes. Not often.

CRISPIN: Made the unfortunate mistake of physically writing his, neglecting his wife's needs and forcing her to create an imaginary lover. And the rest is history... so far.

GEORGE: Yes. Not that she was particularly attentive to *his* needs.

CRISPIN: What?

GEORGE: Well, she must've known what she was getting herself into surely... marrying him: a writer. He's bound to want to withdraw now and again into the world of his writing...and sometimes for quite long periods of time too.

CRISPIN: But you said he was neglecting her.

GEORGE: According to *her* he was, not to him. To him he was just being a writer.

CRISPIN: It sounds like you're arguing yourself out of writing Second Honeymoon.

GEORGE: No, I'm... I'm just saying... I'm just presenting both sides of the argument, as a good writer should do.

CRISPIN: I suppose the question is: does he really *want* her back?

GEORGE: Of course he does. He loves her. He can't live without her.

CRISPIN: I see. How long's it been?

GEORGE: Been?

CRISPIN: Without her.

GEORGE: Like I said, three days.

CRISPIN: No, not the wife in your book, the wife in your life, I mean.

GEORGE: Oh. Three months... more or less.

CRISPIN: Do you know where she is?

GEORGE: With him.

CRISPIN: Her imaginary lover?

GEORGE: Unfortunately, he's very real.

CRISPIN: You've met him?

GEORGE: No, I haven't.

CRISPIN: But you've seen him?

GEORGE: No... and I don't want to.

CRISPIN: Then how do you know he's real?

GEORGE: What?

CRISPIN: She could be making him up.

GEORGE: Why would she do that?

CRISPIN: To see if you'll fight to win her back again.

GEORGE: We're in real life not a work of fiction. I trust her, he's real. She used to be so encouraging, so enthusiastic about my writing. We used to talk for hours, hours on end about my characters, my plot lines, my sub plot lines... everything. That's why I thought she'd be delighted about me quitting my job to concentrate solely on my writing. She still had *her* work, so we weren't going to starve. Sure, it would mean a bit of belt-tightening for a while just until the money started to roll in after a bestseller or two.

CRISPIN: What's her name?

GEORGE: Tanya.

CRISPIN: Nice name.

GEORGE: Thanks.

CRISPIN: And is the wife in your book called Tanya too?

GEORGE: For now, yes.

CRISPIN: And *his*... her non-imaginary lover?

GEORGE: Bradley.

CRISPIN: But I'm still puzzled as to why you've come here again – to the scene of your honeymoon together – unless it's to exercise some masochistic streak in you.

GEORGE: I thought being here and connecting to my memories here – my happy ones – would give me the impetus to furnish my writer with the enthusiasm to conjure his wife back to him again.

CRISPIN: I see. And if you'll permit me to add a little magical realism of my own: to use those same happy memories to conjure your own Tanya back to you again?

GEORGE: That's a ridiculous idea.

- CRISPIN: Not to me it isn't. Well... is it?
- GEORGE: Perhaps I'm just here to throw myself off the cliffs out there.
- CRISPIN: Let's have none of that, George, none of that. You need to take a leaf out of your writer's book. He's not just gone through his three-day ordeal on the tree branch to arrive back at the cottage in order to return to the cliff edge again and throw himself off. No, he's come back armed with an absolute conviction that he will achieve his goal.
- GEORGE: Yes, but he's just a character in a work of fiction so he's bound to get it... if I *want* him to.
- CRISPIN: Then I suggest you need to add a little more magical to *your* realism too.
- GEORGE: Okay, thanks for the advice, now I'd really like to...
- CRISPIN: Crack on? My cue to leave. One last question.
- GEORGE: What?
- CRISPIN: I'm curious, why did you choose this humble cottage in Kent to spend your honeymoon together?
- GEORGE: We were meant to go to Hawaii, but her mother got ill so we decided to stick a pin in a map and it landed here.
- CRISPIN: A map of the world?
- GEORGE: A map of Kent. She likes Kent.
- CRISPIN: Who doesn't? Did you ever make it to Hawaii?
- GEORGE: No.
- CRISPIN: Shame. I've heard it's lovely.
- GEORGE: So have I.
- CRISPIN: If you need me, I'll be around... somewhere. Cheerio for now.

CRISPIN exits through the front door. GEORGE looks about the room again thoughtfully. He opens his case and takes out his laptop. He places it on the coffee table. He sits on the sofa and opens his laptop.

- GEORGE: *(To himself. Reading.)* Part Two. Second Honeymoon. Chapter one.

*GEORGE mumbles reading until he finds the right place.
GEORGE's voiceover is heard. (Note: GEORGE doesn't type here.)*

G. V.O.: *I stood once more in the living room of the cottage. There was no trace of her... or him. After three days on the branch I was aching and weary. I wanted drink, I wanted food, I desperately wanted sleep, but most of all I wanted her. I knew what I had to do, but for now I barely had the strength to walk, let alone muster the army of my weary thoughts to commence my imagination's quest to conjure her back to me again. That would have to wait till morning, I told myself.*

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* End of chapter. You're as deluded as I am, George my friend, you're as deluded as I am.

He closes his laptop. Lights down.

Scene 2

Sunday 9.00 a.m.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of morning birdsong is heard.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter two.

GEORGE enters through the dining room door. He seems energised. He crosses to the front door and opens it. He takes a couple of deep breaths. He closes the door and is about to cross to his laptop. CRISPIN enters from upstairs.

CRISPIN: Good morning.

GEORGE: Oh God!

CRISPIN: Sorry, didn't mean to startle you. Just replenishing supplies in the bathroom. Meant to do it yesterday, but forgot. I did knock and call. Nice walk?

GEORGE: Yes, thanks.

CRISPIN: I noticed you up by the cliff and I must say I was a little concerned in the light of our conversation yesterday. I wasn't sure if you were about to... You were standing there precariously close to the edge for quite some time. Were you... about to...?

GEORGE: If you must know, it did cross my mind. Quite seriously in fact.

CRISPIN: What stopped you?

GEORGE: A crow... funnily enough.

CRISPIN: A crow? Don't tell me it spoke to you?

GEORGE: Yes, it did.

CRISPIN: It did?

GEORGE: But not in English, of course.

CRISPIN: In Spanish?

GEORGE: No, I mean it spoke to me by its very presence there.

CRISPIN: Go on.

GEORGE: The way it was just... perched on the rock there... looking at me.

CRISPIN: How was it looking at you?

GEORGE: In a severe, almost... challenging way.

CRISPIN: Maybe you were standing on its nest.

GEORGE: No. I felt it was telling me – daring me – to believe that it *was* in fact possible. That I *could* somehow bring her back to me through the power of my imagination. That I'm *not* deluding myself. In fact, the very thought that I *was* deluding myself was the very thing that was preventing me from achieving the thing that was perfectly... achievable.

CRISPIN: Wonderful! And you got all that from that bird?

GEORGE: Yes... more or less.

CRISPIN: And if that creature hadn't appeared to George in your book, you, George, may not have given it a second glance and you may be over that cliff edge now and on the rocks below.

GEORGE: We walked back together the whole way.

CRISPIN: You and the crow?

GEORGE: No, me and Tanya.

CRISPIN: Ah. And is she here with us in the room now?

GEORGE: She's outside in the garden enjoying the sunshine.

CRISPIN: Lovely. So, are you going to concentrate your focus solely on conjuring *your* Tanya back into *your* life again and forget about George in you book for the time being?

GEORGE: Why would I do that? I can do both, can't I?

CRISPIN: Yes, two birds with one stone... so to speak.

GEORGE: One will assist the other. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to...

CRISPIN: Get busy in the workshop of your imagination?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: My cue to leave again. Happy conjuring. Cheerio for now.

CRISPIN exits through the front door. GEORGE crosses to the DSL exit. He opens the door.

GEORGE: *(Calling off.)* Everything all right with you out there, darling? ... Good. I'm just going to do some writing in here. ... Love you too.

He crosses to the sofa and sits. He opens his laptop.

(To himself. Typing.) Chapter two.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.)* I was well rested and after my four slices of toast and six egg breakfast followed by three cups of good strong coffee, I reclined in the living room chair. Although my body still ached, the long soak in the hot bath the night before had helped to alleviate the pain considerably. How was I to do it? I asked myself. Was I to conjure her back the same way she had conjured up him, with a supreme and concentrated effort of imaginative intent? And could I just do it sitting in a chair? Or would it require me physically being in the rooms we had been in together? In the dining room reliving our candlelit dinners and gazing lovingly into each other's eyes. Walking along the cliff path enjoying the splendour of the setting sun. In the bedroom, our nights of unbridled passion. Our breakfasts on the terrace, serenaded by a tuneful morning blackbird.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* Nice.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.)* No, I told myself, that wasn't the way to do it... at least not my way. I was a writer. What was writing's art if it was not painting pictures on the page so real that the reader was convinced they were tasting the succulent fruit, smelling the fragrant rose, feeling the prick of its thorn, or indeed sensing the presence of someone standing behind the closed front door of a cottage in Kent? A returned wife perhaps, ready for reconciliation... or perhaps a hated rival, seething with malicious intent?

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* End of chapter. Coffee.

GEORGE crosses to the DSL door. He opens it.

(Calling off.) I'm making coffee, darling. Want some? ... Okay. ... Love you too.

GEORGE exits into the kitchen. The front door opens. TANYA stands in the doorway. She surveys the room. She crosses to the sofa and looks down at George's laptop. GEORGE enters from the kitchen with a cup of coffee.

Oh God! Tanya?

TANYA: Hello, George.

GEORGE: What...?

TANYA: How are you, George?

GEORGE: It's...

TANYA: Yes, George?

GEORGE: You? Really... you?

TANYA: It was the last time I checked. A strange question.

GEORGE: What are you...?

TANYA: Doing here? I'm here to see you, George.

GEORGE: Are you with... *him*?

TANYA: No, I came alone.

GEORGE: But you're... still... *with him*?

TANYA: Bradley and I have gone our separate ways. I've uncreated him.

GEORGE: What?

TANYA: He no longer exists for me. There is no Bradley, George. There never *was* any Bradley, George. I made him up.

GEORGE: You... Why?

TANYA: It was necessary.

GEORGE: To... to torture me.

TANYA: I needed to do something, George.

GEORGE: But... that? There hasn't been a day – or night – when I haven't imagined you with him... kissing him... making love to him.

TANYA: My imaginary lover.

GEORGE: He wasn't imaginary to me. We could've talked more.

TANYA: Argued more?

GEORGE: Talked.

TANYA: Do you want me to leave, George?

GEORGE: No. I... Where have you been living?

TANYA: With a friend. You don't know her.

GEORGE: How... how did you know?

TANYA: Know what?

GEORGE: I was here?

TANYA: A little bird told me.

GEORGE: A bird? A crow?

TANYA: Your mother.

GEORGE: Oh.

TANYA: I've taken time off. Two weeks. If you want me to... stay?

GEORGE: Do you have a case?

TANYA: It's outside. I didn't want to presume you'd be happy to see me. Are you?

GEORGE: Yes, I... I... I'm just having trouble believing you're really...

TANYA: Me?

GEORGE: It's just... what I'm writing, it's very... true to life – for a work of psychological magical realism thriller.

TANYA: It's going well?

GEORGE: Better... now. Oh... Tanya, I'll never give you cause again to create any more monsters to torture me with.

TANYA: Good. Although Bradley wasn't really a monster... not to *me* anyway. He was actually quite charming, witty, romantic and hugely exciting in the bed –

GEORGE: I'll fetch your case.

GEORGE exits through the front door. He enters through the front door with Tanya's case.

Is this all you have?

TANYA: I didn't want to be lugging a heavy case around if I wasn't going to be staying. Honeymoon essentials.

GEORGE: Honeymoon?

TANYA: Perhaps we can call this our second honeymoon, George. On one condition.

GEORGE: What's that?

TANYA: No writing. Can you manage that... at least for the next two weeks?

GEORGE: This laptop will remain well and truly closed.

GEORGE closes his laptop.

TANYA: We still need to talk, George. Negotiate going forward together.

GEORGE: Yes, but not now. Come on.

GEORGE takes TANYA by the hand. They cross to the stairs.

TANYA: Don't I even get a cup of tea?

GEORGE: Tea later, honeymoon fun first.

They exit upstairs. Lights down.

Scene 3

Monday 2.00 p.m.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of afternoon birdsong is heard.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter three.

GEORGE enters through the front door. He exits into the kitchen. After a moment he enters from the kitchen holding a bottle of champagne and two glasses. He looks across to his laptop. He deliberates for a moment before sitting on the sofa and opening his laptop. He mumbles reading and makes a couple of corrections as he does so. CRISPIN enters from the cellar holding a tool box.

CRISPIN: Afternoon.

GEORGE: Jesus!

GEORGE hurriedly closes his laptop.

CRISPIN: Sorry, you're working.

GEORGE: No... I'm not.

CRISPIN: Pipe needed fixing. All done now. I wanted to take the opportunity to attend to it while you were out. At least I *thought* you were. But you're not, you're in. Is she sitting here?

GEORGE: No.

CRISPIN: Out in the garden again, sunning herself.

GEORGE: No, she's up at the cliff edge.

CRISPIN: What's she doing up there?

GEORGE: Waiting for me.

CRISPIN: Good stuff. Real champagne too. Carry on like this, George, and she'll be walking through that door for real.

GEORGE: Too late, she already has.

CRISPIN: What?

GEORGE: She arrived yesterday afternoon.

CRISPIN: Tanya?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Not just in your mind's eye.

GEORGE: No. The real, solid, flesh and blood Tanya.

CRISPIN: Congratulations, George.

GEORGE: For what?

CRISPIN: For conjuring her up so quickly.

GEORGE: I didn't do anything.

CRISPIN: What do you mean you didn't do anything?

GEORGE: Like I say, I had nothing to do with it.

CRISPIN: Nothing?

GEORGE: Only in the sense that I happen to *be* here, the person she wanted to see.

CRISPIN: But yesterday morning you convinced yourself – and me – having recently met the crow at the cliff edge – that you could absolutely bring her back here solely through the power of your imagination.

GEORGE: Well, I may've said that, but I was obviously deluding myself, wasn't I, in my state of desperation.

CRISPIN: I say *you* did it, George.

GEORGE: Well, you can say what you want, don't let me stop you.

CRISPIN: What about the writer in your book?

GEORGE: What about him?

CRISPIN: Is he just deluding himself too in his state of desperation?

GEORGE: He's just a character in a book – my book – a psychological magical realism thriller, for him anything's possible... if I *want* it to be. So no, he's not deluding himself. He'll get what he wants... if I want him too. Besides if he didn't it wouldn't be much of a book would it? Now, if you'll excuse me, I have an appointment on a cliff edge with a woman and a bottle of champagne.

CRISPIN: She got rid of *him* then?

GEORGE: Who?

CRISPIN: Bradley?

GEORGE: She didn't have to.

CRISPIN: No?

GEORGE: He was never real. She'd just made him up to... to torture me with.

CRISPIN: I said he wasn't. You should've listened to me.

GEORGE: Well... I didn't. Oh, if you see her, no mention you caught me on this. I've promised her under pain of dismemberment absolutely no writing during our... we're calling it our second honeymoon.

CRISPIN: Ah, life imitating art... or is it art imitating life?

GEORGE: Is there a difference?

GEORGE takes the champagne bottle and glasses and exits through the front door.

CRISPIN: *(More to himself.)* Cheerio for now.

Lights down.

Scene 4

Over several days.

Lights up. A montage scene commences with the song Dos Gardenias from Buena Vista Social Club playing throughout.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter four.

CRISPIN has remained on stage. He moves to the music in a tango-like style before exiting through the front door.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter five.

Next day. GEORGE enters from upstairs. He descends the stairs. He glances towards his laptop before exiting into the kitchen. TANYA enters from upstairs. She descends the stairs. GEORGE enters from the kitchen carrying a bottle of champagne and two glasses. He and TANYA move to the music in a tango-like style before exiting upstairs.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter six.

Next day. CRISPIN enters from the cellar. He carries a plumber's wrench. He moves to the music before exiting through the front door.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter seven.

That evening. GEORGE enters from the kitchen carrying two glasses of wine. He crosses to the dining room door. He stops and looks at his laptop thoughtfully. TANYA appears at the dining room door and gives GEORGE an admonishing look. GEORGE and TANYA exit into the dining room.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter eight.

Next day. CRISPIN enters through the front door carrying two watering cans. He moves to the music before exiting through the dining room door to the garden.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter nine.

That night. GEORGE enters from upstairs in his dressing gown. He opens his laptop and begins to write. After a few moments TANYA appears at the top of the stairs in her dressing gown and gives GEORGE an angry look. GEORGE closes his laptop and hurries up the stairs. They exit upstairs.

Lights down as the song ends.

Scene 5

Friday 4.00 p.m.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of afternoon birdsong is heard.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter ten.

There is a knock on the front door. CRISPIN enters through the front door carrying a toolbox.

CRISPIN: *(Calling.)* Hello? Anyone at home? Hello?

He exits upstairs.

(Off. Calling.) Hello?

After a few moments GEORGE enters through the dining room door.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* I had woken up this morning with a most absolute conviction that today would be the day.

He sits and opens his laptop.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.)* I had woken up this morning with a most absolute conviction that today would be the day. I'd been busy since my return writing page after page of detailed description about her in the hope of conjuring her back to me, recreating in detail our time together at the cottage here before the arrival of him: Bradley. It was now afternoon and I had the distinct sense that she was near. I believed I could even smell her perfume in my mind's eye.

GEORGE: *(To himself. Considering.)* Mind's nose? Eye.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.)* And I also sensed that he was too. For, much to my displeasure, it had also been necessary to write page after page of description about him too, since he also needed to be summoned here in order for her to send him over the cliff edge and out of our lives forever.

CRISPIN enters from upstairs.

CRISPIN: Oh, you *are* here.

GEORGE: Bloody hell!

GEORGE hurriedly closes his laptop.

What is it? Another leaking pipe, blocked toilet, chimney collapse?

CRISPIN: Window catch needed tightening. All fixed. I say, aren't you risking the pain of dismemberment working on your book?

GEORGE: She's not here.

CRISPIN: Out walking?

GEORGE: She's browsing round the shops in the village. I'm meeting her down at the pub later.

CRISPIN: The second honeymoons are going well then – both of them, I trust.

GEORGE: Yes thanks.

CRISPIN: Has he managed to conjure her up yet – your writer – in flesh and blood... like you did with your Tanya?

GEORGE: I didn't.

CRISPIN: Has he?

GEORGE: Almost.

CRISPIN: And him too? Are you calling him Bradley?

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Just until you get to the end and then you'll change his name to something else.

GEORGE: Right.

CRISPIN: Will they arrive together or separately?

GEORGE: I haven't decided yet.

CRISPIN: What are the merits of either?

GEORGE: I suppose if they arrive together the reader loses an element of surprise.

CRISPIN: The surprise of the other one perhaps not returning... until they do return... by surprise.

GEORGE: Right.

CRISPIN: If *she* arrives first?

GEORGE: The reader might think she's got rid of him.

CRISPIN: Bradley.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: If *he* arrives first the reader might think he's here alone to finish the job – the job of finishing George off once and for all.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: They're both good, but if you want my opinion –

GEORGE: No, I don't. I'd like to figure it out for myself, thanks. I am the author, after all.

CRISPIN: Of course. I say, don't forget about *your* Tanya.

GEORGE: *(Distractedly.)* Yes... right.

CRISPIN: Cheerio for now.

CRISPIN exits through the front door. GEORGE faces his laptop.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* The cursor on my laptop winked at me as I stared into the patiently waiting screen.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.) The cursor on my laptop winked at me as I stared into the patiently waiting screen. The light of the afternoon sun shone through the cottage windows and cast its bright, golden sheen on the oak wood floor.*

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* Nice.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.) There was somebody there, I knew it, outside the door. I looked up from my laptop and stared in the door's direction. I steeled myself, ready to meet whoever it was who was about to make their imminent entrance.*

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* Her or him?... Him or her?... Him... No, her... Him...

The front door opens and TANYA stands in the doorway. GEORGE doesn't look up from his laptop.

Oh, what is it now?

TANYA: It's pissed off, that's what it is.

GEORGE: Tanya?

GEORGE hurriedly closes his laptop.

TANYA: You were supposed to meet me at the pub.

GEORGE: At three thirty.

TANYA: It's half-past four.

GEORGE: Is it?

TANYA: Yes, it is.

GEORGE: Why didn't you call me?

TANYA: Why didn't you remember to meet me?

GEORGE: I... I... Look I...

TANYA: I hoped it would be possible, George, I really did, but it seems it's too much to ask. It was a simple choice, you either *live* your second honeymoon or *write* it, it can't be both.

TANYA exits through the front door.

GEORGE: Tanya? Tanya? Tanya, come back. Tanya?

GEORGE crosses to the front door and exits.

(Off, calling.) Tanya? Tanya? Tanya, where are you? Tanya? Tanya?
Tanya?

GEORGE enters through the front door. He takes out his mobile. He dials. He gets through to Tanya's voicemail.

Damn! *(To mobile.)* Tanya, wherever you've gone, please... come back. I'm sorry. I'll not write another word. I promise. Tanya please... come back.

CRISPIN enters through the front door.

CRISPIN: Hello, I heard a lot of hullabaloo, shouting and whatnot. Is everything all right?

GEORGE hangs up.

GEORGE: Did you see her out there?

CRISPIN: Her?

GEORGE: Tanya.

CRISPIN: I thought you were meeting her down at the pub?

GEORGE: I was... meant to, but...

CRISPIN: Don't say she came back and caught you writing. She did.

GEORGE: Why didn't you tell me what time it was?

CRISPIN: I'm not in the habit of telling people the time if they don't ask for it.

GEORGE: I'm so...

CRISPIN: Stupid?

GEORGE: It's crazy... it's like she just... vanished.

CRISPIN: Vanished?

GEORGE: She ran out the door. I followed her and... when I got outside she was... nowhere. She couldn't have run off that quickly.

CRISPIN: I see. Well... there's only one other explanation for it.

GEORGE: What's that?

CRISPIN: That I was correct. When I said you'd conjured her here through the power of your imagination. And now you've sent her away again through the power of your... well, foolishness – if you don't mind me saying.

GEORGE: What, you're telling me that that woman who's been here with me for the past few days wasn't actually real?

CRISPIN: In a word: yes.

GEORGE: Oh please!

CRISPIN: Not that she didn't *seem* real in every way... to *you*.

GEORGE: Well, what about to you?

CRISPIN: Me?

GEORGE: Wasn't she real to you either?

CRISPIN: I couldn't possibly say. I never saw her, did I?

GEORGE: Didn't you?

CRISPIN: No. I only had your word to take for her *seeming* existence. If I were you, I'd get busy using your imaginative powers to conjure her back up again and I'd have a big bunch of apologetic flowers at the ready.

GEORGE: Please, this isn't helping anything.

CRISPIN: Do you want me to go outside and look for her?

GEORGE: Not if you don't believe she's real I don't. *(To himself.)* Oh, why did I do it? Why? Why?

CRISPIN: Because you're a writer.

GEORGE: What?

CRISPIN: You can't help yourself – being a writer: writing.

GEORGE: *(Considering.)* No... no I can't, you're right. And anyway, why should I help myself – if that's what I am: a writer – that's what I should be doing, isn't it: writing? And if she doesn't want to join me on my meteoric rise to literary success by supporting me and encouraging me – whenever and wherever I need it – then she's with the wrong person. Isn't she? She is. So good luck to her, that's what I say. Good luck to her.

GEORGE crosses to the front door.

(Shouting off.) Good luck to you! Wherever you are! Do you hear me? Good luck to you! *(To CRISPIN.)* That felt good. I actually feel quite... liberated. Yes. So now, if you'll excuse me, I have highly important, valuable work to be getting on with.

CRISPIN: Right. Then I'll delay you no further on your meteoric rise to literally success.

GEORGE: Close the door on your way out.

CRISPIN: Will do. Cheerio for now.

CRISPIN exits through the front door.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* No, she can't just set the rules that suit *her* and expect me to be obediently obeying them. I'm sure none of the great writers – anybody who's ever been anybody – didn't get to where they were by kowtowing to the made-up rules of their partners or spouses or significant others. No. And neither will I. Right then, where was I?

GEORGE sits on the sofa and opens his laptop.

(Reading.) There was somebody there, I knew it, outside the door. I looked up from my laptop and stared in its direction. I steeled myself, ready to meet whoever it was who was about to make their imminent entrance.

G. V.O.: *(Typing during V.O.) The door handle turned slowly and the door opened. There he stood, the man she had created. Our eyes locked in a stare of mutual revulsion. Truly it was hate at first sight. I glanced behind him to see if there was any sign of her... but there was not. Had I only managed to summon up him and not her? Had I only half completed my necessary task? Time would tell. But for now there was only him.*

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* Coffee.

GEORGE exits into the kitchen. The front door opens and BRADLEY stands in the doorway. He surveys the room. He enters and crosses to George's laptop. He glances at it.

BRADLEY: *(Calling.)* Hello?

GEORGE enters from the kitchen.

GEORGE: Hello?

BRADLEY: Well, well, well... look who's still with us.

GEORGE: Who are *you*?

BRADLEY: You *know* who I am?

GEORGE: No, I've no idea.

BRADLEY: What... you don't remember me?

GEORGE: Should I?

BRADLEY: I would... if I were you. How the hell did you survive it?

GEORGE: Survive what?

BRADLEY: It's a miracle.

GEORGE: What is?

BRADLEY: You being here.

GEORGE: Who are you and what do you want?

BRADLEY: You really don't remember?

GEORGE: What?

BRADLEY: Me. Your fall.

GEORGE: What fall?

BRADLEY: You must've landed on a ledge or something and hit your head. Did you?

GEORGE: I've no idea what you're talking about. You've obviously got the wrong cottage, the wrong person.

BRADLEY: No, I haven't... *George*.

GEORGE: Are you going to tell me who you are?

BRADLEY: It begins with a B and ends with a Y.

GEORGE: You're not...?

BRADLEY: Not?

GEORGE: *Him*... are you... Bradley?

BRADLEY: Ah, it's all coming back.

GEORGE: So... so you *are* real.

BRADLEY: Real?

GEORGE: Yes, she didn't just make you up.

BRADLEY: Make me up?

GEORGE: You *do* exist.

BRADLEY: Who told you I didn't?

GEORGE: Where did you meet her? In London? Do you know her from work – hers... or yours – whatever it is you do?

BRADLEY: We met here.

GEORGE: Here? No, that's impossible. She's only been here once before and that was on our honeymoon... and I know you didn't meet her then.

BRADLEY: Really.

GEORGE: What... you're telling me you met her on our honeymoon?

BRADLEY: She wasn't happy with you, spending all your precious honeymoon moments working on your book. She needed someone who was going to give her some undivided quality attention. I arrived just in the nick of time.

GEORGE: I hardly worked on my book at all.

BRADLEY: That's not her story.

GEORGE: If she was seeing someone – *you* – on our honeymoon I would've certainly known about it.

BRADLEY: You did know about it... before you hit your head.

GEORGE: I did not hit my head.

BRADLEY sits.

I wouldn't get too comfortable if I were you, I've got nothing to say to you.

BRADLEY: Good, because I've got nothing to say to you either.

GEORGE: If you've come to see her, you're out of luck. She's probably on a train back to London by now

BRADLEY: Why would she be doing that?

GEORGE: Because we had an argument.

BRADLEY: About what?

GEORGE: None of your business.

BRADLEY: Well... we *didn't* have an argument, so I say she'll be back here soon. We've just been enjoying a nice refreshing glass of Chablis in the pub together. Perfect after a hard day relaxing at the beach.

GEORGE: You've just been in the pub with her?

BRADLEY: Yes.

GEORGE: It must've been a quick drink, she only left here ten minutes ago.

BRADLEY: What are you talking about? She's been with me the entire day.

GEORGE: No, she hasn't.

BRADLEY: She has.

GEORGE: No.

BRADLEY: Yes.

GEORGE: Well... it appears *I'm* not the one with the head injury. Which pub?

BRADLEY: The Plough and Harrow.

GEORGE: Okay, well you got that correct.

BRADLEY: I've got it all correct.

GEORGE: Where is she now then... Bradley?

BRADLEY: Up at the cliff path having a stroll... George. She wanted to have a little me-time before dinner. Although why anyone would want to have time away from *me* is anybody's guess.

GEORGE: So, you think she's coming back here, do you... Bradley?

BRADLEY: I don't *think* it, I *know* it... George.

GEORGE: Perhaps you'd like to put a little bet on it.

BRADLEY: Sure. How much?

GEORGE: Not money. Let's say if she doesn't return – within an hour from now – you leave and never come back here again.

BRADLEY: And if she does?

GEORGE: We ask her which of us she wants to be with. The one she doesn't goes. Is an hour enough time for you... Bradley?

BRADLEY: Plenty... George.

GEORGE: It's five-thirty now, so shall we say six-thirty?

BRADLEY: Let's.

They shake hands.

Better start packing... George.

BRADLEY crosses to the kitchen door.

GEORGE: Where are you going?

BRADLEY: To fix us some drinks.

GEORGE: I don't want a drink, thanks.

BRADLEY: Good, because I wasn't making one for you.

*BRADLEY exits into the kitchen. After a couple of moments
TANYA enters through the front door.*

TANYA: Darling, I'm back.

GEORGE: Tanya?

TANYA: George? You decided to return then.

GEORGE: Return?

TANYA: From London. I assumed that's where you've been for the past three days. Is that where you've been?

GEORGE: London?

TANYA: Yes.

GEORGE: I've been here.

TANYA: Here?

GEORGE: Yes.

TANYA: No, you haven't.

GEORGE: Yes, I have.

TANYA: You haven't.

GEORGE: I have. We've been here together, remember?

TANYA: Is Bradley around?

GEORGE: You *know* about him then?

TANYA: You know I know about him.

GEORGE: You told me he didn't exist.

TANYA: No, I didn't.

GEORGE: You did.

TANYA: Is that why you've come back here, George, to try to gaslight me?

GEORGE: Gaslight you? No. He told me you met on our honeymoon. Is it true?

TANYA: You know we did. Where is he? Is he through there?

GEORGE: Tanya...

TANYA: Why are you here, George?

GEORGE: You know why I'm here.

TANYA: No, I don't. Did you come back for me?

GEORGE: I came back to write.

TANYA: Well... I think that says it all – don't you, George.

There is a pop of a champagne cork, off.

BRADLEY: *(Off.)* Hey, hey!

GEORGE: Yes... I did come back for you... indirectly.

TANYA: Indirectly?

GEORGE: Yes – as I *thought* I'd told you – I came back here to the cottage in the hope that being here – the place of our happy honeymoon – what I *assumed* was our happy honeymoon – I might somehow miraculously bring you back to me again through the power of my imagination – like my writer is attempting to do in my book with *his* wife. But then you arrived for real. It *seemed* like we were having a good time – on what we were calling our second honeymoon – before I ruined it by writing again. You ran out the door – completely vanished – and then *he* appeared, the man you'd convinced me wasn't actually real. But now I know he is real... well, that changes everything, doesn't it?

TANYA: Have you been drinking, George?

GEORGE: No.

TANYA: Taking drugs?

GEORGE: Neither.

TANYA: You're making very little sense.

GEORGE: You actually met on our honeymoon?

TANYA starts to cross to the kitchen exit.

Tanya, please... answer me this: have you or have you not been here with me for the past few days?

TANYA: No, George, we've established that. *I've* been here, but not with you.

GEORGE: With *him*?

TANYA: Yes, with him.

GEORGE: Then where have I been?

TANYA: You tell me, George. I've no idea. I assumed you were in London.

GEORGE: (*Laptop.*) No... no... it's that that's doing it. That! That's it... no more... no more writing... not another word... never again.

TANYA: George?

GEORGE: It's seriously messing with my... reality. That's it... finished. Well... I suppose I'll just... pack my things and go.

GEORGE picks up his laptop.

TANYA: You're leaving... *again*, George?

GEORGE: That's what you want, isn't it?

TANYA: Is it?

BRADLEY enters from the kitchen with two glasses of champagne.

BRADLEY: Darling, you're back.

TANYA: And so is George, it appears.

BRADLEY: Yes, but he's just going, aren't you, George?

BRADLEY gives a glass to TANYA.

Cin cin, darling.

TANYA: Cin cin.

BRADLEY: Mmm. Orange zest, cherry, almond and citrus. Delicious. (*To GEORGE.*) You still here?

Blackout.

Act 2

Scene 1

Friday 7.30 p.m.

Lights up. A bottle of whisky sits on the coffee table.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter eleven.

GEORGE sits on the sofa drinking whisky. There is a knock on the front door.

GEORGE: Go away.

The door opens. CRISPIN enters.

CRISPIN: Do you really mean that?

GEORGE: Yes. I couldn't *more* meaningfully mean it.

CRISPIN: How's it going?

GEORGE: Wonderful!

CRISPIN: Why am I getting a feeling that that's not entirely the case? I say, you're not planning to drink all that by yourself, are you?

GEORGE: I am.

CRISPIN: A Speyside single malt by the look of it. Am I right? I love a good Speyside single malt.

GEORGE: So do I.

CRISPIN: I won't stay long. Just a glass.

GEORGE: Look –

CRISPIN: Be right back.

CRISPIN exits into the kitchen.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* Oh God!

CRISPIN enters from the kitchen with a glass. He sits and pours himself a drink.

CRISPIN: It's not writer's block again, is it?

GEORGE: No.

CRISPIN: Have they arrived yet?

GEORGE: Oh yes... they've arrived.

CRISPIN: Did he arrive first or her?

GEORGE: He did.

CRISPIN: And...? I'm eager to hear.

GEORGE: They're having dinner together.

CRISPIN: All three of them?

GEORGE: No, George is back at the cottage getting drunk on whisky.

CRISPIN: Ah. Just like you are.

GEORGE: Just like I am.

CRISPIN: Art imitating life again... or the other way round. Why's he doing that?

GEORGE: Because he's found out the wife he thought was telling him the truth turned out to be lying to him all along.

CRISPIN: Oh, in what way?

GEORGE: It appears he *does* exist.

CRISPIN: Who?

GEORGE: Bradley.

CRISPIN: But he knows that, doesn't he – George? I mean he got pushed off a cliff by him. You can't get much more real than that.

GEORGE: He might have known it, but I didn't.

CRISPIN: I'm not with you.

GEORGE: He came here.

CRISPIN: Who did?

GEORGE: Bradley.

CRISPIN: What... your Bradley?

GEORGE: *Her* Bradley.

CRISPIN: In flesh and blood?

GEORGE: Very much in flesh and blood.

CRISPIN: Ah.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: What did he want?

GEORGE: Not to see *me*, that was quite clear.

CRISPIN: Where is he now?

GEORGE: Having dinner... with *her*.

CRISPIN: She came back too?

GEORGE: Yes. I knew she hadn't just vanished into thin air.

CRISPIN: They arranged to meet here, did they?

GEORGE: So it seems.

CRISPIN: Knowing that *you* were here too?

GEORGE: That's the thing.

CRISPIN: What thing?

GEORGE: She claimed to have no recollection of us being here together the last few days.

CRISPIN: No?

GEORGE: None at all. And *she* was accusing *me* of trying to gaslight *her*. I suppose that's the ultimate in gaslighting: accusing the person you're gaslighting of attempting to gaslight them. She was trying to get me to believe I'd been in London for the past three days.

CRISPIN: Three days?

GEORGE: Yes. And he was trying to convince me I'd fallen off a cliff and had hit my head.

CRISPIN: Fallen off a cliff and hit your head.

GEORGE: You don't *have* to repeat everything I say, you know.

CRISPIN: Interesting.

GEORGE: Is it? Disturbing more like. But not as disturbing as her telling me they'd met on our honeymoon. And not only that, but I actually knew about it.

CRISPIN: I see.

GEORGE: What?

CRISPIN: Yes. Three days on the branch of hope or despair.

GEORGE: What?

CRISPIN: Three days on the branch of hope or despair.

GEORGE: Yes, I heard you the first time. What's that got to do with it?

CRISPIN: That's where I think you've been... for the three days you'd been gone for.

GEORGE: What?

CRISPIN: Although she thought you were in London. *He* thought he'd got rid of you by pushing you over the cliff. That's why he was surprised to see you... alive. He assumed you must have landed on a ledge or something and hit your head.

GEORGE: What the hell are you talking about?

CRISPIN: They obviously think you're *him*.

GEORGE: Who?

CRISPIN: George.

GEORGE: I am George.

CRISPIN: Not you, George, the George in your book George I mean.

GEORGE: Why would they think that?

CRISPIN: Because that's who you are to them. That's what I'm guessing. Well, doesn't it all make sense when you think about it?

GEORGE: No... it doesn't. It makes no sense whatsoever.

CRISPIN: It does to me – from what you've been saying. To them you're

obviously the George in your book.

GEORGE: All right... then who are they to me?

CRISPIN: That depends which *you* you're talking about. To you, George – the George in your book George I'm talking to – they're real-life flesh and blood. But to you, George, they're characters in your book.

GEORGE: You're mad.

CRISPIN: Perhaps. But I say you're a creative genius. You've brought them to life through the power of your writer's potent imagination.

GEORGE: I can't possibly believe that.

CRISPIN: Can't... or won't?

GEORGE: Neither.

CRISPIN: It appears as if you have no choice. No choice at all. So, the question now is, George – the George in your book George I'm talking to – is what are you going to do about it?

GEORGE: He's going to get so drunk he'll forget this day even ever existed... and so am I.

CRISPIN: No, no, George, that'll never do.

CRISPIN takes the whisky.

GEORGE: Hey, give me that!

CRISPIN: No. Both of you Georges have to proceed with a clear head, otherwise you, George – the George in your book George I'm talking to – might be in serious danger of being pushed over that cliff edge again – possibly by both of them – and Second Honeymoon might just be a repeat of First Honeymoon. And what's more, you might not be so lucky to get yourself caught on the branch of hope or despair or meet any encouraging birds to save you. So, what do you want to happen in part two? You want her – Tanya – to fall back in love with you again and out of love with *him* – Bradley – and so out of love with him that she dispatches him for good over the cliff edge. Then you and she can live happily ever after... or for however long you want it to be for. The end. And then you, George – you George I'm talking to – can enjoy the glowing reviews, the book prizes, the countless weeks on the bestseller list... and the rest. So, George – both of you – what's your plan?

GEORGE: We still think option A is the best one: getting so drunk and forgetting this day ever even existed. Right, George? We do.

CRISPIN: Not an option, I'm afraid. I'm not having you going over that cliff edge again. And... George – both of you – you have work to do. So... I'll leave you both to it.

CRISPIN crosses to the front door.

GEORGE: Hey, come back with that!

CRISPIN: Cheerio for now.

CRISPIN exits through the front door with the whisky bottle.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* Kill me now, I said to myself, as I stared into the expanding black hole of the cottage living room. Psychological magical realism thriller... Why, oh why, hadn't I decided to become a travel writer instead?

Lights down.

Scene 2

Saturday 12.30 p.m.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of afternoon birdsong is heard. George's laptop and the whisky glasses are gone.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter twelve.

Sound of laughter is heard, off. TANYA and BRADLEY enter through the front door.

TANYA: *(Playfully.)* You're so naughty, Brad.

BRADLEY: I know.

TANYA: Stop that now! Stop!

BRADLEY: His laptop's gone.

BRADLEY crosses to the bottom of the stairs.

(Calling up.) Anyone still here who shouldn't be? Hello? *(To TANYA.)* Looks like he's finally got the message. I think something cool and refreshing is in order... and I'm not just meaning me. Be right back.

BRADLEY exits into the kitchen. TANYA crosses to the bottom of the stairs.

TANYA: *(Calling up.)* George? George? Are you there?

There is a pop of a champagne cork, off.

George?

BRADLEY enters with two glasses of champagne. He gives a glass to TANYA.

BRADLEY: Cin cin, darling.

TANYA: Cin cin.

BRADLEY: Let's make love.

TANYA: Let's just relax and enjoy this.

BRADLEY: We can just relax and enjoy this *while* we make love.

TANYA: You're too fired up all the time, Brad.

BRADLEY: But that's what you want, isn't it darling?

TANYA: Tell me some more about that place you own in the south of Italy overlooking the Med. We're on the rear terrace where the infinity pool is.

BRADLEY: On either side of the pool there's palm trees gently swaying in the summer breeze. We stroll to the edge of the terrace and gaze out towards the azure blue sea beyond.

TANYA: Sounds idyllic.

BRADLEY: It is.

TANYA: And can we walk directly to the beach from the property?

BRADLEY: We can. There's a path through the pine trees that threads down to the sea, where my ever-ready Sunseeker yacht is moored for the days we want to just chillax on the ocean.

TANYA: So... when do we go?

BRADLEY: Whenever you desire, my darling, whenever you desire.

GEORGE enters from upstairs. He wears a smart jacket.

GEORGE: *(Cheerfully.)* Morning.

BRADLEY: Oh!

GEORGE: Champagne, lovely. Bit early though for me, I'm afraid.

BRADLEY: It's a pity people nowadays are incapable of honouring their agreements.

GEORGE: I'll be gone soon.

BRADLEY: Good.

GEORGE: For most of the day.

BRADLEY: What?

GEORGE: I've got an important business meeting nearby, so I'm not sure when I'll be back. So don't wait up.

BRADLEY: What business?

GEORGE: My business. The business of writing.

BRADLEY: With who?

GEORGE: With whom.

BRADLEY: Who with?

GEORGE: A literary agent. She's one of the top brass at HarperCollins. I sent her some of my book and she absolutely loved it.

BRADLEY: *(Disbelievingly.)* Did she.

GEORGE: She did.

BRADLEY: What's her name?

GEORGE: Dolores Foster-Creighton.

BRADLEY: He's making it up.

GEORGE: Not everything in life is made up, Bradley.

BRADLEY: What's that supposed to mean?

GEORGE: Ask Tanya.

TANYA: Congratulations, George. If it's true.

BRADLEY: It isn't.

TANYA: Where are you meeting her?

GEORGE: We're having lunch in one of the top seafood restaurants in the country. And then we're going back to her place. She has a holiday cottage here. Overlooking two bays apparently.

TANYA: Sounds wonderful.

GEORGE: Yes, I can't wait to see it.

*When TANYA focusses her attention more on GEORGE,
BRADLEY feels a diminishing of his own life force.*

BRADLEY: Ah.

TANYA: Everything all right, Bradley?

BRADLEY: Yes... fine.

GEORGE: It's probably just the pangs of jealousy.

BRADLEY: Jealousy? Jealous of what?

GEORGE: Oh, I don't know... probably that I'm a brilliantly talented, soon to be widely published and highly thought of author and you're... not. Better dash, mustn't be late for Dolores Foster-Creighton. Have a wonderful day both of you... whatever it is you get up to. Ciao for now.

GEORGE exits through the front door.

BRADLEY: What... you don't actually believe him, do you? It's obviously a sad attempt from a desperate man to desperately try to impress you.

TANYA: We could follow him and see where he goes.

BRADLEY: I've got a much better idea: let's just forget about him utterly and entirely and take these upstairs to the bedroom.

TANYA: I want to enjoy the sunshine.

BRADLEY: We can enjoy the sunshine through the windows while we're making love.

TANYA: Let's go outside. Coming?

BRADLEY: I'll fetch the bottle.

TANYA exits through the dining room door. BRADLEY crosses to the front door. He opens it and surveys the outside for a moment. He closes the door and exits into the kitchen. Lights down.

Scene 3

Saturday 8.30 p.m.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of evening birdsong is heard.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter thirteen.

GEORGE enters through the front door with a box containing four bottles of champagne.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* I arrived back at the cottage. Welcome back, George. Thank you, George. It was eight-thirty in the evening. My day spent with Dolores had been a great success. A highly sophisticated and entertaining woman who was absolutely enthralled with my book... or what she'd read of it so far. I'd invited her here for an evening drink – or two – with the ulterior motive of letting Tanya know what she was missing by ditching me for that *creation* of hers: I had noticed earlier when Tanya's attentions had turned more on me than on Bradley, there seemed in him a certain diminishing of his life-force, as if his very being were entirely supported by her continued focus on him... which indeed it was. Having Dolores here singing my praises – which surely she would – would have the effect, I hoped, of pushing Bradley further over the edge – so to speak. And then, in time, he would enjoy another push over another edge – a precarious and more fatal edge – this time by Tanya... once she had come to appreciate the true value of the man she was rejecting: me. Nice, George. Thank you, George. On my way back I'd noticed them through a window of the Plough and Harrow finishing their romantic dinner together. They'd soon be here, unless they were intending a post-prandial promenade somewhere. But that was not to be. I spied them returning here as I glanced through the cottage window. Better chill the champagne, George, Dolores would not be the sort of woman who would tolerate warm champagne.

GEORGE exits into the kitchen. TANYA and BRADLEY enter through the front door.

BRADLEY: Finishing with a helicopter ride over the Alps.

TANYA: Sounds wonderful.

BRADLEY: No expense spared.

TANYA crosses to the bottom of the stairs.

TANYA: *(Calling up.)* George?

GEORGE enters from the kitchen.

GEORGE: Here I am.

BRADLEY: What time does your train leave?

GEORGE: Tomorrow morning.

BRADLEY: How about tonight?

GEORGE: I have a guest coming.

BRADLEY: A guest?

GEORGE: You know, someone you invite round for drinks or dinner.

BRADLEY: Who?

GEORGE: Have a guess.

BRADLEY: You're still determined to try to convince us she actually exists?

GEORGE: She was right about the seafood restaurant. Top notch cuisine. And her cottage is absolutely stunning. Breathtaking views.

BRADLEY: You wait and see; he'll be getting an imaginary text any moment telling him how 'unfortunately' she can't make it.

There is a knock on the front door.

GEORGE: That sounded like a real knock to me.

GEORGE opens the front door. DOLORES stands in the doorway.

DOLORES: George, darling.

GEORGE: Dolores, darling. Come in.

DOLORES: Oh, what a charming cottage.

GEORGE: Dolores meet Tanya... my wife.

DOLORES: Tanya, delighted to meet you.

TANYA: And you... Dolores.

GEORGE: And this is Bradley... her lover.

DOLORES: Ah yes, George was telling me about your 'arrangement' here. It could be straight out of the novel we've just had published: A Parisian Affair by Edwina Taylor. Know her work? The three of them live together in

a Parisian town house. It seems quite amicable – at first – but then turns into a dangerous game of emotional intrigue and psychological manipulation. I won't give away the ending... only to say things don't go too well for the lover... not too well at all. Pleased to meet you, Bradley.

GEORGE: Champagne everyone?

DOLORES: Champagne, the very ichor of the Gods. A day without champagne in it is not worth getting out of bed for, I always say.

GEORGE: Be right back.

GEORGE exits into the kitchen.

TANYA: George says you have a cottage here.

DOLORES: I do. A wonderful spot to withdraw to when I want to escape city life – which is more and more frequently nowadays. It has absolutely gorgeous views of the sea. There's nothing I like better than looking out at a setting sun, watching the birds perform their aeronautical acrobatics, while cradling a glass of chilled Dom Perignon in my contented fingers.

TANYA: He says you work for HarperCollins.

DOLORES: My dear, I practically *am* HarperCollins... I've been there for so long now. I come from a long line of literary agents so I was destined for little else in life. Although I did have a brief spell as a catwalk model in my twenties. I had a career-ending fall in Barcelona when I tumbled off a pair of nine-inch heels into a group of Japanese businessmen in the front row. I was mortified, naturally. The businessmen however were quite delighted and consoled me by supplying me with the finest champagne for the rest of the evening.

There is the pop of a champagne cork, off.

Ah, music to my ears. No, since then, it's been HarperCollins all the way. It's a rewarding profession and made all the more rewarding when a rare jewel such as a George T. Slinger finds its way into one's inbox.

GEORGE enters from the kitchen carrying a tray with a bottle of opened champagne and four glasses.

GEORGE: Champagne.

DOLORES: Yes, this man is quite the writer. From the moment I started reading the first half of his novel – I am eagerly awaiting the rest – I was instantly drawn into the intriguing world of psychological magical

realism thriller. A genre I had not come across before. But I think once this book is published – and I have no doubt it will be – we will see a slew of imitators eager to replicate this exciting new category of literary fiction. I can't wait for Marion to read it. She'll be green with envy that I discovered you first, George. Simon will also be incredibly miffed. And Geoffrey... well Geoffrey might actually read something for a change. He's long overdue for the pasture poor man.

GEORGE has poured and distributed the glasses. They all have taken one except for BRADLEY.

GEORGE: Well... Cheers everyone.

DOLORES: Santé.

GEORGE: Santé.

DOLORES: Tanya, you must've read George's book... so far.

TANYA: Well...

GEORGE: I haven't shown her much – as yet. I want to keep it a surprise until it's published.

DOLORES: Quite. There's nothing more exciting for a writer than to be able to present one's friends and family with a newly printed copy of one's latest novel. To see their excited faces as they peruse the eye-catching cover with title and author's name writ large on the front and glowing endorsements from fellow novelists eager to be associated with one's up and coming notoriety on the back. I can only *imagine* the thrill of it as we publishers are merely the facilitators of greatness not the producers of it... like George here. And if the remainder of his novel is as magnificent as what I've read so far: so artful in pacing, gripping in suspense, evocative in metaphor and allegory, intimate in its first person narrative voice... and the rest, then we will have a guaranteed bestseller on our hands. I don't often use the word genius – as it's a word all too often used and all too often misapplied nowadays – but in George's case it is indeed the mot juste.

GEORGE: Dolores, you're too kind.

DOLORES: Not kind, George. I can't afford 'kind', not in my profession. I didn't get to where I am today by being 'kind' to people. Au contraire, talk to anyone in the publishing world and they'll tell you that Dolores Foster-Creighton has the reputation for merciless savagery when it comes to critiquing novels. To receive praise from her – *me* – I assure you is well and truly earned. (*Raising glass.*) So, here's to George T. Slinger and his story so far. Is Bradley all right?

BRADLEY has been feeling a diminishing of his life force.

BRADLEY: He's fine. He's just finding it a little stuffy in here. *(To Tanya.)* Let's take a walk.

GEORGE: And break up the happy party, Bradley. There's still plenty of champagne left. Have some, it might help to lift your spirits.

BRADLEY: My spirits are fine, thanks. *(To TANYA.)* Shall we?

TANYA: I'm enjoying myself here.

DOLORES: We're all enjoying ourselves here, Bradley. Have some champagne. Top up for me please.

GEORGE tops up the glasses.

George tells me you work in home furnishings, Tanya.

TANYA: Oh... yes.

DOLORES: High end, I assume.

TANYA: Some of it.

DOLORES: And what is it you do, Bradley? George wasn't entirely sure.

BRADLEY: I enjoy my wealth.

DOLORES: We must all enjoy our wealth, that goes without saying, but what is it you *do* – or *did* – to have the wealth you presently enjoy?

BRADLEY: I'm in the travel business.

DOLORES: How wonderful! I love travel. What branch of it?

BRADLEY: I own an exclusive travel agency.

GEORGE: What's it called?

BRADLEY: Bradley...

DOLORES: Bradley?

BRADLEY: Bradley Travel.

GEORGE: An adventurous name.

DOLORES: I can't say I've heard of it.

GEORGE: Neither can I.

BRADLEY: It's very exclusive.

DOLORES: My dear, exclusivity is my middle name. Where are you based?

BRADLEY: Hawaii.

DOLORES: Oh, I love Hawaii. I'll have to look you up next time I'm there.

GEORGE: Me too.

BRADLEY: You can, but I won't be there. I leave my team to get on with the day to day.

GEORGE: You're too busy enjoying your wealth.

BRADLEY: Precisely.

DOLORES: As we all should. Yes, a charming cottage this. Does it have a garden?

TANYA: It does. Would you like to see it?

DOLORES: I would. And you can tell me more about your home furnishing business. I'm sure it's full of intrigue, scandal and nefarious goings on... once we lift up a rug or two. Get it: home furnishings?

TANYA: Very good. This way.

DOLORES: A bientôt, gentlemen.

TANYA and DOLORES exit through the dining room door.

BRADLEY: All right, who is she?

GEORGE: Dolores? Dolores is... Dolores.

BRADLEY: Who is she really? And how much are you paying her to say what's she's saying?

GEORGE: You know you should be more trusting of people, Bradley.

BRADLEY: You may think you're playing a winning hand, my friend, but I regret to inform you that the casino is well and truly closed, so you might as well gather up the few chips you have left and go.

GEORGE: Oh. I was actually thinking of upping the ante.

BRADLEY: What with? You've got nothing left.

GEORGE: I'm just imagining what Tanya's going to say when she finds out about

your murderous tendencies, Bradley. She's not going to be too chuffed to learn that the man that she's presently sweet on tried to murder her husband by shoving him over a cliff edge.

BRADLEY: So... it's all coming back, George.

GEORGE: Yes, it's all coming back... Bradley. That really wasn't very nice, you know. I could've got badly hurt.

BRADLEY: She's only got your word against mine. And the grumblings of a desperate ex don't carry too much credibility, I'm afraid.

GEORGE: Bradley Travel. Is that the best you could do? You know, I bet you couldn't even point to Hawaii on a map.

BRADLEY: Couldn't I?

GEORGE: I bet you couldn't even tell me where you grew up, what school you went to, or, in fact, who your parents were. I doubt if you even know what your surname is for that matter... unless it's Travel: Bradley Travel. Without *her* you're nothing. You're just a creation formed out of my neglect of her. You're no more real than a character in a work of fiction, who the reader – *she* – has breathed life into for a spell to satisfy her *temporary* desires and longings.

BRADLEY: Really.

GEORGE: Yes, really. But now, I'm afraid, we're nearing the end of the novel. And where would a good novel be without a sweet turn of events that indulges the reader's need for some sort of poetic justice.

BRADLEY: What kind of poetic justice are you thinking of... George?

GEORGE: I see a very satisfying ending where you are standing on a cliff edge staring down at the harsh and jagged rocks below. Should you 'accidentally' fall it would be a most unpleasant occurrence for you. You're not sure why or how you got there. It's almost as if some invisible force beyond your control has brought you to where you are. And now I see Tanya – in the half-light of the evening – standing silently behind you. Her interest in you now is gone, completely... expired. You're yesterday's dream. She's realised now George is her one, true love. And the fact that he's soon to be a bestselling author isn't hurting anything either. She puts her lips together and blows. That's all it takes to dispatch the now insubstantial Bradley. Over the edge you go and down to the rocks below. But perhaps before you even touch the bottom you fizzle out into... unremembered oblivion. (*To himself.*) Nice, George. Thank you, George.

BRADLEY: Okay, let's cut the pleasantries, shall we. I'll just say this: if you're thinking about spending another night here, George, you might find it a

little tricky waking up in the morning.

GEORGE: That sounds like a threat on my life, Bradley. Is it?

BRADLEY: Whatever gave you that idea, George?

GEORGE: Well, I suppose you've attempted it before, so there's nothing to stop you from attempting it again.

BRADLEY: You can shack up tonight with Dolores – in her cottage with the spectacular views. If she doesn't want you, I suggest finding a park bench somewhere – preferably near the station, so you don't miss the first train back to London. Just tell me: how the hell did you survive it... your fall?

GEORGE: I landed on the branch of hope or despair.

BRADLEY: What?

GEORGE: It's symbolic... yet, I suppose, very real at the same time.

BRADLEY: What are you talking about?

GEORGE: You'll find out... or not... as the case may be.

DOLORES and TANYA enter through the dining room door.

DOLORES: *(Entering.)* ... and I discovered the hard way never to mix business with pleasure... not on weekdays anyway. Gentlemen we're back. I hope you didn't miss us too much.

GEORGE: Welcome back.

BRADLEY: Shall we go for that walk now, darling?

TANYA: I'm happy here, darling.

GEORGE: More champagne?

DOLORES: Yes, please.

TANYA: Please.

GEORGE pours out more champagne.

Dolores has been telling me about her dream.

GEORGE: Her dream?

DOLORES: My dream. Fine-cuisine, book club cruises around the world.

GEORGE: That's sounds like fun.

DOLORES: It unites my three passions in life: books, fine cuisine and world cruises.

TANYA: It was my idea that the cruises should be themed to the novel. That way the cruise could visit any places mentioned in the book.

DOLORES: An inspired idea. I'm only slightly disappointed I didn't think of it myself.

BRADLEY: I'd really like to get some air, darling?

TANYA: Then you go and get some, darling.

GEORGE: When you pick my book, you can cruise off the coast of Kent.

TANYA: I'm compiling in my head a list of novels with exotic locations.

GEORGE: Parts of the Kent coastline can be very exotic... on a good day.

DOLORES: True. The British Isles can be its own cruise.

BRADLEY: *(Energy diminishing.)* Darling?

TANYA: There're plenty of novels set about the British coastline.

DOLORES: Rebecca, of course.

TANYA: To the Lighthouse.

GEORGE: Brighton Rock.

DOLORES: The Sea, The Sea.

BRADLEY: Darling?

TANYA: The French Lieutenant's Woman.

GEORGE: On Chesil Beach.

DOLORES: Evil Under the Sun.

BRADLEY: *(Desperately.)* Tanya, please –

TANYA: Look, go if you're going. Goodbye, Bradley.

GEORGE: Goodbye, Bradley.

BRADLEY lunges at GEORGE, but is halted by TANYA who mentally stops him. He is pulled by the invisible force to the front door. GEORGE opens the door as BRADLEY exits. Sound of seagulls and crashing waves is heard. This is soon followed by the sound of a prolonged distant cry as BRADLEY goes over the cliff edge.

Well... that's him out the way. More champagne? Ah, the bottle appears empty. Don't worry, there's plenty more chilling.

DOLORES: I'm afraid I'll have to decline. I must be away too. But it's been a wonderful evening. Very inspiring... in quite unexpected ways.

GEORGE: Can I walk you home?

DOLORES: No, that won't be necessary. I love nothing more than my own company while walking. George, I'm sure you will have a magnificent future.

GEORGE: I'll make sure you get the rest of the novel, Dolores, as soon as it's finished.

DOLORES: Tanya. Au revoir.

TANYA: Au revoir, Dolores.

GEORGE: Au revoir.

DOLORES exits through the front door.

Well... that couldn't have gone better. Not only is my yet-to-be completed novel destined for almost certain publication, but my nemesis – Bradley – is now no more. He is now no more, I trust, darling?

TANYA: He is now no more.

GEORGE: And we can return to enjoying our second honeymoon. Yes, darling? Darling?

TANYA: There's something I need to tell you, George.

GEORGE: What's that?

TANYA: I'm leaving you.

GEORGE: What?

TANYA: I'm in love with another.

GEORGE: But... but you said he was –

TANYA: Not Bradley, George.

GEORGE: Then...? Who is he?

TANYA: Not *he*, George... *she*.

GEORGE: She?

TANYA: Dolores, George.

GEORGE: Dolores?

TANYA: Yes, George, Dolores. While out in the garden it became absolutely clear that we were meant for each other. We shared a kiss together. I think the most beautiful kiss I've shared with anyone... ever.

GEORGE: But I didn't think you were even that way...

TANYA: No, George, neither did I, but now it appears I am. We've got plans.

GEORGE: Plans?

TANYA: She's leaving HarperCollins at the end of next month. We're going to set up our fine-cuisine, book club tours and go cruising around the world together.

GEORGE: Really?

TANYA: It'll be so much fun.

GEORGE: But what about my book?

TANYA: She's passing it on to Geoffrey.

GEORGE: Geoffrey? Geoffrey who barely reads anything Geoffrey? Geoffrey who's long overdue for the pasture Geoffrey?

The front door opens and Dolores's arm appears with her hand outstretched.

TANYA: Goodbye, George.

GEORGE: Tanya?

TANYA takes Dolores's hand and exits through the front door. Dos Gardenias from Buena Vista Social Club plays from the 2 min mark. THE CROW enters from upstairs. It moves to the music as it descends. At the 2 min 20 sec mark THE CROW

takes out a pistol and hands it to GEORGE. GEORGE studies the pistol. GEORGE slowly ascends the stairs and exits upstairs. The song ends to the sound of a gunshot, off, and the sound of startled crows taking flight. Lights down.

Scene 4

Sunday 9.00 a.m.

Lights up. Sunlight comes through the windows. Sound of morning birdsong is heard.

V.O. NARRATOR: Chapter fourteen.

GEORGE enters from upstairs. He is minus his jacket. He carries his case and laptop and descends the stairs. He puts his case down and sits on the sofa. He opens his laptop. GEORGE's voiceover is heard. (Note: GEORGE doesn't type here.)

G. V.O.: The life-size bird swooped and flapped before me in its mesmeric dance about the room. I was hypnotically drawn into its magical avian aura. In its claw was the shining metal instrument of my doom. I took it and ascended the stairway to my final resting place in the bath. The shot was not heard by me, but only by the crows that had assembled on the cottage roof. The pistol's loud report sent them shrieking and cawing into the night air.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* The end. Well, George, if I'm not going to have a happy ending then neither are you.

There is a knock on the front door.

Who is it?

The front door opens. CRISPIN stands in the doorway. He holds an empty whisky bottle.

CRISPIN: Me.

GEORGE: Ah. You.

CRISPIN: I've just come to see how it's all going.

GEORGE: Too late, it's all gone.

CRISPIN: It's finished?

GEORGE: It is.

CRISPIN: Congratulations. *(Whiskey bottle.)* Oh, and this is too, I'm afraid. It was very tasty. I'll buy you another.

GEORGE: That won't be necessary.

CRISPIN: So, you're no longer in your book?

GEORGE: Well and truly out of it.

CRISPIN: Come on, George, I'm eager to know how you solved things. Or are you expecting me to buy the book now?

GEORGE: I conjured up a literary agent called Dolores, who was staying at her cottage nearby. She was a big shot at HarperCollins. She'd read the first half of my novel and was eager to publish it once it was complete.

CRISPIN: Go on.

GEORGE: I invited Dolores to the cottage for champagne and to meet Tanya and Bradley.

CRISPIN: And...?

GEORGE: Dolores, I was confident, singing my praises would help Tanya see me in a new light.

CRISPIN: A successful, celebrated and potentially wealthy new light.

GEORGE: Right. And her attentions would turn away from Bradley?

CRISPIN: And did they?

GEORGE: They did.

CRISPIN: And does she send Bradley over the cliff edge?

GEORGE: She does.

CRISPIN: How?

GEORGE: By the same method she conjured him up: the power of her mind.

CRISPIN: So, mission complete. George and Tanya are now back together again. And you, George – as you say – are well and truly out of your book. The end.

GEORGE: Not exactly.

CRISPIN: Oh?

GEORGE: Not quite so straightforward. Dolores and Tanya happen fall in love.

CRISPIN: Really?

GEORGE: Yes. A magical kiss while alone in the garden is all it took. They leave

together to set up a fine-cuisine, book club business cruising around the world.

CRISPIN: Okay. And what happens to you?

GEORGE: Oh... I shoot myself.

CRISPIN: Dead?

GEORGE: Very.

CRISPIN: Ah. You decided not to go for the happy ending then?

GEORGE: No.

CRISPIN: Where did you get the gun from?

GEORGE: A crow gave it to me.

CRISPIN: The same crow that talked you off the branch of hope or despair?

GEORGE: Yes... no... possibly... I don't know.

CRISPIN: It sounds like your enthusiasm for your book is waning a little.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: Why's that?

GEORGE: Because it's rubbish, that's why.

CRISPIN: Shouldn't you let your readers decide that?

GEORGE: There won't *be* any readers.

CRISPIN: How can you be so sure?

GEORGE: Because I'm deleting it from my laptop, that's how.

CRISPIN: No.

GEORGE: Yes.

CRISPIN: You probably just need to get a bit of distance between you and it.

GEORGE: And deleting it from my laptop will do just that.

CRISPIN: Well I implore you not to, George. Is that your case?

GEORGE: It is.

CRISPIN: You're going?

GEORGE: I am.

CRISPIN: But you've still got several days left.

GEORGE: To do what?

CRISPIN: Perhaps you can try to conjure her back to you again. Now you're through with writing, things might work out better between you.

GEORGE: I think I've done all the conjuring I want to do, thanks. Now if you don't mind I'd like to have a moment or two alone before I catch my train.

CRISPIN: Right. Well... I'll miss our chats, George.

GEORGE: Yes. Thanks...

CRISPIN: Crispin.

GEORGE: I'll leave the key in the door.

CRISPIN: Okay. Well... good luck with... everything, George. Cheerio for now.

CRISPIN exits through the front door. GEORGE stares at his laptop.

GEORGE: *(To himself.)* 'George T. Slinger has produced a novel of pure and utter... claptrap'. 'The hallmark of anything *but* genius on every page.' 'A must *not* read... ever.' 'From the moment I put the book down I couldn't pick it up again.' 'Avoid like the plague'.

GEORGE's finger hovers above the delete button for a few moments.

No... No... No. Why *should* I have a bad ending in my book just because I have one in my life? I'm a writer, dammit! What's the point of being one if I can't write myself the ending I want? No, George, you're going to get a good ending, a great ending, the best one I can write you. *(Deleting text as he speaks.)* Delete... delete... delete... Goodbye Dolores and Tanya... Hello Tanya and George.

He considers for a moment.

Okay.

GEORGE starts typing. After a couple of moments, the front door opens and TANYA stands in the doorway.

TANYA: Hello, George.

GEORGE: Tanya? What...? Wait... which one are you? Are you the Tanya in my book or the Tanya in real life?

TANYA: What?

GEORGE: Is Dolores out there?

TANYA: Dolores? Who's Dolores? George?

GEORGE: Where have you just come from?

TANYA: I've just come from the village. The Plough and Harrow. The pub. I spent the night there. Who's Dolores?

GEORGE: Someone in my book.

TANYA: (*Seeing empty bottle.*) Are you drunk, George?

GEORGE: No. You came back for your things?

TANYA: No.

GEORGE: No?

TANYA: I was wrong, George. I see that now.

GEORGE: Wrong?

TANYA: To stand in the way of your writing with my demands. Who am I, George, to get in the way of your genius, your need to express the magnificent stories that are there inside you waiting to be given out to the world? The wonder, the magic, the brilliance of George T. Slinger.

GEORGE: Tanya?

TANYA: No, my bedroom visitor at the Plough and Harrow made me see everything in a completely new light.

GEORGE: Bedroom visitor?

TANYA: The bird who was perched on the tree branch outside my bedroom window early this morning.

GEORGE: What bird?

TANYA: A crow.

GEORGE: Crow?

TANYA: Yes. Our exchange together was magical as we stared into each other's eyes. It felt as if he was looking into my very soul. And in that beautiful moment it felt as if another window within me burst open and through it I could see us together, George – you and me, our future life together – you writing and me... painting.

GEORGE: Painting?

TANYA: Yes, George, I've hidden it away since I was a child – my secret passion to paint – but now I feel it like an unstoppable force bubbling up within me. I want to paint the sea, the sky, the cliffs, the birds... everything. I need to find an art shop to buy canvasses and an easel. Perhaps there's one in the village. We'll enjoy the rest of our second honeymoon together, George – two creative artists, side by side – you writing and me painting. How does that sound?

GEORGE: It sounds... perfect.

TANYA: I need to get changed. Let's make today, George, the first day of the rest of our life together.

GEORGE: Yes.

TANYA: I love you.

GEORGE: I love you.

TANYA exits upstairs.

(To himself.) 'George T. Slinger has produced a novel of pure and utter brilliance.' 'The hallmark of genius on every page.' 'A must read.' 'An unputdownable book.' 'If there's only one book you ever read – ever – make sure it's Two Honeymoons by George T. Slinger.' Some champagne, I think.

GEORGE crosses to the bottom of the stairs.

(Calling up.) Let's have some champagne, darling, shall we? To celebrate. I've got some chilling in the fridge. Darling? Would you like that? Darling? Tanya? Hello? Hello?

V.O. NARRATOR: But there was no reply.

GEORGE: What? Who said that?

V.O. NARRATOR: George looked about him, but he could see no-one.

GEORGE: Who is this?

V.O. NARRATOR: He called out again.

GEORGE: What...? What's going on? Hello?

V.O. NARRATOR: Bewildered and confused, George stood alone on the final page.

GEORGE: What?

V.O. NARRATOR: It gradually began to dawn on him that he too existed only in a reality that dwelt between the covers of a novel I have entitled Second Honeymoon. The end.

The lights start to fade.

GEORGE: What? Wait!

V.O. NARRATOR: No... too predictable for a psychological magical realism thriller. Try again, George.

The lights return to full. GEORGE is visibly relieved.

On the realisation of his fictitious existence, a sense of overwhelming despair gripped George at his very core. As if in a dream, he walked out of the cottage. In what seemed to be a matter of moments he found himself standing at the perilous cliff edge.

GEORGE walks to the front of the stage. There is the sound of seagulls and wind.

The waves crashed against the rocks below.

Sound of crashing waves against the rocks.

It was only one step more, one step more for George to escape his fictitious existence forever. The end.

The lights start to fade.

GEORGE: No!

V.O. NARRATOR: No, too bleak and depressing. Again, George.

The lights return to full. GEORGE is visibly relieved again.

George stood in the living room in the cottage. He smiled the smile that only a contented novelist who had just completed a great masterpiece would smile. Even though he now knew himself to exist merely within the pages of a work penned by his creator, nonetheless it was true to say George T. Slinger was a happy man... at last.

TANYA enters from the top of the stairs wearing a new outfit.

Tanya appeared at the top of the stairs in her new dress.

TANYA: Here I am.

V.O. NARRATOR: She said, her face glowing, thrilled with the thought for their adventure ahead. She excitedly descended the stairway.

TANYA descends the stairs and crosses to GEORGE.

The mysterious bird enters with two glasses of chilled champagne clutched in its bony claws.

THE CROW enters from the kitchen carrying two glasses of champagne. GEORGE takes the glasses.

GEORGE: Thank you.

He gives a glass to TANYA.

Cheers.

TANYA: Cheers.

V.O. NARRATOR: That's it. Much better.

GEORGE: *(Looking up.)* Much.

TANYA: George... who are you talking to?

GEORGE smiles and turns out to the audience.

GEORGE: The end.

Blackout. Curtain.

Dos Gardenias from Buena Vista Social Club plays from the start of vocal at 12 sec mark.