

SquareDance

by
Frank Reage

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**Any reference or similarity to any persons living or
dead is entirely accidental in this work of fiction**

Characters:

Pablo about 35 years old Liza German or French 30 years old

Barman interchangeable with Jules French, about 40

Suzanne 30 years old Steve a cockney 30 years old, scruffy

appearance Annie 20's Peter any age

all ages are adjustable

ACT 1
LIZA

Scene: The scene opens in a club or bar. *PETER and ANNIE enter, ANNIE is married, PETER is not:*

ANNIE

God! I need a drink. Hey Buy me a drink Peter

PETER

Okay, Okay, relax. What would you like then, sweetie..?

ANNIE (*to Barman*)

Yes, Oh I think I'll have a Sol..

BARMAN

With a glass ...

ANNIE

Hell, no! Nobody drinks them that way

PETER

You and your bloody affectations, Darling...!

ANNIE

I thought that *Darling* was only for

PETER

Shhh! Even here, walls have ears.

ANNIE

God! Sometimes I hate being married, even to someone else...!

PETER

Well, at least you don't have all the wear and tear you get with me!

ANNIE

More tear than wear ... *Darling..!*

Suddenly they notice PABLO who is slightly drunk, sitting at a stool and talking to the BARMAN:

PABLO

.... well like I said, I'd waited for her, for a long time, that new one. I was almost predatory. But let me explain: when at first I met her I noticed some excitement in her eyes, though I'd be hard put to to say what, exactly.

BARMAN *serves Annie and Peter:*

PABLO (*Cont*)

....a kind of sexual wildness, maybe, in her manner; a creative touch in her dress - I liked that, it turned my imagination on ! That's really normal, isn't it? But I felt the dangerous excitement We were in each others company, hardly communicating, for several, or a couple, of hours.

Then I left - actually I had to: because... well she had to leave,

too. Actually, we went in ~~op~~posing directions, nicely peeled the fruit of our lives as if the skin itself would be shed. Anyway, that was that, forgotten - those couple of hours were merely that: a distant promise, a distant landscape. Time passed as it does. I'd frankly, forgotten about her. Then came the coincidence in a thousand: a chance meeting. Whilst I was visiting a friend for a couple of days, she phoned unexpectedly. Out of the blue. An arrangement was made by our friend to meet for a meal - though I hadn't said a word: after all, no-one knew, no-one had said anything, everything was unofficial - even my friend didn't know. It was just a chance. ,,,, when I met her that time I had no expectation: nothing.....

- *BARMAN has suddenly become interested:*

BARMAN

You clever bugger...are you telling me that you could get away with that without anyone noticing ? Huh!

LIZA is talking on a mobile at the other end of the BAR which becomes like a split screen:

LIZA

.. now it's my turn to talk ...I found something out later, to my cost, that Pablo's friends had nicknamed him 'Capo di Bomba'- a Neapolitan expression meaning a head full of ideas- and indeed he *was* full of fucking ideas!

BARMAN

What?

PABLO

.... Of course I got her number., that time

LIZA (on 'phone)

.... yes, of course you can call me, I'll show you the sights!

- *Lights fade back to BARMAN and PABLO:*

PABLO

But then there was a time of forgetting. I forgot Liza because I had work to do, deals to make remember that at the same time my relationship with my lover was beginning to rupture, God ! That was awful ! no longer was the sex so open, so bright.

We see ANNIE and PETER passionately enveloped in a corner:

I found that now Suzanne and I made love almost by default, by oppressing each other, though I didn't think at the time that she could have planned it that way. Then one day at my desk I had opportunity to think, suddenly I began to put the fragments together... they just seemed to float together - somehow it centred on the fact that I had Suzanne's camera by my side - I examined it. It never has worked properly blast it!.

I should have thought about that: that was a warning: it should have been ! But, what was I to know, the relationship

seemed good, for the first ~~time~~ ^{UTZA} in my life and, like the proverbial fool, I had entered the minefield blindfold, committed myself to one woman. That was a rare moment - I had made a decision to trust, then love her. The two of us after all had agreed tacitly that we were permanent, lovers. For ever. We'd made some sort of an agreement. That was as it was.... you know, everyone thinks that love is as it is after all: unchangeable: love goes through many changes and I thought that this dullness was only one more of those inevitable stages. For example, I knew, and was friendly with her whole bloody circle, I knew both her sisters, her brothers-in-law. I got along with them, and it seemed fitting that we should make love quietly whenever we stayed at Robert's flat at Powis Square: it made everything about us seem so permanent. Could I think of a better word? I. me. Pablo, was a fact, was an accepted, expected face. Part of the family. But there it was - I was setting myself up like a classic patsy: I should have know ... one of my erstwhile friends should have told me and then I would have seen the inevitable ... maybe there was a crack in the crucible: there was, there was: one of those moments that I'll never ever forget: a traffic lights in my life.

BARMAN

Another one?

PABLO

Yes, another one.

BARMAN

Well go on...! tell me..!

PABLO

Are you sure you want to know ?

BARMAN

I'm interested., curiosity .. you know

PABLO

Okay the.... well, one evening whilst cooking for our guests Vicki and Richard, Suzanne was thinking about escape, and burned herself quite badly with cooking oil. I mean, I think she was thinking about escape: I expect so, that's the root of sods law, isn't it? But Suzanne was a tough girl, hardly a sound escaped her lips, though the agony was intense: that's the sort of girl she was. Huh! It took weeks for the scars to heal, and in that time our relationship became crabbed and distorted by whatever was going on in her secret dreams; or was the damage to her body, her mask, her Personna, real? I was such a fool....!

BARMAN

I see... Sort of ...

Lights pick up LIZA again:

LIZA

.... I see it: I get it, time was the disease - as it always is.
What a lousy excuse: damage limitation by excuse!

PABLO

... for my part I was already taking out 'Insurance.'
Yes, I am a coward and I dreaded it all the more intensely
because of the courage with which Suzanne had 8 bourne

hers; and maybe because ~~I~~ **LIZA** knew that whatever happened it would be permanent when it happened, disabling, crippling, destructive..... And that final word, that ever final word, icy, *forever*.

We hear Annie and PETER in the background: two women enter:

BARMAN

Can I get you a drink?

LIZA

Hey ... so ... so what did you do?

PABLO

A few days later I wrote the secret one, you, my untried lover, a letter. Then: silence. Nothing....

BARMAN

....I kind of know what you mean., it happened to me once.... I forgot her just as I expect she forgot me.

Nothing. That's how it was

Well ... come on ... tell Paul [the Barman]

PABLO

....let me finish Some time later another friend of

mine mentioned that you, Liza had received that letter, talked about it, puzzled about it. But that was later, much later, almost weeks later, maybe months, I can't recall, nowI can't remember just how long. ...

LIZA

Oh God! *I can remember... weeks! ...months!* It was my life you were playing with. My fucking life!

BARMAN

I couldn't either

PETER and ANNIE exit

PABLO

.... then the relationship with Suzanne began to disintegrate.

BARMAN

Bloody normal!

PABLO

.. yes, but the pain was so intense that screaming was not

enough. I mean it, it was awful. I took drugs, you know
LIZA
... anything to kill me, at least destroy the pain which
threatened to engulf me when I was alone- and yet the
pain would not stop. It just would not stop ! cocktails
of drugs, but the ...the explosion seemed to have both
raped my mind and boiled my body in the same oil that I
had seen splash Suzanne, weeks before. Burning fucking
oil amidst my pain I recalled that lousy moment, and
the shock, and wished that this pain could be over as fast
and soundlessly as her pain had been. But it was not.
How could it be so goddam simple !

Then there was a period of numbness; of puking
in gutters. One day I banged my head against a wall so
hard with the pain that I fell down. But crying was not
enough. God, no, it could never be !

LIZA

It never is, but it cures you ... it cures you ..

BARMAN

.... what the fuck is pain? there isn't a description
of it.... the experience of it is so different
as different as its ferocity. Why? Because it does not exist!

PABLO

Fucking great! How do you live with that! How!

LIZA

I had to: I had to live with real damn pain..

PABLO

Okay later, I found that the pain level had fallen, but now of course my recollections began to filter back. I had to strike, that's all I could do after all ... ! ..strike back.

BARMAN

I know what I would have done, I would have...

PABLO

**.... One numbed morning I 'phoned her, the secret one, you, Liza, and there was the voice: bright and alive and wanting. Wanting, unexpectedly. That took me by surprise
... you caught me at a weak point: God yes, I wanted you: my belly heaved: I needed you, my body became
alive**

PABLO

... I Had to keep going; I just had to keep moving There were affairs to be sorted, scores to be settled... don't you see that ..!

LIZA (on 'phone)

Hullo!

PABLO (on 'phone)

Shall we meet? Would You like that?

BLACKOUT

Lights fade back:

LIZA

**The secret thing was that my need was greater than his. God!
... I realise it now ... Now he could strike. Now I was someone
else's fool.**

BLACKOUT

End of Act One

LIZA

ACT TWO

SCENE:

Liza is talking to someone at one side of the stage as if it's very confidential: the lights find her, she is playing with a tape recorder throughout, as if she is recording or dictating what she is thinking for reference later:

LIZA

... I remember.... it was, let me see ... The first time I saw him was one autumn evening, outside the station at San Remo. I'd heard other people discuss him; he'd developed quite a reputation for one thing

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and another: mind you that's the way the feminine network works, to it's cost. Anyway - coincidence.

A reputation for being weird, that was all. Simply that. Very attractive. So that afternoon I'd dressed just a little bit extra (just in case, you know). For some bizarre reason I really found him extraordinary - exciting - pleasantly exciting. That was enough to tempt the taste buds, anyway.

Then, after a couple of hours he had disappeared, just gone: for a few hours I felt myself a little shaken: he grew in my imagination, I expect: after a day or so I just had to forget it all anyway - I had anyway to leave San Remo and return to Milan. My work in Milan was tough: there were endless queues of people to be cared for: it's well I know the concept of 'Compassion Fatigue'! Work was arduous, and then one evening I just suddenly felt myself sexually awake. Aware. And of course the inevitable happened.

.... anyway ... I fell into an affair with someone that I met in a club: actually, I hardly recall him now: odd, how someone you get to know so well can be such a vague, passing fantasy figure, for that was all he really was ... anyway, it lasted several months, and like a fool one day I got careless, or despairing, or something and I found myself pregnant ... I won't go in to that: except I felt brutalised... it was ... brutal

JULES has entered and walks to LIZA: she continues the dialogue:

.... now I was bruised, I had to escape.

Away from Milan and across Europe to Fecamp, where the stiff Atlantic breezes whistle through the grass. At least for the moment I had some rest but then came the usual Saturday night procession of available partners and that soured me - after all I was the rejected one, you know.

But let me tell you - you know sex has always been an

important aspect of my life, and one evening at Fecamp whilst the band played jazz in the 'Bar Atlantique' I was taken by, decided upon, and took a sort of temporary lover. I explained to him, Jules that it really was temporary.

She stops the recorder.

JULES

I, Jules for my part was excited by her sexuality, and as you can imagine, very careless of the results. Basically she was a good lay!.. Why should I care?.. you don't discuss things like that..!

she starts the recorder:

LIZA

This arrangement continued for some weeks, we made love whenever Jules was in town, it was for enjoyment, that was all.

the lights have faded on LIZA and when she reappears in them she looks as if shes just woken up.

JULES

But pleasant and satisfying. What do you call it: a accomodation..?

The light on JULES fades away very slowly, then:

LIZA

.... an accomodation, Jules, *an accomodation, an hotel*
..... but then one morning, absurdly, the man from
San Remo, Pablo, 'phoned me on a long-distance line from
Munich, Annaliese woke me

LIZA fumbles for a telephone and finds one.

...at the time I remember thinking that that was
indecently early that was about all I knew, or
bloody cared about, *vor Gotteswillen!*... actually, that
morning I was drunk with tiredness, and hung-over from
Jules' excesses the night before.... but the oddness of that
spark, more a fantasy than a fact was, amazingly, still there.
Even on the 'phone I was
suddenly.....on fire ... unexpectedly on fire. How
wierd...it was like that., *it was!*

PABLO (on 'phone)

Shall we meet?

LIZA

'But of course!'.

A song in my mouth. How else could I put it- I was excited, I
spent the morning whistling, light. Skipping around and
making my friends laugh...

PABLO

**We met at Nazaire, or was it Rouen? Under the clock,
anyway.**

LIZA

**I wore a funny hat and felt a little fear for the outcome:
but when I saw you in your funny hat ..**

the lights on PABLO have gone down, he disappears:

**... remember our pact to wear funny hats ?...
suddenly my nerves dissolved and my belly felt warm,
domestic, excited- for the first time in simply ages!**

The lights have picked up JULES again:

JULES

... how wonderful., just like it was with me! Here, have a drink on me..!

LIZA

**..I'm sorry ... I really am sorry ... I'll have to backtrack....
(rewinds recorder) it was obvious that how can I put it: still the most important fact was that there is a proper way to carry-out a relationship, and for some reason the plan has always to be followed. Absurd; but tell me if I'm wrong!
Anyway, we drank coffee together, and earnestly discussed our problems; I explained to him about things and secretly watched his eyes for a sign. Was there one?**

JULES

**.... what did you expect:, a halo, wings, a wad of money ! Huh !
There were signs for me... I should have seen them: ... God! I was about to make the ultimate mistake and fall for you..!**

LIZA

... I know, I was a fool, but I was female too: I let my judgement go askew, it was sort of *for him*... after all, I sympathised... it was that I liked his age, his resourcefulness, his knowledge later we met some friends and went to eat something. And then I ate his meal

LIZA

because his appetite was down, and everyone laughed. After all, - *"I'm a solidly built girl...* thats what I said just for effect, everyone laughed, just for effect too..... Or was I doing it because it was an act of wanting something of his... I mean, like consumption, accepting. Perhaps it was Anyway, finally we (I keep on being tempted to say *they* as if I were watching two white mice under a microscope: except one of the white mice was *me*) I returned to the station and I/she kissed him full on the mouth, and then the thought came in both our minds

JULES

.... because that was not simply the customary side-to-side friendly kiss, but a kiss of friendship with the mouth partly open. ...? Eh ?

LIZA

...no ...it was ..a kiss of intent. Then I got on the train....

JULES

.. like everyone else..!

LIZA

.... the night was dark, and the carriage was empty. Rain leaked in at the corner of the window ...now I felt loneliness sweep over me, on the way back to damp F6camp...

JULES vanishes, as the lights go down:

LIZA

...now I was sure that that spark was in him, like in one of those magazine stories you read and then throw away ... but it was real... clammy on my arms as if he had just touched me that very moment - and my flesh still burned., still burned. And I wanted it, to have *him*... To possess him between my legs. My God, what a feeling when it isn't satisfied! Time passes: and now I went numb, noticed nothing now, though during such moments I occasionally remembered his mouth, his battered eyes. Remembered his funny laugh. Wondered about his body. How strange!... , all that I wanted or thought for his fingers, his suddenly beautiful hands.

PABLO suddenly arrives in the lights:

PABLO

... you ... *your hands* ... you !

LIZA

.... oh, well ... now the humdrum. The usual round of chores. ... the stress at work, which had been gently increasing for ages. I thought 'It must be your age.' Twenty nine years old, I was: a frisson of fear, of doubt...

lights fade and PABLO has disappeared:

.... the days were beginning to drain away. I knew that. After

LIZA

all, the clock winds down ... and then it can be too late .. but in the meantime ... there was Jules. Kind, and sometimes drunk. Still, when he drove his cock into me I forgot everything, remembered nothing, forgot the pain and the humiliation, awaited merely the liquid spurting inside me and the wetness in my bed. Strangely comforting. Really, such gentle

domestic thoughts contrasted horriblywith the reality of the lying, the duplicity, the painful breach of trust. But now it was odd, out of context. It no longer made sense. I didn't like to, but as soon as Jules would leave I would douche myself out, clear out the past from me, cleanse my breasts of his saliva and the smell of his breath. I actually caught myself thinking that that underlined my rejection of him enough, made it sufficiently clear to him that it was now really over, just something that perhaps he could remember as a nice moment, in isolation, so to speak but Jules blundered on like the proverbial bull in the china shop. But for me, it really was over. I

knew it was. I said it aloud to myself. Only Jules did not comprehend. I said: "It's over" You see, I had decided. I was steadfast, though I knew not how or even why. Poor Jules. He 'phoned more often now than I had ever wanted him too, even in the brief summer of our affair. Then I just dismissed him: but still he returned to exercise his prerogative with me and then leave. It was becoming dreary and sad. there was no feeling in it. But I couldn't say no, I couldn't say no to him.

JULES reappears in the light:

.... I had begun to cease feeling, I knew that. Mysterious. No, no, it was conscious.....

LIZA
JULES

...I made the ultimate error, didn't I..!

JULES fades as the lights do:

LIZA

... but it couldn't stop there., you see... a few days later, the 'phone rang very early in the morning, after another heavy night with Jules. It was Pablo. He seemed to spark in my mind - again - the fire had started, again...

lights up on PABLO

... I told myself that it could not be like that! But he insisted I suppose: he drove down; that very afternoon, he arrived late.

PABLO

**Was it 'La Rentrée?..that's what it must have been, but La Rentrée is in the fall, and.... oh well.. .. I can't remember!
There were so many old cars on the road that day, it was like a mobile traffic jam!
.... well..?**

LIZA

**Actually, I neither knew nor cared. I was thinking about
....other things ...**

LIZA
PABLO

... after I got there we sat looking at one another.
She watched my body move: it was a sort of discovery, I
suppose..

LIZA

... I watched the bulge at his crotch, fantasized about him.
That was it.

PABLO

.... we walked and talked. We sat in a restaurant and ate
Black Bean Soup. I loved it, remember ?

LIZA

... we discussed our pain together, the pain of past
affairs ... and we stood in a bar and drank bad Rosé - but of
course my curiosity and impatience were spurred by the
alcohol. I said: "Should we be friends?"

Then I looked at his nose and imagined him naked....

PABLO

"No, we should get involved".

LIZA

Of course we should !

LIZA
... and this gave a new frisson to the transaction. I said:

"What do you mean?"

PABLO
....curiosity killed the cat. That was it; I said;

"That it's inevitable!"

LIZA
"Inevitable?"

PABLO
"Of course."

LIZA

The alcohol made me laugh, but ever so gravely. For it was a grave matter.....my feelings had monopolised the day-I had waited for him with deep distrust, fear and impatience mixed, feeling that special warmth in my belly again. The new creative me. What a stupid phrase ! How mysterious ! But now I felt the discomfort of it. But what the hell! He had spoiled my day and now I was behaving like an automaton. I suddenly lost all care. This feeling, this new sense, was all pervasive. I knew though I had denied myself the thought that I had not thought about anything but him all day. Perhaps for weeks. And now we were nose to nose! I don't know, maybe I had been lost in my own thoughts;

LIZA
perhaps he had outmanoeuvred me. I didn't know. So I said:

"Shall I make you a coffee?"

PABLO

"Please, it's a long drive back".

Perhaps you meant it, but I didn't care any more: Why should I, after all ... after all I was tired or something .. besides, all I could think of was your mouth, and that alone was sufficient justification. ... yes I. I could think only of your mouth, the way that you bit your lips in nervousness or stress the primacy of this natural moment was the only universal force that had ever existed.

PABLO

We drove to her place, a cold flat on the third floor of an anonymous block near the sea: rather dank and depressing

LIZA

.... finally... now we were driving, I wanted you to touch me, secretly. You didn't react. After all, how could you know? I had to possess some part of you. No reason to it, only, pure illogic: perhaps hormonal.

After all, who cared, who fucking cared The alcohol was talking !

**LIZA
PABLO**

After an age we were standing in the kitchen - you left for a moment to secretly make the sitting-room warm.

LIZA

Now, now. Urgently, urgently. The moment was upon me, though why or how I knew it was yet another matter. It felt right, that was all.

PABLO

Then suddenly you stepped up to me and kissed me with all your body, pushing your lips upon my mouth until suddenly my tongue invaded your mouth as if some secret floodgate had ruptured.

LIZA

That first kiss was wonderful. You were suddenly wonderful. For ever. I burned from my backbone across to my pubic fur. I felt simultaneously, softly, and secretly on fire. Hard and soft, simultaneously.

You know how it is: you neither want to loose the extraordinary magnetic magic of that moment, nor to continue, because the perfect contact that you have might spoil. We seemed to stand there reeling, for hours.

But my blood was up. You touched my stomach with the back of your hand and suddenly caressed my breasts so that they leapt into focus in my mind. And I said, dreaming of your mouth:

”Should we make love?”

LIZA
PABLO

I said: "We might" I was being casual: such moments are important enough to eclipse stars and planets !
... that's what they say, don't they ?

LIZA

"No, really"

... now we were standing near the couch and you were smoothing my belly with your fingers. And I needed those fingers, now not so secretly. This feeling had become a fact, almost in black-on-white. This moment - was my time. I began to unbutton your shirt, concentrating so as not to lose a moment, thirsting ... uncontrollable and yet fearsome. ... but that was only a moment: now I was naked too. I pressed my body against yours, smelling you for the first time in my time..... wanted to say "I Love You" but I knew that to be a lie. Even at moments like that you have to restrain yourself. Now my body was ready, he made me moan and stretch as if the very devil had taken hold of me. It was wonderful, *wonderful*.... I writhed in this sudden sweet agony, uncontrollable. The pile of the rug was on my back, and my palms had fabric burn from the power of it you can imagine the rest, it's not difficult.

PABLO

.. no, it's almost commonplace

LIZA

.. now I'm telling you a secret ... once you were gone I was

LIZA

sort of gripped by a passion about you ... I sampled the scents of my own body, seeking traces of you. The scent of you in my pubic hair. Where you had licked in my armpits. Where the traces of your mouth lingered on my breasts and thighs. Where too, you had explored the backs of my knees, and nipped at my ankles

PABLO

... there you are ... a simple music to it, the total possession of a moment ... but lost in a moment... was that all of it ?...

LIZA

.. you make it sound lyrical... ridiculous...are such moments really so quickly forgotten ?... is it possible that I can ever explain this thing to you....!

She puts the recorder down:

***BLACKOUT* end of Act TWO**

LIZA

ACT THREE

SCENE: an unpleasant dirty locale: we have the impression that STEVE is virtually down & out: manages to preserve a veneer of attractiveness but is basically a real low-lifer.

STEVE is quite drunk, the background is busy; he is talking to no-one in particular

STEVE

I suppose it was in my nature, you know, like a hunter, to see her first, you know what they say The quickness of the eyes, the speed of the hand ! Like simple music. You know ? Effective. Know what I mean? Bang, Bang !....at first when we met she made me feel insecure. But then, I always do. Feel insecure... Know what I mean ?
.... what attracted me after her face and her body was her emotional reserve, her enormous rock-steady lack of insecurity, her coolness and balance.... I've never had anything like that: it's a commodity I could use... when I first saw her... well., for some days I just visited the bar and watched her

body. She hadn't even noticed mine, yet. But I knew that there must be a lucky moment, a brief window of opportunity. I knew that. Just like any hunter. Bang!

And - then it happened: one Tuesday, as she sat beside me for a moment at my table, and I began to say something - the usual, you know a stupid something, anything she reacted. I remember that I breathed more easily all of a sudden. Then she smiled. I could

see her eyes though I was ashamed of my work, I still needed reassurance. When you're single you spend lots of time just flirting, you know, instinct, because your ego is never as good or as polished as you would like it to be: I've always been rather insecure: they used to say at the orphanage that I was an undeveloped little boy: that's as much as I knew, when I got big and left, I found that what I call hunting was the elixir. The cure for age and uncertainty. The Hunt. Quickly over anyway, like the kill. Quickly over. Bang! Gave me time to think and yet be active, like. The sweet smell has always attracted me; still, it always takes me a little while to gather my courage.

a passer-bye says hullo:

...Yeah. Yeah when we was talking sweet nothings: really nothings: I was trying to think of things to say. Like, Bang!

But also, magically, what I was saying seemed to have caught something, you know, in her eyes like: she turned to me and gave me a wide slow smile. Almost a smile of pleasure. A secret smile, between us, just us, intoxicating. Now I knew that this hunt was over.

It was just in an instant. As I