

THE DUCK

by

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INT. MANSION - 19TH CENTURY ENGLAND - MIDDAY

JERALD enters the living room and notices his wife MEREDITH.

JERALD  
Meredith, have you seen Mr.  
Bernham?

MEREDITH  
Oh, I believe he went for his  
mid-day stroll.

JAROLD  
Did he now?

MEREDITH  
I'm almost certain. (beat) Is  
something the matter?

JERALD  
Not at all, dear. (beat) Well, to  
be perfectly honest, I do believe  
there appears to be a small  
question.

MEREDITH  
What small question?

JERALD  
Well, do you not find Mr. Bernham  
acting a bit odd?

MEREDITH  
However do you mean?

JERALD  
Strange like.

MEREDITH  
...I don't believe I've noticed  
anything strange at all.

JERALD  
Alright, dear. Perhaps it's a  
figment of my imagination but...I  
happen to be missing a pair of  
cuff links...the ones given to me  
on my fiftieth birthday.

MEREDITH  
You must have misplaced them is  
all.

JERALD

Not quite.

MEREDITH

I don't understand.

JERALD

...I caught Mr. Bernham doing a bit of the old snooping around.

MEREDITH

Did you? When? Where?

JERALD

Well, darling, it happened in the wee hours of yesterday morning. I went to use the toilet when I heard a creak downstairs. I followed suit only to find Mr. Bernham eyeing the Kristofferson painting with a magnifying glass.

MEREDITH

A magnifying glass?

JERALD

Correct. Just as I was about to utter a word, Mr. Bernham walked into my study and began gently fumbling through my desk draw.

MEREDITH

No!

JERALD

I give you my word.

MEREDITH

Well---

JERALD

Shh, not too loud, I don't want him overhearing if he's returned.

MEREDITH

He's only just---

JERALD

I am concerned not only for whatever it is he is up to but also for the man's health. Have you noticed that he seems to touch things twice?

MEREDITH

Twice?

JERALD

Darling, surely you must have caught wind of what appears to be a nervous tick of some sort. This morning he went to grab the tea pot, first touching it with his left hand as if to take hold of it, only to switch over to his right hand to take hold and touching but then only to switch yet again back to his left hand before gripping the tea pot. I also noticed he'll be walking along only to suddenly stop, take two steps backward and then walk forward again. Can you make any sense out of such behavior?

MEREDITH

My dear. I did notice something now that I think on it.

JERALD

Do tell.

MEREDITH

For starters, about two days ago, in the evening I could have sworn I heard a bit of giggling.

JERALD

Giggling? Whatever do you mean? Please don't tell me he was alone.

MEREDITH

I'm afraid so.

JERALD

Shocking!

MEREDITH

Yes, yes it is. Mr. Bernham was in the kitchen by himself when I entered but just prior to my entrance there was an assortment of giggling going on and please forgive me but I could have heard actual banter.

JERALD

This is quite serious.

MEREDITH

Hmmm.

JERALD

Do you think he st--took my cuff links?

MEREDITH

One cannot be sure.

JERALD

Let us study his mechanism and observe his looks; We'll tent him to the quick. If he but blench, we'll know our course. We will shake a spear for our dear friend over dinner this evening.

MEREDITH

There is something else.

JERALD

Go on.

MEREDITH

He was a duck.

JERALD

Darling, please do not tell me that you have gone ill because---

MEREDITH

No, no. Mr. Bernham was waddling round the courtyard as if he were a duck.

JERALD

And this is the very first time you utter this to me?

MEREDITH

I was afraid.

JERALD

Afraid of what?

MEREDITH

That you would think me mad. Who would believe such a thing?

JERALD

But I am your husband.

MEREDITH

If before this conversation I had told you that I witnessed Mr. Bernham waddling around like a---

MR. BERNHAM

Duck?

MEREDITH (SCREAMING)

Ahhh!

JERALD

Hello, Mr. Bernham.

MR. BERNHAM

Meredith, are you alright? I did not mean to startle you. I thought you mentioned duck. Is that what we will be having for dinner, roasted duck perhaps?

Jerald and Meredith look at one another.

JERALD

We were only discussing the possibility of cooking---

MR. BERNHAM

I love duck.

MEREDITH

Well, I am sure we can arrange it. I will speak with Helena and see if she---

JERALD

Yes! Wonderful! (to Meredith)  
Darling, I'm going to have a word with Mr. Bernham if you don't mind. Do let us know if duck---

MEREDITH

Absolutely. I will find out and---

JERALD

Thank you, dear.

MR. BERNHAM

Good show!