SYLVIA. *(Whispered.)* My husband.

RICHARD. *(Whispered.)* I see.

CLARKE. *(Calling from off.)* I'm coming down!

SYLVIA. *(Calling off.)* No! No Clarke! Not yet. I'll let you know!

CLARKE. *(Calling from off.)* Well alright then, Sylvie, but let this be a warning!…

Beat.

SYLVIA. *(Calling off.)* Is that it dear? Was that the warning?

CLARKE. *(Calling from off.)* Right then.

Their dialogue continues hushed.

RICHARD. Is your husband *hiding* upstairs?

SYLVIA. Well, now you know he's there so I suppose he's done a poor job of it—can this be true? William Pierce? I was only just now talking of you! It's as if the universe heard me.

RICHARD. How grand!

SYLVIA. I thought I'd lost you forever!

RICHARD. And I you.

SYLVIA. How'd you find me?

RICHARD. I didn't.

SYLVIA. What?

RICHARD. I mean I'm not looking for you.

SYLVIA. But you've found me.

RICHARD. Thank God!

SYLVIA. Well if you're not here to find me, whatever are you doing here?

RICHARD. *(Remembering his mission—returning to his hunt.)* My wife has left me for another man and I've come to find him.

SYLVIA. *(Not hushed.)* You're Richard!

RICHARD. *(A gentle confession.)* It's my pseudonym.

He's back to the hunt.

SYLVIA. You're married to Dierdre!

RICHARD. *(Genuine surprise.)* You know her?

RICHARD.

~~SYLVIA. Yes.~~

~~RICHARD. *(Pathetically emotional, despite unconsciously pointing the gun toward Sylvia.)* She's decided to leave me.~~

SYLVIA. Would you mind terribly putting your gun down while we determine why any woman would decide to leave you?

RICHARD. *(Politely.)* Oh! Sorry. Of course.

He sets his gun down.

SYLVIA. There now. A breath of relief.

They breathe in unison. Dialogue resumes hushed.

RICHARD. This is a lovely cottage.

SYLVIA. It belongs to my mother-in-law.

RICHARD. *(Sincere.)* I didn't mean to frighten you, Sylvie. Lord knows, in a million years, I never thought I'd find you here. God. You look ravishing.

SYLVIA. *(Flattered.)* Thanks. *(Back on task.)* But, that's quite besides the point. *(With joy.)* William, you're alive?!

RICHARD. I am!

SYLVIA. *(With despair.)* But your wife says…

RICHARD. *(Interrupting.)* Ex-wife.

SYLVIA. Most people do choose to divorce murderers, darling.

RICHARD. *(Confused.)* Murderers?

SYLVIA. I never would have thought it, William. You were always gentle as a lamb.

RICHARD. *(Hurt.)* But you can't think I've actually killed anyone?

SYLVIA. Haven't you?

RICHARD. *(Offended.)* Sylvie!

SYLVIA. Dierdre says there's a bloke buried in your back porch steps!

RICHARD. *(A realization.)* She really is gullible isn't she?

SYLVIA. And Gavin at the local pub?

RICHARD. *(A decision to explain.)* My ex-wife is a bit of a free spirit, Sylvia. I thought—

SYLVIA. What?

RICHARD. *(Not quite finding the words.)* Well, I thought—

SYLVIA. Yes?

RICHARD. *(Ashamed.)* I made up stories to frighten her into staying with me.

SYLVIA. You fabricated murders?

RICHARD. *(Apologetically.)* Wellll…

SYLVIA. But you're here, aren't you? With a rather large gun, I might add.

RICHARD. *(Matter-of-fact.)* It's not loaded.

SYLVIA. So, you're not a murderer?

RICHARD. *(With pride.)* I'm a fantastic storyteller.

SYLVIA. You always did have a way with words.

RICHARD. *(Humbly.)* I'm thinking of becoming a writer.

CLARKE. *(Calling from off.)* Sylvia?!

SYLVIA. *(Calling up the stairs.)* Still fine, Clarke!

CLARKE. *(Calling from off.)* Just checking.

SYLVIA. *(Calling off.)* Right darling.

Sylvia returns to Richard.

RICHARD. He seems nice.

SYLVIA. Bit of a philanderer.

RICHARD. Ah.

SYLVIA. My mind is all in a jumble.

RICHARD. It's wonderful to see you, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. What were you going to do with that gun then?

RICHARD. Hm? *(Remembering his mission.)* Oh. Scare the fellow.

SYLVIA. Beau Van Kipness?

RICHARD. *(Surprised once more.)* You know him?

SYLVIA. Indeed.

RICHARD. *(Back to the hunt.)* Is he here?

SYLVIA. He is.

RICHARD. *(Curious.)* Where?

SYLVIA. Hiding.

RICHARD. *(Impressed.)* Successfully.

SYLVIA. I suppose so.

RICHARD. *(Bravely.)* Coward.

SYLVIA. Quite.

RICHARD. *(Back to a fool in love.)* You're looking so lovely.

SYLVIA. Your eyes haven't changed a bit. Warm. Gentle.

RICHARD. I've dreamt of this moment. *(Re: the gun.)* Well, not this moment exactly…but—seeing you again.

SYLVIA. I always thought it unsettling that your body wasn't found. All these years I've mourned you. You've got a tombstone. Your parents think you're dead. All of Shrewsbury thinks you're dead.

RICHARD. How are my parents?

SYLVIA. Dead!

RICHARD. How awful.

SYLVIA. Oh, William.

RICHARD. Oh, Sylvia.

SYLVIA. How I've longed for you.

RICHARD. And I you.

They rush to each other. In their haste, Richard's gun drops to the ground. It goes off with a very loud bang.

They scream, and screams are heard throughout the house. (Perhaps the bullet strikes a china figurine, or some such object, creating a Rube Goldberg–ricochet effect.)

SYLVIA. I thought you said it wasn't loaded!

RICHARD. I thought it wasn't! I've never been good with guns! Perhaps it was slightly loaded.

SYLVIA. That leads to slightly dead doesn't it?

Richard takes the gun, clearly not an expert, and examines it.

RICHARD. It's empty now. For certain.

SYLVIA. Let me see it.

She expertly examines the gun.

Gate. Cylinder. Chamber. Hammer. *(Then.)* Right. Good then.