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MELVIN: YOU SAY YOU CAN'T FIND MAD ANYWHERE?
Julie Adams finished her little speech and sat nervously, gazing into her lap. John Hendricks suddenly realized he had been staring at her and roosed himself...

"I received the highest marks in my class! And I'll work hard...really! I'm sure I could make you an efficient secretary if you'll only give me a chance!"

"She was fresh out of high school, with a youthful beauty, a childlike innocence that floored him. All his life John Hendricks had been searching for someone completely pure, someone completely unsullied by life...and by men!" In fascination, he listened as she spoke...

"I had been hoping to find a secretary with some...er...experience! However, I'm sure you'll do nicely, Miss Adams...you're hired!"

"Oh, Mr. Hendricks, I'm so thrilled! You won't be sorry. I promise you!"
He moved Julie into his private office where he could be certain the office wolves would not be able to destroy her purity. But even then... I'd like to leave now, Mr. Hendricks? I have a date tonight?

A date?? Er... why... I, ah.. I'm very sorry, Miss Adams, but you'll have to call it off. I just remembered some important work that must be done tonight!

In every way possible, John did all he could to keep her from other men... to keep her as clean and wholesome as he wanted her to be... for himself and he worried deeply.

Julie, my Julie! I must protect you from your own innocence! No one must spoil you! No one!

He knew she was so naive that any fast-talking man would find her easy prey, and he wanted to save her from such a fate.

I can't make her work late every night and what about weekends? There must be a way...

He could think of but one way... only one sure method...

Er... Julie. I hope you won't think me too forward... but... would you have dinner with me tonight?

Why, Mr. Hendricks? I'd be delighted!

He had to make sure that he was always with her... he had to monopolize her every minute!

I... I thought you might like to go dancing tonight and tomorrow night we could see a show!

Oh, it sounds wonderful!

Every weekend he took her far from the city... far from any sight or contact of men...
It was immediately after their honeymoon that John brought Julie to live at his beautiful country estate, surrounded by miles of woodlands and completely isolated from any men.

Oh, John—it's heavenly! It's only right that an angel like you should have a heavenly place to live, Julie!

John's entire world had been changed by the entrancing, ever-youthful Julie. But she gradually became lonely, alone on the huge estate.

John's entire world had been changed by the entrancing, ever-youthful Julie. But she gradually became lonely, alone on the huge estate.

Darling... believe me, I'm very happy, but... I'm alone so much. You're in the city, all day, and I never see or speak to anyone. I'm not complaining. Honest! It's just that... well, I get lonesome sometimes!

I... I know, Julie! But... well, what can I do?

I don't mind never leaving the estate, but I thought... maybe if I had something to... to keep me busy... like, maybe a baby?

Let's make a baby... the way we were planning... let's have a child... how's that for insurance?

What's a baby? No! No, I... I don't want to have any children! It... it would spoil you for me!
Julie said no more about it, and John thought the matter was forgotten. Then, some weeks later...

John? What on earth is the matter?

Mr. Farnsworth, one of my biggest clients, is coming to visit us tonight! His wife and children have gone to Europe, and he's LONELY! Why, he practically forced me to ask him over! I couldn't refuse!

To Julie, this was as exciting as her wedding day! She fairly bubbled over with happiness as she listened attentively to Mr. Farnsworth's chatter.

Yes... nothing like children to make a house a home! They keep you young, too! That's your trouble, John? No children! HA! Why don't you talk to him about it, Julie? HA!

Mr. Farnsworth visited them on several occasions, and John had to struggle desperately to control his seething jealousy.

You look lovelier than ever, tonight, Julie, my dear! Why, thank you, Mr. Farnsworth!

And several times the talkative Mr. Farnsworth would bring up the Delicate Subject...

No children, John? You're not getting any younger, you know!

ER... Not yet, sir? Maybe... soon!

And several times, after Mr. Farnsworth had returned home...

... but I'm a woman, John? I want to be a mother! I... I want a child... badly!

No, Julie? No! I won't hear of it! Please don't ask anymore!

Extremely Downhearted, Julie said no more. She turned and silently left the room, leaving John alone with his agony. Though he wouldn't admit it, he didn't want children because he couldn't bear the thought of ANYONE sharing her love...

Julie... oh, my Julie! What am I going to do? What am I going to do?

It was a few weeks later that John became aware of a fact that startled him...

There goes Julie running off into the woods! Hmm... this is the second Saturday that she...
But early that evening, while Mr. Farnsworth was finishing some work before visiting John's home...

Days later, at John's office...

Oh, hello, Mr. Farnsworth! Why, certainly! We'd be glad to have you for dinner tonight! About eight o'clock? Fine!

But it's almost nine-thirty, John! Mr. Farnsworth has never been this late!

Nmph! She's worried! Just wait till she sees tomorrow's headlines!

You're right, Julie! I guess he couldn't make it. Let's get some sleep!

Later that night, both he and Julie paced the floor, but for very different reasons...

The next morning, John Hendricks read the headlines, then handed the paper to his wife. He watched her face closely for any tell-tale expression...

Oh, good heavens, John! It says here that Mr. Farnsworth was murdered by a burglar last night! Isn't that awful?

He was such a good client of yours! It would be a shame if this hurts your business in any way! Tsk! Such a nice old man!
Though disappointed when his wife showed no sign of deep grief because of Mr. Farnsworth's death, he was also puzzled by her calm acceptance of it. Until the following Saturday...

**Frantically, he raced out of the house, into the woods... but she was nowhere in sight...**

**...no use trying to find her now! I'll wait until next Saturday!**

He returned to the house, the tears of anger rolling down his cheeks...

**I... I don't understand! If she's still meeting some man, then... then maybe she never met Farnsworth at all! Did I kill the wrong man?**

**...Julie, I'll never let anyone else have you! I can't bear the thought of another man being near you! I'll kill him, Julie! I'll find him... and kill him! I swear it!**

**As usual, the following week, Julie disappeared into the trees, with her small basket... but this time John was trailing close behind her, an ugly gun in his pocket...**

She ran lightly in and out among the trees and he kept her in sight only with difficulty. He kept trying to make himself believe that he was all wrong... that it was his insane jealousy that caused him to think such filthy things about his precious Julie...

**...but he knew he had been right when he saw her reach the crest of a small hill. She stood motionless for a moment, then happily raised her arm, waving and calling a greeting to the someone out of sight beyond the rise...**

**Oh... Julie...**
He sat there, sobbing quietly, listening to her bubbling laughter float up over the hill, while hideous visions of what was taking place raced through his mind. The laughter died, to be replaced by interminable quiet, broken only by an occasional giggle... a squeal of joy.

Through a stream of tears, he saw her begin to remove her blouse as she disappeared down the other side of the hill toward her companion. He slumped to the ground weakly...

A long time later, he saw her reappear at the hill crest, radiant and smiling, and buttoning her blouse. She waved good-bye, blew a kiss from dainty fingertips and hurried back toward the house, her little basket swinging gaily in the sun. John picked the gun up from the ground...

He caught a movement behind a clump of bushes. Through the leaves he saw the color of flesh and he aimed the gun and fired... again and again and again!

He ran hysterically from the hill, back through the trees to the house. It was over! Julie was his again!

There were no tears now. Only hatred! Deep, venomous, maniacal hatred! With the gun gripped tightly, he crept stealthily to the top of the rise...

He was exhausted as he reared the house and saw Julie...

Oh, there you are! I've been looking for you. Please, dear, walk with me?

I... I have something to tell you!

 Eh? Wha...?
She led him back into the woods. He hesitated at first, then went with her! Why not? He had nothing to fear...

"I... I WANT TO CONFESSION SOMETHING, JOHN! I KNOW I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT BEHIND YOUR BACK... BUT WELL... I COULDN'T HELP IT! YOU KNOW HOW LONELY I WAS!

... Maybe, if he had to...

YOU KNOW HOW LONELY I WAS? I WANTED SOMEONE... ANYONE? IT WAS WRONG... BUT WE STARTED TO MEET EVERY SATURDAY..."

"HE AND I HAVE HAD SUCH FUN, PICNICKING AND SWIMMING TOGETHER! HIS NAME IS TOMMY! HE'S FROM THE ORPHAN HOME BEHIND YOUR ESTATE! I KNOW YOU'LL JUST LOVE HIM AND... HE'S JUST DYING TO MEET YOU!"

A confession. Fat lot of good it will do her! Lover? Just as well if they DID stumble on his body... JULIE WOULD BE A GOOD WITNESS...

"IT... IT JUST HAPPENED! I WENT SWIMMING AT THE POND ONE DAY, AND THERE HE WAS! I LIKED HIM RIGHT AWAY! HE WAS SO CUTE... CURLY HAIR, BLUE EYES! YOU... YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, JOHN?"

"... ON JULIE! WHAT A LAUGH!

I DIDN'T WANT TO DO IT BEHIND YOUR BACK... BUT THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY! I KNOW HOW... HOW JEALOUS YOU ARE!"

"... BUT I CAN'T KEEP IT FROM YOU ANY LONGER! YOU'VE A RIGHT TO KNOW! HE'S SO WONDERFUL! I WANT YOU TO MEET HIM!"

The End.
Marcia and Andrew Norris, the parents, stood amid the cheering shouting crowd. There were tears of joy in Mrs. Norris's eyes, and Mr. Norris's face beamed... He's come home, Andrew, our Joey's come home... a hero! The whole town's proud of him, Marcia... The whole town! Look at 'em...

Marcia and Andrew Norris, the parents, stood amid the cheering shouting crowd. There were tears of joy in Mrs. Norris's eyes, and Mr. Norris's face beamed... He's come home, Andrew, our Joey's come home... a hero! The whole town's proud of him, Marcia... The whole town! Look at 'em...

The train hissed and snorted as it steamed into the station and squealed to a stop. The crowd yelled and waved and pushed. The band blared. Somebody pointed... shouting... There he is! Welcome home, Joey! Joey! Map pa?

It was as if a huge blanket had suddenly fallen upon the crowd that jammed the station platform, hushing their clamoring voices, stifling their laughter. All eyes turned to where the shining rails ran away toward the horizon and disappeared into the haze at the foothills of the distant mountains. All ears listened to the faint whistle of the approaching train, and then, it was as if the blanket were suddenly lifted again, a band began to play. The shouting and laughter exploded again... louder this time...

Here he comes! Right on time, too! Let's give him the best darn welcoming this town ever had! Let's start wavin' those flags, folks! Let's really put on a show for him!

The train hissed and snorted as it steamed into the station and squealed to a stop. The crowd yelled and waved and pushed. The band blared. Somebody pointed... shouting... There he is! Welcome home, Joey! Joey! Map pa?
The boy swung off the train and put out his arms. His mother rushed into them and held her close.

"Joey! My baby! My son!" MA! MA! GOSH, it's good to see you!

"Hello, Pa... It's good to have you back, son..."

Oh... I'm sorry, Joey. I forgot... It's okay, Pa!

The mayor put up his hands and the band stopped playing. The crowd quieted.

"Joey! On behalf of all the folks here in Centerville, I just want to say that we're all proud of you... mighty proud of you..."

This afternoon at three, there's going to be an official welcoming rally at the town hall. Now you run along home with your folks, have yourself a nice home-cooked meal, and we'll see you there.

The mayor held up his hand again.

The crowd cheered.

The boy smiled, waved to the crowd, and picked up his barracks bag. The crowd parted and he moved to the waiting car flanked by his beaming parents.

"All right, folks! Let him through!"

"Come, Joey! You must be tired after your long trip!"

"See you this afternoon, Joey!"

The car door slammed. The band began to play again. The crowd roared as their returned hero was whisked off.
The parents sat quietly, picking at their food, watching Joey feast ravenously, marveling at the way he manipulated his fork with the shiny clamp.

"Does... does it hurt, much, Joey?"

"What, ma? Oh! This? Naw! I'm used to it now. In the beginning it was tough... but now..."

The boy put down his fork on the empty plate before him and sat back, sated. He looked around, grinning... drinking in the familiar scene... the familiar smells...

"It's good to be home again, ma... pa!"

"It's good to have you home again, Joey!"

He looked at his watch...

"It's two-fifteen. We have plenty of time till the rally. I think I'd like to go out to Hank's grave first!"

The parents paled, the son looked at them...

"That's right, pa? I'd kinda like to stop by and see it before we go on to the rally, you know."

The son stood up...

"What's wrong, ma... pa? What's bothering you?"

"N-nothin', Joey."

"It's... it's just."

The mother took her son's hand...

"We meant to write you about it, Joey. We meant to tell you, but we just couldn't bring ourselves to do it!"

"Sit down, Joey! You might as well know it... now."

The mother puttered happily over the kitchen stove, chattering gaily and wiping away an occasional tear of joy...

"I made everything you like, Joey! Roast beef. French fries. Broccoli. Apple pie with ice cream..."

"Sounds great, ma!"

The boy looked at them... he looked at his watch.

He looked around, grinning... drinking in the familiar scene... the familiar...
The heros sat down. He looked up at his parents standing over him...

'The hero's voice wavered. The mother took up the story.

All those letters... he was you wrote, joey! you never mentioned it! it wasn't fair! we grew to love hank from your letters!

What happened, pa? couldn't you swing it? didn't his body set here?

It isn't that, son! it's... it's...

"When you wrote about that patrol you were sent on, we could just see you both... tramping through the mud together...

What the...? hit the dirt!

Enemy machine gun!"

Keep your heads down, fellers. we'll take care of 'em, lieutenant! be right back, lieutenant!

'And when the enemy machine-gun cut your patrol off... pinned it down, we could just picture you and hank volunteering to put it out of commission... and crawling off..."

"We were so proud of you both, joey... tossing those grenades... silencing that gun..."

That did it, hank! look out, joey!

'And when the live grenade landed beside you and hank leaped upon it... covering it with his body... saving your life..."
The mother hung her head...

...we cried when we read about it. Joey! we cried!

Not because you lost your arm, Joey! we cried because Hank gave his life to save yours!

...and when you wrote home that Hank had no family and asked that we send for his body so he could be buried in our family plot at Fairlawn...

...we did it, Joey happily!

We even arranged to have his body transferred from the simple wooden coffin the government supplies...

We bought a real nice casket, Joey! everything was set...

Only the night before Hank's funeral, the undertaker called... and told us!

We...we didn't know what to do!

And by morning the whole town had heard...

The phone didn't stop ringing...

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The phone didn't stop ringing...

The soldier-hero sat there...stunned...

Listening...we couldn't go through with it, Joey! The whole town was on our necks, our friends, the family...

I had my business to consider, son. We couldn't do it!

He looked up...whispering hoarsely

Then...what did you do?

Why...we...we buried him over in Greendale...

He's got a nice plot, Joey! pa bought him the best. More than we could afford!
The boy got to his feet. He looked at his watch.

"It's late, Ma. Pat. We better get going!" Joey.

They drove to the town hall in silence. Joey just sat, staring at his gleaming steel clamp.

He stood in the wings as the mayor introduced him.

"And now folks, let's give a rousing welcome to the guy Centerville is proud of. To our Korean War Hero... Joey Norris!"

The gathered crowd that had come to honor Joey rose to its feet, applauding. Joey stood before it, his head bowed.

"They drafted me into the army. They took me away from my home, my family, and this town I loved... and they put a uniform on me."

"They trained me and sent me to Korea. They said I was fighting for democracy, helping to turn back the tide of slavery that threatened to overrun Europe and Asia, the world."

"I gave my right hand defending freedom and equality, and I was proud of it."
He gave his life for that cause... and he saved mine in doing it. He threw himself on a live grenade... got blown up... to save me...

I had a buddy in Korea. We ate together... slept together... laughed together... cried together. We fought together, we fought for democracy together.

He looked from face to face...

But when his body was sent back here, it wasn't good enough to be buried in Fairlawn Cemetery. It wasn't good enough because its skin wasn't the right color...

I was proud... that is, until today...

Well, the grenade that tore that skin to pieces... didn't know its color... didn't care if it was white or black.

I'm ashamed! I'm ashamed of you... and for you!

What did he die for? What did I give my arm for? You say you're proud of me. Well, I'm not proud of you.

But when his body was sent back here, it wasn't good enough to be buried in Fairlawn Cemetery, it wasn't good enough because its skin wasn't the right color...

The soldier-hero sat down... there was no applause... no cheers... no band playing... little by little, the crowd filed out of the auditorium... sheepishly... silently...

What did he die for? What did I give my arm for? You say you're proud of me. Well, I'm not proud of you.

... Leaving the soldier-hero alone in the empty town hall... leaving him crying...
Dr. Curtis Clark drew his bathrobe tighter around his ample stomach and snorted angrily: "How long does your worthless brother intend to stay here and sponge off us?"

"N-Now, Curt," his wife mumbled from the big bed, "I'll see that Burt doesn't get in your way while he's here. If you'd only try to make allowances for him. He's so proud that you're one of the country's most eminent botanists..."

"Pfui!" rasped Dr. Clark. "He's nothing but a worthless bum who's never done a day's work in his life! Only reason he's visiting is to satisfy that bottomless pit he calls his stomach!"

Burt Devine tiptoed silently down the stairs and into the kitchen. With great care he flipped the light switch and moved across the room. An audible grunt came from him as he stopped in his tracks: that pompous brother-in-law of his had put a padlock on the refrigerator! What was a guy supposed to do when he hankered for a midnight snack? Burt moved toward the pantry and his hand closed around the doorknob. That crummy Clark, he thought to himself with disgust... he's even locked up the pantry! Not a speck of food around, and I'm starving to death after that stingy little snack they call dinner at this dump!

A thought struck Burt Devine and, switching off the kitchen light, he
walked silently toward the rear of the house... to the glassed-in porch where Clark did his at-home experimenting. In the greenhouse, Burt reflected, he might find some tidbits left behind by his sister's cheap husband.

The door opened quietly and Burt stepped into the workroom: a quick search revealed nothing to eat. About to exit in disgust, Burt saw a wooden box set on a worktable. Closer examination brought a smile to his heavy face: his eyes lit up, his mouth gaped in a grim, the corners of his eyes crinkled with good humor. Digging his hands deep into the soil, he pulled up a fistful of the objects planted there.

"This is better than I hoped for," Burt rejoiced. "Just what I need to satisfy my craving for a late snack: MUSHROOMS! If there's anything I adore, it's a feast of luscious, tender, succulent mushrooms! Yum!"

And, suiting actions to word, Burt Devine proceeded to clean out the box. In a few minutes, smacking his lips with obvious delight, he closed the greenhouse door and tiptoed upstairs to his bedroom. What a laugh on stuffy old Clark!

Dr. Clark rose from the breakfast table. "First time in memory," he said, "that your brother missed a meal!" With that he strode toward the greenhouse, while his wife tidied up the kitchen. Within a minute Clark was back, his face crimson. "That special strain of TOADSTOOLS I've been working on," he spluttered, "they're all gone! Must've been dug up last night! I-I hope the dog didn't get in and eat them! Those toadstools are highly poisonous! One mouthful and... brrrr! I hate to think of the agony that will precede death within two hours of the time they're eaten!"
The only shocking thing about this column is that it’s probably no shock! You’ve no doubt seen it two or three times in previous E.C. issues. But if you haven’t yet heard about E.C.’s new fan club, why read on!

Before launching into the sordid details of the club, however, we would like to sketch in a little background. We started out with two conditions that positively had to be met:

1) Our club would have to be a different kind of fan club ... a continuously active club that would provide long-range interest, enjoyment and benefits for its members! And...

2) Our club would have to be a non-profit fan club! Incredible as it may seem, the only income we at E.C. derive... or care to derive... from our efforts comes from the neatest sales of our 10c mags. We actually lose a little on subscriptions, and make very little on the annuals... both are primarily offered as services to promote good will! If you readers want a fan club, we’re more than happy to oblige... but, again, as a service, not for profit!

So here’s what we’ve come up with

1) THE NAME: As one reader wrote a while back, "E.C. magazines are habit-forming." So what could be more logical than to call the organization, "THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB"?

2) THE SET-UP: The E.C. Fan-Addict Club will consist of the national "parent" organization, and local chapters. Everyone who joins will be a member of the national organization. In addition, any group of five or more prospective members may join as an authorized chapter of the national organization. Each such chapter will be assigned a charter number. The name and address of the elected president of each authorized chapter will be made available to all members, so that those who are not already a member of a chapter will be able to join the one nearest them if they wish to.

3) WHAT YOU GET: Each member will receive a full-color 7½ by 10½ membership certificate, suitable for framing; a wallet-size membership identification card; a striking membership patch for sweaters, jackets, etc.; and a very distinguished-looking membership pin!

4) COST OF JOINING: Membership in THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB will set you back two bits. 25c! This 25c represents the exact cost to us (plus or minus a fraction of a cent!) of one envelope, one stamp, and the above mentioned four items—certificate, card, patch, and pin! (The cost of Ruby’s and Nancy’s loving labor in packing and mailing is lovingly donated by E.C.)

5) POSSIBLE FUTURE PLANS: We are considering publishing an E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB BULLETIN, containing such features as national and local chapter news; advance inside information on new titles, future stories, and special issues, etc., and stories submitted by members, and a "back-issue trading post!" Only club members would be eligible to subscribe, with the price and frequency of publication yet to be decided upon.

We are also considering some sort of "E.C. Surprise-of-the-Month" plan for members. What the ‘surprises’ might be, and what we might have to clip you for THIS one, is a question yet undetermined.

6) IF YOU’RE STILL INTERESTED: For an individual membership, send 25c, along with your clearly printed name and address, to:

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
Room 706
225 Lafayette Street
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

If five or more of you wish to join as an authorized chapter, enclose each member’s name and address, along with 25c for each name, and indicate the name of the elected president. We will notify each president of his chapter’s charter number, but each chapter member will receive his membership credentials, etc., individually.

So that's it! Meet new friends. Make new enemies. See the world. Spend money. Join THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!!

(In honor of the occasion, we will forego the usual subscription plug that 6 issues of this, or any other E.C. mag, cost 75c—ed.)
It was almost time. Wanda turned and looked back across the desolate pebbled plateau to where the ship stood, tall and silent and silvery... a monument to life in a dead atmosphereless world. Then she looked down at Milton, her wealthy middle-aged husband, kneeling awkwardly before her in his heavy rubber-ribbed space-suit, studying the sample of planetoid rock. Cold Milton, as empty and barren as this world they’d traveled across the void of endless space to explore, and then she looked at Donald, her husband’s young and handsome employee, standing behind her, warm Donald, vibrant and exciting, with whom she’d planned all this... with whom she’d planned Cold Milton’s death.

I don’t understand, Don! You told me this planetoid was loaded with uranium-bearing ore!

I know, Milton. I know what I told you!

Wanda stiffened. Milton was getting up slowly. It was almost time now. He’d looked at the ore samples and now he knew... he knew Donald had lied to him. Yes, it was almost time to kill him...

I'm afraid not, Milton.

Ther it’s true! There is no uranium ore on this god-forsaken rock?

What’s this all about, Donald? What does this mean?

Wanda shivered. Even though her space-suit was webbed with fine wires that heated the pocket of air between its ribbed surface and her smooth white body, she shivered. Milton stared at the gun Donald held in his gloved fist.

It means you’re going to die, Milton. It means Wanda and I will be rid of you!
Wanda moved forward, hate burning in her eyes. She leered at her husband...

"I'll tell you what's going to happen, Milton! After you're dead, Don and I are going back to the ship and we're going to take off our suits and he's going to take me in his arms and...

"What are you waiting for, Don? Don't listen to him! He's trying to stall us! Pull the trigger...

"Yes, Don! Pull the trigger. Kill me! See what happens!

Wanda stared at Milton. Her thoughts went racing wildly... back across those torturous months... back across those months of longing and frustration... back to the beginning...

"Wanda... This is Donald Conrad. Don is a space-explorer. I've hired him to do some prospecting for me...

"A pleasure, Mr. Conrad...

Wanda remembered how she'd thought about Don after that, and now the fire within her had leaped into a flaming inferno of desire...

"It was nice of you to invite me to dinner, Wanda!

Milt told me you were leaving tomorrow, and I thought we'd give you a nice send-off...

Had she been so obvious? Had Milton actually seen the glow of the passion-fire that Don had stirred within her?

Your husband is interested in uranium, Mrs. Griffith...

Yes! I know! It's his whole life. He hardly has time for anything else!

"What's so funny, Milton?

You two! You've been so clever! Well, I've been cleverer!

No, Milton. If you knew, you wouldn't have come! You wouldn't have walked into this trap!

You're wrong, Wanda! I knew I'd lose you! I knew it that day Don came to work for me and I saw that hunger in your eyes...

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"It was nice of you to invite me to dinner, Wanda!

Milt told me you were leaving tomorrow, and I thought we'd give you a nice send-off...
...the thrill of their First Kiss... the tempting entree to the feast of love that had to follow...

Oh, Ooh! I've loved you since the first moment I saw you... loved you... and wanted you! Must you go tomorrow?

I've got to! But when I get back we'll... cough... watch it! He's coming!

Those interminable months of waiting until Don came back... the torture of greeting him at the Rocket Port... with Milt...

Hi, folks! Welcome back, Don! Well? Any luck?

...The pain of being so near him and not being able to throw herself into his arms...

I found a bonanza, Milt! A planetoid loaded with uranium-bearing ore...

Great! Great!

...the whispered pleas...

I've got to see you, darling! Tomorrow, Milt won't be home. Come up about eleven...

...and then, finally, that sweet moment alone...

Sweetheart! I've thought about you every minute that you were away... wanted you... dreamed of it...

Listen! We don't have much time! I've got a plan...

She remembered those stolen moments together... out on the balcony... while Milt was mixing drinks...

Please... take care of yourself, Oon! I wouldn't want to lose you now that I've found you...

Baby...

...and not being able to throw herself into his arms...

I've got to see you, darling! Tomorrow, Milt won't be home. Come up about eleven...

Trust me...

...and then, finally, that sweet moment alone...

Sweetheart! I've thought about you every minute that you were away... wanted you... dreamed of it...

Listen! We don't have much time! I've got a plan..

Listening all that evening to Don and Milt talking business... numbing... longing for this man...

It's a little atmosphereless planetoid outside of solar system X-5-19. Of course, we'll have to wear space-suits...

I'll make arrangements to go with you... and take a look...

...and then, finally, that sweet moment alone...
Wanda remembered how don't outlined his plan... no one will suspect. Foul play, baby! There is no motive! No one knows about us!

EXACTLY! That's why I can't come up tomorrow when Milton's away! We've got to wait, baby! We can't afford to take chances!

But... don't we've waited all these months... while you were gone.

We can wait just a little while longer. Wanda, honey! Just a little while longer...

Hold me... kiss me...

Had Milton really known? Had he suspected? Wanda couldn't believe it! They'd been so careful! Aside from those brief stolen seconds alone, they'd behaved like strangers.

Wanda? I have an excellent idea! Why don't you come along with me when I go to examine Don's discovery?

No nonsense! Wanda wouldn't be in the way, would she, Conrad?

Of course not, Milton. You come along, Mrs. Griffith. You'll enjoy the trip, I'm sure!

Had Milton had an ulterior motive in inviting Wanda on the trip? Had he found out about their plan to kill him?

Why did you do that? Why did you say 'yes' to my coming along? It's a long trip home, baby! A long trip...

Wanda remembered the excitement... the anticipation! Not of the trip to the planetoid that would be sheer torture! But the trip home with Milton dead... and she and Don... together.

Of course, if you'd rather, I don't be silly, not go, Wanda. Milton I want to go!
Milton's laugh, echoing inside Wanda's space-helmet, shocked her out of her reverie...shocked her back to the barren rocky planetoid.

Yes, Wanda. I knew I'd lost you. That's why I came! I wanted to die. There was nothing left for me without you.

And you're wrong, Wanda! After I'm dead, you're not going back to the ship, you're not going to get what you want. That's not what's going to happen at all.

If I press this toggle, the ship's automatic pilot will take it off...and you'll be left...stranded here. Both of you...

...and there isn't any atmosphere on this planetoid, so there isn't any air pressure!

So go ahead, Don! Pull the trigger! Kill me! See what happens! He's lying, Don! How could he have known? He's trying to outsmart us! I don't know, baby...

Don...Don, darling? Think of that trip home! Think of how long we've waited! Think of the torture we've both suffered...wanting each other and not being able to... Okay, baby! Okay! Stand aside...

Don raised his gun. His gloved fist tightened. There was a sharp click as he pulled the trigger...
Milt pitched forward, the air hissing from his rent space-suit, fountaining his blood across the rocky planetoid surface.

And then, suddenly, the distant ship shuddered, spitting flame.

...And shot skyward... up into the black star-studded void.

For a long while, the man and the woman just stood there, staring after the fading needle of fire.

Then they looked at the body lying on the pebbles with the bloated ruptured face that seemed to grin back at them...

And then they looked at each other hungrily, and knew that what they'd killed for was now impossible... that they were confined to their suits... that if they tried to remove them, their bodies would bloat and blister and their blood vessels would rupture... that they couldn't even kiss, no less...

And when the other space explorers finally came to the tiny pebbled planetoid, they found the man and the woman sitting beside each other... dead from suffocation and starvation... holding bloated ruptured hands...

And then they looked at the body lying on the pebbles with the bloated ruptured face that seemed to grin back at them...
Della had been acting strangely lately... cold to my advances. I'd sensed something was wrong, but I just couldn't put my finger on it. When she'd suggested doing up to the lodge for the week-end, I'd jumped at the chance. I'd felt that the two of us, alone up there, could straighten out whatever had come between us, but then she'd gone to the phone and called Andy and invited him up, too...

Yeah, Andy. This week-end, just the three of us. Yes, your can? Well, if you insist, good. See you Friday night, then, you'll pick us up! Fine! Bye, dear!

Della, what'd you do and do that for? Delia hung up and turned to me innocently...

Do what, Alan? Invite Andy up? I thought it might be nice if we went up to the lodge alone... just the two of us...

She laughed...

aren't we a little old for thot kind of thing, Alan? Besides, Andy is our best friend. I thought it would be nice to have him along.

Very cozy! And what's this about him picking us up? You know how dangerous those roads are. I prefer to drive....
I GUESS I ACTED PRETTY GUILTY ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, BUT, QUITE FRANKLY, I WAS ANNOYED. OUR ANNIVERSARY WAS COMING UP THAT SUNDAY, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE PERFECT CHANCE TO CLEAN THE AIR OF WHATEVER IT WAS THAT WAS BOTHERING DELLA, BUT SHE'D GONE AND INVITED ANDY, AND SPOILED THE WHOLE DEAL. FRIDAY NIGHT, ANDY PULLED UP IN HIS BRAND NEW CONVERTIBLE.

OH, ANDY! IT'S BEAUTIFUL! TOSS YOUR BAGS IN THE BACK AND HOP IN. SWEET-LOOKING JOB, ANDY.

ALL THE WAY UP TO THE LODGE, ANDY RATTLE-D ON, PRAISING HIS NEW CAR, AND IT WAS A SWEET JOB! IT HAD POWER STEERING, POWER BRAKES, REMOTE-CONTROLLED WINDOWS THAT-raised_and_lowered_at_the_TOUCH_OF_a_BUTTON... YES, SIR, SHE'S GOT EVERYTHING. WHAT'S THAT, ANDY? WHAT'S RINGING?

WE'D ALMOST REACHED THE ROAD LEADING TO THE LODGE AS THE BELL STARTED TO RING, ANDY SMILED, LOOKING AT HIS WATCH. I SAVED THIS FOR THE PIÈCE DE RÉSISTANCE! RIGHT ON TIME, TOO... IT SOUNDS LIKE... OH, NO!


ANDY HUNG UP. HE GRINNED AT US ALWAYS WANTED ONE OF THOSE THINGS. WATCH IT, ANDY! RIGHT AFTER THIS BRIDGE, THE ROAD SWERVES UP A STEEP GRADE.
We zoomed across the bridge and the car took the sharp curve easily and sped up the steep mountain road.

You'll have to watch this spot on the way back, Andy. It's pretty dangerous. You can't see the bridge until you're almost on top of it!

Andy, what in the world do you need a telephone for?

You never can tell, Della. Someone might want to reach me...

About ten miles further on, we turned off the main highway and pulled up to the lodge. Andy was still bragging about the car-telephone.

I'll give you the number, Alan, soon as we get inside, you write it down.

Fine, Andy! Now, you and Della go on in and I'll get your bags out of the trunk!

Della turned white. I looked at her...then at Andy...

Er...my bags are in the back seat, Alan! The trunk doesn't open, it's got the radio-telephone chassis in there.

Oh! I see...

The color came back into Della's cheeks and she went on into the lodge. I felt a sudden chill creep up my spine.

How did Della know about that?...

I'll help you with the bags, Alan!

Huh? Oh... sure...

Della and I unpacked in silence. That coldness she'd shown toward me lately...those rejections of my amorous advances...could it be...?

Della I. Not now, Alan! Andy must be starved. I'll go fix something for us!

She hurried off to the kitchen, leaving me with my doubts and my uncertainties and a rising tide of mistrust and suspicion. Andy came in after a while...

Here's my car-phone number, Alan, where shall I put it?

Huh? Oh, just put it down on the bureau there, Andy!

After supper, we sat around and made idle chatter...and then Della announced...

I think we all ought to get to bed early tonight. Tomorrow, we'll get the boat out, and do some sailing.

Good idea! I'm pooped! G'night, you two!

Good night, Andy!
I was awakened with a start about three in the morning by the slamming of a car-trunk. I sat up. The bed beside me was empty. Then, I heard whispering voices outside...

That's Della's voice... and Andy's! They're out there... together!

I staggered from the cottage, as I passed Andy's new car, I noticed the trunk slightly ajar. I swung it open, cursing...

Empty! They lied to me. They said the phone chassis was in here. Della's things were in here. The things Andy bought her! New dresses. Perhaps a fur coat! No! On, Lord... no!

I moved to the guest cottage silently... listening. Inside, Della was laughing softly, and Andy's voice was warm...

Alan has no idea, has he... I mean... about what we're planning?

No! It'll be a complete shock to him when he finds out. Did you get me everything I'll need?

Yeah. I bought everything on your list. I sure was embarrassed buying those dresses though.

Well, I couldn't do it myself! Alan would have suspected them! Oh, Andy... we've both wanted this so badly... and we've waited so long!

I slipped into a robe and tip-toed out of the lodge, down the trail, the door to the guest cottage closed. The blinds were drawn, but the lights were on inside...

I was right! There is something going on between them!

Jealously and hate tore at my heart, ripped tears from my eyes, and sent them spilling down my cheeks. Andy and Della... my best friend... and my wife. I couldn't see in through the shaded windows, but I could just imagine them in each other's arms...

Every time he's taken me in his arms I've wanted to tell him about it. I've had to make excuses... refuse his advances...

Jealously and hate tore at my heart, ripped tears from my eyes, and sent them spilling down my cheeks. Andy and Della... my best friend... and my wife. I couldn't see in through the shaded windows, but I could just imagine them in each other's arms...

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Every time he's taken me in his arms I've wanted to tell him about it. I've had to make excuses... refuse his advances...
They were going to Run off together. They'd brought me up to the lodge to tell me. No wonder Della wanted Andy along. No wonder we'd used his car. They were going to laugh... and say...

"Sorry, Alan, Happy Last Anniversary!"

That's the way things are, Alan...

"Bye, Alan!"

Hope we see you... Never!

Suddenly I hated them. I hated their deception. I hated Della for what she'd done to our marriage. I hated Andy for pretending to be my friend, and all the while twisting my wife from me...

No wonder we never had children! Della never wanted any! She never loved me enough!

I lay awake for a long time, the anger and hurt inside me growing. Then, Della and Andy came in, whispering softly, and I heard the resounding sound of a kiss...

I froze as she crawled into bed beside me. And I knew that I had to kill them, I lay there and I planned it. In the morning, we were to go sailing. It would be so simple...

Alan! Put down that spike! Alan!

I would knock them both unconscious, then capsize the sailboat and swim to shore...

By morning I had made up my mind to go through with my plan. But somehow I couldn't bring myself to do it. And after we'd been out on the lake a few hours...

It's starting to rain! Head for home, Alan.

And it would be just an unfortunate boating accident.
The storm seemed to come up suddenly. I prayed the boat would capsize by itself, but we made it back to the lodge safely. We arrived chilled and soaked to the skin.

The bridge at the bottom of that dangerous grade. The bridge that you couldn't see till you were almost upon it. Had been washed away.

All afternoon, the storm raged. Toward evening, it subsided. The phone rang and I answered it.

Hello? Just wanted to warn you folks that the bridge down the road is washed out, so don't try to come into town tomorrow.

Who was it, Alan? No one. Della! Just a wrong number!

A plan was forming in my mind. A death-plan...

I usually drive into town on Sundays to get fresh rolls for breakfast, Andy! Of course, I wouldn't expect you to let me use your new car...

Andy's fallen for it. Della was next...

He won't know where to go, Della. Why don't you drive in with Andy?

Of course, dear. We'll make it early, Andy. About eight!

It was done. The bridge was washed out. They'd come down the grade and see it and it would be too late...

That night, Della and Andy went down to the guest cottage again and returned hours later. I pretended I was asleep. I felt chilled and my throat felt sore. I was probably coming down with a cold. In the morning, I heard Andy's knock.

Ready to go into town, Della? Ready in a minute, Andy!
Della dressed quickly. I swallowed the lump in my throat and listened to them leave the lodge... Let's go...

Then I got up, I dashed to the door, and watched them zoom away.

**A pity!** Such a lovely new car! 

A morbid curiosity drew me to the guest cottage. I wanted to see the scene... the rumpled bed... the packed suitcases with Della's new things that Andy bought. I kicked open the door angrily... Good Lord!

That's why she had been cold to me. Della was going to have a baby! She wanted to surprise me. Andy had these things in the trunk. Oh, God... and I thought... I... sent them to their deaths...

**Happy Anniversary Daddy!!** Oh, God...

The cottage was cheerfully decorated, a colorful sign greeted me. A bathinet stood in one corner... a new crib in the other. A complete layette was spread out on the table beside the box of cigars. Maternity dresses lay on the bed. Little knitted things... diapers... bottles... blankets...

I tore into the house. There was one chance to stop them. One slim chance...

Andy's car... it has a telephone! He gave me the number...

I found the car-phone number on the bureau where Andy'd left it. I stumbled to the phone. I lifted the receiver...

I opened my mouth. I tried to speak. Nothing came out. Not a sound...

I had come down that night with a bad case of laryngitis! —The End—
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