

Danced to the Fiddle

scene: The action takes place in a kitchen, center stage is a table with chrome legs and a Formica top, no tablecloth. The counter behind them has a toaster, a chrome coffee percolator, a cutting board, and a radio—conspicuous is the lack of a microwave oven.

JON: on sits at one end of the table, head down in his arms with a beer can, Old Milwaukee, in front of him. Meg enters, hangs her coat on a peg beside the door, opens the fridge, gets a piece of meat, and immediately starts slicing it on the cutting board. She doesn't look at him.

Jon looks up, but not at her, finishes the beer, and opens the fridge for another.

JON: You want a glass of wine while I got the door open.

MEG: No, I'm good. (continues slicing)

JON: Suit yourself (closes the door and caps the beer, sits) Did you get a lawyer?

MEG: Did you?

JON Yeah, sort of. Don't know if he's the right one.

MEG: What makes you unsure of him? Afraid he won't win it for you?

JON: I (pauses) ... I don't think he's enough like me.

MEG: (stops slicing, faces him) What's his name? Maybe I should hire him.

JON: You still haven't told me if you got a lawyer or not.

MEG: Why is that so important to you?

JON: Well, I'm in uncharted waters here. I figured we need lawyers speaking for each of us.

MEG: Mmmm. Interesting. (sits at the table)

JON: Look. This is my first time at this kinda thing. But this ain't your first rodeo.

MEG: Yeah, well. I have been divorced one other time.

JON: Well, this is all new to me. Why don't you hire the guy you got before?

MEG: Quite frankly, he's out of favor with the family.

JON: I've been out of favor with your family since the git-go.

MEG That's a little unfair.

JON: With the money in your family, somebody must have been second all along.

MEG (pauses) You know, I think I will have some wine. (goes to the fridge, gets wine, door open) ... another beer? (he nods, she gets it) He's out of favor with me as well.

JON: (genuinely interested in what she has to say) How so?

MEG: He was hitting on me the entire time I went through my first divorce.

JON: You must have told him you were divorcing the other guy to be with me? Or something different.

MEG: Uh-huh, at every meeting with him. But he kept at it.

JON: Inquiring minds want to know. What did your family think?

MEG: He was in favor with them. My feelings were of no matter. That's how they roll. More, they paid the bill.

JON: And this time, they won't pay the bill?

MEG: They'll pay. And, that's not the reason I haven't got a lawyer.

JON: You have a hell of a whole lot more reason for a lawyer than I have.

MEG: How so?

JON: Well, you're from money. If you showed up in court without a lawyer, and I had a good one, my guy could rip you to shreds, and your family with it.

MEG: Let it happen. Be good for both of us. ... All three parties.

JON: You can't possibly be serious, 'cause I'm not.

MEG: I am. But, be that as it may, why do you want a lawyer—to rip my family to shreds? Get out of one-bedroom flats, with shag rugs, and no doorman?

JON: Seems like the thing to do.

MEG: ... the thing to do?

JON: The thing to do is have another beer. (goes to get it, and shakes his head, sits down without one)

MEG: What do you have to protect?

JON: (shrugs) I dunno. Maybe someday my writing might take off.

MEG: And, you think I might want some, ... or all. I'll gladly sign off on that one.

JON: See, you never had any faith in the stuff I wrote.

MEG: That hurts. I've never been anything but enthusiastic, in love with, everything you've written.

JON: Enthusiastic on the surface maybe, ...

MEG: When I met you, I didn't even know you wrote.

JON: Nobody does. Join the club. It goes back a long way.

MEG: That's just the trouble. You don't have any more faith in your readership than you do in our marriage.

JON: Is that what's between us?

MEG: Ask yourself that question.

JON: I'm asking you. Maybe we just don't care for each other the way we did.

MEG: Another beer? (starts to get up)

JON: No, no. I'm out of that piss. But thanks for asking.

MEG: I have wine to share.

JON: (pauses) Sure why not?

MEG: See we do care. I offered you wine, and you accepted, even though I know that you hate it with a passion.

JON: I also know that you hate that rot-gut beer I drink. If the tables were turned would you have accepted.

MEG: (assuredly) Yes.

This brings them both to a halt. They ponder the meaning of where this conversation has brought them. Jon doesn't know what to do, or say. Meg doesn't either, but, after a pause, she takes a chance.)

MEG: You used to play the fiddle, but you don't now.

JON: I wasn't all that good. I was in a band, but that's about it. Nothing to write home about. D-listers at best. Why do you bring that up?

MEG: You lost interest in the fiddle. And you lost interest in me. Do you remember how we met?

JON: Yeah, I can see it like it was last night—or right now.

MEG: Roll the film

JON: (breathes deeply) Well, me and my band were playing a gig at a grange hall.

MEG: Names: name of the band; name of the grange.

JON: We were the Country Cuzins. The hall was the Saccarappa Grange. Why were you there?

MEG: Don't remember. Could have been a fight with my ex. That was our *modus operendi* about then. But, then again, I think not. Continue, please.

JON: So the Cuzins were doing all right. I played fiddle for them, and we even had a second fiddle. Charlie was his name.

MEG: Charlie was good, but you deserved to have been first fiddle.

JON: You leaned across the lip of the stage and asked me to dance with you. We'd been making eye contact for a few songs, and I was going to look for you when we took an intermission.

MEG: I knew that. I was trying to push things along.

JON: I told Charlie he was the first fiddle on the next number. He could pick it. C.J., our leader didn't know whether to shit or go bowling.

MEG: Charlie played a good one.

JON: Yeah, one he'd wanted to play for a long time.

MEG: "Cherokee Fiddle." Good story.

JON: It is. I was impressed that you knew the Texas two-step.

MEG: It's just a combination of the fox-trot and the jitterbug. I followed your lead ... right from the beginning.

JON and Meg: (together) We danced to the fiddle.

JON: Yeah, and we both listened to the story. (sings) "When he'd smell the smoke and the cinders, slick back his hair, and open up his case."

MEG: We listened to the point that we took our honeymoon in Silverton, Colorado.

JON: The inspiration for that song.

MEG: Michael Murphy's source.

JON: Problem was, nobody in Silverton knew the story.

MEG: Or, did the two-step ...

JON and Meg: (together) Except us.

JON: (sings) "And the fool with the fiddle middle of the station is gone."

MEG: (sings) "Some folks say they're never gonna miss him."

JON: I will miss you. Sorry.

MEG: Change of subject: ever hear of Bill Staines?

JON: He's a folksinger, isn't he?

MEG: Yeah, sort of, but he's more of a storyteller.

JON: What brought him up?

MEG: He's got a song "Roseville Fair," sort of reminded me how we met.
(sings) "And we danced all night to the fiddle and the banjo."

JON: Might be the only folksong I know. (sings) Line just before yours: (sings) "She took my hand, and we stepped to the music, and with just one smile she became my world." Good story, that one.

MEG: Two good stories. And on the subject of twos—I have two favors to ask of you.

JON: Ask anything.

MEG: First, get your fiddle out.

JON: If I can find it. What's the second?

MEG: Take me to that music store you always used to drag me to. I checked, they're open late tonight.

JON: And ...

MEG: I want to buy a banjo.