

LOUISE

Shouldn't my husband be back by now? Surely his meetings were through by noon. Wasn't he catching the early train?

JOSEPHINE

Hush, Louise, he will be back soon. Let's begin our supper.

LOUISE

I don't want to start.

JOSEPHINE

Have some wine to calm your nerves –

LOUISE

My nerves are fine!

JOSEPHINE

Please don't strain your heart!

LOUISE

My heart has grown much healthier! I know you think I'm very fragile, but the doctor says my heart is beating clear and strong!

JOSEPHINE

(soothingly)

I'm glad to hear it, dear... *(trying to lighten the mood)* Tell me, Louise, did you like my latest novel? Have you read it?

LOUISE

Oh, I loved it.

JOSEPHINE

Good! I'm glad! Can you keep a secret?

LOUISE

Josephine....are you...?

JOSEPHINE

Yes!

LOUISE

How far along?

JOSEPHINE

I've just started writing it.

LOUISE

Your third novel! You are so clever! Where do you get the ideas for your books?

JOSEPHINE

Sometimes from *other* books! I just read a wonderful biography about the man who built this house. He was quite famous, you know. Many of these paintings were once his!

DO YOU SEE THAT PORTRAIT NEAR THE TREE?
THAT GIRL INSPIRED NOVEL NUMBER THREE!
I READ SHE'D WALTZ AND BARELY TOUCH THE GROUND.
THE MEN WOULD WAIT IN LINE TO SPIN HER 'ROUND.

LOUISE

She's very pretty.

JOSEPHINE

She broke many hearts!

THE MAN WHO OWNED THIS PAINTING LONG AGO
HAD LOVED THE GIRL, BUT SHE WOULD NEVER KNOW.
FOR HIM, THIS PAINTING, 'T WAS LIKE FLESH AND BONE.
HE TALKED TO IT FOR YEARS, THEN DIED ALONE.

(SHE becomes melancholy.)

LOUISE

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU.
I BRAG TO ALL MY FRIENDS,
"MY SISTER IS A WRITER!"
YOU NOVEL SOUNDS ROMANTIC
AND IT'S SURE TO BE SUCCESSFUL,
JUST LIKE BOTH YOUR OTHER BOOKS.
DO YOU KNOW HOW FAR YOU'VE COME?
YOU ARE LIVING THE DREAM
YOU DREAMED LONG AGO!

JOSEPHINE

I had many kinds of dreams.

LONG AGO, OR SO IT SEEMS,
BACK WHEN YOU WERE FOUR
AND I WAS NINE OR TEN,
I THOUGHT SOMEDAY
I WOULD FILL MY HOME WITH CHILDREN.
WITH HAPPY CHILDREN.
BUT THAT WAS THEN.

LOUISE

I REMEMBER LONG AGO,
BACK WHEN YOU WERE TEN
AND I WAS THREE OR FOUR.
I IMAGINED I'D BE
DANCING WITH THE BALLET.
I LOVED THE BALLET,
BUT NOW I DREAM NO MORE.

JOSEPHINE

JUST LIKE MAGIC,
DREAMS CAN VANISH IN A MOMENT
WHEN THE DREAMER FINDS
SHE'S SUDDENLY AWAKE.

LOUISE

YET MORE OFTEN,
DREAMS WILL DISAPPEAR LIKE SNOWFALLS,
MELTING SLOWLY, FLAKE BY FLAKE.

JOSEPHINE

NOW IT'S TIME TO LOOK AHEAD.
YOU HAVE SOMEONE
WHO WILL LOVE YOU ALL YOUR LIFE.
YOU CAN DREAM ABOUT A HOME
YOU'LL FILL WITH CHILDREN.
WITH HAPPY CHILDREN.
AND YOU, THE HAPPY WIFE.

You are happy, aren't you? Tell me you're happy.

LOUISE

There you go—always worrying about your little sister.

JOSEPHINE

I'm interested, that's all. What is it like to be married to Brently? Is he always so stiff and proper?

LOUISE

You've seen him for yourself.

JOSEPHINE

But I haven't seen how he treats you when you're alone together. Is he good to you?

LOUISE

THERE'S GOOD AND THERE'S BAD –
WITH ANY MAN THAT'S TRUE.
I HAVEN'T ANY REAL COMPLAINT –
WELL, MAYBE ONE OR TWO.

HE CAN BE QUITE DEMANDING.
HE'S GRUFF WHEN DINNER'S LATE.
HE SCOLDS ME WHEN I LAUGH TOO LOUD.
HE'S SOUND ASLEEP AT EIGHT.

JOSEPHINE

AND THE GOOD PART?

LOUISE

THE GOOD PART...

HE ONLY LOOKS AT ME WITH LOVE,
SO I DON'T MISS THE WORDS THAT GO UNSPOKEN.
HE TELLS ME SO MUCH WITH HIS GAZE
THAT IT CAN LIFT MY SOUL FOR DAYS.

HE ONLY LOOKS AT ME WITH LOVE.
NO ROSE WAS EVER SUCH A TENDER TOKEN.
HE GIVES ME SO MUCH WITH HIS GLANCE
I SOMETIMES FEEL THE NEED TO DANCE...

HE CAN GROW CROSS.
YES, HE CAN BE FRETFUL.
AT TIME HE'S DULL,
AND YES, HE GETS FORGETFUL.
BUT STILL....BUT STILL...

HE ONLY LOOKS AT ME WITH LOVE.
DESPITE SOME WORDS, OUR BOND REMAINS UNBROKEN.
HE TELLS ME SO MUCH WITH HIS EYES,
SO MUCH SO GENTLE AND SO WISE.
SO MUCH SO GENTLE AND SO WISE.

(The clock starts to chime six)

JOSEPHINE

Now please, don't make a fuss; it's time to take your pill. I know you're feeling just fine, but please, dear, do it for me.