**Engagement**

A 10-Minute play

By

David K. Farkas

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# Characters:

Roy: An undercover operative for a US government agency

Sara: A graphic designer

Two theater-goers

# Suggested casting:

Roy/Theater-goer 1

Sara/Theater-goer 2

Alternatively, the play can be performed with four actors.

# Setting:

Very late at night in a hotel room somewhere in Europe.

(The stage is dark or dim. Shots ring out from different guns. Roy is kneeling behind an overturned desk (or table) that has shielded him. After a long pause, ROY sets down his gun and turns on the light on his cell phone, more clearly revealing SARA on the floor propped up against the desk.There is a chair nearby.)

SARA: (Groaning in pain.) Ahhh.

ROY: They’re gone.

SARA: I’m hurt. My God!

(ROY picks up his gun, rises, and warily walks to a floor lamp or a wall with a light switch. He illuminates the room and walks back to SARA and sets down or pockets his gun. He has a wound on his upper arm. She has a wound, not too serious, above her hip.)

ROY: Let me see.

(Inspects the wound.)

ROY: Not too bad. Mine isn’t bad either. I think a slice of wood got driven into the skin. We were lucky. They weren’t professionals. Just low-level guys.

SARA: Call 911.

ROY: Well, something like 911.

SARA: What do you mean? I’m hurt. You’re hurt. We want a hospital, an ambulance. If it’s not “911,” it’s something like that. I’m sure you know the emergency number in this country.

ROY: We’re both OK, Sara. Calling the emergency number presents complications—complications I don’t want to deal with. If one of us really needed a hospital, I’d do it, but what I’ll do instead will be plenty good enough, almost as fast, and it avoids problems.

(ROY dials his smart phone.)

ROY: 1602. Silver fox. Rapid dancer. (Listens.) Hotel Endymion. 542. OK. (Listens.) OK.

SARA: What’s going to happen? I’m still bleeding. So are you.

ROY: We’ll stay here. People will come. A medical person. Some other people. They will make sure we leave the hotel without any more trouble. We’ll go to a safe house in the city. In a few days, they’ll fly us back home—but not on a commercial flight. *(Laughing.)* We may get refunds on our plane tickets.

SARA: So this is what you hinted about when things got serious between us. This is your “security work”?

ROY: Yes.

SARA: I’m still bleeding, and it hurts.

ROY: You’re not bleeding much. Neither am I.

SARA: You never made a secret of your gun. But this? I never expected this. Do you know who they were?

ROY: I can guess. We’ll be sending our people after them. Much better people who will do their job.

SARA: Whether you get them or not means nothing to me.

ROY: It should.

SARA: Can you help me up? Maybe on that chair? I don’t like being all bent over like this.

ROY: (Looking at SARA’S wound.) I think so.

(Carefully, ROY lifts her onto a chair.)

SARA: I never asked questions. That was your condition, and I accepted it. But now . . . (Pointing to her wound*.)* . . . this is different. I think you need to tell me more. I already know more. And I’ll know more when those “people” of yours come. Are you going to have to kill me? I mean for security reasons?

ROY: Don’t be ridiculous.

SARA: Don’t tell *me* not to be ridiculous. What’s ridiculous is going on vacation with you—if this really was a vacation—and getting shot. I’m a graphic designer. I work on brochures for the Park Service. Graphic designers don’t get shot in their hotel room in the middle of the night. This is your crazy world, and now I’m in it. So, if you’re not going to kill me, you’d better tell me *something*.

ROY: I work for a government agency that keeps a very low profile. I was a field agent. Eastern Europe, Baltic, other places. Now I’m a desk officer, so I plan and monitor projects. But I’m in the field a lot too. We learned the hard way that officers who plan projects need to spend time in the field. This truly *was* a vacation, though I did meet briefly with a few people.

SARA: What are your “projects”?

ROY: Are you ready to hear this? I can tell you, in general terms, but maybe you don’t want to hear about it at all.

SARA: In for a dime, in for a dollar. I always did want to know everything about you. That’s how it is when you love someone. I told you everything about me, my past relationships, everything really.

ROY: Primarily, my group neutralizes people, people who are in a position to do a lot of harm.

SARA: “Neutralize”? You mean you kill people.

ROY: Generally, no. We prefer bribes, sex, other forms of human weakness. We use blackmail, some very special drugs. We make threats, very credible threats. But we try to avoid killing people. When you get rid of a guy, you just get another guy, maybe smarter and more dangerous. Also, killing leads to retaliation. Their side, our side—we all prefer to die of natural causes. And, killing is a bad thing, especially public figures. It degrades civilization, the better world I’m trying to build. For all our faults, we’re the *good* guys in all this.

SARA: So you say. So you think. But you do kill—have you killed, personally? I want to know.

ROY: I am going to answer you in one word. But not a word beyond that, so don’t ask anything further: Yes.

SARA: So what happens to me?

ROY: I don’t exactly know yet, but I think I can marry you. Consider this your lucky day—from the point of view of our relationship. My lucky day, too. I can make the case that given everything you know and what you’re going to know, it’s best to have you on the inside. Not 100% on the inside, but on the inside. You understand there is some risk for you in a permanent relationship. And, no kids. They’d be obvious targets for retaliation or blackmail.

SARA: What if *I* got kidnapped, and they wanted something from you?

ROY: That’s complicated. I’d have options, good options. Look, I never wanted you involved in any of this—for very good reasons. Tonight is a big change. The agency won’t like it. But it happened, so let’s make something very good come from it.

SARA: I want to be trained.

ROY: What?

SARA: I don’t just want to be a wife. I want to work for the same people you do. Take some of the same chances. Live with the same moral ambiguity. I’m smart, I’m fit. I’m talking pretty calmly for someone with blood oozing from a gunshot wound. That’s a qualification. I want to work where you work. Will they do it?

ROY: They’ll offer you a job, a good one. Probably as an analyst. And you’ll *never* get laid off. But fit or not, you won’t get into the field. I think we can have a wonderful life together, but I won’t be able to share everything—for your own safety. And, some of my field assignments are long ones, so you’ll have a lot of time on your hands.

SARA: OK. I accept all this. So, congratulate me on my new career. I wasn’t crazy about graphic design anyway.

ROY: Congratulations on your—probable—new career. I can’t guarantee.

SARA: OK—on my probable new career. Now propose to me.

ROY: What?

SARA: Ask me to marry you. Say, “Sara, will you marry me? Will you be my loving wife?” I’ll say “Yes.” You told me you loved me. Now the obstacles are gone. So, if you really love me, propose. Do a real proposal. Do it before your people get here.

ROY: Sara McHenry, I love you very much, and I want to share the rest of my life with you. Will you marry me?

SARA: Roy Taylor, yes, I will marry you. Other than our wounds, this is a joyful moment.

(ROY listens carefully.)

ROY: I think my people are coming. These aren’t the folks to talk to about our future plans. That will happen state-side. You’ll have to let me explain why you’re with me and how you fit into the picture. It will be a bit complex. Everything about our lives together will be a bit complex. You know that. But I really think you can handle it. I am really very happy now. Happier than I ever thought I’d be.

SARA: You always knew I loved you, Roy.

ROY: Yes. I guess I did . . . They’re here.

(SARA and ROY kiss. After a pause, the actors playing ROY and SARA walk far Upstage, put on light jackets in view of the audience and become THEATER-GOER1 and THEATER-GOER2, who stroll Downstage as if leaving the theater. Initially we see them talking in pantomime, but as they approach Downstage, they are audible.)

THEATER-GOER 1 (formerly ROY): And what about the [third] play—“Engagement”?

THEATER-GOER 2 (formerly SARA): It was OK, sort of an off-beat love story. What did you think?

THEATER-GOER 1 (ROY): I didn’t like it. The play has a flawed structure. No dramatic arc. It’s supposed to be boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. In this play, the obstacles the protagonists need to overcome disappear in the first moments. After they survive the assassination attempt, the play is just about arrangements. No surprises, no nothing.

THEATER-GOER 2 (SARA): I guess. But maybe this little play doesn’t need an arc or a surprise ending. If you were going to end it, how would you do it?

THEATER-GOER 1 (ROY): I don’t know. But I’d give the play some punch. Something to hold the audience’s attention.

THEATER-GOER 2 (SARA): Hmm. Maybe something like this?

(THEATER-GOER 1 and THEATER-GOER 2 remove their jackets, transition back to ROY and SARA, and begin acting.)

ROY: I think my people are coming. I am really very happy now. Happier than I ever thought I’d be. They’re here. . . Oh! . . . God! . . . They are not my people!

(Presumably in response to guns pointed at him, he lifts his hands into the air. SARA is unafraid, satisfied, and then triumphant.)

SARA: (Cold and hard.) They are *my* people. Our cyber unit broke your codes. I hacked your cell phone. We’re doing it globally. This is a bad day for your side.

ROY: What? How could it . . . What’s going to happen to me?

(ROY lowers his arms but is clearly still aware of the people with guns pointed at him.)

SARA: You’ve been neutralized. You will disappear. You *have* disappeared. We will get a lot of information from you. After that, you will earn your keep. You have a lot of skills that we value. We will get that value from you—every day.

ROY: Were you an agent when we met? Yes, you must have been.

SARA: Yes, and smarter than you. And higher level. I’ve made plans, for you, for us. You will live very comfortably. Fine furnishings, good food—a real boutique of a prison cell. Oh yes, our engagement is still on. In a manner of speaking you’ll be my . . . “husband.” I’ll visit you whenever I can. I hope we can have a really enjoyable relationship. But, I am afraid you’re going to have a lot of idle time on your hands.

(ROY is dismayed. After a pause, the actors, put on their jackets and switch again to THEATER-GOER 1 and THEATER-GOER 2.)

THEATER-GOER 2 (SARA): Was that better? It had punch. It had a surprise.

THEATER-GOER 1 (ROY): It was creepy, unpleasant. Roy becomes a prisoner and a sex slave?

THEATER-GOER 2 (SARA): I’m sort of into creepy. But I see your point. Maybe there was nothing wrong with the original plot. What’s wrong with a simple little love story?

THEATER-GOER 1 (ROY): I still need a little more, a little surprise, a little something.

THEATER-GOER 2 (SARA): Hmm. OK. I’ll give it another shot.

(THEATER-GOER 1 and THEATER-GOER 2 remove their jackets, transition back to ROY and SARA, and begin acting.)

SARA: (Cold and hard.) They are *my* people, Roy Taylor. Our cyber division broke your codes. I hacked your cell phone. We’re taking out U.S. agents globally. This is a *bad* day for your side.

ROY: What? How could it . . . What’s going to happen to me?

SARA: You’ve been neutralized. You will disappear. You *have* disappeared. We will get a lot of information from you. After that, you will earn your keep. You have a lot of skills we value. We will get that value from you—every day.

ROY: I have powerful enemies inside the agency, and a whole career’s worth of people who’d like me dead. If I could just disappear—and have my personal freedom—I might be ready for a whole new start.

SARA: You’d switch sides, work with us?

ROY: Maybe.

SARA: You know we’d never fully trust you. But there’s plenty you could do, and we’d keep you well out of sight and safe. Yes, you’d have your personal freedom, and we can marry. Of course, I’ll be spending a lot of time in the field, so I’m afraid you’re going to have a lot of idle time on your hands.

ROY: Sara, congratulate me on my new geo-political affiliation. I love you, Sara, and you love me. It’s love that really matters, not which side you’re on in this mixed-up world.

*(They kiss. Without any costume change, the actors switch back to THEATER-GOERS 1 and 2.)*

THEATER-GOER 2 (SARA): (to THEATER-GOER 1 and the audience.) There, you have it!

THEATER-GOER 1 (ROY): I like that ending. Not entirely plausible, but fun. Will you marry me?

THEATER-GOER 1 (SARA): Not entirely plausible, but . . . why not?

(They embrace and kiss.)

## THE END