

The Wife

Joan and Joe enter the hotel room after Joel has just received the Nobel prize for Literature.

Joe: Joanie, sit where I can look at you. Come on. I want to talk to you. Do you want a drink?

Joan: No, thanks.

Joe: Listen Joanie. Listen, there is nothing horrible or shameful or immoral about what we do. Hmmm? We are writing partners and we've created a beautiful body of work together.

Joan: You edit Joe. That's all you do. I'm the one who sits at that desk eight hours a day.

Joe: Is that the way you see it? Really? All these years, you've been sitting in some giant stew of resentment? And what about all the years I've been rubbing your back, bringing you tea, cooking your dinner? Watching the kids so you could work without distraction. You don't think there were times when it killed me that you were the one with the golden touch? Hmm? You think I wake up every morning feeling

even remotely proud of myself? But have I ever said I'm done with this marriage, I'm walking away?

Joan: No, you had affairs.

Joe: Oh, God. And I've regretted every fucking one of them.

Joan: Oh yeah right. You'd sob in my lap and you'd beg me to forgive you, and I always would, you know, because somehow you convinced me that my talent made you do it.

Joe: Oh, shit.

Joan: And when I was too angry or too furious or too hurt to write, you would give me one of your famous back rubs and say, "Use it, Joanie."

Joe: I never said that.

Joan: Yes, you did! Lucky for you I had somewhere to put it. Critics loved the image of Sylvia Fry, you know, scrubbing the tear stains out of her dress. They just loved that. "Another Castleman masterpiece." Your chest just swelled when you read me those reviews. It actually swelled. And rather than being outraged, rather than thinking about what this all was doing to our kids, I would watch you and say, "Oh my God. How can I capture that behavior? How can I put that in words?"

And you know what? I did. I did. Right here. {She grabs a book} Right here. Yeah, another Castleman masterpiece. Oh and let's see. {she grabs another book} This one I wrote after you screwed...Who was it? Oh, yeah, our third nanny.

Joe: God. This book had nothing at all to do with the fucking nanny.

Joan: Oh, yes it did. It's on every single page!

Joe: {he picks up books} These are my stories, my culture, my family, my ideas.

Joan: {she begins to throw books} My words, my pain, my spending hours alone in that room turning your appalling behavior into literary gold!

Joe: What compelling ideas did you ever fucking have? You were nothing but a privileged, prissy little coed. The only decent story you ever wrote alone was about Carol. You stole from my life even then.

Joan: Shame on you Joe.

Joe: You loved holing up in the Village with the big, bad Jew, huh? You loved making your parents squirm. You got the literary life and the house by the sea. Hmm? You loved getting the nice clothes and the

travel and all the privileges without ever having to marry some schmuck from a brokerage firm. You got it all, my girl.

Joan: Well, you can have it back. I don't want it.

Joe: What are you doing?

Joan: I'm going to spend the night in David's room, and then when I get home, I'm going to call a lawyer.

Joe: This is ridiculous. Joanie, we got kids. Hmm? We've got a grandchild. We've got friends we've known for years who are going to start dying on us one by one. Where are you going to be? You going to be living alone, feeling brave? Is that what you want? Joanie? Don't walk away from me goddammit!

Joan: Don't touch me!

Joe: Don't touch you? Joanie, we've got to talk this through.

Joan: I can't do it anymore, Joe. I can't do it. I can't take it. I can't take the humiliation of holding your coat and arranging your pills and picking the crumbs out of your beard and being shoved aside with all the other wives to talk about some goddamn shopping trip, while you...while you

say to all the gathering sycophants that your wife doesn't write! Your wife, who just won the Nobel Prize!

Joe: So, if I'm such an insensitive and talentless fucking piece of shit, why the fuck did you marry me? Hmm?

Joan: Oh god, Joe.

Joe: No, I really want to know. Why did you marry me?

Joan: I don't know. I can't think anymore. I just want to get out of this dress.

Joe: Come here, come here, come here. Let me. Come here. Shush, shush, shush. Joanie... {he rubs her shoulders and kisses her neck}

Joan: Oh God.

Joe: What?

Joan: No. No Joe.

Joe: Oh fuck, fuck, fuck.

