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# La migliore offerta

By Unknown

Pinewood marriage chest  
with groove joinery  
and hand-forged hinges  
in the shape of tulip buds.  
Walnut sideboard.  
16th-century French decorations  
of herms  
and griffin-shaped cartouches.  
Embellished deplorably  
in the 19th century.

A pair of oak veneer cabinets  
in the Flemish style.  
Upper section with two doors,  
featuring carved anthropomorphic  
figures and caryatids.

Something wrong, Mr. Oldman?

Is it important?

If you were kind enough  
to let me have this as a gift,  
I'd be delighted to accept.

I don't remember that.

It may look like mouldy wood,  
but centuries ago,  
beneath the mould,  
there must have been a painting.

- Good evening. How are you?

- Very well.

The management  
and staff of Styrorex  
would like to offer our best wishes,  
Mr. Oldman.

Happy birthday, Mr. Oldman.

This year, our chefs wish  
to dedicate in your honour  
an ancient recipe  
of a Renaissance dessert  
made of choux cream  
and bitter almonds.

Enjoy.

- Most likely a rash.

- It must be that.

Was it not to your taste,

Mr. Oldman?

Quite the contrary, but you see,

my birthday is tomorrow.

**It is now 10:**

and I'm very superstitious.

Pretend I had accepted.

The day after tomorrow, then.

The director of the Vatican Museum

wants you to call him back.

The reliquary attributed to Cellini,

I presume.

The report on this is ready.

There's a pile of gifts.

What shall I do with them?

Send them to my house

except the mobile.

Only one this year.

Good. Word's out that I hate them.

Unless you've changed your habits,

you'll have to answer that.

It's the first call on your birthday.

Tradition.

Hello.

I have no wish

to waste your time.

- Who's speaking?

- It's me, Claire Ibbetson.

Please don't hang up on me.

You're Mr. Oldman's secretary,

aren't you?

You can speak to me.

It makes no difference.

You see, I... I don't know anybody.

I'm on my own.

I'm sorry, Miss Ibbetson,

this is not a helpline.

I'm not explaining myself very well.

I'm not in the habit

of speaking to people much.

That's a considerable stroke

of good fortune.

- Talking to people is perilous.

- I'm desperate...

You made the call

so you're running the risk.

It's about the furniture  
of my parents' villa.  
They... about a year ago.

- You see?

- I understand.

An estate of great...

I've always heard it referred to  
as being of...

Extremely valuable.

Very rare pieces,  
including paintings.

Unfortunately,

I have no photographs.

So what?

To be honest, I haven't decided yet,  
but I would like to have a...

Oh, I'm out of my depth.

What's the word?

- Valuation.

- Exactly.

That is why I asked

to speak to Mr. Oldman.

Does Mr. Oldman have the pleasure  
of knowing you?

Oh, no, not at all.

He doesn't know me.

But... but I know a lot about him.

Mr. Oldman's assistants  
are responsible for assessments.

- I'll put you through.

- Perhaps I didn't make myself clear.

I must speak

to Mr. Oldman in person.

Mr. Oldman never presides  
over early appraisals.

But you see, before he died,

Dad told me that

if I decided to sell everything,  
I should entrust the auction sale  
to Mr. Virgil Oldman.

- In his opinion, the best.

- Sold!

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me  
great pleasure to present lot 231,

a refracting elongated telescope  
constructed by Galileo Galilei.  
It's still in perfect working order.  
Can we open bidding,  
please, at 1,000,000?  
- 1,100,000.  
- 1,100,000. 1,200,000.  
1,300,000.  
1,400,000 on the telephone.  
1,500,000 back in the room.  
1,600,000.  
1,700,000.  
1,800,000 in the room.  
1,900,000. 2,000,000.  
At 2,000,000.  
Gesundheit. Was that a bid?  
At 2,000,000. 2,100,000.  
2,300,000 on the telephone.  
2,500,000. I can sell it. 2,700,000.  
At 2,700,000.  
Any more? Are we all done?  
At 2,700,000.  
Sold. Congratulations, sir.  
Lot 232.  
Disciple of Boris Gregorian, Thurst.  
Oil on canvas, 60 x 70.  
This one will go to the best offer.  
1,000. 2,000.  
3,000. 4,000. 5,000 online.  
6,000. 7,000.  
8,000. 9,000 on the telephone.  
10,000 back in the room.  
11,000 online.  
12,000. 13,000 online.  
14,000. 15,000.  
This is not doing my neck any good.  
At 15,000.  
20,000. At 20,000.  
Any more? Sold!  
- Beautiful, isn't it?  
- Yes. Very.  
You never miss a trick,  
do you, governor?  
- Who is it really?

- Yansky.

A Russian painter

who died in the late '30s.

An outstanding landscape painter.

But among his many landscapes,

he painted three portraits.

Only three in his whole life.

And this is one of the three.

It's double, alright?

How long have

we known each other?

Quite a while.

We've pulled off some sharp tricks

time after time.

Remember Milo Hensen?

You were the only one who knew

he was going to be big.

We got that portrait of his mother

for a song

from under the noses

of that bunch of idiots.

Must be worth a fortune now.

You almost sound bitter

you didn't get more.

Have we ever talked about money,

you and me?

- Honestly, no.

- It's been good enough for you.

It's been good enough for me,

you misery.

What matters is that you're satisfied.

My only regret is never being able

to persuade you

that my paintings are evidence

of a great artistic talent.

A love of art

and knowing how to hold a brush

doesn't make an artist.

You need an inner mystery.

A knack you've never possessed.

You're right. Double wasn't enough.

In my 36 years in this business,

never has anyone had the gall

to keep me waiting 40 minutes.

It's a disgrace.  
A display of bad manners.  
Let me explain.  
I tried to call.  
- There's no excuse.  
- I tried to call.  
Never come near me again.  
Nobody answered and  
I don't have your mobile number.  
I do not possess a mobile phone.  
It's the lbbetson woman  
on the phone.  
- Tell her to go to hell.  
- She's crying.  
Serves her right.  
She was hit by a car  
on her way to meet you.  
So much the worse for her.  
It's no concern of mine.  
She was left unconscious.  
She was lying in a pool of blood  
when the ambulance arrived.  
Alright. Put her through.  
- Yes?  
- Please forgive me.  
I had no intention  
to be in any way disrespectful.  
Nothing too serious, I hope.  
No. Fortunately,  
they'll... they'll let me out tomorrow.  
Good.  
I hope you make a speedy recovery.  
Would you consent  
to a new appointment?  
- Please.  
- Alright.  
But I'm sending an assistant.  
I hope it's the same one  
I spoke to last time.  
What do you mean?  
Well, I can't explain it,  
but I understood from the outset  
that voice could only  
have been yours, Mr. Oldman.

Truly surprising,  
wouldn't you say?  
We think we'll be able  
to bring out the whole face,  
part of her dress  
and the left side of the background.  
Incredible. But what made  
Mr. Oldman think that?  
- What period is it from?  
- Too soon to say.  
Perhaps Mr. Oldman  
will be able to work this out  
more quickly and better than us.  
- It's a fake.  
- How is that possible?  
- It's beautiful!  
- I didn't say it wasn't.  
I said it wasn't authentic.  
From an analysis  
of the pigments and wood,  
we thought it was pre-17th century.  
- Even older.  
- Then it must be worth something.  
It is a work by Valiante,  
the female forger of the 16th century.  
She copied masterpieces,  
but couldn't sign them  
as she was a woman,  
so she marked them  
with a personal code  
hidden in the folds of the drapery  
or in this case,  
in the gaze of the subject.  
The beam of light on the iris  
is nothing if not a V.  
That is Valiante.  
It is worth something,  
but nothing compared to the original.  
- Are you Mr. Oldman's assistant?  
- Yes.  
I'm Fred, the caretaker.  
Pleased to meet you.  
- Please, come in.  
- Thank you.



And Miss Ibbetson?  
She sends her apologies,  
but overnight,  
she was running a temperature.  
She should have called me.  
Spared myself a wasted trip.  
Well, give her my best wishes.  
She asked if you would go ahead  
with valuation.  
She's instructed me  
to show you around.  
Everything's at your disposal.  
Come with me.  
Miss Ibbetson was hoping  
to meet your boss.  
It doesn't matter.  
Your mistress didn't show up either.  
Fair enough.  
I suppose  
it'll get the job done quicker.  
Forgive the mess.  
It's gone to wrack and ruin ever since  
Miss Ibbetson's parents died.  
Let's go up.  
How long since the owners died?  
By the look of it,  
you'd think it was centuries ago,  
but it's only been one year.  
First Mrs. Ibbetson and then,  
scarcely 45 days later,  
poor Mr. Ibbetson.  
You have a good look.  
Take your time.  
Just getting these curtains open.  
Too many windows in this room.  
Okay.  
How many brothers and sisters  
does Miss Ibbetson have?  
None. She is an only child.  
- Is she married?  
- No.  
- Has she ever been?  
- No, no.  
I don't think

she even has a boyfriend.

- Grandparents, aunts, uncles?

- No, none at all.

As far as I know,

Miss lbbetson is on her own.

So many rooms.

You know, I've never managed

to count them all.

Have there been other valuations

before me?

Absolutely none. Yours is the first.

Miss lbbetson is extremely fond

of this house.

Maybe too fond.

She'd prefer to keep everything,

but what can you do?

The empire crumbles.

A woman on her own can't cope.

Is she thinking of putting

the house up for sale as well?

That, I don't know. Maybe a part of it.

She won't get rid of the whole place.

What kind of work does she do?

I couldn't say.

I only dealt with her parents.

- May I see the cellars?

- It's this way.

It's a long way down.

Go ahead.

I honestly don't get it.

In the time I've known you,

I've never seen you beaten.

I've watched you produce

all manner of gadgets

from most unremarkable ironwork.

Optical, arithmetical devices,

water clocks...

Even that hairdryer that probably  
dried the locks of Jules Verne's wife.

But you've nothing to say

about this curious contraption?

I'm surprised that

an art connoisseur like yourself

can get so carried away

by a banal piece of ironwork.

It's not the object  
that arouses my curiosity,  
but it's contradiction.

- Contradiction?

- Look.

I found it in this position  
in contact with damp flooring,  
but the rust is all along the top  
of the cogs, nowhere near the damp.

What does this mean?

The object hadn't been there  
for very long.

It got rusted in some other place.

Or someone turned it upside down.

That's all, nothing more than  
a useless exercise in deduction.

Hi. Did you manage it?

Did you ever doubt me?

This works perfectly now.

And I transcribed  
the recording from the tape.

You're a genius.

How much do I owe you?

Oh, nothing.

Maybe you'll invite me out.

Count on it.

- Can I give you a kiss?

- Yes, you can!

That I am good at.

- Good evening.

- Good evening.

William-Adolphe Bouguereau.

The Birth Of Venus.

Authentic.

Umberto Veruda,

The Honest, 1890.

You've been

the talk of the town lately.

I hoped to see you

on TV.

I don't like to appear.

I prefer to remain in shadow.

We're much the same that way.

That doesn't mean we'll agree.  
My secretary's been looking for you.  
How do you know that a painter  
will become collectable?  
Intuition, which also makes  
me doubt your intentions.  
Sorry for that impression but I've  
entrusted you with my belongings.  
That's not how it works.  
There must be a signed contract  
before the inventory.  
It takes time,  
and unless you stop fooling around  
and decide to come out  
it will never get started.  
Go ahead with the inventory.  
I'll meet you at the villa.  
We'll reach an agreement.  
You have my word.  
- Take these.  
- Yes.  
Be careful!  
I'm not sure  
but it looks German to me.  
Austrian. Careful with that.

**It's 11:**

The appointment was 8:30.  
She's not answering.  
She said she'll come. She'll be here.  
The piano doesn't need restoration.  
Quite so.  
We have to check it  
but there's no key.  
But here it is.  
Last time there was no key.  
Looks good.  
Mr Oldman!  
Would you help me  
with the bookcase?  
Italian bookcase, wood. First half  
of...  
Who smashed this?  
Nobody, Mr Oldman,

it was already broken.  
Is this part of the house inhabited?  
Why?  
There have been some changes.  
No, no, Mr...  
I'm sorry, I'm not sure of your name.  
I thought you were...  
It doesn't matter who I am.  
Nobody lives here.  
Be that as it may, if your mistress  
is not here by midday  
I will have no option but to  
suspend operations.  
Mr Oldman!  
Miss lbbetson.  
Hello, Mr Oldman?  
Mr Oldman, can you hear me?  
Mr Oldman, I apologise.  
What must you think of me?  
Spare me  
the self-serving justifications.  
Let me speak.  
I cannot touch your things  
without a contract. Is that clear?  
Would you leave it on the table  
in the hallway?  
I'll sign it.  
I accept all your conditions.  
Yes, but I do not accept yours.  
I will not do business  
with a silly, superficial phantom.  
Be careful!  
I understand your exasperation.  
But please believe me  
I didn't mean anything by it.  
It's been a series of unfortunate,  
unintentional mishaps.  
So what exactly happened today?  
My car was stolen and I had to go  
to the police to report it.  
Which police station did you go to?  
The one in the city.  
- Whereabouts?  
- On the main square.

- Which square?

No more interrogation!

No more!

Who do you think you are?

Are you here, Miss lbbetson?

What kind of question is that?

Are you here?

I don't understand.

I don't understand.

- If you're here, come out now.

- Stop it!

Explain the meaning of this game  
which I do not find amusing.

Call me tonight. I'll explain.

It's the same material

and the same workmanship too.

These belong to the same system.

There's no signature,  
no inscription?

I mean when I've got the rust and  
the oxidisation off the other piece.

There's nothing.

I can do the same with these but, I  
mean, right now I can't see anything.

What have you found?

The technique, how the cog  
has been attached to it's axis.

It's really old.

I've never seen it before.

Here, look. Have a look.

It's 18th century.

We could be onto  
something big here.

Could you guess what it is?

Three pieces of the mosaic  
is not enough, Mr Oldman.

In the last few years  
the old couple were unwell.

The house was in  
a terrible state then.

Mr lbbetson always said  
that they'd have to sell something.

And Miss Claire. How old is she?

About 27.

What else can you tell me  
about her?

Nothing really.

I've never had much to do with her.

I don't really know her.

And yet you've been in the service  
of the lbbetsons for about 10 years.

Well, 11 years to be exact.

I don't have much to do with her.

I talk to her often

at all hours but...

But?

I've never seen her.

- How could that be?

- It's the truth. Not once.

Why?

Because Miss Claire  
suffers from a very strange illness.

- Hello.

- Good evening. It's Oldman.

I was expecting your call.

I have no wish to quarrel  
and I'm sorry if I was rude today.

It doesn't matter.

But if I confirm I am available,  
at the same time

I cannot permit this joke in poor taste  
to continue any longer.

I wish you to stop  
all involvement in my affairs.

I apologise for the trouble.

Send me your bill.

Good night.

Lot 93. Valiante.

Portrait of a Lady.

16th century,  
inspired by the Portrait of  
a Young Girl by Petrus Christus.

Oil on wood. 30 x 40.

I have here an opening  
bid of 20,000.

- 22,000.

- 22,000.

24,000. 26,000 on the telephone.

28,000 in the room. 30,000.

35,000. Thank you, sir.

40,000 on the telephone.

45,000 in the room.

50,000.

55,000. 60,000.

65,000 on the telephone.

70,000. At 70,000.

Any advance on 70,000? 75,000.

80,000 on the telephone.

Any more?

All done at 80,000.

All done at 80,000.

90,000. Any more?

Sold.

- Thank you, sir.

- I bid 90,000 too.

Mr Oldman should have been aware of that.

I don't believe so, Mrs Derain.

Mr Whistler bid 90,000.

- He was the only one.

- They bid simultaneously.

She got her bid in first.

I saw it.

What should we do?

I'm the biggest collector of Valiante forgeries and I'll sue you!

You were too slow, Billy! You didn't get in with your bid in time.

And you were too late. Too late.

You didn't keep up with me for God's sake!

She was behind me.

If I'd seen I'd have bid again.

You're losing it!

Maybe you're right

but it's not the first time

we've messed up.

It's the way things go. Never went into a rage like this before.

That wasn't a Valiante forgery.

It was the genuine one

by Petrus Christus.



It'll be worth 8 million.  
Woe be me.  
I'm sorry. Honestly.  
But even when we lost  
Van Gogh's Lady With The Fan  
you didn't take it this hard.  
What's going on, Virgil?  
642.  
729.  
918.  
1,011.  
1,119.  
1,320.  
1,404.  
- What will you have?  
- 1,581.  
Tea, thank you.  
8,109.  
8,725.  
Sorry, darling, 8,625.  
8,725!  
8,725.  
Take a closer look,  
you moron.  
Shit! You're right, 8,725.  
Well done, girl!  
That's it?  
- Bye!  
- Bye!  
I gave them a clean  
with this special fluid.  
And I have studied them  
by the millimetre  
and look what's come up.  
Vaucanson.  
I can't believe it!  
Jacques Vaucanson.  
18th century constructor  
of automata.  
When I was a student  
I did my thesis on him.  
That's incredible!  
One of his most famous androids  
even managed to talk.

Exactly.  
People would pay to ask it questions.  
The android would move its head,  
bow, and give its reply.  
I bet there was someone inside.  
You know, a dwarf maybe.  
Just like Edgar Allan Poe suspected  
with Maelzel's Chess Player.  
More than likely.  
But the mystery  
that nobody could explain  
was how Vaucanson's  
automaton always got it right.  
Of course there was trickery  
in making the automaton talk.  
Everything it said was true.  
You bring me all the pieces.  
I promise to put them back together  
exactly how Vaucanson had them.  
I don't doubt it  
but I fear I've lost my chance  
to get the missing pieces.  
They must be in the same place  
you found these.  
And all I need is 80%  
of the elements,  
and I can work out the rest  
and rebuild it myself.  
It's not that easy.  
I'm sorry. That's my girlfriend.  
Hey, Sarah, this is Mr Virgil Oldman.  
Pleased to meet you, Sarah.  
It's a pleasure. Robert has told me  
so much about you.  
Don't young people talk about  
more exciting things?  
Why don't you eat with us?  
That's very kind.  
Another time, thank you.  
Alright, we won't insist.  
We'll promise.  
- Bye.  
- Goodbye.  
Cancel New York and tell

the Alphasons to meet us here.  
We called the meeting.  
So we've changed our minds.  
Is that a problem?  
Alright, Mr Oldman.  
Claire lbbetson phoned.  
What does she want now?  
She asked you to meet her

**at 2:**

Meet her where?  
At the lbbetson villa.  
Where else?  
I'm extremely grateful to you  
for coming, Mr Oldman.  
How did you know it was me?  
Fred has a limp. You don't.  
Ah.  
To be honest I didn't expect  
you'd want to speak to me.  
I know you can't stand my excuses.  
If I were you, I wouldn't either.  
In fact, your beh...  
How should I put it?  
Speak frankly. Don't worry.  
I won't deny that your whimsical  
little ways  
are getting a bit tiresome.  
I hope not too tiresome.  
But I wanted to say sorry  
for... well, my behaviour.  
Typical of a "silly, superficial  
woman", as you put it.  
Why do you systematically  
avoid meeting me?  
Nothing personal, believe me.  
Why would you want to do  
business with a person  
who arouses such aversion in you  
that you can't even look him  
in the face?  
It's hard to explain. You won't  
believe me anyway.  
If I didn't believe you, I wouldn't be

here playing hide and seek.  
I don't meet many people.  
It's been a long time now.  
I see nothing serious in that.  
Everyone has moments  
when they prefer solitude  
to the multitudes.  
I haven't left this house  
since I was 15.  
- I don't think I understand.  
- You understand perfectly.  
This is my room.  
If there's somebody in the house  
or in the villa,  
I lock myself up in here.  
I've always done that,  
even when my parents were here.  
I hardly ever saw them.  
I don't see anybody.  
But why?  
Why do you go around with  
your hands covered by gloves?  
It's a question of hygiene.  
I don't see the connection.  
You're afraid to touch others.  
To touch their possessions  
disgusts you.  
I'm afraid of going to places  
where others live.  
These seem to me  
very similar personal choices.  
You'd like me to believe you haven't  
walked a street in 12 years?  
I see you know my age.  
Being a hermit and employing  
a caretaker doesn't add up.  
I walk about quite a bit,  
if that's what you want to know,  
inside the villa  
when there's nobody here,  
which is often now,  
but I never go out.  
The very idea paralyses me.  
I hope you understand me now.

I hope that, within the limits  
of your work, you'll help me.  
You have my word, Miss lbbetson.  
As to any agreement between us,  
I leave it to you to set your fee.  
I trust you blindly.  
Leave the contract on the table.  
You'll find it signed next time.  
Now, please, I'm very tired.  
Apart from your fondness  
for my gloves,  
what made you decide  
to call me again?  
I haven't been kind.  
I was taken by the way you  
were looking at my house yesterday  
from the bar opposite.  
You found the missing pieces.  
In the meantime  
make do with this one.  
How much would the  
automaton be worth  
if we manage to make it work?  
Think of a really, really high figure.  
- Do you have one in mind?  
- Yes.  
You've probably pitched it  
too low.  
You're good at talking  
without saying anything.  
I'll take that as a compliment.  
Should things go  
the way I trust they will,  
you'll be very handsomely rewarded.  
I didn't mean to talk about money.  
It's a real privilege for me.  
Where did you find these?  
There are very precise rules  
in the world of antiques.  
It's forbidden to reveal  
one's sources.  
There's a few more gears  
but bigger in that corner.  
Gather them together. I'll take

care of the cataloguing myself.

Of course.

Candlesticks.

- Which period?

- 17th-century. Repair.

Mr Oldman.

Mr Oldman.

Yes.

What have you decided  
about the furniture in this wing?

We're only drawing up  
the inventory.

Later you can tell me  
what to leave out.

Thank you.

Listen, Miss lbbetson, I can't help  
thinking about your situation.

I'm sorry to have  
intruded on your thoughts.

That's not the point.

I've been wondering how you  
can live like this.

I'm organised and self-sufficient,  
I don't need any help  
but I appreciate your concern.

You're welcome.

- See you soon, then.

- Have a good day.

Mr Oldman!

Your contract.

I read it and it seems fine to me.

I initialled every page  
and signed the last.

That's how it's done, isn't it?

Perfect.

But your personal details  
are missing.

Take them from my passport.

But it expired quite some time ago.

- Personal details never expire.

- That's true enough, I suppose.

I was just a girl then

but it'll do for your purposes.

I wanted to mention

that in certain critical cases  
my advice is to proceed  
directly to restoration.

You know best.

It means the whole thing  
will take a little longer.

We can widen  
the scope of the valuation.

I understand.

You dye your hair.

I never noticed.

I'm disgusted by people  
who don't trust their own hair!

I don't trust people who think so  
much of themselves

that they won't come outside.

Ah, sir, there'll be no more  
caretaker service as from Monday.

I'll just come in to bring  
Miss lbbetson her shopping.

- The matter is of no interest to me.

- These are the keys.

- Why give them to me?

- It's what Miss lbbetson wanted.

In case you needed access  
for further inspection.

When you come in, slam the door,  
otherwise she'll get scared  
and panic.

I'm going off my head  
trying to work out the alignment  
of these devices,  
trying to figure out  
which one fitted into which.

- That can't be easy.

- But not impossible.

You know,

gearboxes are like people.

If they've been together  
long enough,

eventually,

they take on each other's forms.

So, you believe time can make  
any kind of cohabitation possible?

Yeah, well, absolutely.  
You've reminded me of a friend  
who met a much younger girl.  
She had agoraphobia.  
Fear of open spaces  
and distances?  
Exactly. She lived for years locked  
up in an apartment on her own.  
Recently, she gave him the keys  
to her house and ever since,  
he's been in a state of...  
...permanent anxiety.  
What did I tell you? Now  
he'll be constantly worried about her.  
He'll be thinking,  
"What does she need, shampoo,  
medicine, tights... yoghurt?"  
It's beautiful, isn't it?  
I'm not so sure.  
Tell your friend to stay calm,  
'cause time is already  
working on their gearboxes.  
And there you are, Mr. Oldman.  
- Are you angry with me?  
- Why should I be?  
- What I said about your hair.  
- Not at all.  
I was just calling to ask  
if you wish the sale of the furniture  
to be identified by your family name.  
Or do you prefer anonymity?  
- Anonymity, anonymity.  
- Good.  
This time, I did see you.  
- Oh?  
- On TV.  
I don't generally give interviews  
but I was forced to.  
You're more intriguing this way.  
You'll be a great success  
with the ladies.  
So, we go to Lot 132.  
Gustave Rett,  
Portrait of a Woman With a Hat.



1956. Oil on canvas. 80 x 100 cm.

This one goes to the best offer.

10,000.

Fred, any news from Miss lbbetson?

She hasn't answered in days.

It's a while

since I heard from her.

I've been in bed all week, ill.

Who's been bringing her food?

Miss lbbetson?

Miss lbbetson?

Miss lbbetson? Answer me!

Claire?

Claire, are you alright?

Oh, no. Please!

- No. It's me, Claire.

- Get out!

- It's me, Mr. Oldman.

- Go away!

- Listen to me, it's Mr. Oldman.

- Get out!

There's nobody else here.

Calm down.

What's wrong?

Tell me what happened.

I wasn't well.

I didn't know who to call.

Nobody answered.

And then I fell.

I fell and I hit my...

Open the door.

You need to see a doctor.

No, please! Please!

Please, no!

Can you fix a broken auctioneer  
as well?

I wouldn't know where to begin.

It's good to see you again,

Mr. Oldman.

Is something wrong? You seem  
more preoccupied than usual.

Too many woodworms

and spider webs

and too few masterpieces.

Could we put it that way?

- So, how's our toy coming along?

- Ah.

Well, I've managed to put  
some sections back together.

But, I mean, there's just still  
too many pieces missing.

The entire exterior.

We can't establish  
what kind of character he is.

Like my friend  
and his girl in the tower.

Yeah, maybe, although  
we've never seen our android.

We're still groping around  
in the dark.

So is he.

He speaks to her  
through a closed door.

- Closed door?

- Yes.

If anybody moves in the house,  
she barricades herself in her room.

- He's never seen her face?

- Not only him, no-one has.

That's like when two young people  
meet on the internet.

They get to know each other,  
then reveal themselves.

She won't reveal herself.

Maybe he hasn't  
got a good strategy.

So, it's more difficult for my friend  
to succeed in his enterprise  
than for us to reconstruct  
the Vaucanson automaton?

Depends on the number of rusty  
pieces you're able to bring me.

Well...

...here's one more.

That's a mobile phone.

This is brand new.

I'm the one that's rusty  
because I don't know how to use it.

Could you teach me  
before your girlfriend gets here?  
- Hello.  
- Good evening, Mr. Oldman.  
It's Claire Ibbetson.  
Am I disturbing you?  
No, not at all, Miss Ibbetson.  
I told you, from now on,  
you can call me any time you like.  
I wanted to thank you for...  
...everything, really.  
No need. All that's important  
is you're feeling better now.  
Yes, it was just a small cut  
on the head. I'm much better.  
I wanted to tell you,  
I looked over the inventory.  
Oh! What do you think?  
You've done a great job.  
Really, you have.  
But I'm troubled  
by so many doubts.  
I'm not sure if it's a good idea  
to sell. What would you advise?  
I couldn't say. I don't know  
what your plans are.  
Why did you decide  
to sell in the first place?  
Out of necessity in order to start  
life afresh or another reason?  
All of the above, I suppose.  
I'd even sell the house.  
It's too big for me now.  
Sometimes, I feel as though  
I were in a public square.  
I'd like something smaller.  
But the idea of having to leave here  
and go somewhere else  
fills me with dread.  
How would I manage it?  
Wear blindfolds? Have myself  
carried out while asleep?  
I'd get into a state and end up  
putting everything off.

You have all the time in the world  
to make up your mind.

- You think?

- Well, until the catalogue is printed.  
Don't torment yourself.

Think of yourself, your future.

That's the biggest torment of all.

When I think about it,

I can't even work.

I didn't know you were working.

I write. I write novels, stories,  
things like that.

I'd like to read them. I'll buy some.

Luckily for us,

you'll never manage to.

Why not?

Because I write under a pseudonym  
and I loathe what I write.

Artists always loathe  
what they make, Miss lbbetson.

Yesterday, you called me Claire.

I wasn't aware.

I was in a state of alarm.

- Sorry.

- I'd like you to continue.

"I'd like you to continue."

She said it to him, just like that.

Well, what did he say?

He was taken back but he went  
along with what she wanted.

What else could he do?

I'd have asked her to do the same,  
call me by my first name.

That's not his style.

Besides, I don't think my friend  
intends to court her.

Then he'll never get her out of there.

I don't

think my friend intends to court her.

I don't think my friend  
intends to court her.

Horrible voice!

I'd have thought he'd at least  
have desired to see her face.

'Desired's probably  
not the right word.  
Curious to see her, perhaps.  
Yes, I could understand that.  
But the chances of it happening  
seem to be really remote.  
There might be a way.  
Just depends on how brave  
your friend is.

- The French bureau.
- Yes.
- The table with the roll top.
- No, I'd like to keep that.

That's it.  
Next time, we'll do the paintings.

- OK.
- One last thing, Claire.

You'll have to decide whether we do  
the photography here or in a studio.  
In a studio. I don't want  
many people around the house.  
That's the best solution.  
Well, I'm off now.

- Anything you need?
- No. Thank you, Mr. Oldman.

When will we next see each other?  
You mean, when do you see me?  
Since I am not given that privilege.

- Forgive me.
- But soon.
- Have a good day.
- You too.

Hello?

- I can't believe it.
- I couldn't sleep at night, Virgil.

I had to do something to make  
you forgive me.  
But how did you get it?  
I heard that Mrs. Durane  
had fallen on hard times,  
so I persuaded her to sell it to me  
for 250,000.  
Hmm, not exactly cheap!  
I thought it was a reasonable price.

You were talking about 8 million.  
This way,  
everyone gets a good deal.  
How much do you want, Billy?  
I don't want a penny more  
than I gave the old girl.  
Now you're really losing your grip.  
I just want to get back  
to where we were.  
How was your friend,  
your accomplice,  
your trusted procurer of women?  
If you're doing this to win back my  
trust, it's been a bad deal for you.  
You never lost it in the first place.  
Oh!  
This is great.  
This is great!  
You found important stuff.  
Best bit is this.  
- An ear.  
- A step forward, wouldn't you say?  
I'd say!  
I'd say we're at a turning point.  
Look.  
- Huh?  
- Excellent.  
The pieces are attracting each other.  
So...  
How did things go with your... friend?  
How many seconds did it take you  
to realise I was talking about myself?  
Quite a few, to be honest.  
Let me confess,  
I didn't follow your advice.  
There was something too contorted  
about it, too imprudent.  
Yeah, OK, I see your point.  
The mathematical set  
of a six-day week.  
The mathematical set  
of a 51-minute hour.  
- What will you have, sir?  
- Tea, please.

Have you thought of anything else?  
The length of a point.  
The direction of a circle.  
Your tea's ready, sir.  
The edge of a circumference.  
The centre of space.  
- The area of a segment.  
- Amazing. Well done!  
The vertical position of a sphere.  
I brought the furniture  
and painting valuations.  
Look at them carefully because  
you'll have to authorise them.  
- I don't know a thing about this.  
- I know. Trust me, Miss lbbetson.  
You've been spending time  
in the cellars recently.  
- Is that why you changed the locks?  
- I change them every six months.  
And I take care to double-check,  
compare and correct  
when dealing with  
odds and ends in cellars.  
It's how I work.  
If it upsets you, speak now.  
You'll find the new keys on the table.  
Please take them.  
Thank you for your trust.  
Were you offended  
at being locked out?  
No, but I was worried.  
You're right, I should have told you.  
I'm sorry.  
Claire, you're ruining your life  
for reasons which are beyond me.  
This illness of yours is so absurd,  
it almost seems unreal.  
My mother thought  
I was faking it the first time.  
We were abroad.  
I was so afraid of walking  
at the foot of the Eiffel Tower  
that it paralysed me.  
I started screaming,

fell to the ground.  
I was just a little girl, but it kept  
happening more and more  
and she had to believe me.  
Has there ever been an open space  
where you weren't overcome  
by anxiety?  
Only one. During a school trip  
to Prague. I was 14.  
The square  
with the astronomical clock.  
I must have walked across it  
a hundred times. It was beautiful.  
I remember a restaurant  
with very strange decor.  
If there's one place in the world  
I'm nostalgic for, it's that.  
I was really happy there.  
It was called Night and Day.  
- You've never been back?  
- Never.  
Why not go now?  
I'd be happy to take you.  
Well, you don't seem too pleased.  
We're almost there.  
Our automaton is about  
to emerge from the shadows.  
No, I'm delighted.  
You're a force of nature.  
It's just that...  
...this is one of those evenings  
when one feels like this contraption  
here...  
...incomplete.  
Why did you never marry?  
You know, never have kids?  
The regard I have for women  
is equal to the fear  
I've always had of them...  
...and to my failure  
to understand them.  
If that's the rule, then Miss lbbetson  
gives every impression  
of being the exception.



I'm afraid so.

Have you really never  
set eyes on her?

Just once.

What's she like?

I suppose feeling a certain interest  
in a person  
necessarily engenders  
a conviction that she's beautiful.

Up to a point.

It's her birthday in two days.

I'd like to get her something useful.

I don't think useful  
is probably your best approach.

- No?

- Not the first time.

It's better to get her something  
more... traditional.

Morning, sir.

Hello, sir.

Hey, Mr. Oldman.

Look what I found in the cellar.

I saw you were interested  
in this old junk.

The supports for  
the Murano chandelier.

My colleagues couldn't find them.

- I can put them in your car.

- That's very kind.

Wait.

Oh, thanks.

Morning, Mr. Oldman.

I took the liberty of remembering  
it's your birthday.

Happy birthday, Claire.

I read  
the valuation documents.

Did you manage to understand  
some of it?

Of course.

Ridiculous sums of money.

Even a backwards child  
would know she's being cheated.

They need interpretation.

They're starting bids.

- There'll be higher bids later.

- Suppose there aren't!

Unlikely, but in that case,  
we'll even things out.

We'll raise the margins  
on other pieces.

A gamble? Where I'm the only one  
that can lose?

You're trying to cheat me.

It's all to your advantage.

You're a fucking thief!

I'm willing to resign  
the commission forthwith.

Huh!

I'll have them replace all your  
mediocre bric-a-brac immediately.

And do me the favour  
of disappearing completely  
from the face of the earth!

1984, sir.

- Hello.

- I behaved so badly.

I feel so stupid. I constantly have  
to offer justifications.

I've never been given flowers  
before.

I don't know what this says to me.  
There's no need for this display  
of anguish. I'm not angry with you.  
My birthdays have always been  
so horrible.

And you...

Since you came along...

...you've turned my life upside down.

The other day, I went downstairs.

I opened the main door  
and looked out onto the garden.

- Did you go out?

- No.

I was afraid.

I felt terrible.

But I never even got that far before.

Do you want me to come over?

I already know it's pointless.

There are new treatments  
nowadays. They might help you.

I'd rather talk to you  
than to some shrink.

- Should I take that as a compliment?

- Yes.

I see you brought up  
the portrait of the dancer.

- It's something I want to keep.

- No great value.

It's a portrait of my mother.

She was about my age  
when she had it done.

Do you look like her?

- She was prettier, I can assure you.

- I cannot judge.

Alright, Claire. I'll go.

Don't hesitate to call  
if you need anything at all.

Thank you, Mr. Oldman.

See you soon, I hope.

Hello? Oh, it's you, director.

No, I would've called you,  
it's just that...

...clearing the furniture  
has been complicated.

Yes. Oldman is dealing with it.

What's he like?

Not as old as you might think.

He dresses in an odd way,  
but he's still a good-looking man.

I know I can trust him.

Why? Are you jealous?

In love? No, I don't think so.

He's too put off by my illness,  
like everybody.

Oh no, it's nothing.

I... I hurt my foot.

Can we talk later?

Who is it?

Who's there?

No, get out!

No, please, get out!

Go away! Get out!

Get out! Please, leave me alone!

Get out!

Get out!

- Hello?

- Please, help me, please.

Calm down, Claire.

What's happened?

You have to help me!

Help me!

- I'll be there as soon as I can.

- Please.

Claire!

- It's me. I'm here. What's happened?

- There's somebody in the house!

- Please get them out!

- Calm down. There's nobody here.

- There's someone in the house!

- Calm down.

It was me before, Claire.

It was me.

It was me.

I hid in the room so I could see you.

You were spying on me?

You were spying on me?

Get out!

I want nothing more to do with you!

Get out!

Please, Virgil. Don't go.

Believe me,

I don't normally behave like this...

Neither do I.

So I'm bound to make some

mistakes...

...but nothing in the world

would make me want to hurt you.

It's just that I can't help myself.

I need to see you.

You should've seen her.

Pale, like a Durer etching.

She had the look of some creature

terrified of the universe.

And I could read my own terror

in her eyes.

Every man on earth would like to be as terrified as you at this moment.

- You've worked a miracle.

- It's too soon to tell.

And you be careful, alright?

This is when mistakes occur.

When you think you've made it, that is when you lose strategy.

- And what strategy would that be?

- Never stop surprising them.

Do things they couldn't have foreseen. Take a gamble, run a risk.

You're asking me to behave in a way that isn't me.

That's why you have to do it.

As long as you're playing according to her rules, you're always gonna make her feel like... like a patient.

She needs to be treated like a woman.

What do you think? Do you like it?

I don't know.

What do you think?

It looks marvellous on you, Claire.

Perhaps the smaller size?

Yes. I think so too.

It's been a long time since I got a present like this.

- Long overdue, don't you think?

- I don't know.

I'm a little, you know, taken a back.

- I'm sorry, I can't...

- What?

Oh, certainly.

I'm sorry.

I didn't understand.

I don't honestly know if I deserve all this.

Let me be the judge of that.

If we don't set a date for the Stockholm auction, they'll shoot themselves.

It's too far.  
Let them shoot themselves.  
We have to schedule the meeting  
with the Hermitage  
and the auctions in  
San Francisco and Madrid.  
Ditto. Too far away.  
- We can't abandon them.  
- There are auctioneers galore.  
They'll find someone else  
and it will cost them less.  
As you wish.  
Lambert, are you married?  
Yes. Nearly 30 years.  
What's it like, living with a woman?  
Like taking part in an auction.  
You never know if yours  
will be the best offer.  
- This one.  
- Very well, sir.  
What do you think?  
Have I made myself pretty?  
- Beautiful. You've done very well.  
- Liar.  
- Claire.  
- I haven't done this for years.  
I've forgotten how to do it.  
I look like a monster.  
Trust me. Some practice  
and you'll be wonderful.  
And you'll take me to  
one of your auctions,  
and to galas with elegant people,  
and to the most refined restaurants  
in the world.  
That's the reason for your  
presents, isn't it, Virgil?  
To help me recover little by little,  
and then take me out.  
Isn't that right?  
No!  
Claire. Don't be like this.  
Let's talk.  
Maybe we did get the last moves

wrong. I was a bit rash.

Don't blame yourself.

It's always her who manages  
to pull everything apart.

Robert. My aunt's gone missing  
again.

- You're kidding.

- Pardon me.

- We found her in Central Park.

- I'm sorry, Terry.

It was no good  
trying to reset this thing.

It was much more easy  
just to make a new one.

This one has a much wider range.

She can go off  
and you won't lose touch.

Just make sure  
you reprogram the PC, okay?

I can manage that.

You're an angel.

- Thanks, darling.

- No worries.

- I'll see you tomorrow night, yeah?

- Yeah.

You need an idea that'll excite her  
but at the same time reassure her.

Yes, but she'll still see through it  
as some deceitful therapy.

- You should invite her to dinner.

- Yes! Noma in Copenhagen!

At the climax of the evening,  
by candlelight,  
tell her that she's beautiful.

And after  
you'll have coffee with us?

Why not?

Joking apart, I'd be glad  
if you did see her, hear her talk.

I'm sure you'd understand  
far more than I.

Who said anything about joking?

129,403.

Your champagne.

- Thank you.  
- Calculate this.  
12,624,831.333.  
Unbelievable!  
You're radiant, Claire.  
You did all this?  
I can turn my hand  
to interior decorating.  
You've done a wonderful job, Virgil.  
Thank you.  
I can't tell you how long I've wanted  
to spend time alone with you.  
Somewhere quiet,  
far from the madding crowd.  
To your serenity, Claire.  
To your irony, Virgil.  
- Now I feel I can finally tell you.  
- What?  
You are more beautiful than the  
dancer.  
Dinner is served.  
- Please be seated.  
- Thank you.  
I warn you, as a waiter  
I'm not the best.  
I offer no guarantees.  
- I'll take the risk.  
- Somewhat foolhardy of you.  
- Why?  
- If the service is not to your liking,  
next time I'd have to  
make a reservation  
at the best restaurant in town.  
Let's not ruin this evening, Virgil.  
- Please, let's not talk about me.  
- Alright.  
Instead I'd like you to tell me  
about your past.  
You see, there's nothing  
very original about my life.  
A child loses his parents,  
a horrible orphanage...  
The only point of interest is  
that the nuns would punish the boy



by making him work with a restorer  
who had a workshop there.  
That's beautiful.  
He loved to observe  
this craftsman,  
so the little boy got up to  
all sorts of mischief  
to ensure he'd be punished  
as often as possible.  
So he became acquainted with art,  
techniques of painting,  
how to tell a forgery from an original  
etc., etc.  
In an old article of yours  
I found on the internet, you said,  
"There's something authentic  
in every forgery."  
What did you mean?  
When simulating another's work  
the forger can't resist the temptation  
to put in something of himself.  
Often it's just a trifle,  
a detail of no interest.  
One unsuspected stroke,  
by which the forger inevitably  
ends up betraying himself,  
and revealing his own,  
utterly authentic sensibilities.  
I really love the way you talk.  
You couldn't have been  
more convincing.  
Huh? A born seducer.  
- So you'd give me a pass?  
- A+. With distinction!  
Sorry, you've been  
a bit neglected lately.  
You haven't said  
anything about Claire.  
If I didn't know about her problems,  
I'd say she was normal.  
And she's much more beautiful  
than you described.  
Really. I liked her.  
You're going to make me jealous?

If you want my advice,  
you pray that girl never gets better.  
Do you want lots 87 and 88  
done separately?  
No, together. That's important.  
How can I help you?  
- It's about Robert.  
- What's going on?  
Don't be afraid to tell me.  
We're not getting on so well,  
that's the problem.  
All those girls hovering around him...  
I guess I'm just...  
...I'm afraid of losing him.  
Is there anything I can do?  
Do you want me to talk to him?  
For a while now he's been  
talking about someone called Claire.  
Claire?  
I don't understand  
With him everybody's got to  
be on their guard, all the time.  
That goes for you, too.  
I feel so stupid.  
Promise me you won't say a word  
to him.  
I promise.  
Have you been  
waiting long?  
If you'd phoned,  
I wouldn't have kept you waiting.  
- I prefer to see you.  
- Is something wrong?  
My assistant will come by today.  
Kindly hand over the  
Vaucanson as it is.  
Alright. Whatever you want.  
Tell him how much you're owed.  
He'll pay you.  
Aren't I at least due an explanation?  
You're not the trustworthy man  
I thought you were.  
It's weird seeing them so  
perfect and polished up.

It's as if they weren't mine.  
I believe nothing is missing.  
There is something missing.  
How could you have lived  
the best years of your life in here?  
I don't know. I don't know.  
It was just the right thing.  
"Was."  
It still is.  
It always will be.  
Always.  
You have to get out of here.  
You have to do it by yourself.  
I don't have the courage.  
It's a spider's web that  
I don't know how to break free of.  
It's an old collection  
my father was fond of.  
I never did understand what it was.  
Hello?  
Good morning, director.  
Yes, I'm nearly finished.  
But I would like to rewrite  
the last chapter.  
A more upbeat ending.  
If that's all you want...  
Yes. Talk to you soon. Thanks.  
I wouldn't rule out them  
being part of something valuable,  
but exactly what I couldn't say.  
- I often wonder if...  
- What?  
If you're more interested  
in my furniture than in me.  
How could you say that?  
I shouldn't have let you in here.  
I shouldn't have.  
I've found all the missing pieces.  
How do you feel about  
finishing the job?  
Well, it's your problem.  
Sarah came to see me  
a few days ago.  
She was upset

about your relationship.

- Are you here to advise me now?

- No, you're the expert on women.

Alright.

We can pick up where we left off.

On two conditions.

You just stop involving me  
in your private life.

And the second?

Is that you take this back.

I didn't get excited about  
your Vaucanson for the money.

I brought it back. It's in the car.

And the new pieces too?

You'll have to be patient for those.

They're tied up with my private life.

I don't know

and I don't want to know.

If you were forced to choose  
between Claire and the automaton,  
which would you take?

- This one.

- An excellent choice, Mr. Oldman.

If it's the wrong size,  
please inform the lady to pass by  
whenever she wishes.

Thank you, I'll let her know.

Claire? It's me.

Claire! I've brought lunch.

Claire!

Claire, answer me!

Claire!

Claire!

Claire!

Are you down here?

Claire!

Have any of you seen a woman  
going out the gate  
of the villa across the road?

No, I can't say I have.

Has anybody seen someone  
coming out of the villa?

A young woman.

Medium height, light hair.

- A bit pale.  
- I think I saw her.  
I didn't see her go out,  
but she was walking away  
from the gate.  
- When?  
- This morning at breakfast.  
- What else can you tell me?  
- She seemed a bit weird.  
- Weird? Which way did she go?  
- That way. Towards the park.  
231.  
Idiot!  
- Hello? Virgil?  
- She's gone.  
- Who? What's going on?  
- Claire's disappeared.  
I've looked.  
They saw her leave this morning.  
- Do you want me to come over?  
- Please.  
Has this happened before?  
She never even appeared  
at the windows.  
Just behind the shutters.  
Did she have friends  
she could go to?  
She'd talk to people on her  
computer under different names.  
- She can't have gone far.  
- Let's hope so.  
I've already been round three times.  
- Hello?  
- Mr. Oldman.  
- Listen, has Miss lbbetson phoned?  
- No.  
- If she calls, let me know.  
- I will.  
Mr. Oldman, I wouldn't like  
to think you'd forgotten.  
Forgotten what?  
- There he is. Here we go.  
- Lot number one.  
Late Baroque, Venetian,

mid-18th-century mirror.

Inlaid wood with gold leaf,  
with adornments,  
floral motifs and festoons.  
Upper frame richly...

Inlaid wood with gold leaf,  
with adornments,  
floral motifs and festoons.  
Upper frame richly  
engraved with whirls.

Can we say 130,000 euros?

140,000 euros.

150,000 euros.

Gentleman on my left.

160,000 euros. Lady up the back.

170,000 euros.

180,000 euros on the telephone.

200,000 euros.

Gentleman on my left in the room.

220,000 euros.

250,000 euros on the tele...

Still nothing, Mr. Oldman.

I'll keep looking.

- Robert's looking further afield.

- Alright.

- I'll call you later.

- Alright

- He's gone crazy.

- 280,000.

310,000. Any more?

Sold!

I'm doing the rounds  
of the hospitals, but there's nothing.  
Just keep looking.

- We'll find her. I'll keep in touch.

- Thanks.

Lot number 2.

A 17th-century  
Fassadenschranke wardrobe  
in walnut, maple, oak and ash.  
The carved frame  
surmounts an inlaid stripe,  
and two doors engraved  
with architectural motifs,

surrounded by carvings of fruit.  
Three spiralled,  
tapered columns flank the doors.  
The lower body has two drawers.  
And um...

There's nothing for it  
but to call the police.  
It'll be all over the papers.  
They'll drag me into it.  
Let's wait a bit longer.  
What do you hope will happen?  
That she'll come back... or turn up.  
Or they'll find out where she is.  
Someone with her problems  
doesn't just disappear into thin air.  
Well, that depends.

No matter how deeply rooted it is,  
sometimes a phobia  
can just disappear by itself.

So, why did she run away?  
Maybe something happened  
between you  
that drove her  
to take that kind of decision.

You know perfectly well  
that's impossible.  
You're the only person  
who knows everything  
that happened between us.

Excuse me a minute.

- Hello?

- I'm sorry, Mr. Oldman.

I've called  
all the publishers in existence  
but none of them knows  
who she is.

They said that often  
even they don't know  
the identity of authors  
who use pseudonyms.

I'd never have guessed that you  
would have ended up  
in a mess like this.

- I don't know how I can help you.

- All you had to do was listen.

Ah.

Considering the lady's illness,  
it seems highly unrealistic  
that she's just run away.

I'd say, I don't know,  
she'd been abducted or something.

That's not likely.

I don't think she had any enemies.

It could be somebody became  
so besotted with her  
and carried her off by force.

- But who?

- I've had my doubts about Robert.

The young guy?

The way you describe him,  
he doesn't seem the type.

From the literary point of view,  
he fits the bill.

The young knight  
rescuing the damsel  
from the clutches of the old man  
incapable of love.

Literature, exactly.

Don't go overboard, Virgil.

She could have had her own reasons  
for disappearing.

I can't imagine what reasons.

Recently, she's been experiencing  
emotions and feelings  
that are incompatible with flight.

I wouldn't be so sure,  
if I were you.

Human emotions  
are like works of art.

They can be forged.

They seem just like the original,  
but they're a forgery.

- Forgery?

- Everything can be faked, Virgil.

Joy, pain, hate.

Illness, recovery.

Even love.

- Hello?



- Listen.

There's something  
that hadn't occurred to us.  
Are you sure there are  
no other secret rooms in the villa?  
I don't remember  
any other doors  
like the one to Miss lbbetson's room.  
Claire!

The only place we haven't looked at  
is the attic... if you want?

Did you know  
that Miss Claire was a writer?

I heard her parents  
talk about it.

She used a pseudonym  
for her books.

I never knew that.

I've never seen the books.  
She never wanted them here.

Claire!

We're wasting time.

There are no other secret rooms.

You've come back.

- We should...

- Quiet!

You've...

You've come back.

You've...

You've come back.

You've...

Claire?

Claire, I can feel you're there.

Answer me.

You've come back.

- You've come back.

- Of course I have.

Were you afraid I wouldn't?

I thought

you'd abandoned me.

- Like last time.

- Last time?

When we got back from Prague.

Claire.

I will never abandon you.  
I'd been happy in Prague  
in that very odd restaurant.  
I was there with my first  
and only boyfriend.  
He was older than me.  
When we got back  
from that excursion,  
one afternoon,  
we were walking in the city centre.  
A car crashed into us.  
When I came to,  
he wasn't there anymore.  
I went back home  
and I never went out again.  
I've never slept  
with a woman.  
In fact, I didn't close my eyes.  
I spent the whole night  
just looking at her.  
- It was wonderful.  
- Well, welcome to the grown-up club.  
You've succeeded  
in making her fall in love.  
I had a good teacher.  
I understood where the dwarf hid.  
Look, there must have been  
a sunken pedestal here.  
He would crouch in there  
and his voice would reverberate  
in the body.  
It must have made an impression.  
Do you think love can be faked?  
In keeping with what you say  
about art forgeries,  
I'd say it can't be completely faked.  
If one could say love is a work of art.  
It'd be amazing if it were,  
wouldn't it?  
It could be sold off at an auction.  
The highest bidder could relive  
the greatest love stories.  
I hope I haven't destroyed  
your love story.

No problem. No problem.  
A new valve, two hinges, one fuse...  
It'll be good as new.  
Just like the first day.  
What do you think  
you're going to do now?  
I want to coax her out.  
Yeah, I wouldn't push too hard  
if I were you.  
She's too fragile.  
You'll see. When you least expect it,  
things will fall into place naturally.  
No!  
Hello? Hello?  
Virgil? Virgil, is that you?  
Virgil! Virgil!  
Virgil?  
Help! Help!  
- Hold it up!  
- It is up!  
Why don't you love it?  
I've never felt it to be a real home.  
More like a hotel.  
You come home a night,  
sleep if you can.  
Next morning,  
you're off somewhere else.  
Let's go back inside.  
Seems to have been planned  
to welcome a lot of people.  
Yes, but the plan was never realised.  
Except for the inaugural reception.  
I was so distrustful of other people  
that I kept them away from  
the perimeter of my personal hotel.  
I was a fool.  
Even now, I still get upset  
when I see the housekeeper  
and the maids walking about.  
After dinner, I send them home.  
I wasn't wrong when I said  
we were very similar.  
Yes, you were right.  
And thanks to you, I understood.

- Where are you taking me?  
- You'll soon find out.  
Close your eyes.  
I'll tell you when you can open them.  
Don't be afraid. I'll lead the way.  
I never liked games  
where you had to close your eyes.  
- Mind the step.  
- Gently, please.  
We're almost there.  
Stop now.  
Open your eyes.  
I don't believe it.  
It's overwhelming.  
I've been collecting them  
all my life.  
So, I'm not the first.  
You have had other women  
Yes.  
I've loved them all  
and they loved me back.  
They taught me to wait for you.  
And now that you're here,  
we'd like you to come  
and live with us  
and make this beautiful hotel  
your home.  
Oh, Virgil.  
If anything should ever happen to us,  
I want you to know that I do love you.  
I love you too.  
The catalogue for the sale  
of the paintings and furniture  
of Ibbetson Villa is ready.  
Congratulations. It's a lovely volume.  
About time!  
I wonder who'll buy this wonderful  
stuff... Oh, sorry.  
I can't conceal my anxiety to know  
what you think about it.  
Well, don't you like it?  
No, it's just that...  
...ever since I decided  
to come and live with you...

...I've been thinking I... don't want to sell anymore.

I'd like to leave everything the way it was.

I understand.

Are you sure?

Believe me, if I were you, I'd do the same thing.

Tomorrow, everything will be back in its place.

Alright, Virgil!

To the most tortured and most fortunate catalogue of my career.

That's saying something.

- Here, here.

- Cheers.

And since you've become my family...

...I too have an important announcement to make.

Next week,

I have an auction in London.

It will be the finest of my career and the very last.

They say he's been seen recently in female company.

- Who? Virgil?

- Yes.

It's finally come home to him that the worst sexual perversion is chastity.

How is it going

onstage for the last time?

I've never felt better. There's a whiff of anticipation in the air.

All my colleagues

have come to see me off.

That's nice of them.

This affection is because they won't have to put up with me anymore.

Anyhow, I'm happy, Claire.

I just wish you were here.

Me too.

But I'm not ready to travel yet.

I got dizzy in the car yesterday.

Don't let it get to you. We have  
all the time in the world to travel.

- We're ready, Mr. Oldman.

- I'm coming.

Have you heard  
from our young friends?

Constantly.

I'm never left on my own.

Good. Give them my love.

- I can hear you've got to go.

- Yes.

- But I can't wait to get back home.

- Good luck, my darling.

12,100,000.

Any more?

12,300,000.

Any advance?

12,500,000 on the telephone.

Any more?

All done at 12,500,000.

Sold for 12,500,000.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

- Good to see you.

- Thank you. Not a bad price.

Can I say hello to you in public?

Oh, Billy.

You were fantastic, my friend! I'm  
happy for you. I'm going to miss you.

You say it like

we'll never meet again.

Of course we will.

But I'm feeling nostalgic  
thinking about all our exploits.

- You'll get over it.

- Virgil?

To remind you of  
what a great artist I could've been  
if only you'd believed in me,  
I've sent you one of my paintings.  
I promise I won't burn it.

Claire.

Claire, I'm back!

Hello?

- Have you seen Miss Claire?

- No, sir.

Claire?

Where are you?

Claire?

Mr. Oldman,

she must have gone out.

It was the same yesterday.

Sarah and Robert came to get her,  
then came back for lunch.

Alright.

"There is always  
something authentic  
concealed in every forgery."

I couldn't agree more.

That's why I'll miss you, Mr. Oldman.

"There is always something  
authentic  
concealed in every forgery."

I couldn't agree more.

That's why I'll miss you, Mr. Oldman.

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"There is always something  
authentic  
concealed in every forgery."

I couldn't agree more.

That's why I'll miss you, Mr. Oldman.

"There is always something  
authentic concealed in every..."

Good morning, Mr. Oldman.

We have visitors today.

Isn't this nice?

Look who's come to see you!

How are you, Mr. Oldman?

I've brought your mail,  
some newspapers

and a few magazines.

A few days ago, they brought  
some furniture to the villa opposite.

Did you notice?

I think so,

but I don't see much from in here.

Ask her.

Claire?

Listen to what  
this gentleman wants to say.

Yes.

And the day after,  
other workmen came  
and took everything away again.

The day after?

In 18 months,  
three deliveries and three removals.

I was here a while ago.

- Do you remember?

- Nine.

- What do you mean?

- You've been here nine times.

Today makes 10.

I was wondering if you saw  
a woman leave the villa.

Medium height, light hair,  
a bit pale?

- Yes.

- That time was 231.

Are you sure?

Then another six.

In a year and a half,  
I saw her go out 237 times.

What did I say?

She's a phenomenon,  
remembers everything.

It's not possible.

You were at the villa 63 times.  
36 during the day and 27 at night,  
excluding the night  
of the accident.

- One, four, four.

- One, four, four?

The telephone number



for the ambulance.

The villa is free now.

If you're interested,

I'll get you a good deal.

- Who owns it?

- Me.

But I don't know what to do with it.

I often rent it out to cinema people.

Cinema people?

For the past two years,

it's been taken by the engineer

who does the lift

that takes me up to my house.

He's really nice, that boy.

He can do anything.

There's nothing he can't fix.

And he's always kissing me.

Bringing me flowers.

The Paris Express

is now arriving at platform seven.

Your attention, please.

The Berlin-Prague Arrow

is running 40 minutes late

due to fog on the line.

Come in, sir.

We furnished it

exactly as you requested.

And tomorrow, your trunks

will be delivered.

And later, I'll pass by

with a copy of your contract.

If there's anything else,

please don't hesitate to call.

Oh, Virgil.

If anything should happen to us,

I want you to know that I do love you.

Are you on your own, sir?

No. I'm waiting for someone.