

Solstice

by

Kevin Scrantz and Peter Devonald

Five Page Extract (of a Twenty One Page Script)

WGAeast Registered

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FADE IN:

EXT. PILL HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY

Lush, manicured lawns sweep into the distance. Carefully tended blooms, bright with color, line the grass. A cardboard mail order box, labeled "THE GARDEN TOAD."

PHILIP PILL, a small, fastidiously neat man of 50, makes a final turn on a pipe with his crescent wrench. He reaches over, flicks a switch.

A concealed pump HUMS. A squatting stone TOAD belches, spits a stream of water into a large stone clamshell.

Philip stands, smiles proudly. Feminine laughter O.S.

Across the low garden wall, RACHEL COMB and her tiny daughter, MARY, watch a kitten chase a piece of twine. Rachel, 30's, is blonde, with an old-fashioned prettiness, as careful about her appearance as Philip is about his.

She tilts her head towards him as Philip walks up to the wall, smiles sweetly.

GRACE (O.S.)

Philip! Stop harassing that woman.

Startled, Philip turns, sees GRACE, 40's, tall, solid, scary. In her arms, a basket of laundry. Rachel giggles girlishly O.S. Grace notices the toad and steps back.

GRACE

What on earth?

She walks around it, snickers, then chortles.

GRACE

That is the most repulsive thing I've ever seen. Very you.

PHILIP

It's a water feature.

GRACE

Philip-Philip-Philip, my pink panties are gone from the clothesline, and all you care about is a water feature? Lucky thing I put my name on the tag. They must have been stolen, so it's clearly a matter for the police.

Grace harrumphs, turns, stalks back to the house. Philip watches her, shakes his head.

EXT. PILL HOUSE - GARDEN - LATER

In the background, near the carousel clothesline, Grace gives her statement to plainclothes DETECTIVE HARDIN, arms waving. Hardin, 40, is watery-eyed, big for nothing.

Philip ignores them as he weeds his roses, prunes them, leans back, looks at them adoringly.

HARDIN (O.S.)
Mister Pill?

Philip turns to Hardin's extended hand, shakes it.

HARDIN
Detective Hardin. I just want you to know, I am on this case personally, and will not rest until we retrieve your wife's property.

PHILIP
Well, um, thank you. We'll all sleep easier knowing that.

HARDIN
Such a terrible shame, that happening to a lady as nice as your wife. It's obvious why they were stolen, of course. She's a very fetching little lady, if you don't mind my saying so.

Philip looks at brawny Grace as she beats the hell out of a rug strung over the clothesline. He sighs.

INT. PILL HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Philip and Grace eat dinner in silence, the only sound their utensils on china and Grace's chewing.

Philip looks down at the newspaper: "CLORLEYS OPEN HISTORIC GARDENS TO PUBLIC FOR FIRST TIME." He smiles, carefully tears it out.

GRACE
What's that?

PHILIP
Nothing.

GRACE
Don't say "nothing," when it's clearly "something." Is it about my attack?

PHILIP
 You weren't attacked, Grace.
 And, no, it isn't.

Grace rips the paper from his hands.

GRACE
 Gardens? Again with the gardens!

PHILIP
 It's the chance of a lifetime!
 I've wanted to see Clorley
 gardens since I was a boy, and
 it's only open for three days -

GRACE
 Three days? How do they expect
 to make any money that way?

PHILIP
 They're opening to show a rare
 blue orchid that blooms on the
 solstice, then dies.

GRACE
 (tosses clipping at him)
 I was violated today, and you're
 mooning over grasses? Glad to
 know where your priorities lie.

Grace rises noisily, collects her dishes.

GRACE
 Dry and save after you wash, I
 don't like my silverware lying
 out all night.

INT. PILL HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Philip, apron tied around his waist, puts a thick old
 record of "LA BOHEME" on an ancient phonograph.

MUSIC. RODOLFO sings "O SOAVE FANCIULLA."

BATHROOM

Grace, lolls in bubble bath, hears the music, frowns.

PHILIP

Looks out the open window. Next door,

RACHEL,

sits on a bench in her garden, lit by the full moon. She glows with beauty, hands folded quietly in her lap, enjoying the music.

PHILIP

Stares. Overcome, his eyes tear up, his chin trembles.

RACHEL

Turns her head. Philip appears behind her, singing Rodolfo's part.

Rachel stands and SINGS back MIMI'S part.

Philip takes her hands. They sing at each other as he twirls her around her garden, yearning to kiss, unable to.

Overhead, a colossal lover's moon hovers.

GRACE (O.S.)

Philip!

The moon deflates with a sputtering noise like a balloon, spins, spirals away into space.

PHILIP

Shakes his head. Grace towers over him in a bathrobe. They stands in the living room.

GRACE

Turn off that racket, I need my rest.

Philip mutes the volume with a remote control.

GRACE

I have an appointment with a police sketch artist in the morning. For once, have some consideration for others.

Grace turns, marches away.

Philip looks into the distance, sighs.

EXT. CLORLEY GARDENS - DAY

An overcast sky. A small knot of PEOPLE, including Philip and Grace, wait outside a locked, chained gate, set in an old, tall, mossy wall.

GRACE

When are they going to open the gate? It's criminal making people wait like this.

PHILIP

I wish you'd stayed home. I really don't think you'll like this.

GRACE

Stay home? Stay home? With a maniac on the loose?

A gray-haired GUARD, in an oversized uniform, approaches with a big key ring and unlocks the gate.

GRACE

Well, it's about time.

The gates swing open. People file in, pay the Guard.

PHILIP

Grace, shhh.

GRACE

Don't shush me, Philip Pill.

Philip looks away, embarrassed. His face lights up as Rachel approaches. Grace looks her up and down, sniffs.

RACHEL

Hello Missus Comb. And you're the Pills, yes?

PHILIP

Philip. And my grace, Wife - uh - wife, Grace.

GRACE

We see you out and about often enough, but where is Mister Crumb? Divorced?

RACHEL

Widowed.