

SHANGHAI MOON

Sylvia, Gong Fei (1 man, 1 woman)

1930's Shanghai. Lady Sylvia Allington, the beautiful young American born wife of the elderly aristocrat, Lord St. John Allington, is visiting Shanghai with her husband. They are guests of the mysterious and alluring warlord, General Gong Fei. Allington is hoping to purchase one of the General's precious jade figures for the British Museum. Lady Sylvia enters in a huff, holding the scanty costume of a temple dancer in her arms.

SYLVIA

General Gong Fei, I should like to know what the dickens this was doing in my room?

(She tosses the bejeweled costume at Gong Fei.)

GONG FEI

This costume that you so rudely thrust at me, is one of the most precious artifacts in my collection. It is a Fourth Century costume worn by temple dancers of the Hunan Province. I thought you would appreciate its luxuriant elegance.

SYLVIA

I see. Then I owe you a sincere apology. I thought it was some Hong Kong cooch dancer's get-up.

(Gong Fei lays it down on the divan.)

GONG FEI

Perhaps now you would enjoy closer look.

(Sylvia moves toward the divan.)

SYLVIA

It really is exquisite. Such delicate workmanship.

GONG FEI

I should like to see you wear it.

SYLVIA

I hardly think it's appropriate. It's a scanty little thing at best.

GONG FEI

You would bring out its grandeur. *(He lifts it up to her breasts)* Yes. Indeed you would.

SYLVIA

It's getting rather close in here.

GONG FEI

The heat, the ever lasting heat strips away everyone of pretence.

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SYLVIA

What is that pungent smell? Could it be jasmine?

GONG FEI

The east is a country of the senses, warm, mysterious, like the kiss of a lover.

SYLVIA

I think I get the gist.

GONG FEI

Do you?

SYLVIA

Yes and I'd say the subtleties of you orientals are highly overrated.

GONG FEI

Then perhaps I should try more western approach.

(He tries to kiss her. She slaps him.)

GONG FEI

Ah, the beautiful flower has thorns.

SYLVIA

And a good right hook.

GONG FEI

Why should you spurn me? I have it on good account that you have not always been so righteous.

SYLVIA

I should have thought you'd be above idle gossip.

GONG FEI

I refer to untimely death of a young man of your circle by the name of Boy Barclay. It is said that you were engaged in a passionate illicit romance with this youth of eighteen. And it is said that he crashed his sports car into tree out of mad love for you.

SYLVIA

Stop it! Stop it, I tell you. You've got some nerve dredging that up. It's true that a beautiful, sensitive young boy loved me and that he died in the most cruel manner. But it's not the way the gossips would have it known. (beat) It was all about a hat, a purple felt hat.

GONG FEI

I do not understand.

SYLVIA

Neither did I until it was too late. Boy Barclay wasn't in love with me but the illusion of me, wearing that aubergine cloche the first time he saw me at Ascot.

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GONG FEI

You had affair with him.

SYLVIA

I did everything in my power to dismiss his ardor as a schoolboy crush but it was greater than the both of us. And when I told him that our love would only destroy his future, he raced off in his Hispano Suiza. He never reached Oxford. It was an accident, a ghastly, hideous accident that killed him and what remained of my heart.

GONG FEI

Then it is true that the Home Office arranged this trip to Far East so you could escape the notoriety of this scandalous sexcapade.

(Mah Li enters and hides in a corner to listen.)

SYLVIA

You haven't understood a word I've said. How could you? You're a man. American, British, French, African, Eskimo, Chinese, you're all the same.

GONG FEI

But you, you are unique. You are the solitary wild blossom I've dreamed of.

(He tries to kiss her again and once more she slaps him.)

GONG FEI

I shall see you shortly at dinner.

(He exits. Sylvia is breathlessly confused.)