

Vertigo

SCOTTIE

How'd you get into the shipbuilding business, Gavin?

ELSTER

I married into it.

SCOTTIE

Interesting business.

ELSTER

No, to be honest, I find it dull.

SCOTTIE

You don't have to do it for a living.

ELSTER

No. But one assumes obligations. My wife's family is all gone; someone has to look after her interest. Her father's partner runs the company yard in the East -- Baltimore -- so I decided as long as I had to work at it, I'd come back here. I've always liked it here.

SCOTTIE

How long have you been back?

ELSTER

Almost a year.

SCOTTIE

And you like it.

ELSTER

San Francisco's changed. The things a that spell San Francisco to me are disappearing fast.

SCOTTIE

Like all this.

ELSTER

(Nodding)

I'd like to have lived here then. The color and excitement... the power... the freedom.

ELSTER

Shouldn't you be sitting down?

SCOTTIE

No, I'm all right.

ELSTER

I was sorry to read about that thing in the papers.
(No answer) And you've quit the force. (Scottie nods)
A permanent physical disability?

SCOTTIE

No, Acrophobia isn't a crippling thing. It just means I can't climb

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steep stairs or go to high places, like the bar at the Top-of-the-Mark.

SCOTTIE (cont)

But -- (Shrugs and smiles)-- there are plenty of street-level bars In this town.

ELSTER

Would you like a drink now?

SCOTTIE

No... no, thanks. A bit early in the day for spirits.
(Pause) Well, I guess that about covers everything, doesn't it? I never married; I don't see much of the "old college gang"; I'm a retired detective -- and you're in the shipbuilding business. (Pause)
What's on your mind, Gavin?

ELSTER

I asked you to come up here, Scottie, knowing that you had quit detective works, but I wondered whether you would go back on the job -- as a special favor to me.

ELSTER

I want you to follow my wife.

ELSTER

Not what you think. We're very happily married.

SCOTTIE

Then?

ELSTER

I'm afraid some harm may come to her.

SCOTTIE

From whom?

ELSTER

Someone dead.

ELSTER

Scottie, do you believe that someone out of the past, someone dead, can enter and take possession of a living being?

SCOTTIE

No.

ELSTER

If I told you I believe that his happened to my wife, what would you say?

SCOTTIE

I'd say you'd better take her to the nearest psychiatrist, psychologist, neurologist, psychoanalyst, or plain family doctor. And have him check you both.

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ELSTER
(Defeated)

Then you're of no use to me. I'm sorry I wasted your time. Thank you for coming in, Scottie.

SCOTTIE

I didn't mean to be that rough.

ELSTER

No, it sounds idiotic, I know. And you're still the hard-headed Scot, aren't you? Always were. Do you think I'm making it up?

SCOTTIE

No.

ELSTER

I'm not making it up. I wouldn't know how. She'll be talking to me about something, nothing at all, and suddenly the words fade into silence and a cloud comes into her eyes and they go blank... and she is somewhere else, away from me... someone I don't know. I call to her and she doesn't hear. And then with a long sigh she is back, and looks at me brightly, and doesn't know she's been away... can't tell me where... or why...

SCOTTIE

How often does this happen?

ELSTER

More and more in the past few weeks. And she wanders. God knows where she wanders. I followed her one day.

SCOTTIE

Where'd she go?

ELSTER

Watched her come out of the apartment, someone I didn't know... walking in a different way... holding her head in a way I don't know; and get into her car, and drive out to...(He smiles grimly)Golden Gate Park. Five miles. She sat on a bench at the edge of the lake and stared across the water to the old pillars that stand on the far shore, the Portals of the Past. Sat there a long time, not moving...and I had to leave, to go to the office. That evening, when I came home, I asked what she'd done all day. She said she'd driven to Golden Gate Park and sat by the lake. That's all.

SCOTTIE

Well?

ELSTER

The speedometer of her car showed she had driven 94 miles that day. Where did she go? (Pause) I have to know, Scottie. Where she goes and what she does, before I got involved with doctors.

SCOTTIE

Have you talked to the doctors at all?

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ELSTER

Yes, but carefully. I'd want to know more before committing her to that kind of care. (Anxiously) Scottie --

SCOTTIE

(Quickly)

I can get you a firm of private eyes to follow her for you. They're dependable, good boys --

ELSTER

(Breaking in)

I want you.

SCOTTIE

It's not my line.

ELSTER

Scottie, I need a friend! Someone I can trust! I'm in a panic about this!

SCOTTIE

How can I see her, to know her?

ELSTER

We're going to an opening at the opera tonight. We'll dine at Ernie's first. Which is easier?

SCOTTIE

Ernie's.

ELSTER

(Pause)

All right
You won't know what to look for at first, Scottie. Even I, who know her so well, cannot tell, sometimes, when the change has begun. She looks so lovely and normal...