

The Magenta Scare

Setting: Suburban America, 1955

Characters:

Charley Cain—A young woman, studies philosophy and history

Emma Petrov—Charley's girlfriend, Russian

John Grey—Charley and Emma's neighbor, a traditional man

Officer McKee—A police officer

Scene opens in Charley's and Emma's house. Charley walks through the door, and Emma is reading Emma Goldman's My Two Years in Russia in the lounge chair. She stands up as soon as Charley walks through the door.

Emma: Good afternoon, darling. How was your day?

Charley gives Emma a kiss on the cheek and takes off her tie, coat, and hat, putting them on the coat rack.

Charley: It's the same as every day: using a voice so deep that it hurts my throat, smoking with the other men throughout the day, discussing life—(*sarcastic*) my lovely, fabricated life. (*sighs*) At least, I didn't get caught. Just another day as one of the guys.

Emma: But you are so much more than that. You are brilliant, and selfless, and caring.

Charley: All characteristics of communists; outside of this house, I don't exist. You don't exist. I'm a hotshot sales*man*, and you are a good, American housewife.

Emma: Can we go on like this forever? We only have each other...can we go on forever with nobody else?

Charley: We have to; we won't need anyone else. If they find out who we actually are, I'll get fired, and you'll lose all hope of getting a job. We'll starve to death if we don't get shot first. At least until Senator McCarthy is out of office. Hopefully, it'll be like that Domino effect they're all so scared of. McCarthy could lose his job, the state loosens anti-Communist laws, and the people forget about how much they hate people like us too.

Emma: It's ironic; to protect our freedoms, they take away *our* freedoms.

Charley: Until I have to leave for work tomorrow, we're free. Join me tonight, my love. Join me in our freedom.

Charley turns on the radio and grabs Emma's hands, whisking her across the living room floor. They dance for a few minutes before there is a knock on the door. They quickly move away from each other.

Charley (*clears throats and speaks in a low, deep voice*): Got your American accent ready?

Emma nods, and Charley opens the door.

John: Hello. My name's John Grey; I've just moved in next door. I'm making my rounds around the neighborhood and introducing myself.

Charley (*deep voice*): Pleased to meet you, Mr. Grey. I'm Charley Cain, and this is my wife, Emma.

Charley and Emma shake John's hand.

John: The pleasures all mine, Mr. Cain. Would you mind if I come in for tea?

John tries to lean in and look around the house.

Charley: My apologies, our house is not clean right now. Why don't you come by tomorrow at the same time?

John (*glaring*): Some wife you got here...not even able to clean while you're at work. What does she do all day? (*They all laugh awkwardly.*) No, no, I insist.

Despite Charley's attempts to block the door, John forces himself inside.

Charley: Mr. Grey, would you excuse us for a second?

John: Of course, Mr. Cain.

Charley and Emma go to talk on the side while John investigates the house.

Emma (*in her normal voice*): We have to get him out of here. He'll see your collection of books, or my pictures from Russia. Our fantasy will come crashing down.