

OTHER WOMAN: 'We made love with the desperation of adulterers.' Is that paranoid? Is it paranoid that she repeated the same phrase you used the day after the first time we...? Over the phone, remember? Whispering. Idiot! Her in the house and you whispering down the phone: 'Yesterday we made love with the desperation of adulterers.' A little bit of danger. The idiot wanted a bit of danger, it turned him on, whispering down the phone at me with her two steps away, it turned him on: 'Yesterday we made love with the desperation of adulterers.' I almost hung up on you when you said she was there. But you kept on, you called me back; I think you even recorded it. You're sick!

HE: *(After a silence.)* It's not mine. The phrase isn't mine. It's the title of a song. I'm sorry.

OTHER WOMAN: You're sick! What do I care where you picked it up? The fact is she used the same phrase.

HE: Why?

OTHER WOMAN: Why what?

HE: Why did she use that phrase?

OTHER WOMAN: Don't you get it, stupid? Because that day, she heard you. Because you wanted to be smooth and whisk me off my feet and she was listening. And just now she was trying to unnerve me, to get at the truth by telling lies.

HE: I don't understand.

OTHER WOMAN: You are a doctor aren't you? Doctor of what? Of stupidity? : 'The other day I met someone, in the park. We were together. A researcher. Married. At midday. We made love in his laboratory with the desperation of adulterers'. Then another angle: 'I feel terrible. He's attached. He has a girlfriend. Lately I've been thinking of children, I've had motherhood on my mind. I lost my mother very suddenly. I feel terrible, you wouldn't do it...'

HE: Has she been with someone else?

OTHER WOMAN: *(At the end of her tether.)* No, stupid, no! She described what you and I did, in the same place, on the same day, at the same time. It was a strategy to make me feel guilty and spill the beans. She's very clever. She's always been a bit of a sadist. Have you still not worked it out, idiot?

HE: Don't call me an idiot.

(Silence.)

Do you think she's been with another man?

OTHER WOMAN: Are you an idiot or what? Of course not. I cannot believe how ignorant you are.

HE: Please don't call me an idiot. *(Thoughtful.)* I don't know... Maybe...

(Silence. After a time HE raises his arm and shouts to the WAITER.)

A black coffee!

*(The WAITER approaches and writes on a small slate: **There is no coffee machine.**)*

There's no machine? *(Asks him again.)* There's no machine?

OTHER WOMAN: No, there's no coffee machine here, and the waiter's deaf.

(The WAITER remains standing near them.)

HE: *(With delayed reaction.)* Nothing, then, thanks.

(The WAITER heads off towards the bar.)

Is he really deaf-mute?

(The OTHER WOMAN doesn't answer, but lights a cigarette.)

Do you think she could have slept with someone? Don't you think that, rather than a strategy, like you say, it was a confession? A confidence? Woman to woman? You are her best friend. Oldest friend, at least. Only friend. Maybe she really did meet someone, maybe they started off talking then ended up together. Where did you say she met him? *(Silence.)* All the same it is odd: she finds it hard to open up to people. *(Silence. HE looks from side to side.)* There are no laboratories around here. Maybe you're right, maybe she does suspect us of something. She is jealous, very jealous. *(Breathes deeply.)* Don't worry, I can sort it out. *(Takes her hand and taps it on the back. The OTHER WOMAN removes her hand immediately. Silence. HE goes back to his thoughts, gets up and walks around.)* I'd be very hurt, you know? Just thinking about it makes my fingertips go numb and when my fingertips go numb it means something's really bothering me. My circulation goes funny, my blood doesn't reach the extremities. I even think I get a murmur. *(As if awakening.)* Now I remember! There's a pharmaceutical lab right outside the park. He could have taken her there. *(Goes back to her.)* Do you think she could have gone off with someone? *(To himself.)* No, could she? It's not as if she's so attractive that men would just proposition her like that. I don't dislike the way she looks but she's not beautiful. Men go for girls that are... *(Can't find the word.)* that are... objectively good-looking, with certain characteristics that match a canon. *(Analysing her.)* Like you. They'd try their luck with you, but not with her. We men, the thing that first attracts us is harmony, and she isn't harmonious. She's not ugly but she's not harmonious. She's... subjectively attractive. She's attractive to people who know her, and at first when you meet her, just like that, seeing what's attractive about her, it's difficult, you know? She's not harmonious, she's quite attractive, but to me, because I know her. Subjectively... *(Pondering.)* good-looking... but just to me. *(Looks to her once more for recognition.)* Don't you think?

OTHER WOMAN: *(Glares at him. Brusquely.)* You really are a complete idiot.

(She gets up, grabs her bag from the table and leaves. HE remains sitting, thinking, pondering, lifts his hand, the WAITER approaches.)

HE: *(Without looking at him.)* A black coffee, please.