

Through a Glass Darkly

by Rosie Fiore

Characters

Gideon – mid-forties, handsome, although he looks like he's lived hard- a bit of a bad boy

Laura – early thirties, attractive, elegant, but showing strain

Sasha – late thirties, a bottle blonde, voluptuous, slightly cheap-looking, but warm

Marianne – late thirties, early forties, a bit severe-looking

Angus – late twenties, skinny and geeky

Edith – in her eighties, small and slight

Corey – late teens, pasty, sullen (Character names in blue are not in this extract)

All the action takes place in the sitting room of Laura's house in Cricklewood, North London, in the present day.

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ACT ONE SCENE ONE

[A LIVING ROOM IN A SMALL SUBURBAN HOUSE. AFTERNOON. THERE IS A DOORWAY INTO THE KITCHEN, AND ANOTHER INTERIOR DOORWAY THAT LEADS TO THE STAIRS AND THE REST OF THE HOUSE. THERE IS ALSO A FRONT DOOR. THE SOFA HAS A BRIGHT CLOTH THROWN OVER IT AND THERE ARE SHELVES FULL OF BOOKS AND PAINTING REPRODUCTIONS ON THE WALLS. EVERYTHING IS CHEAP BUT NEAT AND IT LOOKS LIKE A HOME THAT SOMEONE WITHOUT MUCH MONEY HAS MADE THE BEST OF. IN THE CORNER THERE IS A DESK WITH A GOOD COMPUTER, FILING DRAWERS AND PAPERS, AS IF SOMEONE WORKS FROM HOME. DOWNSTAGE TO ONE SIDE, WITH ITS BACK TO THE AUDIENCE, IS A SMALLISH TELEVISION SET ON A STAND.]

A MAN SITS ON THE SOFA, READING A NEWSPAPER THAT IS SPREAD OUT ON THE COFFEE TABLE. HE DOESN'T TOUCH IT. THIS IS **GIDEON**. HE IS IN HIS MID-FORTIES, WITH A HANDSOME, SLIGHTLY DISSIPATED FACE- HE IS VERY SEXY. HE LOOKS LIKE HE HAS LIVED A FAIRLY ROCK AND ROLL LIFESTYLE. A WOMAN IS CLEANING UP, WIPING SURFACES AND TIDYING THINGS AWAY. SHE IS **LAURA**, GIDEON'S PARTNER. SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN OF ABOUT THIRTY-TWO, CLASSICALLY DRESSED. SHE DOES NOT SEE OR REGISTER GIDEON. WE HEAR A DOORBELL RING. LAURA CROSSES TO THE FRONT DOOR TO OPEN IT. GIDEON WATCHES HER CAREFULLY AS SHE GOES. LAURA OPENS THE DOOR AND **SASHA** ENTERS. SHE IS A SLIGHTLY TARTY-LOOKING WOMAN, BLONDE AND A LITTLE PAST HER BEST, LATE THIRTIES.]

LAURA:
Sasha?

SASHA:
Laura? Hi. Sorry, I'm a bit late... the bus...

LAURA:
Not at all. Come in.

SASHA: [LOOKING AROUND]
Wow... this is nice. It's got a really warm heart. I always think a home has a soul and a personality, and you can sense it the moment you walk through the door.

[SHE WALKS INTO THE SITTING ROOM AREA. SHE LOOKS AROUND AT THE FURNITURE... BOOKSHELVES, TABLE, SOFA, ORNAMENTS. SHE TOUCHES EVERYTHING AS SHE GOES. LAURA WATCHES HER, A LITTLE SURPRISED, SAYING NOTHING. GIDEON LOOKS HORRIFIED, AND KEEPS GLANCING FROM WOMAN TO WOMAN. LAURA DOES NOT REGISTER HIM, BUT AS SASHA COMES AROUND THE COFFEE TABLE, SHE STOPS SHORT AND STARES AT HIM, HORRIFIED. SHE LOOKS UP AT LAURA, BACK AT GIDEON AND THEN AT LAURA]

LAURA:
Are you all right?

SASHA:
Could I have a glass of water, please?

LAURA:
Of course. Would you prefer something else?

[THEY SPEAK SIMULTANEOUSLY]

SASHA:
Wine?

LAURA:
Tea?

SASHA: [QUICKLY]
Tea would be lovely, thanks.

[LAURA GOES THROUGH INTO THE KITCHEN AND STARTS MAKING TEA, HER BACK TO THE MAIN ROOM. SHE KEEPS TALKING TO SASHA]

LAURA: [OFFSTAGE]
So Marianne told me you're ready to move straight away.

SASHA: [STILL STARING AT GIDEON]
Yes. I don't have to give notice where I am.

LAURA: [OFFSTAGE]
I'm surprised we haven't met before. I thought I knew all Marianne's friends.

[SASHA KNEELS DOWN IN FRONT OF THE COFFEE TABLE, STARING AT GIDEON AS IF MESMERISED. HE STARES BACK AT HER]

SASHA:
I haven't known her long... only about six months. I was part of the life-drawing class.

LAURA: [OFFSTAGE]
Oh, so you must have met my partner, Gideon...

SASHA:
No, no, I don't think I ever did. I heard he passed away, I'm so sorry.

LAURA:
Thank you. It's been fairly horrible. It's also left me in a bit of a spot financially, hence the urgent need to find a housemate. [SHE STARTS TO COME THROUGH TO THE SITTING ROOM WITH TWO CUPS OF TEA ON A TRAY. SHE LOOKS A BIT SURPRISED TO SEE SASHA KNEELING ON THE FLOOR]

SASHA:
Um... do you think... [PLAYING FOR TIME] ... do you have an aspirin?

LAURA:
Yes. They're upstairs in the bathroom

[SHE PUTS THE TEA TRAY DOWN ON THE TABLE BETWEEN GIDEON AND SASHA AND GOES OUT THROUGH THE INTERIOR DOOR]

SASHA:
Gideon?

GIDEON:
What in God's name are you doing here, you crazy cow?

SASHA:
Don't you crazy me. I may be crazy, but you're bloody dead.

GIDEON:
I'm aware of that.

SASHA:
Jesus. You're a ghost. I'm seeing a ghost. This is insane.

GIDEON:
I would have thought you of all people would be okay with this, with your Derren Brown-spiritual-yoga-and-muesli-crystal-crap.

SASHA:
Can she not see you?

GIDEON:
Laura? No. [HE SOUNDS DEEPLY MISERABLE ABOUT THIS] I've been sitting here for a week now and she hasn't registered me at all. She's sat next to me, even. I talk and she can't hear me, and I can't touch her.

SASHA:
Can you touch me?

GIDEON:
Can't touch anything, I seem to be sort of floating above the sofa. I can't touch the table or the cups, and I can't even turn the pages of the bloody newspaper. Do me a favour, won't you? Turn the page for me. I've been staring at this one since this morning. I know it by heart.

[SASHA LEANS FORWARD AND TURNS THE PAGE OF THE NEWSPAPER. GIDEON LEANS FORWARD AND STARTS READING EAGERLY]

GIDEON:
Arsenal lost! What muppets.

[SASHA MAKES A LITTLE STRANGLER SOUND. GIDEON LOOKS UP AND REALISES HE SHOULD PROBABLY BE FOCUSING ON HER]

GIDEON:
Sorry.

SASHA:
Sorry? Oh my god. This is the freakiest thing ever. What does it feel like?

GIDEON:
What?

SASHA:
Being dead.

GIDEON:
I don't know. Can't really remember what it felt like being alive. I know I'm not bothered with bodily things anymore... hunger, thirst, going to the loo... and I don't sleep. Weirdly though, I'm dying for a fag.

SASHA:
But how do you FEEL?

GIDEON:
What? Emotionally?

[SASHA NODS]

GIDEON:
Mostly, I just don't give a toss.

SASHA:
So nothing's changed, really.

[GIDEON STARES AT HER]

GIDEON:
Oh shit. My sense of humour's gone too. I know that was funny, but I just can't be arsed to laugh.

SASHA:
Oh. My. God.

GIDEON:
Haven't met him, I'm afraid. I did the whole-tunnel-with-the-light-at-the-end thing, and then I think I lost some time... a couple of weeks maybe, and then I found myself back here. It was very odd. [HE LOOKS AT HER STERNLY] More to the point, what the hell are you doing here?

SASHA: [PLAYING FOR TIME]
Me?

[GIDEON JUST LOOKS AT HER]

SASHA: [HESITANTLY]
Marianne told me that Laura was desperate for a housemate...

GIDEON:
And you thought that in her grief, what she really needed was to live with the woman I was shagging on the side.

[LAURA RE-ENTERS, CARRYING A GLASS OF WATER AND AN ASPIRIN]

SASHA: [INCREDULOUS]
Shagging? Is that what you call it? What we had? Shagging?

LAURA
I'm sorry?

[SASHA LOOKS BLANK FOR A MOMENT]

LAURA:
Oh, I'm sorry. Were you not talking to me? Are you on the phone?

[TOO LATE, SASHA TAKES HER PHONE OUT OF HER POCKET AND HOLDS IT TO HER EAR]

SASHA:
Yes. [INTO THE PHONE] I have to go now. Tell Mum I'll speak to her later. [SHE CLICKS THE PHONE AND PUTS IT BACK INTO HER POCKET. SHE STANDS AND GOES TO LAURA WHO HANDS HER THE ASPIRIN AND THE WATER, SASHA GULPS THEM GRATEFULLY]

LAURA
So would you like to see the house? [SASHA NODS] There's not much to it... this is everything downstairs... there's a little garden out the back and a shed.
Let me show you upstairs. [THEY GO OUT THROUGH THE INTERIOR DOOR. WE CAN HEAR THEM TALKING UPSTAIRS]

LAURA: [OFFSTAGE]

This is the bathroom... I work from home, so you'd be free to shower first in the mornings... I usually work in my pyjamas till about ten. This would be your room... and this is ours... I mean mine...

SASHA: [OFFSTAGE]

Wow... it's all really nice. Did you decorate it yourself?

LAURA: [OFFSTAGE]

I did... I did it all before Gideon moved in with me. He always thought it was a bit girly.

[MEANWHILE GIDEON SITS ON THE SOFA. HE LEANS BACK, LISTENING TO THE WOMEN FOR A WHILE, THEN LOSES INTEREST AND LOOKS AT THE PAPER. HE GOES TO TURN THE PAGE, CAN'T, AND TRIES BLOWING ON THE PAPER. IT DOESN'T SHIFT. HE SITS BACK AND CLOSES HIS EYES. THE WOMEN COME BACK INTO THE ROOM]

SASHA:

I don't think it's girly at all. Like I said, it's a house with soul... with spirit. [GIDEON OPENS HIS EYES AND STARES AT HER]

LAURA:

Just a couple of things... you don't smoke, do you?

SASHA:

No... [GIDEON COUGHS. SHE LOOKS AT HIM, LAURA DOESN'T REGISTER] well, yes, a bit, but never in the house and never in the bedroom, that's for sure. [GIDEON LAUGHS] But didn't Gideon... didn't your partner smoke anyway?

LAURA:

How did you know that?

SASHA: [THINKING QUICKLY]

I saw an ashtray on the kitchen window sill. I was pretty sure you weren't a smoker, so it must have been his.

LAURA:

That was very Sherlock Holmes of you.

SASHA:

What?

[AN AWKWARD MOMENT OF SILENCE]

LAURA:

So Sasha, what do you do? Marianne said something about you being a healer...

SASHA:

Well, I'm learning. I've just finished a Crop Circle Experience, and I'm going to be doing a Bronze Dragon Experience soon – we're going to do dream-weaving and stress melting.

LAURA: [DUBIOUSLY]

Wow... I don't know much about those things... it sounds very interesting...

SASHA:

I mainly do my classes in the evenings though. I work as a receptionist during the day.

LAURA: [RELIEVED]

Oh.

SASHA:

I do have a regular income, if that's what you're worrying about. I brought a bank reference and a letter from my old landlord, and I've brought a month's deposit and the first month's rent in cash. It's £500 a month, isn't it? That's what you told Marianne.

[SHE OPENS HER BAG AND TAKES OUT THREE ENVELOPES, WHICH SHE HANDS TO LAURA. LAURA LOOKS AT THEM BRIEFLY AND THEN SMILES BRIGHTLY]

LAURA:

Well, I haven't got any other questions. If you'd like to move in, I'd love to have you.

SASHA:

Would you? Oh, that's fantastic. [SHE HUGS LAURA SPONTANEOUSLY. GIDEON SNORTS]

LAURA:

If you'd like to bring your stuff over this weekend, I'll make sure the room's all ready, and we can sign the tenancy agreement then.

SASHA:

Brilliant! I'll see you on Saturday morning. [SHE PICKS UP HER BAG AND HEADS TOWARDS THE DOOR. SHE STOPS AND TURNS] Laura, I've got such a good feeling about this. I knew as soon as I walked through the door that I was meant to be here. This is fate. I know it is. [SHE EXITS]

[LAURA SITS DOWN ON THE SOFA NEXT TO GIDEON. SHE RIPS THE THREE ENVELOPES OPEN FEVERISHLY. THE FIRST TWO ARE LETTERS AND SHE TOSSES THEM ASIDE. THE THIRD IS A WAD OF CASH. SHE COUNTS IT QUICKLY. SHE LOOKS DEEPLY RELIEVED. BLACKOUT]

SCENE TWO

[LIGHTS UP. EARLY EVENING, A FEW DAYS LATER. THERE IS A NEW BOOK CASE AND A COUPLE OF BOXES. SASHA IS UNPACKING BOOKS AND ARRANGING ORNAMENTS. HER BOOKS ARE ALL SELF-HELP VOLUMES, HER ORNAMENTS ARE A VARIETY OF ESOTERIC AND QUASI-RELIGIOUS OBJECTS: A VIRGIN MARY, A MENORAH, A DREAM-CATCHER, A BUDDHA. GIDEON IS IN HIS SPOT ON THE SOFA. LAURA IS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN]

SASHA:

So let me get this straight. You can't move?

GIDEON:

Well, movement pre-supposes some sort of body to move around, as it were. I don't have a sense of a physical self at all.

SASHA:

But I can see you!

GIDEON:

I think you're seeing some kind of manifestation of my energy. [STOPS HIMSELF] Bloody hell. Listen to me. I sound like Mystic Meg. Or you. Anyway. There isn't really a me here, so I can't move. Or I don't think I can.

SASHA:

So you're stuck here. In Laura and my living room. Oh dear.

GIDEON:

I know. Believe me, I thought when I died I'd get Nirvana and scantily clad virgins for all eternity, not an Ikea sofa in Cricklewood. It's very disappointing.

SASHA:

At least you get to be close to the woman you love.

GIDEON:

Well, that's something. I don't seem to be much of a comfort to Lozzie, though. She keeps crying. It's awful, and I haven't seen her do any work since I died.

[SASHA STARTS TO UNPACK AGAIN, WITH VEHEMENT ENERGY]

Listen, Sash... I don't really understand why you're here. But it really isn't fair to Laura.

SASHA:

Really? And what about me? How do you think I feel? I've had to deal with you dying too, you know.

GIDEON:

Well you... you're tough. And you get to see me. That's good, isn't it?

SASHA:

Fabulous.

GIDEON:

Well, I just wanted to say that maybe you shouldn't say anything to Laura about us.

SASHA:

Why not?

GIDEON:

She's hurting enough. Does she really need to have my memory sullied?

SASHA:

Sullied? Wow... is that one of your Guardian-reader words for "find out the truth about you?" What did she think you were? Some kind of saint?

GIDEON:

Don't be a bitch. We had a good relationship. We were happy.

SASHA:

So happy you've been sleeping with me for the last six months?

GIDEON:

That's neither here nor there. We were very contented and incredibly close. She trusted me.

SASHA:

So, let me guess. That stuff you told me about her being frigid and you two never having sex wasn't really true.

[GIDEON DOESN'T SAY ANYTHING]

SASHA:

Not going to answer that one? Maybe I'll ask Laura.

GIDEON:

Sasha, so help me God, I'll...

SASHA:

You'll what? What will you do to me? Haunt me? Oooh, I'm terrified. You can't move, she can't even see you, and I can walk away.

GIDEON:

I always knew you were a psycho bitch.

SASHA:

Why thank you. I always knew you were a lying bastard. Count yourself lucky you don't have a bunny. I'd be boiling it right now.