

Hotel Nights

Written by Mariano Rochman, translated by Rose Jones

Every single person who passes through our lives is unique.
Each one leaves behind something of themselves
and takes something from us.
Some will take a lot,
but there will be no one who leaves nothing behind.
That is the definitive proof that two souls
don't just meet by chance.

Jorge Luis Borges

The action takes place in three hotel rooms on four different nights. It's not clear whether two of these nights take place a month before or a month after the first.

ALEX.

Before, not that long ago, I considered myself a lucky guy. When I was in the car or in the mornings, when I saw my reflection in the lift, I'd say: "I like my work, I'm not rolling in money but I'm not hard-up either. I can travel about, give in to the odd impulse, go out for dinner and drink good whisky from time to time. I like reading, sitting on a comfy sofa with soft music on in the background, jazz ideally." I'm what you'd call a creature of habit. My problem is that I've got a messy relationship with my mother, and I don't like talking about it; let he who has no unresolved tensions with either of his parents cast the first stone. See, I *am* talking about it. And my quirk (which I get hung up, even neurotic about) is that I never – absolutely never – remember my dreams. Never. I wake up and all I can remember is the last thing I thought about before I went to sleep. My wife, though, she likes to tell me everything she's dreamed about. When she wakes up, I bring her a coffee and the paper and sit on a chair by the bed while she comes round and pushes the hair out of her face. She looks like anyone else who's just woken up, but you can tell from her eyes whether she's had a good dream or not. This is... or rather was... my life...

Now... now I still can't remember my dreams and above all, I hate hotel rooms.

PART 1

THE CRUCIAL NIGHT IN THE LIVES OF VICTORIA AND ALEX.

(Alex and Victoria are in a hotel room; the mood is celebratory.)

Alex: Let me help you.

Victoria: *(Handing him the bottle of champagne.)* OK, you take that, I'll start opening the box of Swiss chocolates I bought for tonight.

Alex: I'm intrigued by all this posh food.

Victoria: *(Taking a box of expensive-looking chocolates out of its wrapping.)* You'll see we've got cause for celebration.

Alex: So many treats: the Japanese restaurant, this hotel room, champagne, Swiss chocolates – it must be something pretty big.

Victoria: It is!

(Alex uncorks the champagne, the cork bursts out violently and foam spills out of the bottle.)

Alex: Whoops, I'm messing this right up! *(Trying to contain as much as possible and prevent stains.)*

Victoria: Don't worry, it's good luck.

Alex: Like on a podium! *(He sprays Victoria a bit with the foam and drinks straight from the bottle.)*

Victoria: No, we've got to make a toast!

Alex: Sorry, couldn't resist. Ha. *(He pours champagne into two glasses.)* Those chocolates look great!

(Alex reaches for one and Victoria slaps his hand away lightly.)

Victoria: After we've made our toast.

Alex: OK. *(He hands one of the glasses to Victoria.)* Now tell me what we're drinking to...

Victoria: Wait, we're missing two things – candles and music.

Alex: The champagne's going to get warm.

Victoria: Come on, you light the candles and I'll put on the music. There are matches on the bedside table. *(She puts her glass down and takes a tablet and two portable speakers out of her bag and connects them up.)*

Alex: *(Puts his glass down, picks up the matches and lights the two candles.)* This hotel's got everything covered.

Victoria: Certainly does. Let's see if you recognise this... *(She pushes the play button and 'So What' from the album Kind of Blue starts playing.)*

Alex: How could I not?

(Victoria picks up the glasses and passes one to Alex.)

Victoria: OK, ready.

Alex: *(Smiling)* I'm all ears.

Victoria: Congratulations.

(Pause)

Victoria: Congratulations, daddy... you're going to be a dad.

(Silence. Alex has stopped smiling. Victoria clinks her glass against Alex's and wets her lips with the champagne. Alex takes a sip, takes a chocolate and sits down.)

Victoria: You're not... saying anything.

Alex: Yes... *(he puts down the glass of champagne)*

Victoria: Yes what? You've gone mute.

Alex: I'm... I'm thinking.

Victoria: But *what* are you thinking? I don't understand you. I've just given you the kind of news that'll change your life and you haven't got anything to say.

Alex: ...

Victoria: I don't believe it. Did you hear what I said?

Alex: Yes, I heard you.

(Pause)

Victoria: Are you OK, honey? What's going on with you? React, say something?

Alex: I'm surprised.

Victoria: Aren't you excited?

Alex: It's not about that.

Victoria: What's it about, then?

Alex: *(Puts his glass down, having drunk barely any.)* Is there whisky?

Victoria: There is... but what about the champagne? It cost me a fortune...

Alex: *(Picks up a glass and the ice bucket.)* Do you want one?

Victoria: I'm pregnant? *(Puts her glass down, having not drunk any champagne.)*

(Alex starts taking the ice cubes out and putting them in the glass. Victoria picks up the box of chocolates and starts chain-eating several.)

Victoria: I don't... I don't understand. What's going on with you? Say something!

Alex: (*Pouring himself whisky.*) I don't know... I'm thinking and I don't know...

Victoria: I thought you'd be jumping for joy.

Alex: Yeah, that'd be the normal reaction for a guy who finds out he's going to be a father.

He'd get excited, shout, jump for joy.

Victoria: I was honestly expecting a different reaction.

Alex: (*Downing the whisky.*) I can't have children.