

THE TOURISTS



Margot, Zoe, Myra, and Emily are playing cards, with Margot and Myra as partners. All four are in their 50s and have known each other casually for many years. The card game is a weekly habit and rotates from house to house of the four. Tonight is Margot's turn.

Margot Zoe, I hear your daughter's in Europe.

.Zoe Yes.

Margot Whereabouts?

Zoe Freiburg, she says.

Myra I had an interesting experience in Freiburg
once. Two hearts.

Emily My dear, you can't bid two hearts.

Myra Why not?

Emily Because it isn't your turn.

Myra, totally unflustered, sips her tea noisily.

Emily My dear —

Myra You're going to tell me not to slurp my tea.

Emily I was not. Two hearts.

Myra Yes you were.

Now exasperated, Myra's voice trails off and she turns to look out the window where only a streetlight can be seen. They play the hand. Margot shuffles the cards for a new hand and begins to deal them out — Emily, Myra, Zoe, herself. Zoe picks up her hand and makes a sour face.

Margot They do it that way in Japan. The Japanese.
Tea.

Zoe: Tea. I've never been to Japan. Pass.

Margot and Emily tussle with the bid. Margot takes it.

Myra I had an interesting experience in Freiburg once.

Zoe Yes? It's your lead, Em.

Emily spreads out her cards on the table to form the widow.

Margot It's mine.

Zoe Is it?

Margot [muttering] For Heaven's sake.

Margot defiantly lays a card on the table. Emily plays, Margot slides a card from the widow, Emily puts down her cards and stands.

Emily Don't you think it's hot in here? I'll just open the window.

Margot hisses with annoyance.

Margot It's your play.

Emily What? Oh, yes. It is. Two hearts.

Myra I was staying in a bed and breakfast that the Freiburg hostel service found for me.

Zoe: How do those things work?

Myra is impatient at being interrupted.

Zoe Apparently you go to an office somewhere and say – well, say you haven't any place to stay?

Margot I thought you had to be a young person.

Emily [stiffens at a perceived insult] My daughter's thirty-five. Are you going to play?

Zoe What? Oh, yes. Two hearts.

Margot Get on with it, will you?

Myra Yes. Well, on Saturday – that's market day, you know – I took the train from Kirchgarten, I think it was –

Zoe Freiburg, I thought.

Myra No, dear. The hostel people sent me to Kirchgarten. Quite a nice place. One of those ecological toilets with the heated seats which munch everything up.

Emily looks a bit green

Myra: I took the train in, you see, to go to the market. I had wondered, that afternoon, as I was having my wine – do you know, their Alsatian wine is quite good, rather like English tea is better in England. There's a shop in Oxford – Where was I? Oh, yes. As I was having my wine I noticed that there were quite number of people going by on bicycles with four or five baguettes in their baskets and when I got back to the station the platform was empty, so I supposed that was why.

Zoe: Why what was why?

Myra: That it was Saturday and things would be closing up. I waited quite a long time and there was no train. Someone else who was waiting consulted the schedule posted there and announced that the train did not run on Saturday after noon, but there was a bus, so we all went to buy tickets. We had a supper in the cafeteria. By then it was pitch dark, and I was worried I wouldn't know where to get off, and I kept badgering the driver about it. Finally the driver stopped along the road and said "Hier est, mein dame" or something like that and got down from the bus and pointed out which way I was to go.

Zoe: That's it? That's your story? That you missed your bus?

Emily: It was a train, dear. There was no train. I hadn't read the schedule properly. I'll just shut the window. [She gets up to do it.] Well, now I don't know. Perhaps it was in Strausbourg.

Zoe: I've never been to Strausbourg. My daughter didn't say she was in Strausbourg. Where is Kirchzarten, anyway?

Emily: Would you look at that?

Myra: What?

The others get up and go over to the window.

Emily: There. Under the streetlamp.

Myra: I don't see it.

Emily: Yes, well it's gone now. Whose play is it?