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SCRIPT SAMPLE

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The Broken Museum

By Christopher Ellis

SETTING:

An immaculate apartment on St. Charles in the Garden District of New Orleans.

There are three large paintings centered on each wall of the living room creating a triptych of different colors and variations.

On the back wall, up left of the center painting, is a small circular window, which is slightly open. Two white curtains are on either side of the window and move gently in the wind.

Upstage center below the painting is a green couch. To the left of the couch is a stand up lamp, to the right a stand up ashtray. Behind the couch is a working old-fashioned record player.

Behind the ashtray is a small black coffee table with a bowl of peaches.

A bar table is by the left sidewall just to the right below the painting with several different liquor bottles on top.

Upstage left is a doorway on the far right side.

Several feet from the doorway is a stool, canvas, and easel with a white cloth top below this set-up. On top of the stool are paintbrushes, paint tubes, and a color board.

Downstage left is another black stool on top of a Turkish rug.

Scenes begin and end with the sound of a streetcar passing from the street below, and periodically they can be heard in the distance.

Nelson shakes his head slightly.

NELSON

Black.

A sound of a streetcar.

KATE

Dark?

NELSON

More pale. Thin.

Pause.

NELSON

How was your shower?

KATE

Who is he?

Lights up on JONATHAN leaning on the side wall smoking an unfiltered cigarette.

NELSON

I met him on the street.

Pause.

NELSON

In the Quarter.

KATE

(quickly)

His name?

NELSON

Jonathan.

JONATHAN

(immediate)

Ten-fifty for a steak and all you can eat buffet. Another thirty for a new pair of shoes and socks.

NELSON

(to Kate)

I gave him money.

JONATHAN

Had a little left over so I bought a pack of
cigs.

NELSON

(acknowledging Jonathan)

Jonathan, this is my wife Kate. Kate,
Jonathan.

KATE

(standing)

Hello.

Jonathan walks past her. He examines the painting located on the fourth wall above the audience.

JONATHAN

(to Nelson)

You did that.

NELSON

Do you like it?

JONATHAN

I saw it on a postcard once.

NELSON

(gesturing to the black stool)

Please, sit down.

KATE

Can I take your coat? Backpack?

JONATHAN

No.

Jonathan sits in the black stool. He puts his backpack beside him on the floor. Nelson hands him a glass of vodka and keeps the brandy for himself.

NELSON

Vodka?

JONATHAN

Yes. I don't have to take my clothes off do
I?

NELSON
(slight laugh)
Not if you don't want to.

JONATHAN
I've done it before. For money. Once this
guy gave me fifty to lick his boots while
he got off.

Jonathan downs his vodka and hands back the glass.

NELSON
(taking a sip of brandy)
Another?

Jonathan nods his head. Nelson walks back to the bar and pours Jonathan another glass. Kate drinks her coffee. Nelson hands Jonathan the glass.

Pause.

JONATHAN
I didn't but the postcard.

JONATHAN
I didn't buy the postcard.

NELSON
Photography was my first love.

Jonathan swallows the vodka.

KATE
(to Jonathan)
He had three shoeboxes full of black and
whites. When we were married they
disappeared.

NELSON
Wanted to start anew.

JONATHAN
Mailed them to friends? Thought they
might find a better use?

NELSON
Exactly.

Silence.

Nelson walks to the canvas. He begins choosing the oil paints he is to use. Throughout, he periodically looks up at Jonathan then back down at his work. Kate stands and walks to the bar table. She discreetly pours vodka into her cup of coffee hoping Nelson won't notice. Jonathan doesn't move.

KATE
(to Jonathan)
Were his boots on or off...?

Jonathan looks at Kate.

Pause.

JONATHAN
(defensive)
I don't remember.

Jonathan lights another cigarette from a book of matches in his coat pocket.

NELSON
(looking for a certain color)
I suppose he'd have them on.

JONATHAN
I don't remember!

KATE
I'm sorry, I didn't mean-

JONATHAN
Do you like my new shoes?

KATE
What?

JONATHAN
My shoes. Do you like them?

KATE
Yes.

JONATHAN
They fit well.

Pause.

JONATHAN

Do you want to feel? (Jonathan pushes the top forward part of the shoe in) Find the big toe. I made sure this time. That it fit snug so they wouldn't rub.

Kate walks over. She feels the shoe to find the fit.

Pause.

KATE

They're too big. Loose. They'll hurt your feet.

JONATHAN

That's not true! I made sure.

KATE

Jonathan they're too big. You can return them.

JONATHAN

(standing)

You're lying! You fucking liar!

Kate doesn't move. Jonathan and Kate look hard at one another. Nelson has put down his paints and goes over to them. He tries to move Jonathan away from Kate.

JONATHAN

(to Nelson)

Don't touch me!

Kate turns away and walks to the couch. She sits down. Kate puts her head down and covers her face with her hands.

JONATHAN

(to Nelson)

They do fit.

NELSON

They fit. You're right.

JONATHAN

Does she think so?

NELSON

I'm sure she does.

Pause.

NELSON

Kate?

KATE

Get him out of here.

NELSON

Yes. She does.

Jonathan sits back down.

JONATHAN

I don't have to stay.

Silence.

Nelson walks to the bar table and pours another drink. Kate and Jonathan don't move.

JONATHAN

I met this girl once. I saw her while waiting for a pick-up. It was inside this run down café that looked like a second hand store. She was chain smoking and drinking a bottomless cup of coffee. Her eyes were red and she was wiping away what wasn't there.

Pause.

JONATHAN

I lit a cigarette myself so she wouldn't think I was a panzy.

Pause.

JONATHAN

Every now and then she'd take a half-pint bottle from her coat and pour some into her cup. Sneak it back. I walked to the table and sat down across from her. We said nothing. My hands were in my lap. I was staring... her every move... what it would be like to touch. She said he, whoever he is, paid more attention to his books than her.

NELSON

Took her for granted.

JONATHAN

Exactly. So she said she flipped through his thesaurus to the word sad and under it drew little arrows to the words dull, painful, and... (thinking) dejected. Funny he never wanted to know a different name for sad.

Pause.

KATE

What was her name?

Kate drinks the rest of her coffee.

JONATHAN

I don't remember.

Kate stands.

KATE

Who wants something?

NELSON

No thank you, no. Jonathan?

JONATHAN

No.

Kate walks from the room with the coffee cup. Nelson drinks his brandy. He walks back to the easel.

NELSON
Would you like me to show you how to treat
a canvas before painting?

JONATHAN
No.

NELSON
You take what is called rabbit skin oil. It's
the old way and what I consider the only
way.

Nelson begins applying the oil to the canvas. Jonathan stands. He slowly approaches the canvas to see what Nelson is doing.

JONATHAN
Later she told me something else. He'd
ignored her from the get-go. That wasn't
the real reason she was upset.

Pause.

JONATHAN
Rabbit skin?

NELSON
Yes. You'll want to cover the whole
canvas with it.

Pause.

NELSON
Something he did?

JONATHAN
Something she found.

NELSON
Of his?

JONATHAN
Yes. Something secret.

Pause.

JONATHAN

Do I look old to you? Older than my age
I mean.

NELSON

I don't know.

Nelson goes back to his work.

Pause.

JONATHAN

That's what they say.

NELSON

I wouldn't know. (finishing his work)
Now wait until dry before putting on the
white.

Kate enters. She has a cigarette between her fingers. She sits stage left on the couch.

NELSON

(to Kate)

I was showing Jonathan how to pre-ready
ones canvas.

KATE

Coffee's brewing.

She takes a peach slice from the bowl and eats it. She smokes.

NELSON

(to Jonathan)

That's the thing about oils. If you make a
mistake you cover it up. No one will ever
notice.

KATE

Add one more layer.

JONATHAN

When are we doing this?

NELSON

Soon.

Silence.

Kate finishes her cigarette and extinguishes it. Jonathan pours himself a drink. Kate lies down.

KATE
(to Nelson)
Where's your hat? (to Jonathan) His
lucky hat.

Pause.

KATE
(looking at Nelson)
Can't do a thing without it.

They stare each other down.

NELSON
Do you know where it is?

KATE
No.