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Abstract Nude
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*More Great Plays From
Original Works Publishing*

The Arctic Circle

(and a recipe for Swedish pancakes)

by Samantha Macher

3 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: A Brechtian comedy about a woman in a troubled marriage who travels through time, space and Sweden to reexamine her past relationships for solutions to her newly found troubles. Unable to get the clear answers she needs, she must look inside herself to find what she is looking for.

Cracked

by Gwydion Suilebhan

1 Female

Synopsis: Just another episode of a run-of-the-mill cooking show transforms into an intricate, otherworldly grief ritual as the program's hostess — or is she some kind of middle-class priestess? — devises increasingly elaborate ways in which to defer the simple act of cracking an egg. When it's finally time for the demonstration, will she actually be able to just... let go?

ABSTRACT NUDE

by

Gwydion Suilebhan

CHARACTERS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Lola | F, late 20s |
| Hank (Henrietta), her best friend | F, mid 30s |
| Buggy | M, early 20s |
| Tyler, his best friend | M, early 20s |
| Mark | M, early 50s |
| Genevieve, his wife | F, late 40s |
| Edward, their son | M, teens |

SETTINGS

Three very different living rooms, plus an alley.

ABSTRACT NUDE was originally produced in the Capital Fringe Festival in 2007. Directed by Merry Alderman, the cast was as follows:

| | |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Lola | Teresa Castracane |
| Hank | Jen Plants |
| Buggy | Josh Thelin |
| Tyler | Clay Steakley |
| Mark | John Lescault |
| Genevieve | Naomi Jacobson |
| Edward | Peter Vance |

And the crew:

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Scenery | Robby Hayes |
| Lighting | Andrew F. Griffin |
| Costumes | Martin Schnellinger |
| Sound | Charles Phaneuf |
| Stage Manager | Taryn Staples |

ABSTRACT NUDE

SCENE ONE

(Evening. An alley: a bare brick wall with a door—the entrance to a painter's studio. A dumpster nearby. HANK, a somewhat plain woman, enters the alley and approaches the door. She thinks about knocking, then briefly loses heart and considers leaving. After a moment in which she examines the dingy alley, she turns back to the door and knocks. No response. She knocks again, this time with a bit more force. Again, no response. She starts pounding on the door with great vigor. Her knocking is interrupted by the hurried arrival of MARK, an older man, who enters carrying a painting wrapped in plain brown paper.)

MARK: Has the door misbehaved in some way?

HANK: What?

MARK: You're giving it quite the spanking.

(HANK indicates the door.)

HANK: Are you him?

MARK: No.

HANK: Shit.

MARK: Is he not here?

HANK: Either that or he's hiding.

(MARK knocks, waits a bit, then knocks again more loudly. No response.)

MARK: Damn.

(They both wait silently. Neither of them is inclined to leave.)

HANK: That one of his?

(She indicates the painting MARK is holding.)

MARK: Yes.

HANK: You like his work?

MARK: Oh, no. Definitely not.

HANK: Really?

MARK: The way you were... *(He mimes banging the door.)* I'm guessing you don't, either.

HANK: I suppose I don't.

(A long silence.)

MARK: Are you... meeting him here?

HANK: No, I just... I thought he might be here. You?

MARK: Same.

(MARK knocks. No response. HANK sits beside the door.)

MARK: You're waiting?

HANK: Yes.

MARK: No matter how long it takes?

HANK: I need to see him.

MARK: You... a friend of his?

HANK: No. You?

MARK: No.

(Another silence. MARK thinks of leaving, changes his mind.)

MARK: So... you hate his work.

(HANK considers the question.)

MARK: This is not a difficult question, I assume.

HANK: Well, it sort of is. I mean, I did actually like it at first. But then I learned more about it, and I really couldn't stand it. It just... wasn't what I thought it was. You know how that happens?

MARK: It's deceitful.

HANK: Yes. That's it. And so... what about you? You just... outright hate it.

MARK: Had an instant distaste for it that grew into loathing the longer I spent in its presence. But I still... I understand what this is worth. Financially. Which is why I'm not going to, I don't know, throw it in that dumpster.

HANK: Why would you say that?

MARK: I find it dangerous.

HANK: No, I mean... why would you put it that way? That you'd throw it in the dumpster?

MARK: That's where trash belongs.

HANK: Oh.

(A quick beat.)

HANK: So then... why are you here?

MARK: I'm going to force him to buy it back from me. First I'm going to scold him till he's standing in a puddle of his own sweat, and then I'm going to make him get his checkbook out.

HANK: Well, that's... wow.

MARK: Of course, I'm not a fool. I know he'll just turn around and sell it to someone else, but --

HANK: Wait a minute. If you hate the thing so much, why did you buy it in the first place?

MARK: I didn't. My goddamn wife did.

HANK: Oh.

(A beat.)

MARK: So why are you here?

HANK: To... try to get one of his paintings back from him.

MARK: But... you said you don't --

HANK: Not for me, for my... for a friend of mine.

MARK: He likes this guy's work?

HANK: She.

(A quick beat.)

MARK: So this... friend of yours likes this guy's work?

HANK: She has a special connection to one piece in particular.

MARK: What does that mean?

HANK: He painted her portrait.

(MARK glances at the wrapped painting.)

MARK: She didn't like what he did?

HANK: Well, she sort of did. But I didn't. I told her to get rid of it. So she brought it right here to that dumpster, right to his studio door, where she knew he'd see it, and threw it away.

(A quick beat.)

MARK: How wonderfully bold.

HANK: You think?

MARK: To have the absolute conviction to give up all that... equity potential –

HANK: Because someone else told you to?

MARK: I happen to believe that if more people resisted their base desires and did what they were told to, what they knew to be right, the world would be a better place.

HANK: What about... defiance? Or passion?

(MARK holds up his painting.)

MARK: This is not passion. It's perversion.

HANK: Different people have different definitions of perversion.

MARK: Well, some of those people are wrong.

(A beat.)

HANK: What's it a picture of?

MARK: A... woman.

HANK: Like... a portrait? Long dress, fake smile, vase full of flowers.

MARK: I wouldn't call this a portrait. It's... the pose is the sort of thing one gets caned for in certain countries. It's distinctly indecent.

HANK: In what way?

MARK: Piquing your interest?

HANK: How is she posed?

MARK: I thought you hated his work.

HANK: I hate him. The painting is... something else. Can I see it?

MARK: No.

HANK: You won't let me see it for one second?

MARK: Why do you want to see it?

HANK: Because it sounds like my girlfriend's painting.

MARK: Oh, so she's your girlfriend now?

HANK: No, she's --

MARK: I should probably burn it.

HANK: You don't have the guts. You have your hands wrapped around it like it's a fistful of money.

MARK: You have no standing on which to judge me, young lady.

HANK: Oh, I think I do.

MARK: It is a fistful of money!

HANK: It's art.

MARK: Wait a minute! Let me get this straight. You absolutely hate it, but you also still want it. You're telling me I should treat it like garbage, but you came here to try to get it back. Where's the logic?

HANK: I hate what it represents. But it's still beautiful.

MARK: What, is this some lesbian thing I wouldn't understand?

HANK: It's complicated. Life is complicated!

MARK: People like you make it complicated.

HANK: What do you mean, people like me?

MARK: When you want something, but you know, deep down, you're not supposed to have it, you need to find a way to stop wanting it. To exercise discipline. It's as simple as that.

(MARK turns to leave.)

HANK: Wait!

(He stops.)

HANK: I can tell you feel strongly about this. I mean, I know we disagree, but I hear you. I do. But that woman, in that painting... she needs that portrait. She's desperate for it. And I want to be able to give it to her, because... I love her. So, I know we're complete strangers, but I'm asking you, as one human being to another. Help me help her.

(A long beat.)

MARK: How much?

(A quick beat.)

HANK: You want me to buy it?

MARK: Well, I did intend to make him pay for it, but if it means that much to you, I'll sell it to you. Though you'll have to pay a premium for depriving me of the chance to exact some revenge.

(A quick beat.)

HANK: I... can't afford what it's worth.

MARK: I'm sorry, then.

(He turns again to leave.)

HANK: Please!

(He stops.)

HANK: At least let me see it. At least let me see it's not lost. So I can tell her it's somewhere. That it still exists.

MARK: Look. Take my advice. Go to this woman and tell her she exists. Because that's all that really matters, trust me. This version of her, if it is her... it's nothing.

(MARK leaves. HANK lingers, watching him go, then suddenly bangs her fists against the studio door.)

SCENE TWO

(Two days earlier. The living room of a well-appointed townhouse. All is as it should be: the couch, end tables, and pillows are all poised precisely as if arranged for a photograph, though a pair of sneakers has been tossed absent-mindedly onto the floor. The walls are hung with photos of a small boy, as well as a beautiful, well-framed reproduction of a trompe l'oeil still life. GENEVIEVE, an elegant woman, enters through the front door carrying the painting, which is now unwrapped, and calls out over her shoulder.)

GENEVIEVE: Mark?

(MARK enters from the bedroom.)

GENEVIEVE: Hello, darling.

MARK: Where have you been? We should have left for dinner five minutes ago.

GENEVIEVE: That's a fine way to greet a brilliant, beautiful woman returning home with spoils.

(She pouts. He sighs.)

MARK: Show me what you found.

(She shows him the painting.)

MARK: Genevieve, dear... this is hardly our style of work.

GENEVIEVE: It's a Jake Cohen.

MARK: Is that the fellow you've been on about, the new –

GENEVIEVE: Yes!

MARK: What did you pay?

GENEVIEVE: Five hundred dollars.

MARK: What?

GENEVIEVE: I know.

(He stares at it for a long beat.)

MARK: In a few years, this will be... Edward's tuition.

GENEVIEVE: No, it most certainly will not.

MARK: What do you mean? We're not keeping this.

GENEVIEVE: Why not?

MARK: It's impossible.

GENEVIEVE: Anything's possible.

MARK: Do you have any idea what this could bring?

GENEVIEVE: Yes. I do. It could bring a little culture into our household. A little excitement. A little something... out of the ordinary.

(She sets the painting down, then moves toward him seductively.)

GENEVIEVE: We can keep it in the bedroom.

MARK: Honey, the Smalls are expecting us.

(She starts to kiss him. He resists at first—clearly accustomed to saying no—but as she buries herself in his neck, his eye returns to the painting, from which he cannot look away. She starts to back him up slowly toward the couch, and as she does, he begins to give in to the passion—which is suddenly interrupted as he trips over the discarded pair of sneakers and falls backward onto the floor.)

MARK: Damn it!

GENEVIEVE *(giggling)*: Are you okay?

(MARK hauls himself back to his feet, grabbing the sneakers on the way.)

MARK: No. Why can't Edward keep this house the way we want it?

GENEVIEVE: He tries, Mark.

MARK: He doesn't try that hard! It's like his life just leaks out all over the place. He leaves trails behind him everywhere he goes. Like he never learned to color inside the lines.

GENEVIEVE: He's a young man.

MARK: I'm a man, too. You don't see my things where they're not supposed to be. It's that therapist. "All boys your age need to express themselves." What kind of advice is that? He needs to learn constraints.

GENEVIEVE: He's finding himself.

MARK: He can find himself within the confines of what's appropriate for a normal human being.

GENEVIEVE: Darling, I have a small suggestion. Let's just put these over here for a while...

(She sets Edward's shoes neatly off to the side of the couch, then rests the painting beside them.)

GENEVIEVE: And then you and I, for a few little minutes, we'll just focus on us.

(She begins to caress and seduce and kiss him again.)

GENEVIEVE: We'll go back in the bedroom, you'll unfasten my necklace, you'll help me take off this silly little outfit.

MARK: We don't have time.

GENEVIEVE: You can arrange my hair for me, choose my earrings, tell me what dress to put on. You can even help me into my lingerie, like you used to, remember? It makes me feel so beautiful.

(A beat.)

MARK: Quickly.

(They disappear into the bedroom. A beat later, EDWARD emerges from a different bedroom, yawning and stretching as if just awoken.)

EDWARD: Dad?

(No answer. He looks for his shoes, sees where they've been moved, picks them up, then notices the painting. He slumps beside it on the couch, dumping his shoes back onto the floor, then picks up the painting and stares at it for a long beat, bewildered by its presence in his home. As he continues to examine it, he begins, half-consciously, to touch himself. His ardor grows quickly, as only a teenage boy's ardor can. He looks around again, trying to determine whether he's alone.)

EDWARD: Dad? Mom?

(No answer. He waits a short beat, then takes the painting with him back into his bedroom. MARK and GENEVIEVE reappear from their bedroom. He is readjusting his clothes. She is wearing only lingerie.)

MARK: I just... can't.

GENEVIEVE: Mark.

MARK: Edward's here. You need to put on clothes. And we're late enough already as it is.

GENEVIEVE: What's happening to us?

MARK: Nothing's happening. Nothing. We have dinner plans. I'm hungry, for God's sake.

(A beat. She notices the shoes on the floor, picks one up.)

GENEVIEVE: You never want me anymore.

MARK: That's not true, Genevieve.

GENEVIEVE: He leaves the shoes here because this is where he takes them off and puts them on every day. This is the natural place they end up. It's... organic.

MARK: I have no idea what you're talking about. Shoes have a place. Things go where they go.

GENEVIEVE: You're so literal.

MARK: I'm grounded. Will you go get dressed?

(A quick beat, then she drops the shoes at her feet and exits.)

GENEVIEVE: You can go by yourself.'

MARK: Genevieve...

(She is gone. He yanks the shoes up off the floor, looks around for somewhere to put them, then heads toward EDWARD's room, opening the door without knocking.)

MARK: Edward! You have to start learning to –

EDWARD *(from offstage)*: Dad!

MARK: What are you doing? Stop that!

(MARK flings the shoes at EDWARD.)

EDWARD *(from offstage)*: Ow! Dad?

(GENEVIEVE re-enters, wearing a robe.)

GENEVIEVE: What's the matter? What happened?

MARK: He has the painting in there. In his room.

GENEVIEVE: Eddie does?

MARK: He was "using" it, Genevieve.

(A beat. She understands.)

GENEVIEVE: The Jake Cohen?

MARK: Yes, for God's sake, the Jake Cohen! He turned your precious painting that you HAD to bring into this house into some fifty thousand dollar porno magazine.

GENEVIEVE: Mark! Stop. Listen to yourself. Wait for a second. Think. He's a boy. It's... that kind of image. You would have done the same thing at his age.

MARK: I didn't even know things like that existed when I was his age!

GENEVIEVE: Things like what, exactly? Art? Fine, abstract art?

(MARK indicates the still life on the wall.)

MARK: That is fine art, Genevieve.

(MARK indicates EDWARD's bedroom.)

MARK: That, what's in there, that's... a lack of discipline. We have to stop this permissiveness once and for all. There will be no more sloppiness in this household. No more therapists. No more self-expression. No more shoes.

(A quick beat.)

GENEVIEVE: Good, then. We'll all go barefoot.

MARK: Don't you mock me, Genevieve. This is critical. Edward, get out here!

GENEVIEVE: Whatever you think you're about to do, Mark, you'd better think twice about it.

MARK: Oh, I've already thought twice.

GENEVIEVE: You'd better just take a deep breath, say a prayer, do whatever you have to, because I'm not about to stand here and let you humiliate our son for being desirous. There's nothing wrong with what he did.

MARK: Desirous? He was debasing himself with a painting. Edward!
Can't you see why that's wrong?

GENEVIEVE: You don't give a damn about that painting. I could see it
in your eyes the second I showed it to you. All you care about is
what it's worth, what you could make off of it.

MARK: We need the money.

GENEVIEVE: We need so much more than money I can't even stand
it!

MARK: Genevieve –

GENEVIEVE: You know what's making you so mad? The fact that
your son has more passion in his heart in fifteen minutes than you've
had in the last fifteen goddamn years.

*(A long beat. EDWARD enters, crying. He is walking gingerly, as if
injured.)*

EDWARD: I'm sorry, Mom.

GENEVIEVE: No, no, no, no, no. You didn't do anything wrong, Ed-
ward.

MARK: Yes, he did. He –

EDWARD: YOU did!

MARK: I did?! I did?

EDWARD *(overlapping)*: Yes!

MARK: You have got a lot to/ learn, young man.

GENEVIEVE *(to EDWARD, overlapping)*: What did he do?

MARK: You're sick. You have a sickness./ You need to learn how to
control --

GENEVIEVE *(to MARK, overlapping)*: What did you do? Mark!

(He falls silent.)

GENEVIEVE: What did you do?

(A beat. GENEVIEVE watches as EDWARD limps across the room to the couch.)

MARK: Nothing. It was an accident.

GENEVIEVE: Tell me you didn't just –

MARK: They slipped! I was just trying to say something.

GENEVIEVE: You hit your own son/ in the –

MARK *(overlapping)*: I did not!

GENEVIEVE: You did.

EDWARD: Yes, you did.

MARK: It was an accident, for God's sake.

GENEVIEVE: Like hell it was.

EDWARD; It was not.

MARK: All I did was draw a line. A clean, clear, straight-and-narrow line, right through all this nonsense. Exactly what a father needs to be doing. What I should have been doing a long time now. *(to EDWARD)* And honestly? Deep down? You probably wanted me to.

SCENE THREE

(Earlier the same day. An apartment. A couch, a large mirror hanging over it, and several boxes of trash heaped in the center of the room. LOLA, a vivacious woman, picks up a random object, eyes it, thinks about throwing it in the trash can, then puts it back where it was. Another object, a quick decision this time: the trash. A beat, then back to the first object: the trash as well. A knock at the door. She checks her watch, starts to primp herself in the mirror, stops herself, then opens the door. It is TYLER, a thoughtful and sweet young man.)

LOLA: You're early.

TYLER: Sorry?

LOLA: I was told noon.

TYLER: Oh. That's... no.

LOLA: You here to haul out the junk?

TYLER: I'm here about the painting. Lost: one abstract nude, generous reward? I saw a flyer.

LOLA: Oh... wow. I'd given up. It's been...

TYLER: Sorry. I got here as quick as --

LOLA: Wait. Why didn't you call? And... how did you find me?

TYLER: Well, on the flyer I saw your number was torn off, but it did have your name, so I just, you know... asked people.

LOLA: People? What people?

TYLER: On the street. In the neighborhood. Excuse me, do you happen to know a woman named Lola who lives around here?

LOLA: You did not.

TYLER: I had no other way.

LOLA: That is so... that had to have taken like, what, a day?

TYLER: Four. Well, parts of four. Maybe all together a full day. Anyway, it was no big deal. I met so many nice people. I never realized what a great neighborhood this is. I actually just moved out of a place around the corner. Funny how you don't really appreciate something until you lose it.

LOLA: I'm sorry... who are you again?

TYLER: Tyler.

LOLA: Thank you, Tyler.

(She shakes his hand.)

TYLER: You're quite welcome.

LOLA: And how... I mean... you have it? The painting?

TYLER: Oh. Uh, no. But I think I know who does! Only I can't find him. He won't return my calls. He's... the guy whose place I just moved out of. Anyway, he changed the locks already, which is nothing short of miraculous, given what kind of guy he is, or I'd have just gone in and taken it off the wall for you. Which would be okay, really, wouldn't have been, you know, stealing, because he actually sort of gave it to me. The painting. It was a gift. But I didn't really force the issue, you know, I didn't try to get the new key from the landlord or anything, because I wasn't even sure I'd be able to find you. Know what I mean?

LOLA: Yes. No. I mean—

TYLER: You think I'm crazy, I know.

LOLA: No, I was just expecting --

TYLER: No, it's okay, I think I'm crazy, too. I mean, I've just spent four days trying to find some strange woman who's looking for her painting, and --

LOLA: And you don't even/ have the painting.

TYLER (*overlapping*): Have the painting, right. What the hell's wrong with me?

LOLA: I know. What IS wrong with you?

(*They chuckle together, LOLA half-nervously. A quick beat.*)

TYLER: I really --

LOLA: So, I should be --

(*A quick beat.*)

TYLER: You first.

LOLA: No, you.

TYLER: I insist.

LOLA: Are you always this... you know... nice?

TYLER: You say it like it's a bad thing.

LOLA: No, I'm sorry. Forget it. What were you going to say?

TYLER: It's not like I'm ashamed of it.

LOLA: No, of course. And you shouldn't. It's --

TYLER: Too many men are afraid to be gentle and kind. We're all such adolescent, juvenile pigs. I mean, I feel like... we ought to be ashamed. Don't you think?

(LOLA tries to respond, but doesn't even know where to start.)

TYLER: Sorry. Here.

(He holds out a piece of paper.)

TYLER: You can ask my old roommate about the painting yourself. This is his number. Sorry I bothered you.

(She takes the paper. He starts to leave.)

LOLA: Wait. Stop. We're having a conversation here. You can't just walk out.

TYLER: You don't have... junk to gather?

LOLA: No. I'm done. It's all going. I'm getting rid of everything, I've decided.

TYLER: You're not... moving, too, are you?

LOLA: No. This is... I'm trying to figure out what I want and don't want. In general. It's just... never mind.

TYLER: No, you don't have to do that.

LOLA: Do what?

TYLER: You just interrupted yourself./ But I'm not—

LOLA *(overlapping)*: No, I didn't, did I?

TYLER: Yes, you did, you didn't even notice. But I'm not the kind of guy who --

LOLA: It wasn't really anyth --

TYLER: No. I'm not the kind of a guy who needs to control a conversation. Or a woman, for that matter. You can just open up, I promise. Without judgment.

(A beat.)

LOLA: You're a little bit annoying. How's that?

(A quick beat.)

LOLA: I mean, you're cute, too, but really annoying. You spent the better part of four days trying to find me to tell me... nothing definitive whatsoever about anything at all?

(A quick beat.)

TYLER: It's... a bit more complicated than that.

LOLA: Is that actually possible?

TYLER: Well, it's... yes? Sort of. I just... really wanted to find a way to meet the woman behind that painting.

LOLA: Gee, I wonder why you might want --

TYLER: Oh! No! It's not, you know, THAT. Believe me. No.

LOLA: Sure.

TYLER: I swear! It was just... when I first saw the painting... you have to understand the context. This guy, my ex, my ex-roommate, he's like... stuck in puberty. And he's got this thing about... don't take this the wrong way, but... porn.

LOLA starts to respond, but he continues, cutting her off.

TYLER: I know, I know. I mean, where I grew up, when you had that stuff, you hid it. Like... under some old rugs inside a piano down in your best friend's basement. But he had it everywhere! I mean, seriously: everywhere. Magazines, web sites, DVDs. You would not believe how many DVDs. And after a while, it starts to get inside you. You start to see it everywhere you look. Billboards, they look like porn. Commercials, porn. TV shows, newspaper photos. Porn,

porn, porn, porn, porn, porn, porn, porn. Even the way the woman at the organic market reaches up to put almond butter on the top shelf looks like a scene from a porn movie.

(With TYLER's back turned, LOLA, confused, lifts her arm as if she's re-stocking a shelf. As he turns around, she lowers her arm quickly.)

TYLER: And then, one day, he brings home this.... well, I mean, at first glance, I thought it was just more porn. And I thought... wow, I have to get out of here. I have to change my life. So I started. I moved. And then I saw your flier, and I thought That's what I need to do. I need to help this woman. I need to be there for her. And so... I'm here.

(A quick beat.)

LOLA: You're here for me? To be here for me?

TYLER: Yes. I mean I really thought, honestly, on behalf of all men everywhere... I thought we owed it to you.

(A quick beat.)

LOLA: Oh my god. Who the hell do you think you are?

TYLER: Excuse me?

LOLA: You are so completely self-deceived. You have no idea. You don't know what I need. You don't even know me.

TYLER: I feel like I do, though, from --

LOLA: And what makes you think you're so important? That you, on behalf of all men, can have some effect on me? I've never actually heard anything more arrogant in my entire life.

TYLER: I didn't mean to --

LOLA: And you can't tell me, you can't, that in some small part of your brain, somewhere, you didn't actually think that if you came here, if you did this thing for me, this big thing that's supposed to be some gigantic apology, that I might actually reward you with, I don't know, a blowjob?

TYLER: No!

LOLA: I'm a lesbian, for god's sake!

(A quick beat.)

TYLER: Really?

LOLA: I don't know. What does it matter?

(A beat.)

TYLER: You know, I really did think about your painting a lot. Every time I saw the flier, with that little sketch you did, I thought Why this image? Why that pose? Why those colors? What does it mean? I thought maybe, if I let go of my ego enough, if I let go of myself, I might finally understand this amazing, mysterious, pornographic self-portrait.

(LOLA laughs at him.)

TYLER: Hey, at least I tried! I mean, how many idiots out there look at art and say Hey, that would look good with my lamp.

LOLA: No, it's not that. That's totally admirable. It's just you're making one huge, critical mistake. I didn't paint it. I'm not even an artist. It's a picture of me, not by me. It was a gift. From the painter. And... I hate to tell you this, after everything you've done, but I think... I don't even want it any more.

(A quick beat.)

LOLA: Look... don't feel too badly. I mean, it's an honest mistake. You look at a painting, sometimes, and you see what you want to see, or what you're taught to see, instead of what's actually there. It's like with people, too.

(A beat.)

TYLER: You know, sometimes my roommate... well, you know, I like to talk to women, to really get to know them. And I try to take care of myself, too. Eat well, exercise. My appearance. My hair. My clothes.

LOLA: You look quite dapper.

TYLER: So sometimes... well, all the time, really...

LOLA: He calls you a fag.

TYLER: Yeah.

LOLA: Look. Did you ever, I don't know, accidentally see him getting out of the shower and want to, you know... keep looking?

TYLER: Buggy doesn't shower.

(LOLA is doubtful.)

TYLER: I'm serious! I have no idea how anyone ever gets within two feet of him.

LOLA: Which... you've thought about doing.

TYLER: No! No. Maybe. I really don't know. You have to understand, he completely disgusts me. Honestly, all men disgust me. They're so... but yes... maybe. Jesus, I'm sick to my stomach now. I have no idea what I'm saying. I feel like I'm losing my mind.

LOLA: So you've got some mixed feelings. It's really not the end of the world. Besides, you've been staring at my tits since the minute you walked in here.

TYLER: No, I --

LOLA: Yes, Tyler, you have. AND you got all dressed up to meet me, too. I can even smell cologne, can't I?

TYLER: Yes.

LOLA: See? You didn't even know what I looked like and you wanted to fuck me. That has to count for something.

TYLER: I guess so.

LOLA: Hell, you even got a little bit turned on when I just said "fuck me," didn't you?

TYLER: Maybe.

LOLA: Fuck me, Tyler.

(TYLER half-smiles.)

LOLA: See? Kiss me. Come on, I know you want to. Kiss me, Tyler.

TYLER: Stop.

LOLA: Fuck me.

TYLER: This is embarrassing.

LOLA: This is fun! Kiss me. Take me.

TYLER: Please.

LOLA: Do it!

TYLER: No.

LOLA: I say yes.

(LOLA kisses TYLER.)

SCENE FOUR

(At the same hour. A different apartment, this one quite shabby. Seated on a couch is BUGGY, a young, unkempt man. He has kicked off his shoes. Fanned out on the coffee table in front of him are a few issues of Playboy. Beside him on the couch, covered by a sheet, lit by a shadeless lamp, is the painting. The door is half-open. A beat, while he fidgets. He picks up the top copy of Playboy, then hears the sound of footsteps and replaces it. GENEVIEVE suddenly appears at his door, opening it the rest of the way.)

GENEVIEVE: Is this...?

BUGGY: Yes.

(He starts fumbling to put his shoes on.)

GENEVIEVE: The art sale?

BUGGY: Yeah. I was just --

GENEVIEVE: Sorry to interrupt.