

mother is — the socialite Miranda Erickson. Correct?

VINCENT. Yes.

JACK. Years ago, she came to buy a painting from me. We had an affair.

ANNIE. Your point being?

JACK. My point being that like every other aging socialite in the city, Ms. Erickson remains close to every aging gossip columnist in the city. All I have to do is tell Miranda that you directly caused her daughter's death and —

VINCENT. What?! I did not!

JACK. Try explaining that to a dead girl's well-connected mother. And trust me, she will spread the story to Liz, Cindy, Muffy, Puffy and every other Page Six face-lift in town! And you know how journalism works nowadays — it's a wild rumor on the Internet one day, *The New York Times* prints it as gospel the next.

VINCENT. You'd do that to a friend, Jack?!

JACK. Some art dealer will get obscenely wealthy off Nicole Erickson — but it won't be you!

VINCENT. You wouldn't! After all I've done for you —

JACK. (*Advancing toward Vincent.*) I will go to any length imaginable to sell this painting!

VINCENT. No, Jack, no! (*Jack rips the cellular phone out of Vincent's pocket and forces it on him.*)

JACK. *Study in Red, No. 4* — one million dollars in one hour! I don't give a damn if you have to buy it yourself! (*Jack strips off his shorts and gets in the tank.*) I love this song — (*Jack slams the lid shut.*)

VINCENT. Let's kill the fucker!

ANNIE. But you said the tiebacks are rotted!

VINCENT. Not as rotted as he's gonna be! C'mon! (*Vincent quickly takes down the tiebacks and hands them over to Annie. They knot them over the tank's handles.*) After all I've done for him, he wants to blackmail me! He wants to mess with me!

ANNIE. I can't believe I'm finally doing this! After all these years of hell —

VINCENT. Let's hurry up, Annie, in case he has another revelation and the nutcase decides to come back out! Okay, what's next?

ANNIE. Rigging the valve. Will you wait here?

VINCENT. Where am I going to go? (*Annie exits. To himself.*) Okay, okay — you can stop this right now and just run out that door and wash your hands of this whole — ... A famous dead artist who's still producing work. Oh, that's good, that's so good. (*Annie enters.*)

ANNIE. All rightee!

VINCENT. Let's do it!

ANNIE. Wait! *(Annie puts on a glove before she grabs the water lever.)* Murder 101 — no fingerprints on the murder weapon.

VINCENT. Let 'er rip! *(Annie turns the lever. We hear the water gushing as the lid of the tank rises, but Vincent pounces on it and sends the lid back down.)* Oh no you don't, Jack! *(Annie joins him on top of the tank as we hear Jack pounding and pounding and the water continues to gush.)*

ANNIE. He had this coming, Vincent! He had every moment of this coming!

VINCENT. No one treats me that way, Jack! *(We hear Jack still banging and struggling.)*

ANNIE. This is for taking my art, Jack! For taking my identity! For taking everything! *(A few more moments, and the water stops. Jack bangs a few more times. Then — silence. Vincent and Annie watch hypnotically as the lever moves back to the off-position.)* There. The lever's gone back off. All done.

VINCENT. He can't possibly be alive now — could he?

ANNIE. Not unless he's a fish. *(Annie takes the magnet, goes to the tank, and slowly runs it along the side. We hear a grating noise as the interior bolt slides into place.)* Okay. He's locked himself in.

VINCENT. How do you feel?

ANNIE. A little strange. I've never killed anyone before.

VINCENT. It's always good to try new things. *(A beat.)* The note — *(Annie takes Jack's suicide note.)*

ANNIE. "My career is dead. And so am I." *(She places the note on the table. A beat.)*

VINCENT. Annie?

ANNIE. Yes?

VINCENT. We did it. Jack is gone. *(Annie jumps into Vincent's arms.)*

ANNIE. A life free of him!

VINCENT. Yes! *(Suddenly, they kiss, fiercely and with passion. A beat.)*

ANNIE. Vincent, did that do anything for you?

VINCENT. I'm gay, Annie, I'm not dead. *(They kiss once more.)* Okay. I'm over it.

ANNIE. C'mon, let's go eat so we can get back here and the hysterical wife can call the police!

VINCENT. Yes! Wait! The ties!

ANNIE. Oh! *(Annie re-hangs the tiebacks as Vincent helps her.)*

VINCENT. Well Jack, my old friend, I have some fabulous news

and some not so fabulous news for you. The fabulous news is that *Vain Fair* undoubtedly will still photograph you in your tank. The not so fabulous news, of course, is you'll be dead.

ANNIE. That's it. All done. And it's foolproof. I think.

VINCENT. You think?

ANNIE. C'mon Vincent, we have to hurry. Plus, I'm hungry.

VINCENT. Bye-bye, Jack! You big, stupid shit. *(Vincent exits as Annie goes to the door.)*

ANNIE. Famous, productive and dead. Good idea, Jack. *(Annie shuts the lights. She takes one last look at the room, then closes the door.)*

End of Act One