

JACK  
ANNIE  
VINCENT  
KATE

*audience.*) The man is always annoyingly on time! Everyone else in this world is running at least five minutes behind schedule, but not our Vincent, no! Except for tonight of all nights. (*Inspecting a rather ridiculous collage.*) How I love this. It's good. It's underrated.

ANNIE. Don't touch anything, Jack.

JACK. Everything's set?

ANNIE. A hundred times, yes, Jack. (*Jack picks up a revolver and flips open the chamber.*) Jack, you just checked that!

JACK. For God's sake, Annie, how can you still be calm — and working! — at a time like this?! (*Re: Annie's painting.*) Let me see.

ANNIE. No, not till it's done.

JACK. C'mon, one look!

ANNIE. Get back in your tank, Jack. I'll give it a good kick when he gets here.

JACK. Not acceptable! I want to see!

ANNIE. No! (*He raises the gun and points it at her. A beat.*) Well, that'd be a new one.

JACK. You don't think I would?

ANNIE. No. Not me. Never. (*Kate enters and immediately screams, having seen the pointed gun. Jack, startled by her scream, nearly drops the gun.*) No, Kate, it's all right!

KATE. He has a gun! (*She screams again, causing Jack to fumble with the gun, which he winds up inadvertently pointing at Kate, who screams yet again.*)

JACK. (*Lowering the gun.*) Kate! Kate! I was just showing Mrs. Brooks my new revolver —

START → KATE. But you were pointing it at her —

→ ANNIE. Everything is fine, Kate.

KATE. Are you sure?

JACK. Yes — (*In his above remark, Jack inadvertently points the gun at Kate again. She screams again. Jack puts the gun behind his back.*)

ANNIE. What is it you want, Kate?

KATE. I just came to ask permission to leave —

ANNIE. Yes, that'll be fine.

JACK. By the way, Kate, where are you going this evening?

ANNIE. Jack, that's none of your business.

JACK. I just thought that if our loyal servant were visiting a friend, she should feel free to stay the night. After all, we won't need her till morning. Isn't that correct, Annie?

ANNIE. Yes.

JACK. So then — are you, Kate, visiting a friend?

KATE. Yes, sir.

JACK. A male friend?

ANNIE. Jack, now you're prying!

JACK. Okay, I'm prying. A male friend?

KATE. Yes, sir.

JACK. Ah. Well, feel free to spend the night with him.

KATE. Yes, sir. I mean, no sir. I mean, not like that, sir — ...

ANNIE. Kate, there's absolutely no need to explain.

KATE. Oh thank you, Mrs. Brooks, I was getting me knickers in a bit of a twist there. *(The phone rings. Kate moves to get it.)*

ANNIE. No Kate, I better take it in the other room. *(Annie exits. An awkward moment between Kate and Jack.)*

KATE. She'll be back in a moment!

JACK. What if it's her mother? They can yap for hours. *(Jack moves towards her.)*

KATE. No, not tonight. I have to go.

JACK. Now, now, I'll be quick.

KATE. I've had enough! I tell you, I've ... —

JACK. You need this job, don't you, Kate?

KATE. She'll be back! She'll be back any second! *(Annie enters. Jack quickly moves away from Kate.)* Excuse me. *(Kate runs off.)*

ANNIE. What's she in such a rush about?

JACK. Beats me.

ANNIE. That was Vincent, he's not far.

JACK. Yes! Oh just picture him, Annie — our son-of-a-bitch art dealer — bursting in the door — his pretentious designer suit, his pretentious designer bow tie, he'll compliment your looks, he'll call me his most valued client, then he'll unleash a non-stop torrent of babble and gossip! And it's all to cover up his betrayal of me! Of you! Of every artist he's ever betrayed in his life!

ANNIE. Jack —

JACK. God, how can you have self-control at a time like this! He deserves what he's getting tonight!

ANNIE. Breathe, Jack, breathe —

JACK. Annie, have you taken a look at what he's done with your career lately? Just tell me, how many paintings signed "Annie Brooks" has ol' Vincent sold recently. Ten? Twenty?

ANNIE. None.

JACK. Ah, none! He's really workin' for ya!

ANNIE. Jack, you know damn well why my name does not bring commercial success.

JACK. Because you're boring.

ANNIE. Because I'm a woman.

JACK. Boring! You never go to nightclubs, you're never in the gossip columns —

ANNIE. Women are still second-class citizens in the art world!

JACK. You can't have a career without publicity!

ANNIE. No, *you* can't have a career without publicity. Without your image, you'd be nothing — a minor talent, a hack, a ... —  
(*Enraged, Jack rushes toward Annie.*) No, Jack, no!

JACK. (*Re: her painting.*) I need to see it! (*He throws her aside.*)

ANNIE. No, please Jack, don't say anything, don't say anything, don't —

JACK. How long have you been working on it?

ANNIE. Not long, I swear — A couple of days — ...

JACK. How long?!

ANNIE. Two weeks.

JACK. I hate it. Start over. (*He crosses away. A beat.*)

ANNIE. Damn it, no! Jack, no! This time I will not listen to you! I will not ... — (*A beat.*) Yes. Of course. You're right. Tomorrow. I will destroy it tomorrow. (*She breaks down. Kate, dressed to go out, enters. Annie quickly turns away.*)

KATE. Is there anything else expected of me this evening?

JACK. No Kate, off with you. Don't come back till morning.

KATE. Mrs. Brooks, are you okay? (*Annie nods "yes."*) Are you certain?

ANNIE. Everything is just as it should be, Kate. Good night.

KATE. Before I go, Mr. Brooks, I was just wondering if you know exactly why I am serving as your maid.

JACK. Pardon?

KATE. After all, you do remember that I've attended university. First in my family.

JACK. Yes, of course.

KATE. And you do remember what I received me degree in. I've told you several times.

JACK. Of course. Home economics.

KATE. Chemistry. But I can't work in America as a chemist without me green card. Which I don't have yet. And that is why I, a highly educated young woman, am working for a very modest salary as your maid. But soon, I will have me green card, and then, you can go screw yourself. Goodnight. (*Kate exits.*)

ANNIE. What was that all about?

JACK. Beats me.

ANNIE. Jack, have you been making passes at her?

JACK. Now darling, if I did, don't you think Kate — a young woman who seems to worship you — don't you think she would tell you? (*Annie nods her head "yes."*) And has she said anything? (*Annie shakes her head "no."*) So give me a little credit then.

ANNIE. There's a monster, Jack, a monster in all of us. I don't care how decent a person is, somewhere, maybe very deep inside, there's a monster.

JACK. What're you talking about?

ANNIE. Most of us keep the monster buried, that's how we stay civilized. But every once in a while, that monster needs to come out and do what it must.

JACK. Annie — come here.

ANNIE. No.

JACK. Come here. (*She does.*) Give me a kiss. (*A beat.*) Give me a kiss. (*Instead, she slaps him, hard. He barely reacts. Another beat.*) Give me a kiss. (*She bends over, and places her lips on his. The kiss is, at first, slight, but it quickly evolves into a hard, passionate moment, interrupted when the doorbell rings.*) Yes! He has finally arrived! Welcome to the night of your life! (*Jack rushes toward the door, stopping just before he is about to open it.*) Annie? You do know how much I love you.

ANNIE. Open the door, Jack. (*Jack lets in Vincent.*)

VINCENT. Oh, I am so sorry I'm late, but the most dreadful thing happened this week and thank God I'm among friends, I am famished! Oh Annie, dear, as always you're looking so frightfully young and beautiful and to think you haven't had any work done yet! And my God, do you realize there's a coffin in the middle of your room?! Oh Jack, my most valued client — you big handsome hunk of commercial talent you. Oops, I said a bad word — "commercial"! You're not commercial! You're an artist of great integrity who just happens to make a shitload of money. Oh, I am so glad we're finally getting a chance to break bread and chat and I'm famished and what's wrong? How come I'm the only one talking?

JACK. When aren't you the only one talking, Vincent?

VINCENT. Okay, but usually you interrupt and berate me. (*Re: isolation tank.*) Is someone buried in there?

JACK. It's an isolation tank, Vincent. *Vanity Fair* is coming to photograph me in it.

VINCENT. Fabulous, Jack! An eccentric artist — Ka-ching!

ANNIE. So the most dreadful thing happened, Vincent?

VINCENT. It did?

ANNIE. You said, when you walked in —

VINCENT. Oh yes, dreadful! Haven't you heard?

ANNIE. We live in the woods, we never hear anything.

JACK. Annie, before our guest burdens us with his problems, how

'bout a scotch for Vincent and Jack? (*Annie pours both men a scotch.*)

VINCENT. "For Vincent and Jack." Oh, do not tell me you're beginning to refer to yourself in the third person.

JACK. I'm an artist, Vincent, never judge me.

VINCENT. Of course, Jack, you're a great, great artist and beyond all judgment! Besides, I never judge, I just sell. Now Jack, remember I showed you some work by that young post-modernist I was so excited about, Nicole Erickson?

JACK. How could I forget? You seemed more excited by her work than mine.

VINCENT. Well, she's dead.

ANNIE. I'm sorry, Vincent. How did she — ?

VINCENT. Suicide. Two days ago. I've been on the phone ever since.

ANNIE. And she was a kid?

VINCENT. Twenty-three.

ANNIE. Awful. I hope it wasn't over some boy —

JACK. Wasn't this the same girl with that picture in *Rolling Stone*?

ANNIE. Not the one wearing nothing but panties, with paint smeared all over her.

VINCENT. That's the one.

ANNIE. What publicity whore ever came up with that idea?

JACK. Oh, I bet the old whore's right in front of us, Annie.

VINCENT. Well, I merely suggested she show off her body to bring the proper attention to her work.

JACK. Wait. Weren't you about to debut her? You had your publicity stooges in full throttle and her big debut in your gallery all lined up —

VINCENT. Well yes, but I pulled it.

ANNIE. Why?

VINCENT. Like everything, it's complicated.

JACK. We're old friends, Vincent. Un-complicate it for us.

VINCENT. Well — I recently took another look at her work and I realized she, well, wasn't quite ready for so much public attention just yet.

JACK. I see.