

THE WORK

Written by

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TEASER

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - DAWN

The place is run down, but not disgusting. It has a welcoming feel to it, but clearly the people who live here are not wealthy. It's a well-put together, well-decorated bohemian loft.

The sun is just coming up. Everywhere there are bodies, both male and female, in various states of undress, naked or half naked, or covered in sheets, on couches, on the floor, some cuddled together in ridiculous piles, some alone. The scene is absurd. Everyone is asleep. It appears to be the aftermath of some kind of orgy.

The apartment is completely still and quiet, except for MICKEY. He is ruggedly good-looking. Disheveled, but extremely handsome. The picture of the scruffy bohemian artist. He is completely nude, standing in the kitchen. His hands and arms have splotches of paint on them.

He is very actively and gracefully painting some kind of abstract art piece on the refrigerator. He uses broad strokes. His painting style is aggressive and full-bodied. The muscles of his back ripple as he paints.

After a moment, he stands back and admires his work. It is very good. He nods to himself and pulls on his pants, no underwear. Still shirtless, he begins packing up his paints and brushes.

At this, a BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE WOMAN rises. She too is completely nude. She is gorgeous, maybe even some kind of model. Having just woken up, she is still sleepy and yawning. She walks over to him and engages him in a deep kiss.

After a highly sexual passionate kiss, she pulls back and they stare at each other intensely for a moment. Then, without ceremony, she starts banging around in the kitchen, starting to make coffee. Mickey just leans against the counter and watches her. She doesn't say anything about the painting.

MICKEY

Did you know that William Blake was
still drawing on his deathbed?

(MORE)

MICKEY (CONT'D)

His wife was crying next to him,
just a total mess, they both knew
he was about to die, and in spite
of everything, he found her so
beautiful that he couldn't not draw
her. And then he said he saw
angels and died.

(beat)

I don't know what made me think of
that.

BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE

(Smiles at him
indulgently. This sort
of tangent isn't rare
with him)

Do you want coffee?

Mickey is putting on his shirt, a faded grunge-era flannel.

MICKEY

No. I'm gonna go wander around on
Canal, see what the world is up to.

BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE

Please tell me you're going to the
retrospective.

Mickey is packing up his things. He shrugs.

MICKEY

Perhaps.

BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE

Perhaps?

A beautiful muscular BLACK MAN walks into the room. He is
naked as well. He and MICKEY kiss. It is just as intense as
MICKEY's kiss with the BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE. Then the BLACK MAN
walks through the room, into the bathroom and is gone.

MICKEY

(looking back at the
BRUNETTE again)

Perhaps.

VOICE (O.S.)

My fridge...

FADE OUT.

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. MUSEUM OF MODERN ART - DAY

A man in his middle to late 50s walks through a vast gallery in the MOMA. His greying hair is very neat. His manner of dress is sleek and stylish. He is well put-together. But his demeanor does not match his style. He looks exhausted. This is RICHARD, a very successful and well-respected artist, who is staging a retrospective at the MOMA. A big deal. As he walks, he is flanked on all sides by people who need his attention.

Directly on either side of him are the most important people: JORN, the uber-stylish obviously gay Danish(?) curator for the MOMA, and AMANDA, his sweet and cute and highly-competent young assistant, without whom he would be lost.

She is fielding many of the questions, trying to insulate him as much as possible from the chaos. The same goes for Jorn, who fields all the museum related queries, and periodically calls out instructions to workers as they pass.

Richard, for his part is the eye of the storm. He is paying very little attention to any of it. He seems distracted. The large white room is abuzz with workers. There are ladders and tarps and equipment everywhere. There are people fussing with lighting. Everywhere workers are carefully wrangling enormous pieces of art, mostly sculptures and paintings.

They are behind schedule, still setting up the show. It should be done by now. Everyone is stressed out.

JORN

(calling to a man on a
ladder, who is adjusting
lights, as they pass)

Julian, this lighting is shit. Am
I at Ikea? Am I buying a fucking
futon? Darken it up. Make me feel
like I'm in a Tijuana whorehouse.

GOFER

Triple latte, extra hot!
(hands the coffee off to
Richard and is gone
again.)

CATERER

Richard, I need your final say so
on the hors d'oeuvres. I need 3
choices from the list I gave you.
And a yes or no on the vegan
option?

Richard and Amanda exchange a look. He is annoyed.

AMANDA

(Rapid-fire, without
missing a beat, the
picture of competence.)
Pork buns, crab puffs, stuffed
mushrooms. No vegan option.

The caterer rushes off scribbling.

RICHARD

This isn't what we talked about,
Jorn. You're fucking me. You are
severely fucking me.

JORN

Richard, darling, we're fine. A
few hiccups is all. The show will
be hung in plenty of time.

RICHARD

I'm about ready to stop showing in
New York altogether.

JORN

Richard, don't say that.

MOMA ASSISTANT

Richard, there's a phone call.
It's your wife.

RICHARD

(to Amanda)
Could you...

AMANDA

(nods)
I'll tell her you'll call back.

Amanda walks over to a nearby desk and picks up the phone.

PUBLICIST

Richard, I need you to sign off on
these releases.

JORN
(pointing at publicist)
On my desk.

WORKER
Jorn, the (---POSSIBLY FUNNY TITLE
OF PIECE--) isn't fitting through
the door. What do you want us to
do?

JORN
(to Richard)
We'll talk more.

Jorn storms off with worker, cursing profusely in German or Dutch or something

We follow Amanda to the desk.

AMANDA
(into phone)
Hi Julia, it's Amanda. Richard's
super swamped...

JULIA (O.S.)
It's not enough that he's not home
half the time? He can't even talk
to me on the phone, like a grown
up?

AMANDA
No. That's not it. Things are a
mess with the show. We're behind
schedule...

JULIA (O.S.)
You tell him he can take all the
time he needs. I want a divorce.

AMANDA
(rushed, trying to keep
Julia on the phone.)
Oh god, no, wait. Please Julia.
No, no, no. Let me get Richard.
Just one second. Please don't hang
up--

(Julia hangs up. Dial
tone.)

Amanda is genuinely upset. Not out of self-interest, or the awkwardness of telling him the news, but because she genuinely looks up to and cares about Richard.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Shit.

(closes eyes, preparing
herself to tell Richard.)

Amanda, still holding the phone, turns around and looks at Richard. He is now standing alone in the center of the room, looking haggard and defeated, while the chaos churns on around him.

CUT TO:

INT. PHOTO STUDIO - DAY

We are in the photo studio of a prominent fashion magazine. This is an elaborate high fashion shoot. Big white walls and backdrops, huge lighting arrays and a cadre of models.

They are shooting the cover with the focus being some celebrity (THE ACTUAL CELEBRITY IS NOT CONSEQUENTIAL, BUT THE BIGGER THE CELEB, THE MORE RECOGNIZABLE, THE BETTER).

Similar to the previous scene, there are a ton of people in the room. Assistants and producers and technicians of various ranks moving around behind the scenes, while under the bright lights on the set, the celebrity is surrounded by numerous models.

(This is an opportunity to poke a bit of fun at high fashion, and a chance for the costume designer to get a little wild. The set and costume design can be funny and ridiculous, so long as it is a plausible approximation of something that might realistically be done in a fashion shoot).

At the center of it all, behind the camera, is LUCINDA. She is an uber-successful fashion photographer. She is coveted all around town and her collection of work is so vast and respected that she can basically write her own ticket. She has virtually total creative freedom.

She is in her early 40s. Her manner is stern and severe. She rarely smiles or laughs. She is very dry.

Aside from the stationary camera on the tripod in front of her, she is wearing a smaller camera around her neck.

Standing next to her is her impeccably dressed black assistant, JACOBY.

LUCINDA
(to assistant, JACOBY,
between photographs,
talking without looking
away from the set)
Is it just me? Or is this
completely atrocious?

JACOBY
(deadpan, also not looking
away from set)
I'm seriously considering drowning
myself in a bathtub full of Crystal
Pepsi. Please make it stop.

LUCINDA
He's too tense. I can't get the
shot like this. Be a doll and
clear the room.

JACOBY
(shouting to the room at
large)
Okay minions, hit the water cooler.
Anyone still in this room in one
minute will be gleefully beaten
with rubber hoses.

Lucinda walks onto the set and approaches the celebrity, as
everyone vacates the room.

LUCINDA
(to celeb)
We're gonna take a quick five.
Cancer stick?

She holds out a pack of cigarettes, but the celebrity
declines. She shrugs and sits opposite him, as she lights
up.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)
When I was five years old, I was
out on the lawn in front of my
house, trying to see how many
cartwheels I could do in a row.
I'd just done 6 or 7 when I heard
this loud BANG. A car had SMASHED
into the telephone pole in front of
our neighbors' house. I was dizzy
from the cartwheels and couldn't
walk straight. I'd just made it to
the sidewalk when the car burst
into flames.

(MORE)

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

I looked all around, wondering where all the adults were. But nobody was coming. The driver was dazed, but when the flames reached him, he started screaming, just these awful high-pitched shrieks of pain. I was trying to get there, to help him, but I was so dizzy. I never reached the car. My dad came and scooped me up and ran me inside. The guy died at the hospital. That's my earliest memory: walking dizzily in a crooked zig zag toward those flames, watching this man as he burned alive.

CELEBRITY

(taken aback, doesn't know
what to say)

Sweet Merciful Jesus.

Rapidly, Lucinda grabs the smaller camera hanging around her neck and snaps a photo. This is the one. The celebrity is still sitting there, blinking, stunned.

She exchanges a look with Jacoby, who is by the door, letting him know she got the shot. He walks through the door where the crew are all milling around.

JACOBY

Okay folks, that's a wrap!