

SEE ME
A Play in Two Acts

by
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ACT 1

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Lights up on the large living room space of a rent-controlled Soho apartment. The neo-gothic architecture of the space is present but obscured behind years of paint and neglect. There are leaning stacks of paintings; canvases 2/3 deep in various sizes and completion against walls. Several work tables filled with paints and supplies seem to overwhelm the senses.

Importantly, the audience is never able to make out specifically the subject of any of these paintings.

There is a low, long sofa splattered with paint angled stage left facing a TV on a short table. The TV and much of the furniture has been heavily painted as art pieces. A number of corrugated boxes are stacked downstage of the sofa and behind as well.

After a moment we HEAR keys unlocking several locks. Finally, MAXWELL GRUMÉ (pronounced as if French), 38 enters.

MAXWELL

Hello, hello?!

He immediately knocks over several paintings.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Damn it.

He mumbles under his breath as he goes about picking up and stacking the canvases. Finally he takes a deep breath.

He turns and immediately knocks over another stack of canvases, ignores them and makes his way over to the sofa. He walks around, picking up various items; commenting on a few with a sigh and a hmph. He has a moment taking in the space.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, Richie. What the hell happened to you?

He walks over to examine the TV. He attempts to find a remote ultimately deciding on the sofa. He searches the cushions of the sofa, digging deep he pulls out a set of keys and tosses them on the nearest table. He pulls out some change and pockets it. Frustrated, he stands and goes to the TV, turning it on manually. It alights and illuminates his face. He plays with the controls but no sound comes out. He attempts turning the channels several times...without success. It is locked on the one channel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
What the hell?

He gives up, leaves the TV on and looks around.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
I'm not happy, Richie! (under his
breath) Artist bullshit. God damn-
mooching-self-serving-son-of-a-
bitch.

He goes off stage right into the kitchen. We HEAR him
rummaging about.

He enters again and looks around. He goes over to the tables
looking under things and in things.

He exits off stage left into the bedroom. He hear him
rummaging until finally...

MAXWELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Aha!

He enters holding a whiskey bottle. He immediately crosses
and exits stage into the kitchen. He yells at no one in
particular.

MAXWELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
\$18,317 dollars, Richie! Yeah,
that's right. I did add it up!

He enters with a healthily-poured drink in his hand. He asks
the TV...

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
What are the chances of me ever
seeing that again, huh? \$18,317.

Looking at the TV.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Is that Oprah? Oprah. Mocha Locha
Oprah Chocha. Who doesn't love ya,
Oprah?

He takes a slip just as the intercom buzzes -- startling him.
He spills most of his drink down his shirt.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
GODDamn, damn, damn!

He goes to the front door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Hold on! Hold - just hold on, damn
it!

He speaks into the intercom.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Sorry, yes?

ZOE (O.S.)
I'm coming up.

MAXWELL
What? Who? I'm sorry, who is this?
Richard's not here but - who is
this?

ZOE (O.S.)
Zoe.

MAXWELL
Zoe? I'm sorry -- who?

ZOE (O.S.)
I'm coming up.

MAXWELL
Alright. Zoe - I'm buzzing you in.

He buzzes her in.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Zoe? Who the hell is Zoe?

Max quickly looks around for something to wipe himself off -
finally settling on a paint-encrusted towel. He rushes to
turn off the TV.

There's a knock on the door. He opens the door to ZOE TORRES
GARCIA, 34, edgy, articulate, from the Bronx, more attractive
than she cares. She wears sunglasses, jeans and a funky shirt
with her hair wrapped in a colorful scarf. She has piercings
including her lip and eyebrow.

ZOE
This is still Richie's place?

MAXWELL
Yeah, yeah come in. Be careful.
He's not here.

ZOE
Yeah, somebody called me from the
hospital -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAXWELL
Somebody called you?

ZOE
Yep.

MAXWELL
That's weird.

ZOE
Agreed. Who are you?

MAXWELL
I'm - I'm an old, old friend of -
not old - distance acquaintance
kinda old - like back in the day
kinda friend helping him out. Yeah.
Zoe, you said?

ZOE
Yeah.

MAXWELL
Maxwell. Sorry. I'm Max.

ZOE
I never met you. Did I?

MAXWELL
No. No, I'd remember.

ZOE
I never met any of his friends. I
didn't think he had any.

MAXWELL
I'm pretty sure he doesn't.

ZOE
I still have a key.

MAXWELL
Sorry?

ZOE
I never gave it back. I didn't want
to just walk in case - you know.

MAXWELL
Hey, yeah. Good. Right. What do you
mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ZOE

In case it was a trap or something.
They said he was in an accident.
Why they called me, who knows? But
hey -- I just came to get some
things. Some of my things -

MAXWELL

Oh, are you his - his --

ZOE

We hung out for awhile -- awhile
ago.

MAXWELL

Really.

ZOE

You know about the accident?

MAXWELL

Car accident, yeah. He was walking
and was hit by a car. Taxi
actually.

ZOE

Yeah, that's what they said. Crazy,
right? I was going to go over there
but wow. Bad?

MAXWELL

Yeah. From what I know. He's in the
ICU. I just gotta look at him
through the window. Yeah. Taxi.

ZOE

Fucking New York.

MAXWELL

Yeah, right?

ZOE

Well, evidently they found my
number in his shit or something.
I'm gonna look around for a sec.

MAXWELL

Uh, okay. Me too, actually -- they
called me...

Zoe exits into the bedroom. Max looks around lost. After a
moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Did you -- are you his girlfriend
or something?

ZOE (O.S.)

Or something.

MAXWELL

What does that mean?

ZOE (O.S.)

What does what mean?

MAXWELL

You said "or something".

ZOE (O.S.)

You said "or something". I was
agreeing with you.

MAXWELL

Okay...

Zoe enters stuffing something into her satchel. She looks
around for more of her stuff as she speaks.

ZOE

But since you're talking about the
typical misogynistic definition of
a coupling, which is ridiculously
inadequate to describe any
relationship, let alone ours -- we
hung out a lot, inspired one
another maybe, drank way too much
and fucked...a lot.

MAXWELL

Did you model for him?

ZOE

What?

MAXWELL

Did you model - did he, you know?
Paint?

ZOE

Have you seen these paintings?

MAXWELL

Yeah. Not really. No. Right. Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

ZOE

You're not trying to flatter me,
are you?

MAXWELL

Right. No - I was just -

ZOE

I modeled for him. He modeled for
me.

MAXWELL

He's got a lot of paintings here.

ZOE

Yeah.

MAXWELL

Last time I saw him he didn't.

ZOE

Yeah -- I'll take credit for that.
The good ones, anyway.

MAXWELL

Yeah?

ZOE

When we first met he'd work on one
painting for like three months or
something crazy. So we started
playing this game to get the
painting rolling.

She exits into the bedroom.

MAXWELL

What was the game?

ZOE

(O.S.)
What?

MAXWELL

You said you played a game?

ZOE

(O.S.)
Yeah. Strip painting!

She returns stuffing another object into her satchel.

MAXWELL

Strip painting?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

ZOE

Every time he dipped his brush into paint and moved that paint across the canvas I'd remove an article of clothing.

MAXWELL

Wow.

ZOE

I'd tell him, look -- I'm the canvas -- how badly do you want to dip your brush?

MAXWELL

Wow.

ZOE

Yeah.

MAXWELL

He has a lot of paintings.

ZOE

It was effective. Can I ask you something?

MAXWELL

Sure.

ZOE

Are you drunk? You smell like a fucking drunk.

MAXWELL

Yeah. No. I probably do. When you buzzed -

ZOE

Are you drunk?

MAXWELL

No?

ZOE

Because he usually kept a bottle by the bed.

MAXWELL

It's in the kitchen.

ZOE

I think I'd really like a drink.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

Zoe exits into the kitchen.

MAXWELL

I feel the same way -- which is why
I smell -- I spilt the -- when you
rang up -- the buzzer(to himself)
stupid. You're a painter too?
Obviously, you said you are a
painter --

Zoe reenters with a drink and the bottle and again is
stuffing something into her satchel.

ZOE

So, what are you doing here anyway?

MAXWELL

What? Oh, I'm -- they called me
too. I have a key.

ZOE

He gave you a key?

MAXWELL

No, I had one from back -- from way
back.

ZOE

Were you guys fucking or something?

MAXWELL

Wow. What? No. Geez.

ZOE

Hey, I don't judge. He just never
mentioned you. Like, ever.

MAXWELL

Believe it or not I found this
place when we moved here like a
million years ago.

ZOE

Long time ago.

MAXWELL

Except he never moved from the
place. He just kinda hunkered down,
you know.

ZOE

He did a lot of that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

MAXWELL

Yeah?

ZOE

Always liked to find like one spot
and spread out.

MAXWELL

Yeah, well I haven't seen him in a
long time so --

ZOE

No?

MAXWELL

He's the kinda of person -- It was
just too expensive. He is -- too
expensive.

ZOE

Ha.

MAXWELL

You know what I mean?

ZOE

I know what you mean. Financially,
emotionally, spiritually. Which one
for you? He owes you money?

MAXWELL

Yeah -- sorta. Added up over the
years. I co-signed the lease --
covered it for awhile. I bought the
furniture. The TV, furniture and
stuff.

ZOE

You bought all this?

MAXWELL

Probably. It wasn't crap when I
bought it.

ZOE

He painted everything -- including
the TV.

MAXWELL

I see that, yeah.

ZOE

He rigged it so it only gets one
channel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

MAXWELL

Yeah. Yeah? Why did he do that exactly?

ZOE

Because every channel --it's all the same shit anyway. Want a drink?

MAXWELL

Yes.

ZOE

Why are you here again? He doesn't have any money, I know that for a fact. Never had any money.

MAXWELL

Yeah. I knew that, I guess. Just kinda hoping things had changed --

A phone rings. It's muffled but audible.

ZOE

That's a phone. Shit.

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

Find it. We gotta find it.

A phone continues to ring - and continues ringing until they uncover it.

MAXWELL

Should we answer it?

ZOE

Yes? A phone rings, you answer it.

MAXWELL

I'm surprised he has a phone.

They continue looking and digging around the apartment. Max finds one ringing under the couch, an old rotary caked with paint. The earpiece is literally glued to the base. It continues to ring.

ZOE

That's not it.

MAXWELL

But it's ringing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

ZOE

There's another one somewhere.

MAXWELL

Wait, what? He still has a fucking
landline?

Zoe finds another phone on the ground behind a stack of
paintings. She answers the phone.

ZOE

Yeah, hello. Well, who is this? Who
are you trying to call? Well, a
woman did answer the phone, okay?
Oh, you were expecting a man. Fine.
Here, talk to a man.

She tosses the phone to Max.

MAXWELL

Hello? Yes, this -- this Richie's
phone. Richard. What's that? Yes.
Max. Maxwell. I'm an old friend.
Yes, we know he's in the hospital.
I know, yes.

He holds his hand over the receiver.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

(to ZOE) It's his sister?

Back to the phone. Zoe continues looking around for things to
put in her satchel.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Well, hello, Hope. I did not know
that, no. He did? They moved him
already? No? Oh, he's still
unconscious. (to ZOE) They might
move him out of the ICU.

ZOE

Good for him.

MAXWELL

I'm sorry -- say again. Yes. Well,
it's pretty cluttered.

ZOE

What's her name? Hope?

MAXWELL

He's got a lot of paintings in
here. Boxes too -- like, a ton.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

ZOE
(yells at the phone) He's a fucking
hoarder, Hope!

Max motions to Zoe for a pen. She is pouring herself another drink. She shrugs and keeps looking around for things, pocketing another item into her satchel.

MAXWELL
Her name? Zoe -- well, we just met,
actually. Are we friends of Richie?
I guess, sorta. Okay, go ahead.

Zoe takes a long sip, finishing her glass and smiles. She walks into the bedroom. Max continues listening and tries following her to the bedroom -- but he's limited by the length of phone cord.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
You want me to what? Yeah, no -- I
understand that but -- It is a long
story, you're right about that,
Hope. Okay, look. Yes, I
understand, of course but -- Can I
just -- let me call you right back,
okay? Do you have a cell? Let me
put you in my cell.

He balances the phone under his chin while holding his cell. Zoe reenters with an opened paint can and dips a brush.

ZOE
Hit me with the number.

Zoe paints the number across the back of the sofa.

MAXWELL
Okay -- what's the number I can
reach -- (213)565-1492. That's in
LA, yes? I understand, but I can't
really make any promises -- you
know -- Let me -- I'm going to call
you back. Yes. I will. Great, bye.

He hangs up the phone.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Evidently, Richie has a sister.

ZOE
Good for him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

MAXWELL

Hope. A sister named Hope. Did you know Hope?

ZOE

Nope.

MAXWELL

Hope. He's getting out of the ICU.

ZOE

I heard that part.

MAXWELL

They said he'll need a place to stay -- to recover.

She resumes looking around for things.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Can I ask you what you're looking for exactly?

ZOE

Stuff.

MAXWELL

Stuff.

ZOE

Yep.

MAXWELL

Your stuff?

ZOE

Sure.

MAXWELL

Did you say you used to date or something?

ZOE

Again with the "or something". Dude, we hung out for awhile. What the hell are you doing here anyway? I'm sure he owes you money -- but you already know the answer to that.

MAXWELL

They called me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

ZOE
Who called you?

MAXWELL
The hospital --

ZOE
So what? They called me too --

MAXWELL
I went over there and saw him and I
figured I'd just come and --

ZOE
You saw how fucked up he is and
figured you come here and take back
some of your shit while he was in
the hospital, unconscious.

MAXWELL
No --

ZOE
Yes --

MAXWELL
Look, I'm helping an old friend --

ZOE
Sure, you are --

MAXWELL
I'm not walking around stuffing
things into a bag --

ZOE
What are you saying?

MAXWELL
What the hell are you looking for?
You're just walking around stuffing
shit into your bag --

ZOE
Yes, I am -- see, I figured I'd
come here and take back some of my
shit while he was in the hospital,
unconscious. See how honesty works?

She goes to him confronts him by poking his chest.

ZOE (CONT'D)
So, what are you going to do about
it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

MAXWELL

I'm just saying --

ZOE

You're not saying shit. Sit your ass down, "Maxwell". Some friend.

Max sits. Zoe exits into the kitchen. He takes a moment looking around the apartment, making a mental inventory of what he remembers buying -- gives up with a big sigh.

MAXWELL

I am his friend, you know!

ZOE (O.S.)

Whatever.

MAXWELL

He needs help.

ZOE (O.S.)

No, he doesn't.

MAXWELL

Yes, he does. He needs to be able to move around this apartment -- to recover.

Zoe reenters with her hand in her satchel.

ZOE

When's the last time you saw Richie?

MAXWELL

When?

ZOE

Yeah, when? Years? It's been years, right?

MAXWELL

No -- probably, yeah. A couple.

ZOE

You don't owe him shit. If you want the crap you think is yours take it. Richie can handle himself.

MAXWELL

Is that what you're doing?

ZOE

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

MAXWELL

Taking the shit you think is yours?

She consider this, smiles.

ZOE

I know what's mine.

MAXWELL

What does that even mean?

She smiles and goes back into the kitchen.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Did I miss something?

ZOE (O.S.)

I'll bet you miss a lot of things.

MAXWELL

Nice. Really nice. When's the last time you saw Richie, "Zoe"? Huh? You're no different -- You're here to get your stuff, I'm here to get my stuff. I don't think there's anything wrong with trying to recoup some of my -- some of what I put out --

ZOE (O.S.)

What you put out --

MAXWELL

I don't care -- you know what? His sister called here -- I answered --

ZOE (O.S.)

I answered --

MAXWELL

She asked for help and Richie is my friend, so I'm going to help him.

She reenters.

ZOE

By taking back your stuff.

MAXWELL

He'll need space to move around anyway.

ZOE

What do you have in mind?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

MAXWELL

Clearing the apartment -- getting this, this stuff --

ZOE

Getting your stuff --

MAXWELL

Whatever! I'm going to get my stuff and put it on the street to make room for the guy. I'm throwing my stuff away because when I look around I can see that most of "my stuff" has been turned into shit anyway.

ZOE

Art. It's called art, Maxwell. See, what you call shit, Richie calls art. So do I actually. One of the few things we had in common. Do you know the difference, friend?

MAXWELL

You know, for a very attractive person, you're very unattractive.

ZOE

What's yours?

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

Your stuff -- most of your stuff is shit, you said. What's yours? Point it out to me. The TV, the sofa, these boxes? Are these boxes of what --

She opens one box -- it's filled video tapes.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Are these old video tapes yours?

MAXWELL

I don't want any of it, frankly.

ZOE

Then go away. I'll deal with it.

MAXWELL

Well, what's yours then? Huh?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

ZOE

All of it.

MAXWELL

All of it.

ZOE

And none of it. Let's go. He wants us to throw all this out. Let's go. Right now. Maybe I'll find what I lost along the way.

She grabs a couple of the paintings.

MAXWELL

What are you doing?

ZOE

You can do what you want with "your stuff". I'm making room for Richie.

MAXWELL

Wait, stop! The paintings? They're yours?

ZOE

They aren't yours, that's for sure. Grab a stack and follow me, Richie's good friend, Maxwell.

She opens the front door and exits with a couple paintings.

MAXWELL

You know what? Fine. Wait, where are you going?

He grabs two more paintings and follows her out the door.

Lights out.

END SCENE

ACT 1, SCENE 2

The apartment has 3 or 4 fewer paintings, the boxes are more clustered together.

Max sits on the back of the sofa.

Zoe stands by the front door, arms crossed defiantly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THEO CALLOWAY, 45, African-American, impeccably dressed in a suit and tie, is deliberately looking through the stacks of paintings. He is shrewd, on top of his profession and exudes success.

THEO

Wow -- wow and wow. How many -- do you have any idea what you have here?

Max looks to Zoe who is slowly unwrapping chewing gum.

ZOE

Yes.

THEO

You have no idea how exciting this is. I just wish I caught you before you put any on the street.

MAXWELL

You like these?

THEO

Do I like these, he asks. How quickly were they snapped off the street? I watched a couple disappear in seconds. You're a funny guy, Max -- you said Max, right?

MAXWELL

Maxwell, Max -- yeah.

THEO

And Zoe, yes?

ZOE

Now that you've had your private showing --

THEO

And the artist, evidently.

ZOE

What exactly do you want, Mr. Caliban?

THEO

Calloway. Please, call me Theo.

ZOE

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAXWELL

She's not the artist.

THEO

You're not? You're the artist?

ZOE

He doesn't know shit --

THEO

Okay, I'm confused. Who should I be talking to?

ZOE

That depends.

MAXWELL

It does?

ZOE

We met, you know. We brought in some paintings to your "world famous" gallery on Bleeker, Mr. Theo Comma whatever.

THEO

Calloway. You did? When was this?

ZOE

Short conversation, as I recall. A wave of your well-manicured hand and we're just as quickly shown the door.

THEO

Oh, no.

ZOE

Oh, yes.

THEO

Well, then I was sadly mistaken -- if that was indeed the case -- you said "we"?

ZOE

Me and Richie -- Richard Wales.

THEO

Richard Wales.

MAXWELL

Richie is the artist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THEO
I'd love to meet him.

MAXWELL
He's in the hospital --

THEO
Oh --

ZOE
He was hit by a taxi.

MAXWELL
We were making room for him to --
you know, convalesce.

THEO
By throwing his work in the street?

MAXWELL
Well -

ZOE
What exactly do you want, Mr.
Colon?

THEO
What do I want? What do I want --
well, can we agree not to throw
anything more on the street? Did he
paint the TV too?

MAXWELL
Yes.

THEO
Brilliant. I love it.

MAXWELL
Zoe?

ZOE
What.

MAXWELL
Yeah, so --

THEO
I'd like to represent Mr. Wales.
I'd like to show his work in my
gallery. Standard arrangement and
commissions of course.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

THEO (CONT'D)

And allow me to apologize for giving Mr. Wales a wave of dismissal with my manicured hand. I must have been out of my mind that day. So, I apologize.

ZOE

I don't think so.

THEO

I'm sorry.

ZOE

I don't think I'll accept your apology.

THEO

Zoe. It is Zoe, right? Evidently, we got off on the wrong foot, evidently.

ZOE

Nope.

THEO

Nope? It's not Zoe.

ZOE

It is Zoe and we didn't get off on any feet. I'm watching you and waiting for you to come clean.

THEO

Come clean? I don't understand.

ZOE

Yeah, I'm trying to figure out your motive, you know?

THEO

I'm afraid I -- my motive?

MAXWELL

He just said that he wants to show Richie's paintings -- in his gallery.

THEO

That's right. Maxwell?

MAXWELL

Maxwell. Max, yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

THEO

Is there anyway to relay this
information to Richie -- Mr. Wales.

MAXWELL

Of course --

ZOE

He's in the hospital.

MAXWELL

Yeah, I can do that.

ZOE

He's unconscious.

MAXWELL

That's true.

ZOE

So what are you going to relay?

THEO

Can you speak for Mr. Wales?

ZOE

No.

THEO

Max?

ZOE

He can't either.

MAXWELL

I can speak for him.

ZOE

No, you can't.

MAXWELL

Look, I know enough to know he'd
like to sell some paintings --

ZOE

You don't know shit.

MAXWELL

And you do?

ZOE

You haven't seen him in years.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MAXWELL

And you have?

ZOE

I didn't say I could speak for him
though, did I?

THEO

I'll buy the television. As a show
of good faith and commitment, I'm
willing to buy the television and a
couple of his paintings right here
and now.

MAXWELL

You want to buy the television?

THEO

I do.

MAXWELL

You know it only gets one channel.

THEO

My guess is that Mr. Wales was
making a statement regarding the
consistency of banality; where
there are no true choices. So
there's no need for anything other
than that one channel. It's either
on or off. Everything else is
dismissible.

MAXWELL

Okay.

THEO

Am I close?

Theo looks to Zoe who loosens her attitude.

MAXWELL

I'd say so -- that's what she said
too.

THEO

Zoe? You're an artist too. I'd be
honored to see your work as well.
Are any of these yours?Zoe takes out her gum and slowly walks across and exits into
the kitchen. They watch her exit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MAXWELL

What kind of money are you talking for the TV?

THEO

Well, that depends. On whether we can agree on --

ZOE (O.S.)

It depends on value.

Zoe reenters.

ZOE (CONT'D)

What value do you place on this art work, Mr. Caraway? Isn't it all about perceived value? What is the value of this work? I'll bet mine is very different than yours.

MAXWELL

It's my TV, actually. A lot of this stuff is mine.

ZOE

You already said what value you place on this "stuff", friend. What was it? Shit or garbage. I can't remember.

THEO

\$2,000? Would that be of interest?

ZOE

Ha!

MAXWELL

Are you serious?

THEO

Let's make it \$3,000. And I'd willing to offer the same for two paintings as well -- as long as we come to an agreement to show the rest. Exclusive, of course. Is that enough value?

MAXWELL

Hey, I'll tell you what --

ZOE

Shut up, Maxwell.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

MAXWELL

What? I can speak for Richie --

ZOE

Shut up, Maxwell.

MAXWELL

Excuse me?

ZOE

Mr. Contraband. Richie's friend here doesn't speak for Richie. I have been in your gallery. I know the value. I know what people are willing to pay. I know what Richie thinks too. I certainly know what we were willing to sell them for when we met you and you're way off. Most of this work is Richie's. Some of these paintings are mine. Some we did together. You can see what he has signed and what he hasn't. The pieces we put on the street weren't finished and therefore not signed. Max here doesn't understand anything. He doesn't care about art -- he has no idea what any of this means or even what the art is trying to convey. You want to show some of Richie's work; okay fine. Okay. Okay, that's fine but let's be real here. I know what your gallery is selling work for. And you want 50%, yes?

MAXWELL

50% of what?

THEO

That's our commission. 50% is a standard commission.

MAXWELL

Wait, what?

ZOE

You want Richie, you take me too.

MAXWELL

Hold on, hold on. I have an opinion. And I like art too.

ZOE

I can come by the gallery tomorrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

Zoe extends her hand to Theo.

MAXWELL

Just wait! Look. This is my apartment. I'm on the lease. This is my apartment. As far as I'm concerned everything in this apartment is mine and Richie's. Not yours. Not yours Mr. Calloway. Not this woman who I just met. Who I don't even know ever even had a relationship with Richie. So excuse me for saying this but, fuck that. And fuck you, Zoe. If there's anyone speaking for Richie it's me - in our apartment! I'll take \$2,000 for the TV.

ZOE

He has a sister.

THEO

Oh?

ZOE

She's on her way out here. I'll tell you what. You want two paintings and the TV. Make it \$10,000 for the three and we can work out the details with Richie when he's better or his sister, when she's in town.

THEO

His sister is coming to town?

ZOE

On her way now. Her name is Hope. Isn't that right, Maxwell?

THEO

Done.

They shake hands.

ZOE

Gentlemen's agreement -- I'm taking you at your word.

THEO

What else does a person have? By the way, it's Calloway. Theo Calloway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

MAXWELL

What the hell just happened?

ZOE

Let me give you a quick tour of the bedroom, Theo Calloway. Where some of my work is and some collaborative pieces we did. I have my own studio too.

THEO

Lead the way, Zoe...?

ZOE

Torres Garcia. Zoe Torres. Right through there --

She points at the bedroom. While Theo exits she turns to Max.

ZOE (CONT'D)

\$10,000, you fucking amateur.

Lights out.

END SCENE

ACT 1, SCENE 3

A week later.

The paintings are more deliberately stacked and organized, as is the furniture. The boxes are still in corners, some clumped together downstage.

The television still sits on the small table.

Max is talking on his cell phone as he walks around the apartment placing yellow post-its stickers on various items.

MAXWELL

Nothing has changed. That's what they told me too. Well, sure -- I understand, I guess. Do you really want me to have that kinda power? He never mentioned -- Richie never talked about his family. All that time we were roommates -- he never, I mean nobody invites information so -- Yeah. Is there something you -- you talked to the hospital about it. They have the paperwork?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Zoe enters from the front door. She ignores Max and exits to the bedroom. Max watches her exit as he continues on the phone.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Yeah, sure. I'm planning on going over there later today. I'll check up on him and get all the legal stuff out of the way. You sure you don't want to come to see him yourself? Okay. Okay, yeah, you can call me. Let's just communicate and I'll let you know what's up. Okay. Okay, Hope. Look, I -- no, that's fine. Okay, bye.

After a moment, Zoe enters from the bedroom, drops her satchel on the sofa, walks to and exits into the kitchen. Max watches her exit. He waits.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Hello? I'm going over to the hospital. I'm going to check on my friend, Richie. Yeah, that's what I'm going to do.

Zoe enters -- she stands at the doorway.

ZOE

Why?

MAXWELL

Why? What the hell --

ZOE

Look, the longer you stick around the more problems you make for me, okay?

MAXWELL

Oh, really.

ZOE

\$3,000 for the TV which isn't even yours! Shouldn't that be enough for you to get lost?

Max sits defiantly on the sofa.

MAXWELL

The TV is mine. The sofa is mine. The table and chairs, the stand over there.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

That -- that chair over there --
All that crap in the kitchen, the
bedroom -- see the yellow stickers?

ZOE

How much does he owe you?

MAXWELL

It's not about that.

ZOE

Bullshit it's not. What are you
doing here then? Does he owe you
money?

MAXWELL

I paid for some things, yes.

ZOE

And you want to be repaid, fine. I
get that. You were willing to walk
for \$2,000 -- I got you three. What
more do you want?

Maxwell jumps up from the couch.

MAXWELL

I'm going to the hospital.

ZOE

What more do you want to go away,
huh?

MAXWELL

Look, it's not about the money.

ZOE

How much does he owe you?

MAXWELL

How much does he owe you, huh? What
are you doing here, with the key
you didn't give back so you could
sneak in and pilfer all these knick-
knacks and what-nots and whatever
the hell you can fit in your bag.

Zoe confronts him, grabbing him by the collar.

ZOE

You don't know BOO about me,
asshole!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAXWELL

Well, you don't know me either! So calm down, huh?

She releases her grip and dismisses him.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Look. Why don't we just start -- can we just start over. (he takes a deep breath) We moved here together years ago. We had a falling out over money, yes. I don't know how he survived because I was like a fucking ATM for awhile. Every time I saw him he was tight, or needed food -- whatever. It pissed me off, what can I say? So, I basically cut him off about three years ago. I stopped calling him and he never called me. So, there you go.

ZOE

He could survive on air, I swear to god. (she takes a moment) We shared a studio -- a couple of friends -- we had a warehouse space in Jersey for awhile. Got kicked out by some fucking developer. I helped him transfer his stuff here. He fucked me over a few times -- I got him into a couple group shows -- he sold paintings at every damn one of them. It pissed me off, I guess. I got jealous. He's the real deal. A very good artist. Good composer, has a point of view -- different take on the medium and the world, I guess. I stopped calling him to see what he would do. He never called me. That pisses me off too. So, there you go.

MAXWELL

So, this guy Theo --

ZOE

That's the other thing. I arranged that whole fucking thing. That was over a year ago. Richie and I talked through every single piece. We were painting our asses off -- we both were. It was awesome. He started painting the furniture because he ran out canvases.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ZOE (CONT'D)

I set up meetings at these galleries. The very 1st one was this Theo Calloway character's gallery in Soho. The "Porte de rêve Gallery" -- the best one downtown -- very different than the others. Certainly different than the 57th street shit holes. They rep the artists -- doing very different stuff. Not the crap they hang in these 50 million dollar penthouses, you know? They're hitting the collectors. The people that want to feel something profound; the desperate collector of human experience. We get ten minutes with this asshole, Calloway and we're dismissed. Richie says fuck it and won't go to any other meetings. That pissed me off too -- made me look bad because I'm trying -- I'm a working artist, you know? I want to eat too. That was it -- after that I stopped calling him and he never called me.

MAXWELL

Good old, Richie.

ZOE

Yeah, right. And then -- and then this character Calloway gets it, you know? All that he said about the television. "Binary". The television has a title. Did you know that?

MAXWELL

\$18,317.

ZOE

Eighteen thousand --

MAXWELL

Three hundred and seventeen dollars. That's not counting the shit -- I'm sorry. That's not counting the furniture I bought for this place. The art.

ZOE

That television didn't cost you \$3,000.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MAXWELL

No, it didn't.

ZOE

That's the difference between art and furniture. You see a television, Theo sees "Binary". Scary part is, in Theo's gallery, he'll sell it for seven -- eight.

MAXWELL

Thousand.

ZOE

Which is why Richie needs to wake up. Cause he owes me a hellava lot more than eighteen thousand.

MAXWELL

\$18,317.

ZOE

Right.

MAXWELL

Not counting the furniture.

They both chuckle.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

You want a drink?

ZOE

Yes.

Max goes to the kitchen to grab a couple glasses.

MAXWELL (O.S.)

What's with the boxes anyway?

ZOE

The boxes -- the video tapes?

He enters and pours the drinks.

MAXWELL

Yeah.

ZOE

I have no idea. He always had boxes stacked in the corners -- just not this many. I never knew what was in them and I never asked.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MAXWELL

You think they're all video -- they can't all be video tapes.

ZOE

Some idea he had, I guess.

MAXWELL

Let's check them out.

ZOE

What?

Max goes to the corner and starts opening boxes.

MAXWELL

Video tapes. Video tapes. Video tapes. No labels. Oh, wait, here's one. Can you read this?

He tosses her a video tape.

ZOE

Not -- I think it's Chinese.

MAXWELL

This one isn't Chinese.

ZOE

Let me see.

He opens another box. All the tapes are smashed into pieces.

MAXWELL

Holy shit. This one is garbage -- look. They're all smashed to hell. Another box. Here.

She comes over to see. He hands her another tape.

ZOE

No idea. Russian maybe?

MAXWELL

What the hell is this crap? Sorry.

ZOE

Who the hell knows?

The intercom buzzes.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Oh shit! That's Calloway.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

He wants to catalog -- do some organizing and shit.

MAXWELL

Now?

ZOE

Maybe he'll buy "your" sofa today, huh?

MAXWELL

Really.

ZOE

Just please shut up and let me do the talking, okay?

She goes to door just as it buzzes again.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Theo?

THEO (O.S.)

And associate.

ZOE

I'm buzzing you in -- the second door too so don't wait.

She holds the buzzer.

MAXWELL

What would he sell the sofa for?

ZOE

Calloway? 25, maybe -- something.

MAXWELL

Thousand? 25,000?

ZOE

Yeah, something like that, maybe.

MAXWELL

Jesus Christ! No kidding? Good lord.

ZOE

I don't know -- but don't ask!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

MAXWELL

What's up with all these tapes?
There's like 30 boxes of this
stuff.

There's a knock on the door. Zoe opens the door to Theo Calloway and AMANDA CLARK, forties, glasses dangling from a neck chain, impeccably dressed and coifed.

ZOE

Welcome.

THEO

Zoe Torres, this is Amanda Clark,
my right arm and partner in crime.

ZOE

Pleasure.

AMANDA

Pleased to meet you, Zoe.

THEO

Amanda had to come with me because -
- well, why did you want to come
with me, Amanda?

AMANDA

We sold the two paintings
immediately. Potentially.

ZOE

What?

THEO

Isn't that crazy? Three days.
Different buyers too but three
days!

ZOE

At a profit, I can only imagine.

THEO

Potentially, yes. So, here we are!
Right?

MAXWELL

I'm Max.

THEO

Maxwell Grumet.

MAXWELL

Grumé.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

THEO

Grumé. Of course, I apologize.
Maxwell is the furniture artist.

MAXWELL

Owner --

ZOE

He's not the artist.

MAXWELL

I bought the television, so --

AMANDA

I'm sorry -- are you also an
artist?

ZOE

He's not an artist. He's an old
roommate.

AMANDA

I see.

MAXWELL

Aren't we all artists though,
really? I mean, I heard -- last
time Theo was here we were talking
about value -- and I can understand
value. I mean, if that's what the
definition -- how you define what's
art and what's just furniture, like
the difference between them --

ZOE

Max is going to stop talking right
now.

MAXWELL

I'm going to stop talking.

THEO

How is our Mr. Wales? Any change?

ZOE

Any change. No, I'm afraid. Any
change, Maxwell?

MAXWELL

Oh, am I speaking again? No change,
unfortunately.

AMANDA

I understand he has a sister?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

MAXWELL

Zoe? Me again talking. Yes, Hope.
Her name is Hope and she's in LA.

AMANDA

On her way, I understand?

MAXWELL

Ah, no.

ZOE

No?

MAXWELL

No.

THEO

Oh.

AMANDA

I see. Is there a way to contact
Hope?

THEO

I think you know where this is
going. We need a few signatures on
the contract --

AMANDA

Mr. Wales in particular.

ZOE

And mine.

AMANDA

Well, yes --

THEO

Sure, of course yours, Zoe, but
here you are in the flesh. We need
someone to speak for --

AMANDA

There are legalities and without
Mr. Wales authorization --

ZOE

You can't sell a painting.

AMANDA

Or the "Binary" piece.

ZOE

Or the television, Max.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

MAXWELL

You already bought the TV.

AMANDA

Technically it's on consignment.

MAXWELL

But I have the check.

AMANDA

I wouldn't try to cash that just yet.

MAXWELL

What the hell are you talking about?

ZOE

You need authorization, and we can't speak for Richie, so --

MAXWELL

I can speak for Richard.

ZOE

No, you can't.

MAXWELL

Indeed, I can.

ZOE

Yeah, no you can't.

AMANDA

Mr. Grumet.

MAXWELL

Grumé.

AMANDA

I apologize. Mr. Grumé.

MAXWELL

You can call me, Max.

AMANDA

What makes you think you can speak for Mr. Wales?

MAXWELL

Hope. His sister, Hope gave me the authority.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

ZOE

What?

MAXWELL

Yes, his sister, Hope. Look, it's a long story. There are family dynamics -- who knows, right? She's in LA -- she can't get out here -- doesn't want to get out here. She asked me to take the reigns on Richie's care so that's what I'm doing. That's what old roommates do. That's what friends do.

THEO

You have this in writing.

MAXWELL

I will have it in writing as soon as I go check on him later today.

Amanda lets out a huge, happy sigh of relief.

THEO

Well, that's great!

MAXWELL

It's great! Why is that great?

ZOE

When did this happen?

MAXWELL

Doesn't matter. Why is this great? Because of the signatures?

AMANDA

If you can legally authorize the contract then we can legally move forward with our arrangement.

MAXWELL

And I can cash the check.

AMANDA

Potentially.

ZOE

Can I talk to you, Maxwell?

MAXWELL

Wow, the roommate got popular all of a sudden, huh!?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

THEO
Should we get started?

AMANDA
I'd love to see everything.

THEO
Should we start in the bedroom?
Zoe?

ZOE
You two go ahead. I'll have a
conversation with my "partner" Mr.
Grumé here.

Amanda and Theo exit in the bedroom. Zoe pulls Max towards
the kitchen.

ZOE (CONT'D)
Are you fucking insane!?

MAXWELL
No.

ZOE
Do you know what authorization
means?

MAXWELL
Yes.

ZOE
It means power of attorney -- you
need the legal authority to say
that kinda shit.

MAXWELL
That's correct.

ZOE
If you blow this deal for me, Mr.
Grumé -- I will kick your ass.

MAXWELL
Hey, I'm not an idiot! I taught in
the New York public school system
for fifteen years so I know a thing
or two, alright.

ZOE
What?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

MAXWELL

I may not know much about art but I know something about something.

ZOE

What something?

MAXWELL

You think you have some special insight into people because you threw some paint at the wall? Let's see you keep 35 lunatics in their seats after lunch. Let's see you break up a knife fight between a couple of 13 year old knuckleheads arguing over a pair of fucking gym shoes and we'll talk about blowing the fucking deal. How about this, Mzzz. Torres Garcia? I'm signing for Richie because I always knew that fucker had some talent and it's nice to see him get some recognition. If I can get some of my money back, I think he'd be okay with that. See, I like to eat as much as the next guy too. But let me ask you, where is your deal, huh? Seems to me like you need Richie as much as he needs me.

Amanda appears at the bedroom door.

AMANDA

So, there's a closet?

ZOE

Yeah -- it's locked, right?

AMANDA

Is it worth seeing?

ZOE

I've never seen it open.

AMANDA

Well, now I'm even more interested!

MAXWELL

I might have that key -- I'll check after I see Richie today.

Amanda give two enthusiastic thumbs up and disappears back into the bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

ZOE

I think he painted the closet shut.

MAXWELL

I've got keys for all the shit.

He pulls out his set of keys.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Two sets came with the lease.

ZOE

What did you teach?

MAXWELL

Phys Ed.

ZOE

Gym? You were a gym teacher?

Theo enters from the bedroom.

THEO

Some fascinating treasures
discovered.

ZOE

I separated and stacked --

THEO

I noticed. Thank you. Makes things
easier.

MAXWELL

I tagged all my crap -- stuff --
art -- my art pieces too. The
yellow stickers are my stuff. My
art pieces.

THEO

Yes, yes -- I wanted to ask about --
there are boxes of video tapes?

MAXWELL

Yeah, all over the place.

THEO

Any idea?

MAXWELL

We were just talking about --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

ZOE

No, no idea. Maybe a piece he was working on? Collecting tapes -- some boxes are just smashed pieces, so --

THEO

I love his imagination! I wish he would just recover already so we could have a real conversation! Have you seen the tapes? Have you looked at what might be on them? You know Andy Warhol was notorious for taping --

ZOE

Yeah, taping all kinda stuff, I know.

THEO

Lichtenstein, Keith Haring, David Hockney -- Who knows what he was putting together. Maybe it's worth seeing what's on Richard Wales videos?

ZOE

So you are interested in -- ?

THEO

Everything.

ZOE

Everything from the bedroom?

THEO

I want the apartment. I want the contents of the apartment.

MAXWELL

The furniture?

THEO

Everything. Amanda, do you have a second?!

Amanda enters from the bedroom positively giddy.

THEO (CONT'D)

Amanda, these beautiful people would like to know what we're interested in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

AMANDA

This collection. This collection is
-- I'm at a loss --

THEO

Which is rare!

AMANDA

Look, Mr. Wales is about to be the
biggest name in the art world.

THEO

It's true.

AMANDA

Do you know why? Because he is an
incredible talent and because we
are incredible dealers.

THEO

Once we set this in motion, he'll
be the talk of the art world. I
promise you that!

AMANDA

We promise you that.

THEO

Three days! His paintings, the two
I bought --

MAXWELL

And the TV --

THEO

Yes!

MAXWELL

"Binary", I think he called it.

THEO

YES!

AMANDA

Mr. Wales is about to become famous
-- or infamous, as the case may be.

ZOE

And Zoe? Zoe Torres. Hi. I'm Zoe
Torres. Some of my things were
stacked in the bedroom too. If you
noticed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

AMANDA

Yes, yes of course, Zoe Torres.
Some lovely pieces.

THEO

We don't have any issue showing
some of your work, Zoe.

ZOE

You don't have issues.

AMANDA

What he meant was, of course we'd
love to include you in our roster
of talent! There are some charming
compositions and interesting
palettes in your work. Just lovely.

ZOE

Lovely.

THEO

Let's do this. We're headed back to
the gallery. What say we reconvene
for a drink later? Sign some
contracts and talk further, yes? Is
that -- does that give you enough
time to gather the necessary
paperwork, Maxwell? I can call you
Max?

MAXWELL

You sure can, Theo. And Mandy.
Thanks for coming by, huh!

AMANDA

Yes, well -- let's say seven
o'clock? We'll meet up at the
gallery and forge our alliance,
yes?

MAXWELL

Sounds good to me!

AMANDA

Ms. Torres?

ZOE

Just call me, Zoe, Amanda.

THEO

Great! Until tonight then!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

MAXWELL

I'm cashing that check!

They all chuckle as Theo and Amanda exit.

After a moment.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

You think I can cash that check?
What's the look for?

ZOE

You don't know a damn thing.

MAXWELL

I know you just got on the artist
roster at the best gallery in the
city. Isn't that what you said?

ZOE

I fucking hate the middle man.

MAXWELL

You hate the middle man.

ZOE

What's art and what isn't -- like
they have some magic insight --
some profundity that by placing
some arbitrary number on a canvas
they deepen the meaning -- all of a
sudden the artist's intent is
clarified! Look at me, see me! I
have worth now!

MAXWELL

I'll tell you what it means. It
means, Richie and Zoe and Maxwell
Grumé are going to eat well
tonight!

ZOE

I gotta think about this.

MAXWELL

Oh yeah?

ZOE

Yeah.

MAXWELL

Well, I'll tell you what, Zoe
Torres.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

If you blow this deal for me, or
for Richie, I will kick your ass.

ZOE

Ok, gym teacher.

MAXWELL

I'm very proud of that label, thank
you.

ZOE

Just leave me alone.

Maxwell goes to the bedroom door.

MAXWELL

And while you're thinking, I'm
going to open a locked closet!

He exits.

After a moment, we hear Maxwell offstage banging and making
noise trying to open the bedroom closet.

Zoe stands and goes over to a stack of paintings leaning
against the paper. She shuffled through them, one at a one.

She mutters under her breath.

ZOE

Son of a bitch.

We hear Maxwell from the bedroom.

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Eureka!

He enters holding a dusty VCR.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Look what was under the bed!

ZOE

Did you open the closet?

MAXWELL

He painted it shut. I'll need some
tools. But check this out!

ZOE

So?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

MAXWELL

So? It's a VCR! Let's watch some tape!

ZOE

On what?

MAXWELL

On "Binary", baby! On the damn tv!
I saw some cables --

Maxwell runs off into the kitchen.

MAXWELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I'm on a roll!

He reenters with the necessary cables.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Let's plug this bad boy in!

He goes to work pushing cables in and turns the TV on.

ZOE

That's not going to work.

MAXWELL

Watch me.

ZOE

You think it's stuck on channel 3?

MAXWELL

I didn't think of that.

ZOE

What a surprise.

MAXWELL

Give me a tape.

ZOE

Why?

MAXWELL

Just give me a damn tape, can you,
please?

She goes to a box and brings him a tape. He plugs in the tape and waits.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Wait a second, wait a second.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

Zoe sits on the sofa.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Careful where you sit! That sofa is
worth a lot of money.

ZOE
Hilarious.

MAXWELL
Holy shit, it's working. There's an
image in there!

He sits next to Zoe on the sofa.

After a moment of watching, their expression changes --
dramatically into fear and horror -- as they realize what
they're seeing.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)
Wait a second -- is that -- Oh, my
god!

ZOE
Turn it off!!

MAXWELL
Jesus Christ!

He quickly jumps up to stop the tape.

He ejects the tape. Zoe sits with her hands covering her
face. Maxwell is frozen in disbelief.

After a moment, Max goes over and grabs another tape. He
plays it. Another horror.

ZOE
Stop!

MAXWELL
What the fuck?!

Max grabs another tape from a different box. Same result.

ZOE
Why are you doing this!?

MAXWELL
These are kids! These are -- I
mean, these are children!

ZOE
STOP playing them, damn it!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

Max eject the tape and smashes it, stands and pounds it repeated under his feet.

MAXWELL

WHY?! Why, Richie?! These are children!!!

Lights out.

END ACT 1

ACT 2

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Lights up on the apartment exactly as it was at the end of Act 1.

Max and Zoe sit side by side on the sofa -- both looking devastated and defeated.

After a long moment.

MAXWELL

Those images. It's like they're
burned into my retina. I'm sick.
Are you okay?

Zoe shakes her head no.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Me either. I want to puke.

ZOE

Then puke.

MAXWELL

I'm sorry you had to see that --
hell, I'm sorry I had to see --
what the fuck?!

ZOE

Do you mind just being quiet for a
second?

MAXWELL

I just don't get it --

ZOE

Evidently you do mind.

MAXWELL

I just don't get who the hell this
guy is? What happened to him? I
never saw any of this shit -- I
mean, how did he turn into a
monster? How, when -- when did he
turn into this fucking monster?

ZOE

Can you please just shut up,
please?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAXWELL

I never saw anything like that before and I never, I mean, NEVER want -- I mean, Richie? Really? Richie?

ZOE

SHUT UP! Just shut up, shut up, shut up! Please -- just please shut up. Just shut up, please?

Zoe breaks down, clearly upset.

Zoe drops her head. Max hovers his hand over Zoe's head in a act of comfort but can't bring himself to follow through.

Max gets up and goes to the kitchen. After a moment he enters with a roll of paper towels. He places them as Zoe's feet.

Zoe reaches for a towels, uses them to wipe her eyes and nose.

ZOE (CONT'D)

I never want to see those tapes again.

MAXWELL

Agreed.

ZOE

How many boxes are there? Fifty? A hundred?

MAXWELL

A lot. Not that many, but shit -- one goddamn tape is too many. One second -- Jesus Christ, I mean --

ZOE

He never -- I never saw any inkling of that, did you?

MAXWELL

Nope.

ZOE

Never even a hint.

MAXWELL

Never.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZOE

I mean, I saw -- he had a couple of boxes, many two or three but I never knew what was in them.

MAXWELL

Nope.

ZOE

I never even thought to ask. Did you? Would you have?

MAXWELL

What? What are you asking me? Would I have asked about the tapes? I wouldn't -- who the hell even has video tapes anymore?

ZOE

Evidently some fucking deviants scumbags from China or Russia or who the fuck knows where.

MAXWELL

Or Richie.

ZOE

Yeah. Yeah. Or Richie.

MAXWELL

We gotta tell them, I guess.

ZOE

Tell who? The police?

MAXWELL

I hadn't thought of that. Yes, probably the police too. I've got to go the hospital.

ZOE

You do.

MAXWELL

You're not going to come with me.

ZOE

No, I'm not.

MAXWELL

Because a little support --

ZOE

Don't go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAXWELL

You think I want to go?

ZOE

No, but what are you going do? Pull the plug? Can you do that?

MAXWELL

Well, that's an interesting idea.

ZOE

I gotta think!

Zoe covers her eyes and drops her head.

After a moment. Max gets up and goes to a box of tapes. He drags one over and throws the pieces of the one he stomped into the box. He rummages through the box.

MAXWELL

Where's that other box?

He looks around the room opening boxes. After a few, he pulls over one.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

What the hell is this about?

ZOE

What?

MAXWELL

He's got pieces -- some of these boxes are just pieces of video tapes.

ZOE

So?

MAXWELL

He kept the pieces?

ZOE

What are you trying to figure out? Deviant behavior? Keeping the evidence? Holding on to his precious? Who the hell cares why he kept them?

MAXWELL

It's just bizarre.

ZOE

You think that's bizarre?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MAXWELL

Relatively, no -- but it's just. It looks like some of these tapes are duplicates.

ZOE

Just stop with the fucking detective shit, would you please!?

MAXWELL

Sorry.

ZOE

Please!

He pushes the boxes away and sits next to her.

After a moment.

ZOE (CONT'D)

Who were you thinking of?

MAXWELL

What? Who?

ZOE

You said we need to tell them. I said the cops -- you said, oh yeah them too. Who were you thinking of?

MAXWELL

The gallery -- Mandy and Theo.

ZOE

Theo and Amanda. No way.

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

You heard me. No way.

MAXWELL

You're kidding, right?

ZOE

I'm not kidding. I'm not saying shit and either are you. When that fucking criminal pervert pedophile wakes up, he can answer for it.

MAXWELL

If he wakes up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ZOE

If, when, whatever. I hope he dies in there. I hope he never wakes up and just dies from getting hit by that fucking taxi. I want to find the driver and give him a fucking medal.

MAXWELL

Or a TV.

ZOE

Yeah! Or a sofa or a painting or a lamp or whatever the fuck they want!

MAXWELL

There are some paintings in the bedroom with some charming compositions and interesting palettes.

Zoe laughs.

ZOE

You're evil.

MAXWELL

No, I'm not evil. That shit in the boxes -- that horror garbage in the boxes. That's evil.

ZOE

I gotta think.

MAXWELL

About the gallery?

ZOE

About everything. About my life.

Max's cell phone rings -- and rings. He finally looks to see.

MAXWELL

Speak of the fucking devil.

He stands and answers the phone while pacing. She keeps her eyes on him.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Hello? Yes, it is. It's Grumé, actually. It's okay. He did, huh? Yes, yes, I understand.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Look, can I ask -- I imagine you're calling me because his sister -- oh, she did. The directive. Okay. That's what it's called? The directive. Okay. No, that's great. I understand. I will be by shortly. Give Richie my -- ha! Sorry, I was about to -- never mind, it's okay. I'm on my way. Okay, bye.

He hangs up and looks to Zoe.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Well, he's still alive!

ZOE

What did they say?

MAXWELL

I gotta get over there. He woke up evidently, but he's in and out.

ZOE

Super.

MAXWELL

Do you want to --

ZOE

No fucking way.

MAXWELL

Got it.

He stands and freezes, unmoving for a long moment.

ZOE

What?

MAXWELL

I don't think -- I can't do this.

ZOE

Then don't go.

MAXWELL

No, I mean this shit -- this garbage -- these boxes. It's just -- I mean -- look, I could use the money, believe me. I thought about how I would get my money back from Richie for years.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I had sort of resigned myself that I'd never get it back -- like it was an investment that went south or something. I was willing to let that shit go -- let it go along with the friendship or whatever.

ZOE

What are you talking about?

MAXWELL

I can't make money on this shit. Can you? You still feel like this stuff -- this "art" has "value"? Does this change the "value"? Help me out here because I'm not well-versed in how this shit is defined.

ZOE

It depends.

MAXWELL

On what?

ZOE

It's complicated.

MAXWELL

Complicated? It's fucking complicated?

ZOE

Yes!

MAXWELL

How?

ZOE

I'm here! I'm in this room. Because it's me!

MAXWELL

I'm talking about Richie.

ZOE

I know that! But it's not just -- look, my work is in that bedroom -- it's in a lot of these paintings. In the furniture, on the canvases, on the walls, I'm all over this fucking space!

MAXWELL

In the boxes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (8)

ZOE

Fuck you!

MAXWELL

I'm sorry, but Richie should be in prison. I don't want -- I can't be associated -- why the fuck, how can you be associated with that?

ZOE

I'm not associated with that. You are. You are associated. You. You are the legal authority. You're signing your name on that contract as the legal representation of Richard Wales.

MAXWELL

Like hell I am.

ZOE

Listen to me -- I don't give a fuck what you do with Richie's work or with anything else, but some of this is my work, goddamn it! I'm not associated with anyone other than me. I'm Zoe Torres!

MAXWELL

You think Theo -- you think Amanda and Theo see it that way?

She takes a moment.

ZOE

No. No, they don't.

MAXWELL

That's what I mean.

ZOE

I know that, damn it! Damn it, damn it, damn it! (she takes a moment) They're not gonna know.

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

They're not going to know anything. They don't need to know any of this shit. Why should I take the fall for this, huh? This filth has nothing to do with me.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (9)

ZOE (CONT'D)

If they see these tapes I'm ruined, do you understand? I'm associated just by being in the fucking room with those tapes -- with Richie. If those tapes -- those tapes -- I don't want to have anything to do with them. I will deny ever seeing them. I will not be destroyed by seeing that shit -- by witnessing any of this.

After a moment.

MAXWELL

They're children, Zoe. I mean, these kids -- these are children just ruined -- just destroyed.

ZOE

And he'll answer for it. That I can guarantee. Richie will fucking answer for it. But I won't. And either should you.

MAXWELL

So what do we do?

ZOE

Go to the hospital. Get that paperwork. Meet me at the gallery at 7:00.

MAXWELL

Really?

ZOE

Let's see how much money Richard Wales donates to save those children. Charity. Organizations. Let's turn that fucker into a philanthropist.

Max consider this.

MAXWELL

That's not bad.

ZOE

Fucking right! Let's play hardball with these fuckers and sell every stitch of this apartment. Every goddamn work that ever spilt from Richie's polluted mind!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (10)

Max paces for a minute considering this approach. He starts to laugh. It builds from a giggle, to a full belly laugh.

ZOE (CONT'D)

What? What the hell is so funny?

MAXWELL

Nothing -- nothing, it's just; I quit teaching a couple of years ago. I fell in love with a student. I was 35. I was single. She was 18, had graduated, getting ready to go to college. It was a totally fucked up situation and I beat myself up about it so bad that I quit. I quit teaching. I quit my fucking job cause I thought it was the right thing to do -- to erase the power dynamic. To make myself NOT the creep who would ever take advantage of my position. I was determined to walk into a relationship with this young lady as an equal -- twice her damn age but as equal as I could be. And you know? I'll tell you what; I'm a fucking angel, you know? I'm a goddamn saint! I tore myself down, twisted myself in knots, desperate to not be that guy and you know, I thought I'd failed. I really did. I thought I was a fucking loser because I really loved this girl. This teenager. This fucking kid. But no. Nope! No, no, no! I'm not -- I'm not this. (he kicks a box of tapes) You probably want to know what happened, right? Here's the brilliant thing -- nothing. Nothing happened. Nothing. Not a goddamn thing. I totally misread the situation. I misread everything. Completely and abso-fucking-lutely misread this young lady. My intentions? Who cares? Her interest? None! She had no interest in me like that what-so-ever! None. None! Right?! None! I was such a fucking idiot. God bless her.

ZOE

What happened to her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (11)

MAXWELL

What, she went to college. Probably married with kids, who knows.

He heads for the front door.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Philanthropy. I like it. I like that a lot. I'll see you at the gallery at 7:00.

Lights out.

END SCENE

ACT 2, SCENE 2

A week later.

Amanda stands upstage facing out as Zoe shows her paintings, one after another from a stack; Zoe's back is to the audience.

The painted television still sits on the same downstage table.

AMANDA

Interesting as well. It's quite curious. These are remarkably different.

ZOE

By different I'm assuming better?

AMANDA

Well, let's just say I'm surprised, I have to say --

ZOE

Surprised.

AMANDA

Not surprised -- poor word choice. It's just, these have a quality that I didn't notice in Richie's -- Richard's other works.

ZOE

Well, because these are the collaborations -- the ones I mentioned before. These few.

AMANDA

Between you two.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (12)

ZOE

Yes.

AMANDA

I see. And where does Richard Wales end and Zoe Torres begin?

ZOE

Does it matter?

AMANDA

It might.

ZOE

Because you can't sell it as a Richard Wales.

AMANDA

Correct.

ZOE

Because no one is interested in a Zoe Torres.

AMANDA

Well --

ZOE

Well? Well what?

AMANDA

I didn't say that. Look, it's a dance, you see? Sometimes what's required is a little extra. You need to create interest in works by buzz, by clever marketing. You encourage value this way. That's my area of involvement, my area of expertise, you see. Though of course, sometimes you can take advantage of an association, so --

ZOE

How about sometimes the work speaks for itself, huh? Shouldn't the painting itself be enough? Isn't the value of a piece reflected in how it moves you? How it makes you feel? I mean --

AMANDA

It should, yes. Absolutely. Aesthetic arrest.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (13)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

James Joyce wrote about aesthetic arrest. I can try to paraphrase, if you like.

ZOE

Portrait of the Artist.

AMANDA

Exactly that. May I?

They switch positions. Amanda goes to a different stack leaning against the wall, she shuffles through and pulls a painting. She shows it to Zoe.

ZOE

Yeah, I know that painting.

AMANDA

And.

ZOE

It's -- it's -- I get it, okay? He did a small series of those. I was actually there, in the room for most of them.

AMANDA

Which makes you invaluable, of course!

Zoe rolls her eyes.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

You simply stop, right? You're held emotionally, intellectually. Aesthetic arrest. You're drawn in and it captures you. You see this painting and you experience a radiance. It compels you to engage. Dares you to experience it.

ZOE

Aesthetic arrest. Maybe I could be Richie's aesthetic arresting officer.

AMANDA

How's that? What do you mean?

ZOE

Nothing -- exactly! Exactly what I was thinking. It's compelling. It holds you for a moment. I get it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (14)

ZOE (CONT'D)

That is called "Eight" -- the title. This series --

AMANDA

Oh, this a series?

ZOE

Well, yes and no. It's just -- I call them a series because he painted quickly during a kind of frenzy we were experiencing together -- there's a theme running through that time.

AMANDA

Yes, yes -- I can see that. They are remarkably playful. There's almost a debauchery within the vulnerable -- as though bodies shouldn't be touching, almost bordering on the...

ZOE

Criminal?

AMANDA

Criminal? I was going to say incompatible -- there's a intimacy but not a comfort.

ZOE

Yes. That, I understand.

AMANDA

Why does he call it, "Eight" do you think?

ZOE

I have some idea but that's a question for Richie. Among others --

AMANDA

Wouldn't that be lovely?

ZOE

I was hoping you and Theo could make it over to my studio this week. You know, I have other works beside these you --

AMANDA

Of course, of course -- we'll make it over there soon.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (15)

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Theo mentioned there was some interest in one of your paintings -- though people like to mull things over.

ZOE

Are people mulling over Richard Wales?

AMANDA

It's a not competition, Zoe.

ZOE

I know that --

AMANDA

Your work has merit -- it's just, Richard's has a quality that transcends --

ZOE

Stop! Please, Amanda. Let me get to know you as a person first before the critic emerges in full bloom.

AMANDA

Well, let me just say, for the gallery --there's an interesting thing that happens when you create a buzz. A buzz in the art world can create a frenzy in days. Just think, a couple weeks ago you were putting Richard Wales paintings out on the street for anyone to take for free. Now those same paintings are selling in the gallery for 12, 16, \$20,000. Richard Wales is, well -- people see, people want, people buy. I wish it was always that easy, but -- alas.

ZOE

Did you just say "alas"?

AMANDA

And you and Maxwell have been holding out on us too, have't you?

ZOE

Have we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (16)

AMANDA

Theo and I have speculated about the extent of Richard Wales into other medias -- namely...?

ZOE

Namely...?

AMANDA

You're so coy. Namely the video tapes, namely?

ZOE

Yes, well, Amanda, my coyness and subtleties are what make me so fucking charming.

We HEAR keys outside the front door. Zoe goes to the door and opens it to a surprised Max who carries a red toolbox. He looks beat down and exhausted.

MAXWELL

Oh, hello. Oh, and Amanda too. That's convenient.

Max places the toolbox next to the front door.

ZOE

You okay?

MAXWELL

I've been better. Though, I'm better than a lot of people, I can tell you that. It's been a long day. A long, long day. Started this morning. What time is it anyway? I tried to call you, Zoe but I realized I don't have your number. I did call Theo. What are you guys doing here anyway? Amanda, how goes things? How the showings been going? The gallery getting rich off the back of our poor artist friend, Richie Wales?

AMANDA

Well, I'm confident that calling him a poor artist friend no longer applies.

MAXWELL

Oh no? Money's not everything though, you know?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (17)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Poor in spirit, poor in attitude,
poor in life choices. Hell, I've
come across a few rich assholes in
my day --

ZOE

You want to sit down, Max?

MAXWELL

Yes, yes I do. Do you want to sit
too? Zoe? Amanda?

He sits.

ZOE

I'm okay.

MAXWELL

Richie is dead.

ZOE/AMANDA

What? / Excuse me?

MAXWELL

Yes. Richie died today. Recently?
This morning. Well, a few hours
ago. More than a few hours ago?
What time is it? Doesn't matter.
Richard Wales passed on due to
injuries sustained from his
accident with a New York City
taxicab. He was 42 years old. He
leaves behind a sister, a shit load
of art work and maybe a couple of
friends who mistook him for someone
they thought they knew.

Amanda goes to a chair and sits.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Zoe?

ZOE

What?

MAXWELL

He's dead, Zoe. Can you fucking
believe that? That son-of-a-bitch
died.

ZOE

Maybe -- maybe I will sit down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (18)

MAXWELL

Here, take my seat.

Max quickly stands and gestures to his chair. Zoe sits. Max paces.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

He was in and out of consciousness over the past few days -- but never really "communicative" as the nurses would say. I experienced that myself actually. He'd string a few words together but --

AMANDA

Oh my -- this is awful.

MAXWELL

Yeah, yeah it is awful, I guess.

AMANDA

Did you -- were you able to speak to him?

MAXWELL

Well, I spoke "at" him plenty. Did he answer back? Did we have a conversation? I'm not sure you could call it a dialogue, you know.

AMANDA

But did he know -- that is, did he know his work was being seen? Revered? That his work was --

MAXWELL

Making folks a lot of money?

AMANDA

I wasn't thinking --

MAXWELL

Did he know how filthy rich he was becoming? And famous too, right? Rich and famous -- everybody's fucking dream.

ZOE

Take it easy, Max.

MAXWELL

What? He was finally becoming the darling of the New York art scene!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (19)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

His work is commanding tens of thousands of dollars!

ZOE

Max --

MAXWELL

What?! What, Zoe? What?

ZOE

Just calm down for a second.

MAXWELL

I'm calm. Look at me!? Amanda? Do I look calm to you.

AMANDA

It's a shock -- of course. I'd say we're all in shock.

MAXWELL

Well, be that as it may -- shocked or not. Richie is dead and here we are -- three dopes having to be shocked about it. I need a drink.

Max heads for the kitchen.

ZOE

There's nothing in there.

Max exits into the kitchen.

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Fuck me!

ZOE

He is in shock.

AMANDA

I don't know -- I thought he had woken up, that he was getting better. Isn't that what was said -- isn't that what was relayed just a couple days ago? He was getting better?

ZOE

He didn't get better.

AMANDA

This is terrible timing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (20)

ZOE

What's that?

AMANDA

I'm sorry -- I'm sorry, I don't know what I'm saying.

ZOE

Terrible timing. Yeah.

AMANDA

That's not what --

ZOE

This is terrible timing, Max!

AMANDA

I'm sorry -- I'm not thinking clearly.

Zoe yells into the kitchen.

ZOE

Max, this is terrible fucking timing! What was that asshole thinking, dying now? He's about to be the toast of the fucking town!

Max re-enters.

MAXWELL

Take it easy --

ZOE

Take it easy? You're telling me to take it easy?

MAXWELL

Amanda doesn't even know Richie. She doesn't have a clue.

ZOE

Take it easy? Just take it easy, Zoe.

MAXWELL

Amanda -- you have no idea what you're dealing with here.

ZOE

Shut up, Max.

AMANDA

I should call Theo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (21)

ZOE

Yeah, call Theo -- let him know about the terrible timing.

MAXWELL

I called Theo. He's meeting me here. I wasn't expecting to see you two here, actually.

ZOE

We were just organizing --

AMANDA

An impromptu meeting. Does Theo know?

MAXWELL

Well, I did convey that information though he seemed a bit preoccupied. So, yes?

AMANDA

Well, I'm sure he was --

MAXWELL

You must know that this changes things, right? Amanda? You know this changes things.

ZOE

What does it change?

AMANDA

Yes, yes I imagine it may change things.

MAXWELL

Not may -- will change. Fact of the matter, you don't need me anymore.

ZOE

Oh shit.

MAXWELL

Right? Zoe? Zoe maybe, cause she has all the info on what's what and how did he do this and oh, "we did that together" -- but me?

ZOE

Does his sister know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (22)

MAXWELL

Of course she knows. Hope, by the way. Her name is Hope. She's flying out now. We talked from the hospital this morning. It's a funny thing. I talked to Hope. I talked to Theo. Hope hasn't seen Richie in years. Theo never met him. These are the people I called. Some guy who didn't know he existed a month ago. A sister who hasn't talked to him in -- Jesus, a decade? More? That is some sad shit. This guy. Richie. Richie Wales. The talk of the town. Amanda, can you call Theo and ask him to pick up a bottle of bourbon on his way over?

The door buzzer rings.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Too late!

Zoe goes to the intercom at the front door.

ZOE

Theo?

THEO (O.S.)

Yes! Zoe?

Zoe buzzes and opens the door, letting it swing and stay open.

ZOE

I've never been called coy before, Amanda. That was a first for me.

Max grabs a toolbox from near the door and exits into the bedroom. Amanda sits, staring blankly.

After a moment. Theo appears at the door.

THEO

Zoe! And Amanda? Great! I was hoping you were still here. Is Max -

-

He closes the door.

ZOE

He's in the bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (23)

THEO

Max, come out here, can you!?
Something hit me on the way over --

Max enters from the bedroom holding a mini sledge hammer.

THEO (CONT'D)

Amanda, you'll love this. Tristan and Viola came by the shop -- you know, from Gallery 7 -- a very hip, urbane gallery. They heard the whispers of our Richard Wales -- well done you, and most importantly, they love multimedia work. Whole room installations, video walls, functional art, and what-have-you. They have tons of European buyers who go for this and the set piece podium works, not to mention the paintings. They LOVE Richard Wales! I mean, of course they do. Who doesn't? I told them about our "Binary" piece, Max; the television piece. Oh, and there she is! I love this piece. Did I mention that on the phone? I should have. We have work to do, people! And if you think this is exciting, just wait until we see --

ZOE

He's dead.

THEO

What's that?

ZOE

Richie died -- did Max not tell you?

THEO

Did he? Did you -- Maxwell?

ZOE

Are you kidding me?

THEO

Of course that's horrible news, but.

ZOE

But?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (24)

THEO
But. Yes, but --

ZOE
Well, this should be interesting.

THEO
I was only going to say --

AMANDA
Theo --

THEO
Of course! Look, this is a tragic day, okay? I understand that. I'm not ignoring the death of this man, it's just --

ZOE
You are.

AMANDA
It seems as though --

THEO
Amanda, you know as well as I do that the work transcends the artist.

ZOE
Can you -- just, just -- who the hell are you people? Richie just died! He just -- I mean, Max?

MAXWELL
Well, it was several hours ago --

ZOE
A couple of hours ago -- don't you - he's not even, I mean -- he's probably still there in the -- in the - what kinda ghoul are you, Theo? Amanda? Holy shit, did I miss read you. Are you hearing this?

AMANDA
I think we all need to just pause for a moment.

ZOE
Pause? Pause? Richie is dead. HOW'S THAT FOR A PAUSE?!

A long moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (25)

THEO

I apologize if I came across -- I was thinking about how we might honor --

ZOE

Oh, please.

THEO

How we might honor the man, the artist and his work by continuing --

ZOE

By continuing to make that big money.

THEO

His work needs to be seen!

ZOE

His work needs to be sold!

THEO

I don't think you understand, Zoe. I don't believe there is a difference between the two.

ZOE

Well not now! Richie's art -- the price goes through the roof!

AMANDA

Actually, that's a common misconception --

ZOE

Is it?

AMANDA

Historically, there's little difference between pricing for an artist whether living or --

Max unexpectedly brings down the hammer on a box, smashing video tapes. Repeatedly...

The room gets very quiet.

MAXWELL

"Please be nice to me." That's what he said. I was standing next to his bed. He wasn't really awake -- what do they call that?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (26)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I don't know if he recognized me -- if he knew it was me, but he looked at me and said that. "Please be nice to me." Isn't that a hell of a thing -- the last thing somebody says? Is that irony, Zoe?

After a moment.

ZOE

I can't do that. I can't be nice.

MAXWELL

Nope.

ZOE

Either can you.

MAXWELL

Nope.

THEO

I can.

MAXWELL

Oh, yeah?

THEO

I can and I will.

MAXWELL

Not really up to you though, is it?

THEO

Do you know why I love artists? Because they're not like us. They suffer. Not any differently than we all suffer, but the difference is -- the difference is they find a way. They access a channel to express their suffering -- they find an outlet to purge, and to cleanse and to expunge their miseries, their joys, their frustrations. And we, yes we get to revel in their catharsis. We get to take ownership of their gateways to salvation. We look at a painting, a Richard Wales painting, and we're better for it because he shows us how. He allows us to exhale. Let me tell you -- a man who does this, I can be nice to that man.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (27)

THEO (CONT'D)

I will be very nice to him and if you use that hammer again, Mr. Grumé, I can guarantee you one thing; I won't be nice.

MAXWELL

This is my apartment and you aren't welcome.

THEO

Our contract suggests otherwise.

MAXWELL

Amanda?

THEO

Amanda?

AMANDA

Richard Wales is dead. I'm afraid Mr. Grumè's authority to act on his behalf died with him.

THEO

You're joking --

AMANDA

The contract ends today.

ZOE

Whose contract?

AMANDA

Not yours, Zoe.

THEO

Not Zoe Torres. No, not Zoe Torres! What would we do without Zoe Torres?!

AMANDA

Theo --

THEO

I'm sorry, I'm sorry -- but I will not stand here and let you destroy this man's work! Contract or not -- what gives you the right to take a hammer to anything?!

AMANDA

It does seem misguided.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (28)

MAXWELL

You don't even know what's on these video tapes!

AMANDA

That's hardly the point --

ZOE

Show them.

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

Let's show them what's on the tapes.

THEO

I'd love to see -- before Max destroys the man's work.

ZOE

Careful what you wish for, Theo. Max?

Max takes a moment, holding the hammer menacingly. He walks over to the television and pulls off the yellow post-it label.

MAXWELL

The TV is not for sale.

He walks around the room, peeling off other labels he'd posted.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Table. Not for sale. Sofa? Don't move, Amanda -- not for sale. Chairs. Not. For. Sale. The paintings? They're not mine. Boxes? Not mine. Video Tapes? Not mine! I'm not sure how you place value on people, Mr. Calloway, Ms. Amanda whatever -- a couple of weeks ago Richie's apartment was filled with garbage. You put a price on that -- you decided the value -- and now? What's the value of Richie's work now? Huh? Still worth tens of thousands? My guess is no. But what do I know? I don't know much but I can tell you this -- I know garbage when I see it. What's in that locked closet?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (29)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I'm guessing a dead body. Maybe a couple. Who knows!? Anyone want to know? I do!

He exits into the bedroom.

THEO

I think he's lost his mind.

Zoe goes to the bedroom room.

ZOE

What the hell are you going to do?

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Exactly what it looks like!

Max starts banging offstage on the closet door.

The front door buzzes.

ZOE

STOP! MAX, STOP!

Max stops.

The front door buzzes again.

END SCENE

ACT 2, SCENE 3

Several minutes later.

A piece of carry-on luggage now sits by the front door.

HOPE COOPER-WALES, 43, smartly California casual in dress and demeanor is flanked by Theo and Amanda showing her paintings through the stacks.

THEO

These few are absolutely fantastic -
- you can make out the figures
enough to wonder. And then with his
use of light! The way he plays with
the light is brilliant, just
brilliant.

AMANDA

He is a -- was, was a tremendous
talent, Hope. May we call you Hope?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (30)

ZOE

Enthusiastic admirers of Richie.
Sometimes I wish we hadn't let them
up.

THEO

I'd say it's a miracle I walked by
when I did. Otherwise, Mr. Wales
would have ended up in the
landfill. His paintings, I mean.

MAXWELL

Maybe we should let Hope sit, huh?

HOPE

I'm okay. I have to say -- these --
all this. I had no idea he was
taking himself so seriously with
all this.

MAXWELL

He was a mystery for sure.

THEO

I can't tell you how horrible we
feel about Richard. It's just so
tragic. You must have gotten on the
1st flight.

HOPE

I live closer to the airport than
one should. When I talked to Max --
well. Arrangements need to be made,
don't they.

AMANDA

Of course, of course -- you must
know that we, Theo and I are
absolutely at your disposal.

ZOE

You bet they are.

MAXWELL

Zoe --

ZOE

Your brother is quite the darling,
Hope. This ridiculous accident took
the life of an artistic phenom --
and Amanda and Theo are here to
keep Richie's value soaring.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (31)

MAXWELL

Zoe, what are you doing?

ZOE

I'm mourning, Max. This is part of the mourning process.

THEO

Zoe is right, but her timing is abhorrent.

ZOE

My timing!

THEO

Hope, your brother is -- was a truly gifted artist. His body of work is formidable and relevant, beyond the paintings, the furniture, the entire apartment! Who knows what creative treasure lies in all these boxes of his.

HOPE

Do you mind if I -- may I have a glass of water?

MAXWELL

Absolutely.

ZOE

So, about the boxes.

Max exits into the kitchen.

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Hey, Zoe?! You have a second?

ZOE

We thought Richie was getting better. We all did. We thought he'd be getting out of the hospital, coming back here to recuperate, get back on his feet -- which is why we came in the first place.

Max returns and hands Hope a glass of water.

MAXWELL

That's when I met Zoe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (32)

ZOE

And I met Max -- we were gonna help out Richie by clearing some space so he could move around. You can see -- it's pretty tight in here. Couldn't roll a wheelchair around or whatever he might need.

MAXWELL

But --

ZOE

But, he didn't get better. He didn't. He died and that sucks. It really does -- it's not -- it's not a good thing.

THEO

Zoe, what are you doing?

ZOE

I want to let Hope know -- let her know what her brother was worth, okay?

MAXWELL

Zoe, come on --

ZOE

Just let me -- Hope, do you mind?

HOPE

Please. I'd like to know everything.

ZOE

Your brother -- oh, Hope. I know you haven't seen him in a long time -- hell, it's been many months for me myself. See, I was around for a lot of these paintings. For the paintings and the furniture, the TV! Theo and Amanda here never met Richie -- which is a shame, really. It's a shame because he could have answered so many questions -- so many questions they have, that I have -- many more questions than answers now. It's a funny thing, this business of art. At the heart of it all, art is the most human of values. It's not a dollar amount.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (33)

ZOE (CONT'D)

It's paid in blood, and tears, and laughter and passion -- it's the human expression in it's purest form. I'm an artist. Maybe I'm not a very good one, many I'm too cerebral -- unlike Richie, whose heart spilt like blood on the canvas -- his dreams, his demons. He never cared about this art. He called his paintings sketchbooks to madness. He threw away paintings all the time -- didn't know that, did you Theo? Max? His value wasn't measured in the price tags at the gallery. But, unfortunately, I guess mine are. Value is a funny thing. It can ebb so quickly. Market forces? And incredible amount of buzz in the right circles? A painting that was sitting on the street one day can sell for thousands the next. And then -- just like that, POOF, it's back on the street again.

HOPE

I'm not sure I understand.

THEO

You brother's work has been seen -- been noticed and if I may say so, it has been recognized by it's merit -- it's "value" by an appreciative audience.

ZOE

By appreciative, he means disgustingly wealthy audience.

THEO

Who are willing to pay very good money to show their appreciation and provide Richard Wales a small fortune.

ZOE

For now.

THEO

For now, for tomorrow, forever!
Richard Wales will be remembered!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (34)

MAXWELL

I'm sorry. I'm very, very sorry
about Richie -- about -- Hope?
Hope, do you mind sitting down
here?

Maxwell motions to the sofa. Hope sits.

Maxwell turns on the TV. He goes to a box, grabs and inserts
a video tape in the VCR.

Zoe turns to face the wall.

Theo and Amanda move to stand behind the sofa. Max presses
play.

After a long moment -- the impact of the images is realized
by everyone but...

Hope, who watches, unflinchingly.

AMANDA

No, no, no --

THEO

What in the world!

AMANDA

Oh, my god!

HOPE

You can stop now.

Max stops the machine, he drops his head.

Everyone is speechless. There is a long pause.

HOPE (CONT'D)

How did you -- where did you get
these?

MAXWELL

They were here. In these boxes.

HOPE

All these boxes? How many?

MAXWELL

I don't know.

ZOE

A lot. Too many.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (35)

HOPE

Are they all the same?

Zoe and Max looks at each other.

THEO

How is this possible?

AMANDA

There's a problem -- a fundamental problem --

THEO

This?

MAXWELL

I'm so sorry, Hope.

AMANDA

Did you know about this, Zoe?

THEO

Maxwell?

ZOE

It doesn't matter. I'm sorry, Hope.

THEO

But it does matter! Of course it matters. Did you both know -- you knew what was on these tapes? Maxwell.

MAXWELL

What.

THEO

Did you know what -- when you signed the contract, all that paperwork, did you --

AMANDA

Theo, calm down --

THEO

I will not calm down! We were duped! Duped! Who is this person? These people! How can we be associated --

MAXWELL

That's what I said to her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (36)

THEO

Zoe? What was this -- was this was your idea? To string us along --

ZOE

My idea? My idea? Are you fucking insane!

AMANDA

Theo! Calm yourself. She didn't know. You didn't know, Zoe.

MAXWELL

Of course we knew. We both knew but --

ZOE

But we didn't know either! We didn't know what was on those damn tapes -- a few weeks ago. Anymore than you did a few weeks ago. That's when we learned! You think I had some secret I was keeping? You're wrong! Richie needs to answer for himself, not me! You're just worried your little talk-of-the-town cash prospect is devalued! So leave me out of it!

THEO

Oh, you're out of it -- don't worry about that --

HOPE

Stop!! Are they all the same, or are they different?

ZOE

What?

HOPE

Those -- those boxes.

MAXWELL

The tapes. You mean, the copies? The same tapes?

ZOE

We only looked at a few --

HOPE

Please! The tapes -- are they the same. Are they the same children? It's important.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (37)

AMANDA

The children?

MAXWELL

We don't really know.

HOPE

You all think Richie was a monster.
Of course you do.

ZOE

Yes.

Hope takes a deep breath, considers this moment.

HOPE

Our mother died when I was in college. I was so relieved! I couldn't stop thinking about how sad that was -- to be relieved your mother was dead. I wasn't happy. I wasn't sad. I was relieved. I didn't care how she died. I didn't care if she suffered. Frankly, I had hoped she -- not hoped. Wanted. I wanted her to suffer. I wanted her to experience a miserable, horrifying death. It took years of therapy for me to admit that. To own it. To not feel that the hatred defined me. It did but it doesn't anymore. That's the last time we talked. The last time I talked to Richie. She died in her sleep, evidently. Just slipped away. Hardly seemed fair. But some how, some way, that evil was removed from the planet. When I found out my father was dying -- Richie reached out to me but I couldn't -- I wouldn't let him. I couldn't go there anymore. I made a decision to start again. To wipe the slate -- tabula rasa. I always loved that idea. Probably the first -- no, indeed it was the first time in my life I ever had control over anything. The first time I took control. I seized control of my life. Tabula rasa! Clean slate! I changed my name. Hope. Makes sense. Open the new world, the new day to hope. So I'm Hope.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (38)

HOPE (CONT'D)

Everything else I'll just let slip away -- just like that evil insanity when they died -- just slip away. But I'm here! I'm here, reborn. Hope. Richie wrote to me. When he couldn't get me on the phone, he wrote and told me he was going to see the old man -- to make peace with that bastard before he died. Richie needed to do that, I guess. For himself. For money, maybe? Who knows. My parents were not poor, I can tell you that. I imagine Richie got an inheritance. Maybe that's what he needed to move on. I don't blame him. He earned it! Hell, I don't -- can't blame Richie for anything. He survived. We survived. I survived. Richie did, for awhile. He found a way out. Through this, I guess. Through his art. His demons. His dreams. Himself. Here he is. I can see him in all of these -- all of these paintings. They make sense to me somehow. They make me feel clean, I guess. Do you understand? Do you understand what I'm telling you? These children -- these children on those tapes are me and Richie. That's right. The evil in this world is all around you -- not everywhere, but it's there. It's omnipresent. It's in a wealthy suburban couple who did this -- who rented their children -- who destroyed -- no. No! NO! Not destroyed! Blunted? Hollowed? Emptied? I don't -- I don't have words for it. But they didn't destroy us. You see what they did to us. You watched those tapes. Richie survived that. I survived that. They are dead. And I'm grateful. I am Hope.

A long pause.

HOPE (CONT'D)

Please don't try to understand. You couldn't -- you couldn't possibly understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (39)

AMANDA

I'm numb.

THEO

Poor Richard. And Hope! Hope, I'm just --

AMANDA

We're going to help you.

HOPE

What makes you think I need help?

MAXWELL

Oh my -- that's it! The boxes. The smashed -- he was -- when we saw -- when Zoe and I saw the tapes, I smashed, I smashed the tape. But Richie was smashing the tapes. He was finding them from all over, from Turkey, from Russia, from shit anywhere he could find them. He was gathering them all to erase them. He was destroying them. Zoe? Zoe do you see what he was doing?

Zoe grabs the hammer off the floor.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Zoe.

Zoe exits into the bedroom.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Zoe!

Maxwell goes to the bedroom door. We HEAR Zoe swinging the hammer at the closet door.

After a moment, the others go to the bedroom door.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Do you want --

ZOE (O.S.)

NO! I need to do it!

A few more swings of the hammer.

ZOE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Open, you son of a bitch!

Zoe breaks through -- the door creaks open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (40)

After a moment.

THEO
Is there anything?

AMANDA
Is it empty?

Zoe enters from the bedroom wiping off her shirt and pants holding a small painting. She hands it to Hope.

ZOE
Hope?

Hope holds a small painting in her hands -- not visible to the audience but obviously precious to her.

ZOE (CONT'D)
I think -- I think that's you.

HOPE
Yes, yes, I believe it is.

ZOE
He painted that closet shut. I think he was protecting you.

HOPE
I cut him out. I needed to start again. It wasn't fair -- what we endured wasn't fair, but what is? Thank you, Richie. This means more to me than I could imagine.

Hope turns to face the others.

HOPE (CONT'D)
I don't ask much of people. I actually try hard not to ask anything of them. It's another thing I need to work on. Maybe it's my life's work -- to trust people, to understand that most people have a decency that you can rely on -- that you need to rely on if we're going to live in a world together. I want to count on the decency of people. I guess -- If I may ask something of you all. When it comes to my brother. When it comes to Richie. Please, just be nice to him. Just be nice. I should probably go finish the arrangements.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (41)

Hope begins to exit.

MAXWELL

Hope?

THEO

Please, Hope -- let us take you.
Amanda?

AMANDA

Of course, of course.

HOPE

That would be fine, sure.

Zoe comes over to Hope.

ZOE

Can I just --

Zoe extends her arms to hug Hope. Hope lets her.

MAXWELL

Hope, I'm gonna be here. When you
need anything to -- you know.

ZOE

We'll both be here.

Hope smiles.

Hope, Theo and Amanda exit. Zoe closes the door and looks to
Maxwell.

After a moment.

MAXWELL

What just happened anyway?

ZOE

A lot. A lot happened.

MAXWELL

So what happens now?

ZOE

Damn it. I'm not really sure. I
imagine your garbage is worth
something again.

MAXWELL

We were wrong about Richie.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (42)

ZOE

I know.

MAXWELL

I've been wrong before, about a lot of things but -

ZOE

I imagine you have. You seem like the type of person to be wrong about most things.

She smiles at him.

ZOE (CONT'D)

And so am I, evidently. Explains a lot about Richie.

MAXWELL

Too much. Yeah, it does.

ZOE

I just wish -- I mean, I should have -

MAXWELL

Don't do that. Not now. Doesn't matter.

ZOE

It kinda does though.

MAXWELL

Yeah, it does.

A long moment.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Are we bad people?

ZOE

No.

MAXWELL

No?

ZOE

I don't think so. Maybe. I don't know -- this is new territory for me.

MAXWELL

Yeah. New territory. What does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (43)

ZOE

I think we -- that I maybe dismiss people too quickly.

MAXWELL

What?

ZOE

I don't know -- I judge people. We all do, don't we? Judge people without knowing shit about them really.

MAXWELL

That's true.

ZOE

I think we can go easy on each other.

MAXWELL

Yeah?

ZOE

I think.

MAXWELL

Like Richie asked?

ZOE

Be nice.

MAXWELL

Yeah.

A long moment.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Tabula Rasa. Never heard that before. I like it.

ZOE

Hello.

MAXWELL

Hello?

ZOE

Nice to meet you. I'm Zoe. Zoe Torres Garcia.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (44)

MAXWELL

Oh, I see. Hello, Zoe. Zoe Torres
Garcia. I'm Maxwell Grumé. Or Max.
You can call me Max.

Lights out.

END SCENE

END PLAY