

RHETORICAL

a one act couple drama
by Terry Roeche

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RHETORICAL

TOM: 30s or 40's. Dry nature, rather distant. HE finds his wife, CAROL, nagging.

CAROL: Same age as TOM, with a similar dry and distant nature.

Setting

A Gallery Opening
(The monochrome paintings of Barnard Surio)

Time

Early Evening, The Present

At Rise: TOM stands before the red painting, his arms slowly stretch out horizontally, then vertically as if to judge the size of the red canvas, but we don't know his feelings about the painting. CAROL approaches with two glasses of wine, SHE hands TOM a glass. Pause.

It's over, isn't it? CAROL

(Pause)

What? TOM

Just say so if it is. CAROL

Do we have to do this now? Here? TOM

Do you think it is? CAROL

Do you think it is? TOM

Think about it. CAROL

I don't want to. TOM

CAROL

Don't you think you should?

TOM

I want to appreciate the art.

CAROL

Can you?

TOM

If you let me.

CAROL

I didn't know you liked art.

TOM

I do. I like art alone.

(Pause)

CAROL

If you think it's over just say so.

TOM

I'll think about it later. Not now. I'm looking at the art. I might want to purchase a painting.

CAROL

Are they for sale?

TOM

Why wouldn't they be?

CAROL

This one?

TOM

Maybe.

CAROL

Do you like?

TOM

You don't.

CAROL

Do you?

TOM

Love it.

CAROL

Really?

(Pause)

Do you think we've been distant?

TOM

I think of one thing at a time. What I'm not thinking about, I'm distant until I think about it.

CAROL

Do you think there's any point in dragging it out? If it's over ...

TOM

I don't know.

CAROL

How would you want it, if it's over?

TOM

I'm trying to understand ... if you'd let me.

CAROL

Us?

TOM

No. Art.

CAROL

I'd like to hear. It might make a difference ... as far as it being over.

TOM

Are you happy?

CAROL

I thought we were talking about art?

TOM

Are you happy?

CAROL

Are you.

TOM

Are you unhappy?

CAROL

Are you?

TOM

Are you looking for something different?

CAROL

Do I do things that annoy you?

TOM

That's a good question.

CAROL

Do I?

TOM

Probably ...

CAROL

Like what?

TOM

Do I annoy you?

CAROL

Maybe we're thinking about the same things ...

(Pause. Then)

TOM

Someone asked why I didn't dress better.

CAROL

Odd. Just now?

TOM

I didn't know what to say.

CAROL

I wouldn't either. Who? A friend, someone we know?

TOM

Not really.

CAROL

Do you think you dress poorly?

TOM

Why would someone care about how I dress?

CAROL

I like the way you dress.

TOM

Why should someone I hardly know be concerned about how I dress?

CAROL

I couldn't possibly know.

TOM

It was a key, a catalyst.

CAROL

It made you think?

TOM

Deeply.

CAROL

About?

TOM

It happens all the time.

CAROL

Someone not liking how you dress?

TOM

No. That's not what they said. They asked, if I liked, how I dress.

CAROL

Oh.

TOM

It's the intent.

CAROL

Which was?

TOM

It's rhetorical.

CAROL

Really?

TOM

You see what I mean?

CAROL

No.

TOM

That wasn't what they were asking me.

CAROL

It wasn't?

TOM

No. They saw something of themselves in me. I became the object of self-dissatisfaction ... there's ...

CAROL

About what?

TOM

We both look at this red painting, only you can't possibly know how it lets me feel.

CAROL

No.

TOM

How could I understand their self-dissatisfaction?

CAROL

You couldn't. You're not he. Or was it a she?

TOM

Questions are rhetorical. It's a commentary about oneself.

CAROL

Narcissistic?

TOM

People ask rhetorical questions all the time ...

CAROL

With you particularly?

TOM

No. With everyone all the time ... no one wants an answer.

CAROL

Is she someone from work?

TOM

You wouldn't know him. It was before I knew you.