# 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.

<u>CAROL</u>: 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.

CAROL

It's over, isn't it?

(Pause)

TOM

What?

CAROL

Just say so if it is.

TOM

Do we have to do this now? Here?

CAROL

Do you think it is?

TOM

Do you think it is?

CAROL

Think about it.

TOM

I don't want to.

CAROL Don't you think you should? MOT 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. MOT 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? MOT 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 ...

MOT

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.

 $\mathtt{TOM}$ 

Are you happy?

CAROL

I thought we were talking about art?

TOM

Are you happy?

CAROL

Are you.

 ${\tt TOM}$ 

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)

MOT

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?

MOT

Not really.

CAROT.

Do you think you dress poorly?

MOT

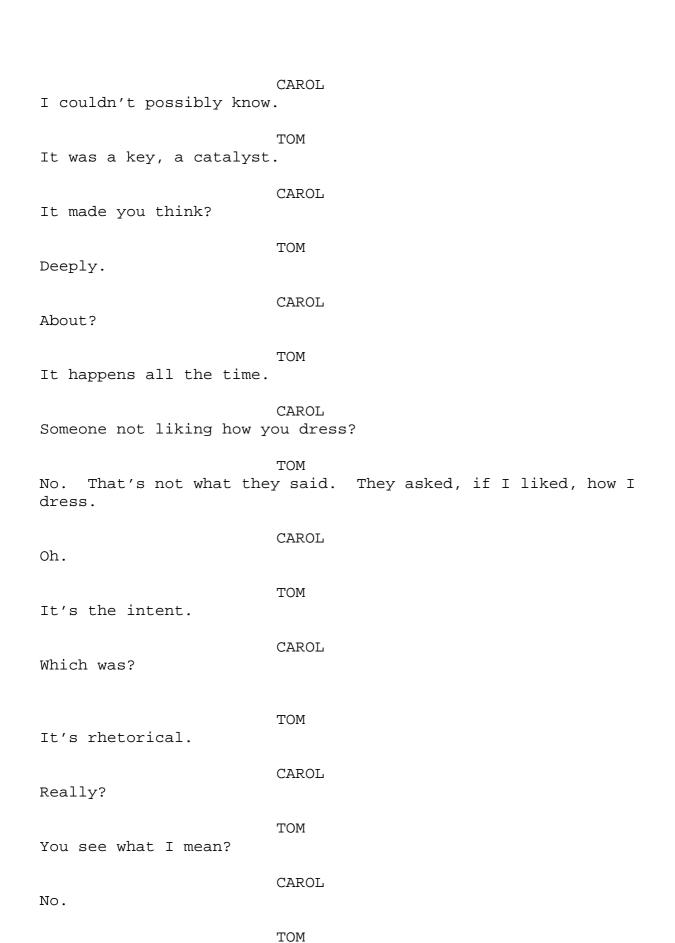
Why would someone care about how I dress?

CAROL

I like the way you dress.

MOT

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



It wasn't?

That wasn't what they were asking me.

CAROL

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?

MOT

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

CAROL

Narcissistic?

MOT

People ask rhetorical questions all the time ...

CAROL

With you particularly?

 ${\tt MOT}$ 

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.