

*audience.*) The man is always annoyingly on time! Everyone else in this world is running at least five minutes behind schedule, but not our Vincent, not! Except for tonight of all nights. (*Inspecting a rather ridiculous collage.*) How I love this. It's good. It's underrated.

ANNIE. Don't touch anything, Jack.

JACK. Everything's set!

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

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

ANNIE. No, not till it's done.

JACK. C'mon, one look!

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

JACK. Not acceptable! I want to see!

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

JACK. You don't think I would?

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

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

JACK. (*Lowering the gun.*) Kate! Kate! I was just showing Mrs.

Brooks my new revolver —

KATE. But you were pointing it at her —

ANNIE. Everything is fine, Kate.

KATE. Are you sure?

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

ANNIE. What is it you want, Kate?

KATE. I just came to ask permission to leave —

ANNIE. Yes, that'll be fine.

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

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

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

ANNIE. Yes.

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

KATE. Yes, sir.

JACK. A male friend?

ANNIE. Jack, now you're prying!

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

KATE. Yes, sir.

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

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

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

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

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

KATE. She'll be back in a moment!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

JACK. Bears me.

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

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

ANNIE. Jack —

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

ANNIE. Breathe, Jack, breathe —

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

ANNIE. None.

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

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