

VINCENT. It did?

ANNIE. You said, when you walked in —

VINCENT. Oh yes, dreadful! Haven't you heard?

ANNIE. We live in the woods, we never hear anything.

JACK. Annie, before our guest burdens us with his problems, how 'bout a scotch for Vincent and Jack? (*Annie pours both men a scotch.*)

VINCENT. "For Vincent and Jack." Oh, do not tell me you're beginning to refer to yourself in the third person.

JACK. I'm an artist, Vincent, never judge me.

VINCENT. Of course, Jack, you're a great, great artist and beyond all judgment! Besides, I never judge, I just sell. Now Jack, remember I showed you some work by that young post-modernist I was so excited about, Nicole Erickson?

JACK. How could I forget? You seemed more excited by her work than mine.

VINCENT. Well, she's dead.

ANNIE. I'm sorry, Vincent. How did she — ?

VINCENT. Suicide. Two days ago. I've been on the phone ever since.

ANNIE. And she was a kid?

VINCENT. Twenty-three.

ANNIE. Awful. I hope it wasn't over some boy —

JACK. Wasn't this the same girl with that picture in *Rolling Stone*?

ANNIE. Not the one wearing nothing but panties, with paint smeared all over her.

VINCENT. That's the one.

ANNIE. What publicity whore ever came up with that idea?

JACK. Oh, I bet the old whore's right in front of us, Annie.

VINCENT. Well, I merely suggested she show off her body to bring the proper attention to her work.

JACK. Wait. Weren't you about to debut her? You had your publicity stooges in full throttle and her big debut in your gallery all lined up —

VINCENT. Well yes, but I pulled it.

ANNIE. Why?

VINCENT. Like everything, it's complicated.

JACK. We're old friends, Vincent. Un-complicate it for us.

VINCENT. Well — I recently took another look at her work and I realized she, well, wasn't quite ready for so much public attention just yet.

JACK. I see.

VINCENT. What do you see?

JACK. You promised her everything she ever wanted, then you snatched it all away. Darling, she did kill herself over a boy. Unfortunately, the boy was Vincent.

VINCENT. Now that's damn unfair, Jack! She was a troubled young woman.

JACK. But I have a hunch, yes — I bet after this troubled young woman so tragically took her own life, I bet all of a sudden — her debut was back on.

ANNIE. Vincent, you didn't —

VINCENT. I'm a man of business, and as this very expensive house can attest to, a damn good one. I cannot deny that her death, as tragic as it is, is also, well — never mind.

ANNIE. No, tell us.

VINCENT. A terrific career move.

ANNIE. Oh for Christ's sake, Vincent!

VINCENT. Young, beautiful, a suicide — you must admit that moves you up the celebrity food chain awfully fast.

ANNIE. But to go ahead and exploit that —

VINCENT. I don't make the rules, Annie.

JACK. All right, old friend, it's time you and I had our little talk!

VINCENT. Our little talk?

JACK. Yes, but not drinking this. Annie, where's the good scotch?

ANNIE. Down in the cellar.

VINCENT. That's what I'm here for? A little talk? You had me drive two-and-a-half hours to talk?

JACK. Yes! I'll get the scotch.

VINCENT. Why couldn't we have talked in the city? Or on the phone?

JACK. Because I said here!

VINCENT. Well what about what I say?

JACK. Irrelevant!

VINCENT. Jack, I will not be treated this way!

JACK. How much money did I make for you last year?

VINCENT. All right, hurry back.

JACK. Vincent, did you ever think, well — wouldn't it be great if Jack had taken the Nicole Erickson route?

VINCENT. Meaning?

JACK. Killed myself. I'd be a dead artist. They're the most profitable, are they not? (*Jack exits.*)

VINCENT. I have a theory about artists — how big an asshole