

JACK, TEA AND ME

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The best things, he always use to say, are put together of a night and vanish with the morning. What people call the floating world.

– Kazuo Ishiguro, *An Artist of the Floating World*

Every man I knew went to bed with Gilda ... and woke up with me.

– Rita Hayworth

JACK, TEA AND ME

TIME AND PLACE

Present.

A round table in the garish dining room of a luxury hotel in Washington, D.C. In the center of the table are several crystal bud vases with individual red roses. Upstage hangs a mirror equivalent to Manet's, A Bar at the Folies-Bergère.

CHARACTERS

JACK DAWKINS, in his 20's, an art student.

ABIGAIL ("Abby"), in her 20's, an art student.

BRIANNA ("Brie"), in her 20's, an art student.

BROOKLYN ("Brook"), in her 20's, an art student.

K, in his 20's, an art student.

... in the dialogue indicates a thoughtful break.

SCENE 1 – FRIDAY, LATE EVENING

JACK, ABIGAIL, BRIANNA, BROOKLYN and **K** are seated around the table, drinking. A toast has been made; and at the rise they are holding their glasses high, and (with the exception of **BRIANNA**) saying expressions like:

"Cheers, all my Dears," and "Friday classes to empty glasses," and "All for One and one for All."

A pause, drinking.

ABIGAIL

But the two of them really do

BRIANNA

Do what?

BROOKLYN

Do who?

JACK

Voodoo.

K

Making “talking” motions with his hands.

What are you trying to say, Abby?

ABIGAIL

They really do *not* see eye to eye on it.
On art.

BROOKLYN

Says who?

JACK

Voodoo.

ABIGAIL

Says me, Brook.

K

You and what credible witness?

ABIGAIL

I heard them, K ... really.

BRIANNA

Who are we talking about?

JACK

Professor, and his girlfriend, I think.

BRIANNA

What does Abby know?

ABIGAIL

What I heard, Brie.

K

Where?

ABIGAIL

I was standing outside the lecture hall, and they didn't know I was there.

K

Why didn't you tell them?

ABIGAIL

I couldn't. They were talking, and I couldn't interrupt.

JACK

Then you might have walked away. Where you couldn't hear.

ABIGAIL

Might have, Jack, but didn't.

I had to ask him, about the painting I'm working on,
and the trouble I'm having with it.

Time's running out, and I needed to ask him right away.

BROOKLYN

What did you hear?

ABIGAIL

They were talking about a student.

Probably one of us, but I don't know for sure.

And he was angry. They both were.

He said she's my leading student. She can't think that way.

And she said, that was all the more reason for her to experiment on her own.

Does that sound like any of us?

K

Not me, certainly.

JACK

Nor me.

BROOKLYN

Could hardly be me.... His "leading" student?

ABIGAIL

Well, certainly not me.

BRIANNA

Why are you looking at me?

I'm no teacher's pet, despite how much I think of him.

BROOKLYN

You admire him like God, you mean.

K

More than God.

BRIANNA

He doesn't know that.
Why should he?
And it's not true, to begin with.
He could care less about me, with all the women he has. That's obvious.

BROOKLYN

He knows. Because eyes speak louder than words.

K

And his girlfriend's pissed....
What did she say again?

ABIGAIL

That a leading student who has the best grasp of the teacher's concepts is the one best suited to find shortcomings in the teacher's own work.
That's evolution, she said. Or is there no room for improvement in art?

K

And what did he say to that?

ABIGAIL

Bullshit!

K

Well, I'll have to say, she's pretty much right.
That's what art has always been. An evolution from one movement to the next.

BROOKLYN

There really are no lines of demarcation in art.
It's a constant rise toward perfection.

K

You're quoting Professor.

BROOKLYN

Who better?

K

All I'm saying is that no teacher wants his talented students to just copy him.
He wants them to branch out.
New leaves on the tree he's planted.
And no one with their own talent should be satisfied doing less.

JACK

Brook?... What is perfection in art?

BROOKLYN

The sun, of course.
The only true source of pure light.

K

Professor, again.

ABIGAIL

It's a question of loyalty, K.
As I see it.
And maybe you don't.

K

Loyalty?

ABIGAIL

Listen, Numbskull, none of us would be this lucky if it weren't for Professor.
We owe him our lives. Our professional lives, I mean.

BRIANNA

This evening's turning sour, all of a sudden.

ABIGAIL

So none of us should embarrass Professor by going too far off on our own.
It's his studio, not ours.

BROOKLYN

I can agree with that.

BRIANNA

Wait a minute.

K

In theory, I suppose, a good teacher should readily accept changes from his way
of doing things.
But, in practice, pride gets in the way.... Big time.

JACK

What if the public is opposed to changes?
Don't we all have to consider them as well?

BROOKLYN

Seldom, but maybe. Some of the time.
The public, ignorant as they usually are, is part of the Cause.
And, in the end, the Cause is the most important.

K

Truth, I think, is more important than the Cause.

BROOKLYN

The Cause is the truth.
Anything else is slipping down the slippery slope.

JACK

Art is truth. In *our* world.
Isn't it?

ABIGAIL

Provided it's used in the right way.

BROOKLYN

Art's like a gun, Abby. It's truth, or not, no matter how it's used.
Or whose walls it decorates.

BRIANNA

Wait a minute. Wait just a minute.
Art is communication. Art is a form of media.
And it certainly *does matter* how it's used.
And you're a fool if you don't see that.

BROOKLYN

You're the fool, Brie, if you think Professor will take kindly to any shortcomings
in his work that *you* communicate.

ABIGAIL

He said it would be next to treachery.

BROOKLYN

What?

ABIGAIL

I don't know.
Going your own way, I suppose, from the techniques he's been so careful to teach
us.

BRIANNA

It's not the technique.
It's the subject matter.

K

Which *is*?

BRIANNA

We paint the Cause.
Duh!

And when the women, who gave their lives and risked their lives in Washington, are represented on his canvas by a bunch of prostitutes, like in *The Great Victory for Truth, Life, President and Country*, as he named it

BROOKLYN

So what?
Who knows they're prostitutes?
Or even cares.
You're such a prude, Brie!

ABIGAIL

She not a prude. She's jealous.

BRIANNA

He can chase his entertainment wherever he wants, Abby.
Just not on our canvases.

K

Our canvases?

BROOKLYN

It's his life.
He should be able to live it the way he wants to, shouldn't he?

BRIANNA

They're the *Cause's* canvases. That's what paying for all of this.
And I'm tired of it!
The smell of sex has taken the fragrance of the Cause's honesty from the air.
It's a distraction, and I don't want prostitutes for models anymore.

BROOKLYN

Get with it, Brie. The nighttime world of pleasure has always been the backdrop for his paintings. And for all of ours.

JACK

Maybe they're not just "prostitutes" in his eyes.

BRIANNA

Like ...? What?

JACK

People.
Ordinary people who work.
Like everyone else who works.

BRIANNA

Come on!
Prostitutes are not "ordinary people" who are just working.
They screw men, for pay.

BROOKLYN

As opposed to what?
Screwing men when they'd just as soon not, for home and hearth?
For security, protection, a new dress and shoes?

BRIANNA

If you're referring to marriage and a wife's love for her husband

ABIGAIL

Brie's right on there.
The difference between a wife and a prostitute is that a wife *loves* her husband.

BROOKLYN

And what if she doesn't?

ABIGAIL

What do you mean?

BROOKLYN

You don't think all wives love their husbands, do you?
Not even all conservative wives.

ABIGAIL

And if they don't, it makes them prostitutes?

BROOKLYN

You said it, not me.

ABIGAIL

You're crazy.
Being married makes all the difference.
And not getting paid to do it.

BROOKLYN

There's some sense to that: Not doing it for pay.
Every time I do it, it's for the fun of it.
Not for anything monetary.
And I'm certainly no prostitute.
Although ... it wouldn't be the end of the world.
And the thought has crossed my mind ... as a lark, a time or two.

K

I think you might be missing the point.
These girls are certainly not ordinary people to Professor.
Not ordinary prostitutes.
They're not just screwing him.
They talk.
They know how to talk to a man.
To help him relax, and find meaning in his life.
Professor says artists are inherently sad beings. He is, for sure.
And a woman, with an eye for it, can find a way to release happiness in such a man.
Tell him what he longs to hear.
And, if only for a night, he's able to believe her.
Particularly when she punctuates it with genuine feeling.

ABIGAIL

What genuine feeling?

BROOKLYN

A good lover is a Hell of a lot better than a vibrator, Abigail.
And you can't say a vibrator doesn't dial up genuine feelings.

BRIANNA

You're sick. You know that, Brook? You're sick.
And my point is, that *you* are missing, they don't belong in my art. Period.

BROOKLYN

Why am I sick?
Because I like sex?

ABIGAIL

With Professor?

BROOKLYN

Why not? I wouldn't refuse him if he'd ask me.
I think I could satisfy his needs.

BRIANNA

You bitch!

K

Whew, cool it!
It's not something personal with him.
Just the opposite, actually.

ABIGAIL

Opposite of what? Sex? Love?

K

Professor believes he can achieve something important. You know that.
That he, and he alone, can make a grand contribution to the world of art.
He believes what he paints, and what he's nurturing in us,
will revolutionize art in America.
The way the Cause will revolutionize democracy in America. Sent from heaven.
It's just that, sometimes, he loses spirit, and needs to have it buffed up.
There's nothing personal in that.
Nothing personal in what he does with his women.
To him they are like angels in a way, ethereal,
who choose to be like him, believe in him, lost in the moment,
with nothing deeper than that to penetrate their thoughts.

BRIANNA

His "angels" be damned. All they are is a distraction.
People aren't trained to think like angels,
and the whole thing will only lead to misunderstandings.

K

If people see it.

BRIANNA

We see it.
And *we* are the eyes of the people.
And of the Cause.

ABIGAIL

Maybe our time *is* devoted more to the “angels” than should be....
It *is* possible.

BRIANNA

It’s more than possible.
Particularly when the “ether” they float us in gets hollow and self-absorbed.

BROOKLYN

You think the Cause is getting “hollow and self-absorbed” too?

BRIANNA

What

JACK

What I think she’s saying is that nothing’s foolproof, if we let ourselves get overconfident.

BROOKLYN

[*aggressively*] And Professor’s getting overconfident?
Is that what you’re saying, Jack?

JACK

No, for Heaven’s sake.
No.
Nothing like that.
What do *I* know?

BROOKLYN

Precisely.

K

His girlfriend’s an artist. A good artist.
What do you think she thinks?

BRIANNA

She’s just another one of them.

BROOKLYN

She’s an *artist*.
Like us.
Maybe not as good, but definitely one of us.
Do you think we’re prostitutes, Brie?

BRIANNA

I think some of us are a bit loose. Yes.

JACK

[quickly] Are we?

BRIANNA

We are the peoples' voice. And their eyes.
And we have a responsibility to that...
When we see things.

K

[in a questioning way] But not their conscience.

JACK

Their conscience, too, I think she means.

ABIGAIL

When we expose the enemies of the people we're the conscience of the nation.
Absolutely!
And destroy their bogus reputations, and their deranged ways of thinking.

K

Well stated, Professor.

ABIGAIL

It's our First and Second Amendment rights.

K

You believe in character assassination?

ABIGAIL

I don't know what that is.
Unless you mean cancel culture and critical race theory.
Which, of course, I can't stomach.

JACK

[boisterously] **Look at us!**
We are the champions of the world!
The new generation of American artists.
The Great Victory for Truth, Life, President and Country.
What else could we ever want at our age?
More vibrators?

K

Maybe a little less to drink, Jack.
And not so loud.
People around us might get the wrong impression that we've been desperate for
victory.

JACK

Oops! Sorry.
So sorry.

BRIANNA

That's exactly my point, Jackson.
We *are* the Revolution.
The face of it.
That's why we don't want prostitutes' faces substituted for the women who
actually fought for our country's electoral freedom in Washington.
And that's why, the Professor being how he is, we don't want him to be the sole
definition of what the Cause, or greatness, is in America.

ABIGAIL

You're sounding more and more like some traitor.

JACK

I'm missing something.
Sorry.
A bit too much cheer, I fear.
But ... has the Professor said that he's the definition of the Cause?
Or that he's the only greatness in the art world today?

ABIGAIL

Well, he is, in fact, isn't he?
Who compares to him?
You don't go around worshipping two or three gods, do you?

K

You think he's God, too?

ABIGAIL

I didn't mean it that way.
Only ... well ... a house divided against itself doesn't stand.

BRIANNA

Are you suggesting I'm dividing the house?

BROOKLYN

Well, aren't you?

BRIANNA

You know how I feel about Professor.
It's just ... maybe even God's not perfect all the time.

ABIGAIL

What planet are you from? ...
Is *this* the democracy we've been fighting for? The Constitution?
When everyone can have their own opinion? About God?

K

Do you know the Constitution, Abby?

ABIGAIL

The Constitution's simple.
And it's *not* the Declaration of Independence.
It tells who is supposed to run this country, and how.
Without things like abortion, and atheism, and universal health care being
constitutional rights.

K

Do you get it now?

BRIANNA

Oh.

ABIGAIL

Other stuff is just hate speech.

K

It isn't hate to speak the truth.

BRIANNA

It isn't hate to paint the truth.

BROOKLYN

That's what we do.

K

Only if the truth is beautiful.
And supports the Cause.

ABIGAIL

The Cause is beautiful.
I don't get what you're getting at, K.

BRIANNA

[*beat*] I've felt sad for a long time.

JACK

What's wrong?

BRIANNA

I feel I've got lost, somewhere.
And I don't know where.
Searching.
Searching for something more real.

ABIGAIL

Washington's as real as it gets.
What are you on about?

BRIANNA

Washington's beautiful.
What we see of it when we're not working.
But I feel, somehow, everything's become constructed.
Like we are the same as the pictures we paint...

K

[*beat*] What is it you're looking for? Do you think?

BRIANNA

Something real that's endorsed by tears as well as laughter.
Something I can feel close to.
Something I can make my own, on canvas.
Not just something for somebody else's cause.
Something relevant for me. With teeth.... And doesn't make me scared.

ABIGAIL

We have teeth. Our art has teeth.
And Washington has felt them, don't you know?

K

We artists all go through this. I call it petite depression.
It's part of the dues we have to pay, from time to time, to be creative.

BRIANNA

I've paid my dues to become an artist.
A good artist.
What I want is more than that.
I want relevance.
I want my life, and my art, to mean something, out on the wider horizon.

K

You're drifting, aren't you?
Getting hungry.

BRIANNA

Damn it, K, I'm starving.
My hunger for relevance is becoming insatiable....
Was becoming insatiable.

K

[*beat*] You've found something, haven't you?

BRIANNA

[*beat*] Yes....

K

What?

BRIANNA

It was a voice.

K

Inside?

BRIANNA

No.
Outside.
On a Wall.
A crow, cawing over the heads of thousands of immigrants,
camped in dirt and filth in Mexico.

K

The road of tears.

BRIANNA

Some dying, with small children starving.

JACK

A crow.
Thankful it's a crow and not a refugee.

BRIANNA

And ... at last ... I asked myself why.
Why, with all this wealth, and beauty, are neighbors starving at our doors?

ABIGAIL

What do crows know?
About anything?

BROOKLYN

They're not our neighbors, that's why.
They don't even speak our language.

BRIANNA

They're Christians, aren't they?
Who believe, like we do, against abortion.
And human beings, for Christ's sake.
And children.
What's it mean to be a Christian and choose life when you let children starve like that?

BROOKLYN

We're not policemen for the world.
And we're not the world's soup kitchen.
We have enough problems with homeless people of our own.
Or haven't you noticed?
They have their own country.
With their own language.
They should stay where they belong.

BRIANNA

Brooklyn's words were part of what I heard, K.
And Professor's.
And so, I went to take a look.
At their country.
In Central America.

JACK

You flew to Central America?
When?

BRIANNA

By internet.

K

What did you see?

BRIANNA

That, by the grace of God, there go I.

K

What, exactly?... Can you tell us, Brie?

BRIANNA

Abigail?

ABIGAIL

What?

BRIANNA

Which house would *you* choose?

Hufflepuff?

Slytherin?

Ravenclaw?

Or Gryffindor?

ABIGAIL

What??

BRIANNA

Hufflepuff?

Slytherin?

Ravenclaw?

Or Gryffindor?

ABIGAIL

I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about.

BRIANNA

Do any of those names mean anything to you?

ABIGAIL

No. Why?

Are they some kind of foreign artists?

From Latin America or something?

BRIANNA

They are in some of the most famous books ever written.

ABIGAIL

The Bible?
I hardly think so.
They don't sound like it....
Maybe Revelations.

BRIANNA

There are from Harry Potter.

ABIGAIL

Harry Potter?!?
O my God!
You read Harry Potter??
Those Satanic books?

BRIANNA

[to K] You still want to know what I saw?

K

You've made your point.
Go ahead.
I'm listening.

JACK

I am, too.

BRIANNA

Streets of open violence.
Young girls raped.
Teenage boys kidnapped from their families into gangs.
Shacks crowded together.
Hunger and malnutrition everywhere.
Sewers overflowing along roads and into ditches.
Stench nearly unbearable, with armies of flies.
Three young boys hunched over.
Something moving on the ground beneath them.
Prodding it with sticks.
Turning, to stare, with scowls on their faces.
Brandishing their sticks.

K

Good God, Brie, I never knew this....
About you.

ABIGAIL

You're not one of us anymore, are you?

BROOKLYN

That's why we built the Wall.

BRIANNA

That's the problem.
With our art.
That's what I'm trying to say.
We've shut the ugly out with the beautiful.
We've closed our eyes to the rest of the world, while it suffers.
And that's what art is for.
To open eyes on the whole of the world.

BROOKLYN

No.
That's what the Wall is for.
To keep people like you from being brainwashed.

ABIGAIL

And that's what the Cause is for.
So people can learn proper manners.

BROOKLYN

And that's why Professor teaches us the way he does.
To build loyalty....
Do you know what loyalty is, Brie?
Really?
I doubt that you do.

BRIANNA

[*pause, looking around the table*] I see one thing.

BROOKLYN

What's that?

BRIANNA

A circle of faces awaiting my reply.

BROOKLYN

And?... What is your reply?

BRIANNA

It's hard to understand how I could feel that I valued my self-respect, and yet, for so long, ignored my responsibilities.

BROOKLYN

To being loyal to Professor? Right?

BRIANNA

They say, I've heard, that God never gives a woman more than she can bear. But, by the same token, God never gives a woman a talent that she's not supposed to share with the world.

BROOKLYN

We all have talent.
Or else we wouldn't be here.

BRIANNA

Then *that's* what we owe our primary loyalty to.

ABIGAIL

Maybe.
That *and* Professor.
We wouldn't have a world to share our talent in if it weren't for Professor.

K

[to BRIANNA] What have you done?

BRIANNA

[beat] Painted.

K

Can you share it? What you've painted?

BRIANNA

[beat] Do you *want* to see it?

K

Of course I do.

JACK

I do, too.

ABIGAIL

Does Professor know?
Is *that* what they were talking about? In the lecture hall?

BRIANNA

I suppose it was.

K

Then let's see.
It can't be all that bad.

ABIGAIL

It better not be.
Disloyalty to Professor is professional death.

BROOKLYN

Being disloyal to Professor is treason.
He demands it that way, because he's single-handedly trying to change the way art is conceived of and used in this country.
And without the fierce loyalty of his students ... us, who he's entrusting everything to, his very heart and soul to, his dreams will go up in smoke.
He's the greatest, and we *owe* it to him. To art. To ourselves.

**BRIANNA takes out her cell phone, and
brings up a picture she shows to K.**

Jack looks over K's shoulder.

K

[*pause, then whistles*] My God, Brie, what have you done?..
What did you name it?
"In a Lonely Mood"?
You must have.

BRIANNA

"The Silence of Heaven."

BROOKLYN

Was is it?
Let me see.

K

I used to think Before now

ABIGAIL

Let me see it, too.

K

I used to think that the finest, most delicate beauty an artist could hope to render is what Professor captures in his best work.

The beauty of the transitory.

The illusory.

Youth forever.

The Keats of it.....

But this

ABIGAIL

What is it?

K

Those three boys, in their stink and squalor, standing there, in their rags, like Samurai warriors, brandishing their sticks in classic Kendo stance.

BRIANNA takes the phone and shows the picture to ABIGAIL and BROOKLYN.

Pause.

ABIGAIL

You F-ing traitor!

BROOLYN

I can't believe it.

How could you ever conceive, in your lowest Brie moment, of painting something that ugly?

BRIANNA

I can't pretend to understand living in poverty like that.

Or drug addiction.

Or gang violence.

I'm only an ordinary woman in that respect.

With no specific gift of understanding.

But I do understand goodness in a person.

Even if the person, like me, is dreadfully ignorant about what they're trying to help.

Or how to help it.

ABIGAIL

Like Brook says, it's sheer ugliness....
Harsh, black outlines, not soft.
No softness in it.
Haven't you learned even the basics from Professor?..
It's outright the ugliest painting I have ever seen.

BROOKLYN

Stands.

[*staring at BRIANNA*] You.Are.A.Traitor.

ABIGAIL stands.

BROOKLYN

The arrogance of you.
The absolute arrogance of you.
I don't ever want to see your face again.

ABIGAIL

Me neither.

BROOKLYN and ABIGAIL walk out.

SCENE 2 – A FEW MOMENTS LATER

JACK, BRIANNA and K are still seated at the table.

A pause, looking at one another.

K

[to BRIANNA] It will all come right. In the end.
You'll see.

BRIANNA

I need some coffee....
No. Tea.

K

[calls out] Tea.
All around.

BRIANNA

[pause] How is it going to come right?
I'm out.
Ostracized.
I have no future.
That's for sure.
Not with them, and not with Professor.

JACK

We're with you.

BRIANNA

I've lost the Cause.
They'll destroy my reputation.
I won't be able to sell a single painting again.
Not in this country.

K

How does it feel?

BRIANNA

Are you shitting me?
I feel horrible. Lost.
Like shit.
How do you think I feel?

K

Let me ask it a different way:
How do you feel?

BRIANNA

Why are you doing this to me?
To rub it in?
What an ignoramus I am?

K

Maybe we disagree.
Think about it:
How do you really feel?

BRIANNA

[*pause*] A few nights ago I had a dream....

K

[*beat*] Yes?

BRIANNA

Professor and I had a child. A boy.
But he wouldn't have anything to do with him.
Except, on his tenth birthday, he gave him a go-kart.
I disassembled it, and threw every piece in the Potomac.
Then, on his sixteenth birthday, he gave him a Harley.
I, of course, disassembled it, and threw every piece in the Potomac again.
On his twenty-first birthday he gave him a Corvette.
My son wouldn't let me near it, and a few days later died in a car crash....

K

[*beat*] You'd surprise yourself to learn that most everyone would agree with you:
Everything of any great moment in life begins with a dream.

BRIANNA

It does?

K

The essential mystery of the night.
And usually some animal runs through it.

BRIANNA laughs.

K

It's like poetry that way.

JACK

Or like the dream my cat will have tonight, that today is all a dream.

BRIANNA

You both are teasing me.

K

But you're starting to look, Brianna.

BRIANNA

I am?

**Tea arrives – iced, in glasses, and hot,
with cups and a large teapot.**

K

You *are*. Seeing what Professor never taught you to train your eyes upon.
The hidden veins of the human condition.
Nothing satisfies like entering the shades of red inside an individual's soul.
And showing it. You're an artist, Brie. A good one. Maybe a great one. Show it!

BRIANNA

[*beat*] Those boys.

JACK

Yes. And cat-lovers.

BRIANNA

And God.

K

And freedom.

BRIANNA

Fairness.

K

Children, on a swing.

BRIANNA

The sheer joy of living. The endless Walt Whitman sea of faces.

K

The meaning of life.

JACK

Being with you.

BRIANNA

[*beat*] But what am I going to do without a job?
The Cause will never have me again.

K

You're worth more now than you've ever been. There *are* other causes.

BRIANNA

What? Where?

K

In a democracy sheep are led through the streets by their shepherd,
who may pretend that all other shepherds are liars and cheats.

BRIANNA

Maybe I can make a living drawing street portraits then.

K

Maybe you can write stories about them,
how you saw the best minds of a generation becoming street walkers.

BRIANNA

Or take photographs.

JACK

That should sell.

BRIANNA

And post them online.

K

Be careful, little crab.

BRIANNA

Why?

K

Because of rights of privacy.

BRIANNA

What are you talking about?

K

Getting releases before getting sued.

BRIANNA

Oh.

K

Danger is always there. Everywhere, except in heaven.

But not to stop. And not to worry.

If we're afraid to act, the dangers only become more dangerous.

BRIANNA

Oh.

K

You are an artist.

The difference between yourself today and yourself yesterday is that today you are your own artist.

BRIANNA

Is that cause for regret or rejoice?

K

You know what you want to say.

And *that* is art.

BRIANNA

Maybe I didn't, a month ago.

K

And *that* is fermentation.

BRIANNA

Beer?

K

Individual fermentation.

BRIANNA

Champagne.

K

An individual is an individual. An artist is an individual.
The difference is, artists are driven by compulsion.
We are missionaries. Called to bring sight to others.
Making them see red, blood red, where it is, in the souls of others.

BRIANNA

That's what I was feeling, isn't it?
Why I've been feeling so lost, isn't it?...
But how can I do that? I can't.
Nobody can.

K

No one person can.
No. Not by themselves.
But someone has to start.

BRIANNA

Why does it have to be *me*?

K

Because of the artist you are. We all are.
And as artists, we know the responsibility we owe to protect the freedom of fellow
artists.
It's what I've been working at.

BRIANNA

How do you know all this?

K

I *don't* know all this
I've simply been waiting and hoping for it to come true.

BRIANNA

And why are artists so special?

K

Because we speak a foreign language that censors don't understand.
We are the Socrates of today. We speak directly to the soul, not to the boss.

BRIANNA

[*pause, thinking*] Am I being brave, or being just stupid?

JACK

Maybe we can be braver together.
I would love that.

K

Yes. I think Jack's right.
I think we can.

JACK

Maybe the bravest thing I'll ever do.
But it's worth it.

K

Until we get on our feet.

JACK

Until they fix the voting machines.

BRIANNA

It's a scary thought.
Like being on an island, alone by ourselves.

K

Island's a good metaphor.
Where we can live close to the earth, and the sea, and the air.
And can make our art.
Where we can give waves the respect they deserve.

BRIANNA

[*shivers*] I'm scared.

K

Good.
The best way to be when a person enters a scary forest.

BRIANNA

That's not helping a bit, K.

JACK

An island, it was. And now a mysterious forest on it.
It's an opera; and could any opera be any better?

BRIANNA

What have I got myself into?

K

I've got enough saved up to last us at least a year.
Provided we live economically.
Milk. And strawberries. And ramen noodles.
We'll be all right.
I promise you.

BRIANNA

What would Jesus do?

K

What would Jesus do?
We've already been told what Jesus would have done.

JACK

And we'll do it together.
The three of us.
Like Mimi, Rodolfo, and what's his name?

K

Methinks Jack has more on his mind than what I was planning.

JACK

What?

K

A dream, maybe?

JACK

[*beat*] Well, yes, K, I do have a dream.
If it's anyone's business....
But I suppose it is.
I've had it since I first saw you, Brie.

BRIANNA

I don't think now's a good time for this, Jack.

JACK

You've been always so up in the clouds for Professor.
And now When is there a right time?

BRIANNA

When things get settled down a bit. Don't you think?

JACK

Let me just say this

BRIANNA

Not now, please.

K

Let him, Brie.

We're in this together, and if it's going to be part of the ground rules, I had better find it out now.

JACK

[*beat*] Thank you, K....

You may not know a lot about me, Brie.

I suppose you don't.

I'm an artist, like you.

No. Not like you.

You are great, and I am just me.

But, I paint.

And without Professor and the Cause, I fear, I'll be just another starving artist.

Except for what K's just told us, of course.

But But, I have dreams.

And when it comes to dreams I'm a millionaire.

Except Two thieves have come to steal all the money from my safe.

They are your eyes.

BRIANNA

That's enough, Jack!

I have far more pressing things on my mind just now than any romance.

We will give it time. Time.

But that will have to be enough for you, or else I'm out of this thing.

Promise me you will respect that.

Now, please.

JACK

Of course I'll promise you that ... if that's all right, K.

K

So long as your intentions remain gentlemanly and under control....

I don't want us to fall into some kind of ragged-edged, jealous triangle here, which ruins all I've hoped for. We're in this for art and country now, not love.

And anyway, I suspect the most long-lasting love is a slow developed love.

JACK

I agree.
Love, if it's to be, will have to wait.
And that will be enough for me....
So, yes, I agree.

BRIANNA

Good.

K

Well then, good.
We have our work cut out for us.
The three musketeers that we are.
One for all and all for one.
And, actually, I'm starting to see it:
We are going to be fine.
Everything's going to be fine, except for Professor.
Professor is going to discover something terribly wrong with his life.

BRIANNA

He doesn't love what he paints.

K

He doesn't love what he sees, and he doesn't paint what he loves.
He paints what he wants to see.
Or is paid to see.

BRIANNA

All my doubts and fears tonight are better than living sad like that.

K

It's a piss-poor shame if you get all the way to the end,
and realize you didn't paint what you loved.
Better to starve a little, than end up like that.

JACK

Well, we're not to the end just yet.

BRIANNA

No.
Not anywhere near the end.
Not

JACK

O, wonders!
How many goodly creatures there are for us to paint!
How marvelous mankind is!
O brave new world, that has such hope and people in it!

K

It's what *I've* been hoping for.
Minus the crush bit that I didn't anticipate.

BRIANNA

[*beat*] So, here we are. A brave, new, three musketeers.
What unknown destination awaits us?
What dragon to slay first?
Climate change?
Nuclear weapons?
World hunger?

K

Musketeers are always a bit hungry, aren't they?
No. I think maybe:
Starting with the alleged overthrow of our constitutional government.

Pause.

They rise and do a one-for-all-all for-one.

K picks up one of the red roses in a bud vase (signaling that he will return the vase to the hotel) and hands it to JACK, who in turn gives it to BRIANNA.

They exit.

END