

Avoidance–Avoidance
A Project of Transparency
(script 10)

By
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Character Notes:

Mary

Educated. Elegant and striking with noticeable stature, poise. Moves calmly, carefully with precision, like a dancer. She is a film maker. One of the early pioneers of experimental film making. A soft, confident woman. Thoughtful. Listens intently. Passionate when needs be. Determined to get what's necessary to understand the world and those around her. No children. Wanted them. Problematic relationship with her career. Feels she and her work were manipulated by external forces: art world, critics, society, companies. She has an 'aesthetic relation to politics'. Very serious about the politics of looking and trusting imagery. Interested in the spectator's visual experience and seduction and its emotional and psychological effects. Experimented with drugs and sex in the 1960's. Never loved in the way she would have liked to. Never allowed herself to 'fall' deeply in love. She was always too careful—scared of that vulnerability. Instead, she loved her work and thus feels cheated by it [she never got what she thought she could from it]. A kind woman, but fundamentally hurt by not loving enough—by not taking the most profound of risks. And now its too late. She feels she wants to put these things right by understanding them, speaking about them so she does not feel like she is hiding anything from herself as she approaches the next phase of her life.

Ted

A little younger than Mary. Cinematographer. More simple in temperament and ambitions. Moves a little more slower but not clumsy. Prioritizes more practical things in a straightforward way. People. Mechanics. Friendship. He is a 'family man' but never had children. Wanted them with Mary and so after their relationship he could never have them with anyone else. He never stopped loving her. A string of relationships after Mary all hit problems when the topic of 'starting a family' came up. Enjoys making 'beautiful things'. Enjoys the immersive process of producing film effects. Has a tendency to disappear into his own world when making, or working on craft. Not really interested in politics, but values honesty, trust, respect and fidelity. Deeply hurt by the split with Mary, although he tries to convince himself otherwise. Anger sometimes bottles up. Can be explosive (never violent). Does not entertain conceit or hidden meanings, concealment, lies. Feels he wasn't good enough for Mary. This feeling of inferiority has plagued all his relationships to date. Feels both lovingly drawn to Mary while at the same time anxious and nervous.

A Studio. With high ceilings, white walls and large windows facing the street outside. People pass by. The room has a feeling that some project is in process, there is work that is being done, and there is some hung on walls. There are two doors to the room that lead to a corridor. Which in turn is accessed by doors to a courtyard and a stairway leading up to the next floor of the building.

There is the sound of shouts. The call of names. 'Mary' and 'Ted'. These shouts echo throughout the space. It is difficult to know where they are coming from. Slowly, the shouts get louder and are coming together. First we see Mary calling for Ted, she cannot see him yet. She makes his way into the studio room and waits there, she looks at the assembly of rocks, framed paintings and starts to inspect them closely as Ted's calls continue. She continues to respond but is distracted by the objects in the room.

Ted arrives in the room.

There is a pause. They acknowledge each other but do not greet each other. Ted

sits down. Mary continues to look at the objects in the room. She has found three small pieces of limestone that are about the size of eggs and rolls them around in her hand. Ted watches.

MARY: I saw a boy once. He must have been about eleven. He had three eggs in his hand. He was standing by a heap of rubble. He turned the eggs around and around in his hand gently with a fixed gaze on his face. I watched him. He looked at me and nodded to the rubble. He said that the three eggs was all that he had left.

[TED CONTINUES TO TURN THE PIECES OF ROCK ROUND, SEATED AND WITH HIS HEAD DOWN TOWARDS HIS HANDS AND THE EGGS]

TED: Where was that?

[PAUSE]

MARY: It doesn't matter.

TED: Of course it matters. You tell a story like that, you describe a memory as profound as that, it matters!

MARY: I didn't say it didn't matter. I just said *where it was* didn't matter.

[PAUSE]

TED: [FRUSTRATED, TED TURNS AWAY AND LOOKS FINDS SOME PIECES OF LIMESTONE OF HIS OWN. HE SITS AND BEGINS TO TURN THE PIECES AROUND IN HIS HAND.]

Its difficult to say anything at all after something like that...

[PAUSE, MARY LOOKS UP FROM HER ROCKS TO TED AND THEN BACK TO HER HAND]

MARY: Sometimes is best not to.

TED: Yes, but it makes an uncomfortable atmosphere.

MARY: Silence?

TED: Yes.

[PAUSE]

MARY: I don't mind it. In fact I like it.

MARY GIVES TED A ROCK, AND GESTURES SHE PASSES IT TO A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE. TED, A LITTLE CONFUSED PASSES IT TO A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE AND GESTURES TO A MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO PASS IT ON. MARY KEEPS PICKING UP ROCKS AND PASSING

TO TED. AS THEY PASS THE ROCKS, THEY
CONTINUE..

TED: I remember the last time we met you said 'places
like these were no place for Love'.

[MARY LOOKS BLANK]

[GESTURING TO THE ROOM] The white walls, the
clinical nature of these spaces..

MARY: I know. They're not [MORE CONCERNED WITH FINDING
AND PASSING ROCKS].

[PAUSE]

TED: I suppose it depends on what kind of love?

[MARY DOES NOT RESPOND, THEN SHE STOPS WITH THE
ROCKS AND ADDRESSES TED / THE ROOM]

MARY: These places are as cold as ice. People trying to
excavate some sort of meaning from some thing
else. Peeling away layer after layer. Circling
around. [MARY TURNS AND CIRCLES A MOUND OF ROCKS]
trying to provoke some piece of information
without directly asking for it.

TED: there's all different kinds of loves. Distant,
removed, desperate, fatal, sexual lustful,
jealous, confrontational, warm [REMEMBERS] You're
love wasn't so warm...

MARY: that was a long time ago. Any way I don't want to talk about the temperature of my emotions thanks.

TED: What do you want to talk about?

MARY: Nothing.

TED: What do you mean 'nothing'.

MARY: Nothing. Its pretty simple. There's nothing to say [SHE CONTINUES WITH THE ROCKS].

TED: [SMILES, THEN REPEATS] 'There's nothing to say'.

MARY: [LOOKS AT TED, LOOKS AWAY REPEATS AGAIN, TO HERSELF] There's nothing to say.

PAUSE

TED: [TED SHOUTS] There's nothing to say. [AS IF SHOUTING TO SOMEONE IN THE CORRIDOR OR IN ANOTHER ROOM] There's nothing to say. She says There's nothing to say.

[MARY LOOKS AT TED AS IF HE IS MAD, TED LOOKS BACK, AND MORE QUIETLY, SERIOUSLY WITH INTENSE EYES]

There is a lot to say Mary. A lot. A real lot of things to say.

MARY: [LOOKING CONFUSED] I'm not sure I understand.

TED: We spent our entire relationship speaking to each other without really saying anything. We were together for a long time.. And we.. [TED TRAILS OFF AND THEN SHAKES HIS HEAD]

I don't know. It's just a shame.

MARY: What?

TED: Us.

MARY: [UNMOVED, MATTER OF FACT] Yes I know. But that's what happens. Relationships breakdown sometimes.

TED: [ANNOYED] 'Breakdown' are you fucking joking?

MARY: Calm down, [MARY LOOKS AROUND THE GALLERY] please not here.

TED: You cheated Mary. That was the reason it ended. That was the beginning of the end anyway. Is that what you call a 'breakdown'?

MARY: You always have such conventional perspectives on things. A typical cinematographer.

TED: [DISBELIEVING] You're incredible. Sometimes its like you're heart has been ripped out. You are a cold woman Mary, not the room [GESTRURES TO THE ROOM]

MARY: Just put it in perspective. It was just a certain period in history. Commitment was a political

construct not a personal one. fidelity represented conservative thinking. It was not progressive. That period in history was no friend of monogamy.

TED: And what about feelings Mary? about people, you and me. Not fucking politics. You think its ok to hurt people [GESTURES TO HIS INTERNAL ORGANS] in the name of some ephemeral 'progressive' ideology.

MARY: It was NOT 'Ephemeral' [MARY FINDS SOMETHING 'CONCRETE LIKE A NEARBY ROCK TO MAKE A GESTIRE OF STABILITY] Things WERE happening Ted. Things were changing. It was not a time to be standing still. Or looking back.

TED: You have no idea. [SHAKES HIS HEAD WITH A SMILE] OK lets get it out in the open: How many were there?

MARY: [COLDLY] What? [CONFUSED AND AVOIDING THE QUESTION] That's just how it was. You're right, maybe some people got hurt but that was unavoidable..

TED: [INTERRUPTS]... **I** got hurt Mary. **ME**. [POINTING AT HIS CHEST]. You're not answering me Mary. How many did you sleep with?

MARY: Ted, You have to understand, look, take your hand away from your chest [TED, SELF CONSCIOUSLY REMOVES HIS HAND FROM HIS CHEST]for a minute and

think [MARY POINTS TO HER HEAD]. the word 'infidelity' is often misunderstood. Its not an evil. It has a relation to 'fidelity'. You need to understand this relation to see what was happening back then. [MARY LOOKS UP TO A NEARBY ART WORK / FLOWER PAINTING, AND WALKS TOWARDS IT] We make representations of things, copies and we try to be 'loyal' to the original. Like a kind of high fidelity. In Sound recording you know. HI-FI. Faith to an original live sound.

TED: What are you talking about? We are talking about your affairs! How fucking many was there? Do you hear me? Do I have to keep repeating the question? Were they good? Where they worth it?

MARY: You sound like some guy in an American sitcom.

TED: [GETTING IRATE] You sound like a politician. You walk around things you cant face. Look at you [GESTURING TO HER MOEVEMENTS IN THE ROOM]. You avoid things that you cant handle. If you peel away the years and years of repressed bullshit, the layers of protection- you'll find..

MARY: [interrupts] Go on what will I 'find'? What will I excavate? [IRONICALLY LOOKING UNDER SOME ROCKS] The Truth? You are a nieve purist with no fucking idea what is going on in the world outside these four walls [GESTURING OUTSIDE THE WINDOW] There's things going on out there Ted. There's sadness you'll never fucking understand. There is misery

on a scale that your tiny mind couldn't even dream up...

TED: [TRYING TO CALM DOWN, POINTING TO HIS HEAD] You have to start here Mary. Before you look out there [POINTING TO THE WINDOW].

MARY: So you're all full of mindfulness now are you. You haven't got a fucking clue.

UNIT 2

MARY PICKS UP THE SMALL PROJECTOR AND REPOSITIONS IT- SHE TRIES PROJECTING IN A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT POSITIONS. TED FINDS SOMEWHERE COMFORTABLE AND WATCHES HER. THE TONE CHANGES, MARY IS REMINDED OF THE FILM THEY WORKED ON TOGETHER AND THE PROBLEMS THAT STILL RESIDE FOR HER.

MARY: (ASHAMED AND WORRIED) What were we doing?

TED: What?

MARY: Agreeing to the Universal Commission.

TED: I thought we talked about it? We discussed all the issues at length. About how our work was about formal things... Something that massaged the eyes, that worked with optics, bending light and objects, creating relations between things without having to describe a particular message. Didn't we talk about how all that was political

in itself, it was about looking, about activating the visual sense.

MARY: But we were seducing too, we wanted to hypnotise our audience and take them somewhere unthinking, psychedelic, *hallucinogenic*, we openly talked about constucting an experience to escape within, to dream with, like opium or absinth or whatever. Don't you think by creating this aesthetic hedonistic place, we were placing the audience in a passive position, ready to be manipulated by Universal Newsreels and their partisan representations? Why else did they invite us? We were completely complicit. (MARY LOOKS AT TED ACCUSINGLY).The very beginning of mass propaganda.

TED Aren't you just talking about how beauty functions? Are work was beautiful. Theres no harm in that. I never saw it like that [LOOKS DOWN TO THE FLOOR, PAUSE, LOOKING FOR WORDS]. Anyway (PAUSE) we are talking about different kinds of politics. (PAUSE) It was just an opportunity to reach a large public audience. A stage where our work, our cinematography..

MARY: (INTERRUPTS) *Your* cinematography [she raises her eyebrows knowingly]

TED: (PAUSE, SMILES KNOWINGLY) so this was the problem! Authorship!

MARY: Don't be ridiculous.

TED: You think I think they were *my* images?

MARY: Of course not, it's jus..

TED: [INTERRUPTS] I lined up the shot. *My* composition? Is that the problem? (VOICE GETS LOUDER, ANGRIER) I took *your* directorial territory? Is that it? You think I stole your voice?

MARY: I think you are getting carried away, this is simply about initials, credits. You wrote TN on the rushes, your impulse was to claim them. Yours. You wanted them for yourself..

TED: (INTERRUPTS AND ALMOST SHOUTING) I *always* signed off TN, I still do. I do the same with texts and emails.

TED: Well, ok, all I'm saying is, you're reading authorship into things that don't need reading, and that's why we always come back here.

MARY: Where?

TED: (SIGHS DESPAIRINGLY. LOOKS DOWN TO THE FLOOR AND THEN BACK UP TO SEE MARY) You know what I'm talking about...Initials, territory, ownership, authority..

MARY: Control. (PAUSE) You know, (RELUCTANTLY HONEST) it's easy to see how all this happened.

We got to know each other because of our roles in the industry, my role in directing, you as a cinematographer. We struck up a relationship. Our relationship got stronger..

TED: Right so now you're saying you regret it. You would rather it never happened?

MARY: I don't know, sometimes I think it might just have been a 'marriage of convenience', something that happened through circumstance rather than emotion.

TED: (INTERRUPTS) ...or love?

MARY: (QUICKLY, ALMOST SPEAKING OVER TED) Yes, I suppose, maybe it was a *circumstantial* love. A *circumstantial* set of relations..
Me, you, our work, our words, the tools we used, the devices we made, the light we reflected, the audience, you know, the whole lot. Chance, circumstance.

TED: (INTERRUPTS HURT AND ANGRY) Friends of convenience? You make it sound like some proxy state!

MARY: (LOOKS WITH QUICKLY RAISED EYEBROWS AS IF TO SAY 'EXACTLY' AND THEN SPEAKING SLOWLY AS IF TO CALM THINGS DOWN) We were losing control.

TED: (IN CONFUSED DISBELIEF) What?

MARY: Do I really need to spell it out?

TED: (ANNOYED, EXASPERATED) Word for word. I have no idea what you're talking about.

MARY: [RELUCTANLY, SYMPATHETICALLY) We were vulnerable, there were always underlying tensions.

Ted: Like what?

MARY: (CONTINUES, IGNORING THE QUESTION) Lets be honest, (LOOKS AT TED FOR CONFIRMATION) let's be open... for once.

TED: [INTERRUSPTS ON 'OPEN'] 'Open'. Are you winding me up.

MARY: [CONTINUES] We were literally at war a lot of the time...

TED: (LAUGHS) I can't believe this!

MARY: (CONTINUES) We had no stability. People like Universal kept approaching us, complicating things.

TED: (INTERRUPTS, SLOWLY, LOOKS INTENTLY AT MARY).
[PAUSE] Look, We could never have done the things we did without them. We were liberated by their support.

MARY: But at what price?

TED: We needed them. Plane and simple.

MARY: All we really needed was the work. Our ideas.

TED: And each other.

UNIT 3

THERE IS A PILE OF ROCKS THAT THE AUDIENCE HAVE MADE. TED PICKS SOME UP AND REARRANGES THEM. HE IS REMINDED OF SOMETHING, SMILES AND LOOKS AT MARY.

TED: (SMILES) 'Your Inner Blackboard'

MARY: What?

TED: That's what you called the back of your eyelids when your eyes were closed, 'Your inner blackboard'. Deep dark scarlet, The colour of your blood running through your eyelids, the screen between you and the world.

(PAUSE. TED LOOKS BACK AT THE FILM AND THEN BACK TO MARY)

Working with film was funny wasn't it? Something always changed the next day, we never had full control like we do now with digital technology.

MARY: Maybe the films we were making contributed to my 'state of mind'? Maybe the hallucinations in our imagery and the objects that we filmed somehow

merged with my consciousness? (IRONICALLY) Made me mad.

TED: What was going on back then? I mean you never actually said. You talked about being followed or something? *who* exactly was following you?

MARY: It doesn't matter now Ted.

TED: Of course it matters.

MARY: What mattered then and matters now is trust. Between people. Between us. You thought it was all in my mind and you still do. I needed support. I needed transparency between us. And you didn't offer it. You offered nothing. You didn't believe me Ted. That's it.

TED: What was I supposed to do? You were having crazy visions. You were hearing voices in the apartment. You thought the telegraph poles we passed one day were passing messages about the French Revolution, you started to read messages in the flower beds in public gardens (GESTURES TO THE FLOWER BED PAINTINGS AROUND THEM) - some secret floral colour code. I mean, come on, what was I supposed to think?

MARY: I needed you. I needed someone that would see what I saw.

TED: But I couldn't. And I cant. I didn't, don't have the key. You didn't give it to me. It went too

far Mary, you needed help (REGRETFUL) and I didn't seem to be able to. I wanted to. [PAUSE] Do you remember in Moscow when I left you for a few days in the airport. I emailed you and you didn't respond. (MARY LOWERS HER HEAD) When I returned you said it was because you feared we were being watched, that our emails were being followed! Come on, why on earth would anyone be interested in a love affair between a cinematographer and a film director! It didn't make sense Mary!

MARY: [MARY IS GETTING MORE INTENSE AND PASSIONATE, STRINGING A LONG, DEFENSIVE MONOLOGUE TOGETHER] You wrote 'weak and difficult to convince' and 'crystal clear' in an email. That could have been interpreted as a low concentration explosive liquid [TED IS SHAKING HIS HEAD] or chemical or something. How could I respond to that? It was too risky. Things can be inferred you know. Words of love as you put it, can be translated into anything. You know how they spied on lovers.. you know all that, it still goes on. Those words about my cheek bones...

TED: I said the shape of your face could tell stories. That you could read a novel in your portrait and..

MARY: [INTERRUPTS, CUTS SHORT, HURRYING ON] Beautiful words Ted, really they were (MARY LOOKS AT TED). But they are open to interpretation you know. Someone else could read it differently.

People read what they want to read. You know when you're looking for something [MARY LOOKS AROUND AT THE ARTWORKS]. Something specific. Things you're looking at can start to change into what you're looking for. Like you said, there maybe words in flower beds, or in the arrangement of those rocks? (MARY LOOKS AROUND AND GESTURES TO THESE)

MARY: (LOOKS AT THE PAINTINGS AND STARTS WHISPERING PLANT NAMES]

Asparagus Aethiopicus, Maranta Zebrine,

TED: What? I cant hear you.

MARY: [LOUDER] Maranta Leuconeura, Maranta Arundinacea, Hedera canariensis (era de batata), Liquala, Monstera, Costela-de-adão (Monstera deliciosa), Dypsis lutescens, Sansevieria trifasciata, Hedera helix (Hera), Pilea nummulariifolia (dinheiro-em-penca), Alocasia (Orelha de Elefante), Colocasia esculenta (Black Magic), Black Magic, Black Magic, Black Magic, Hera Estrela (Hedera canariensis), Asplenium, Nephrolepis Cordifolia, Cyperus Papyrus, Ipoméia-rubra (Ipomoea horsfalliae), Jasminum nitidum (jasmim-estrela), Bougainvillea, Lemon Tree, Ravenala madagascariensis, Raspberry Tree, Philodendron (Burle Marx), Davallia fejeensis Hook. (renda portuguesa)

UNIT 4

[TED COMES CLOSER TO MARY]

TED: During the journey we made. Did you sleep with anyone?

[MARY DOES NOT RESPOND]

When we were traveling. In Hong Kong? Moscow?
Did you meet anyone?

MARY: we met lots of people.

TED: You know, I'm not sure why I stayed with you then? I just wanted to be with you. You had this crazy idea to travel from city to city.. I never really understood why.

(MARY LISTENS INTENTLY)

We traveled from Hong Kong to Moscow. We took a plane in the afternoon. It was June. Humid. You said you were leaving because you thought someone was watching you. (FROWN, DISBELIEVING, QUESTIONING)

MARY: (MARY'S EYES GROW, LOOKING INTENTLY AT TEDS EYES)
I saw them watching the house Ted. I told you that. You never listened. You just followed what other people said. You didn't believe me did you?

THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER FOR A MOMENT, TED SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS UNCONVINCINGLY.

MARY: (ANGERED / FRUSTRATED) You still think it was some psychologically induced state. You think it never happened? You think I was running around the world because of some vision or voice controlling my every move?

(TED GESTURES AS IF TO SAY 'WELL EXACTLY')

I had to get out of Hong Kong. (PAUSE) Moscow seemed right. Cooler. It was so Hot. It was summer then.

TED: June.

MARY: Summer.

Ted: The end of Spring. Come on it wasn't about the weather Mary! It was about politics. You had it laid out in front of us. Moscow, Havana, Quito. It was a pilgrimage. You said you wanted to follow a line of red blood. 'The thinning arteries of socialism' You said. That there was still socialism in the world and you wanted to follow it, and see where it would take us. Your journey was going to take us to a city 1500 metres above sea level. Where the air effects your breathing. (PAUSE) So your political pilgrimage would literally suffocate us! (PAUSE).

We found ourselves together with a sort of uncomfortable dizziness induced by politics not love... (PAUSE).

MARY: (TO THE CEILING AND LOUD) The Vertigo of Politics! (THEN TO TED) Could be a film?

TED: More like a thesis title.
[LOOKING AT MARY FOR SOME SORT OF RESOLUTION]
Look, Mary. All that. The past. it doesn't really matter.

TED LOOKS AT MARY FOR HER ANSWER

MARY: It matters Ted. It matters. [SHE LOOKS AROUND THE GALLERY SPACE WITH DISPLEASURE] These places. Bright white, pretty colours [NODDING TO THE PAINTINGS]. They're no place for Love.

END