

Avoidance-Avoidance
A Project of Transparency
(script 9)

By
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Character Notes:

Mary

Educated. Beautiful. Elegant and striking now 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 a 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 but understanding them, speaking about them so she does not feel like she is hiding anything from herself as she approaches the latter stages of her life.

Ted

A little younger than Mary. Cinematographer. More simple in temperament and ambition. 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. 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 physical). 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.

Act I Scene 1

A TROPICAL GARDEN. MARY IS SITTING DOWN, READING A BOOK. THE BOOK HAS A RED COVER ON THE FRONT AND BACK, HIDING THE BOOK INSIDE. TED SEES HER, IS SURPRISED, AND WATCHES HER FROM A DISTANCE AS SHE CONTINUES TO READ. AFTER A WHILE TED WALKS OVER UNTIL MARY NOTICES AND LOOKS UP.

TED: Hi

MARY: Hi

[PAUSE, AWKWARD SILENCE]

TED: wow, we do bump into each other in strange places. [LOOKS AROUND, PAUSE]. I love it here, Its so beautiful [LOOKING AROUND]

MARY: [HER EXPRESSION DISAGREES, SHE LOOKS AROUND AT THE GARDEN, THE ART WORKS, THE OFFICE, AND THEN RAISES HER HEAD AS IF HEARING SOMETHING FROM OVER THE WALL]. Mmm, yes, I suppose [GESTURING TO THE FLOWERS] but can you hear that? Over the wall. Cars, People, the city.

TED: Yes, but...

MARY: Don't you think this is all a bit of a lie? I mean everything seems so perfect here. We're in our own little sanctuary..

TED: A lie? I'm not so sure. Its just a garden in a city, in a country in the world. Like any garden.

MARY: [SHE LOOKS AWAY FROM TED, AT THE FLOWERS. HER HEAD RESTING ON HER HAND WHICH IS SUPPORTED BY HER KNEE. SHE GESTURES TO THE ARTWORKS] But all that as well? I mean this place is all about disappearing isn't it? Entering other worlds.

TED: Escape. Yeh, what's wrong with that?

MARY: Everything.

TED: I don't follow you.

Mary: You never did.

TED: What do you mean?

MARY: [PAUSE] To be honest, I'm not sure we were every really on the same page.

TED: Are you joking? We were in love Mary.

[MARY LOOKS AWAY, PAUSE]

Look this is just going down the same path as it always does. [REACHING OUT TO MARY] Look, I'm trying to move on. This is hard enough..

MARY: Yes, I suppose so. Sorry. (PAUSE) I thought a lot about what we said before. I'm not sure it ended that well?

TED: (QUICKLY) No it didn't. I didn't ...

MARY: [INTERRUPTS]It was both of us.

TED: (PAUSE LOOKS AROUND) What are you doing here anyway?

MARY: Reading. (MARY LOOKS AT HER CONCEALED BOOK)

TED: (PAUSE) What is it?

MARY: Nabokov

TED: (PAUSE, HE RAISES HER EYEBROWS WITH A SMILE) Oh, right. You still reading Nabokov? Its been years now, and we've traveled around the world and you're still reading Nabokov! Why have you covered it up? (TED GESTURES A BOOK DUST JACKET)

MARY: I don't like people knowing what I'm reading.
(PAUSE)People make assumptions. Too much information out in public, you know?

TED: Information about what?

MARY: About whoever is reading. Information about Me.

TDE: (SMILES) You haven't changed.

MARY: Were you expecting me to? (PAUSE) Are you telling me you've never looked at the cover of a strangers book and made assumptions about that person?

(TED SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS,
MARY SMILES)

[PAUSE] I was on a train once. I watched a man leaning over the shoulder of a woman who was reading some romantic novel. She sat there reading unaware while he read her book at the same time. They were reading together but they didn't know each other. It was quite romantic really. A silent moment between two strangers and one story - of two characters in love. They were reading, but it wasn't completely complicit you know. She didn't know he was reading. Such a private intimate moment between two strangers. (SHAKES HER HEAD, LOOKS DREAMY / THOUGHTFUL).

TED: (PAUSES, LOOKS CONCERNED) Are you alright Mary?

MARY: (SHARPLY) Don't I seem alright? I'm pretty much like I was the last time we met.

TED: (TED LOOKS AWAY THEN BACK TO MARY) Maybe I should leave now, its usually best for both of us that way.

(TED TURNS TO GO, THEN LOOKS
BACK AT MARY AS SHE SPEAKS...)

MARY: (TO HERSELF BUT LOUD ENOUGH FOR TED TO HEAR) I was thinking recently about how we got to this city. The journey from Hong Kong. (PAUSE LOOKING CONFUSED) What were we doing? (MARY LOOKS AT TED).

TED: I don't know. I really don't know. It was complicated back then.

MARY: Complicated! It was fucking crazy. I still don't understand it.

TED: I wouldn't try to. It was a difficult time. We were both under a lot of pressure and we made decisions that maybe we shouldn't have. It doesn't matter now anyway. Its gone. (PAUSE) You know your problem is that you can never really just *be* in the present. (PAUSE) In the garden (LOOKS AROUND), in this world. You're always thinking through another (TED GESTURES TO THE BOOK IN MARY'S HAND) voice or time.

MARY: (PAUSE AND THEN CHANGES SUBJECT) I've started making models.

TED: What?

MARY: Of the places we stayed in during that journey. Hong Kong, Moscow, Quito...

TED: We never got to Quito.

MARY: Yes but I still think of it somehow. I made a model of the Quito airport terminal, and I haven't even been there! [LAUGHS]

TED: Why?

MARY: I don't know. I just had the impulse. Maybe I needed to see those places that were part of our journey but we never got to?

TED: (NONCHALANTLY) Mainly airport terminals as I remember.

MARY: Yes, airport terminals. Transit zones.

TED: They're all the same aren't they? (PAUSE) Where are the models?

MARY: No they're not all the same, they're quite different. [PAUSE, A THOUGHT COMES TO MARY'S MIND] 'The narcissism of little difference' as my father would say. They all have their own identity. Little Differences. They all have different Characters. But those little differences are quite disorientating, like an American speaking English,

TED: Or a Portugese speaking Spanish?

MARY: Yeh I suppose. (CONTNUES) I keep the models at home, around the house. In the kitchen, by the sofa.

TED: Why?

MARY: Why the sofa?

TED: Yes, the sofa, the kitchen, why there?..

MARY: So I don't forget

TED: Forget what?

MARY: How I got here.

TED: How we got here.

MARY: Yes, ok.. How we go here.

TED: It wasn't just the journey that got us here. It was everything else. But I mean, does it matter? Cant you just leave it? it's the past do we really have to understand everything?

MARY: That was always your problem. You had no desire to understand. You just trusted your impulse without thinking.

TED: Well, its plain to see, you need to understand too much. You're making models of your own history for Christ's sake. Its too much.

MARY: (Pause) It allows me to remember that's all. I made one, a model, of the transit zone in the Moscow airport. Of that space that somehow evaded jurisdiction. I remember when we were there. For

those hours that merged into days... that I began to feel really 'present' in that zone. I mean it was completely controlled, Air conditioning, tannoy announcements, vending machines and all that... but it did not have any sovereignty. I liked that about it. I mean, this ground is claimed (MARY TAPS HER FOOT ON THE FLOOR). All cut up (MARKS A LINE WITH HER FOOT). You'd expect sovereignty to disappear in the sky (SHE LOOKS UP) but it doesn't. air space is claimed too (GESTURES THE SKY BEING SLICED/CUT UP). So it was nice to just be in a space, in a room [POINTS TO THE GARDEN GALLERY], on the ground, without being in 'a country'.

TED: I felt trapped there. The rhythm of the place was terrifying. The smell of coffee and pastries so early every morning. 5am or something. That false, sweet air. Yuk. Claustrophobic. I hated it. I'm not sure why I stayed with you there? I was following you I suppose.

(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. But that was paranoia right?

MARY: (LOOKING INTENTLY AT TEDS EYES) I saw them watching the house Ted. I told you that. You never listened. You just followed. You didn't believe me. Did you?

TED: We'd just met. I didn't know you then. And it seemed from the outside that you were really anxious. I Could see that. But you were having treatment at the time, right?

MARY: (ANGERED / FRUSTRATED) You still think it was some psychologically induced state. You think it never happened? You think I was running from city to city 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. I don't know. 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. It took us to a city 1500 metres above sea level. Where the air effects your breathing. (PAUSE) So your political pilgrimage ended in our loss of

breath, our light headedness! We found ourselves together with a sort of uncomfortable dizziness induced by politics not love... (PAUSE).

MARY: Induced by altitude Ted. Didn't you once describe my face in the same way? When we last met? Yes I remember, you said 'I see your face differently. I read it as a story that *wants* to be open but is trapped by its contours.' You moved closer and touched my cheek. (MARY MOVES CLOSER TO TED'S CHEEK). 'The way your cheek bone descends to the curve in your nostril. That smoothness feels at the same time, sort of open like some hillside in spring and there's this peak, quite angular, it looks a bit precarious, somewhere where you might benefit from the view but at the same time worry about the drop.

TED: Yes it was something like that. It sounds overly poetic now. (PAUSE AND SERIOUSLY). Mary, I was talking about the journey. We got stuck in Moscow somehow. You said you felt safer there because you thought someone was following you. I didn't understand at all, I was just getting to know you, and it seemed quite idiosyncratic, you know quite strange, interesting and I think I liked it then, it was quite exciting even. I didn't know what that sense of paranoia would develop into.

MARY: It wasn't paranoia. (Head in hands).

TED: Its still the same Mary. Your house is full of replica models of your past for Christ sake. Take a look at yourself. Nothing has changed. (PAUSE)

MARY: (RAISES HER HEAD SLOWLY FROM HER HANDS)
I have this reoccurring dream. Its like something from Shakespeare. Its just an image really. A group of about 20 to 30 women. Completely naked. Stripped and forced to stand together around a tank as a human shield. The tank moves slowly across the rubble. The women shuffle along and cloak the tank. The tank has its gun raised upwards. Like an erect cock.

TED: You're having those intense dreams again?

MARY: Nightmares.

TED: Do you remember last time. When we talked about being in bed together. Trying to sleep. Our active minds. Being kept up by all those images...?

MARY: Yes, You would lie in bed after we'd been out after shooting the film, in the dark, staring at the ceiling, you would recount the shots, describe them, a form or shape moving from the right hand side of the room to the left, your head would follow the shape as it twisted, changed colour, and merged with another refracted object. You'd describe it with your eyes open in the darkness while I closed mine. You'd talk about the richness of greens, emerald, and the velvet bloods of red. Like a hallucination I

suppose, but based on the truth, the lens you'd been looking through all day. I always preferred your descriptions to the film we ended up with.

TED: '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, almost opaque. Just the colour of your blood feeding your optics, the screen between you and the world.

MARY: [SMILING, EMBARRESSED] I'd write 'to do' lists on that blackboard when I couldn't sleep.

TED: Too many lists. Too many lists.

MARY: With my lists and your nocturnal hallucinations! it's a wonder we ever got any sleep?

TED: [LAUGHS] Those visions I had, 'hallucinations' as you put it, they never turned out the way we expected, something always changed the next day, we never had full control like we do now with digital technology. There was a betrayal with dailies, they never matched your dreams- what you saw through the camera lens.

MARY: Maybe the films we were making contributed to my 'state of mind' as you put it? Maybe the hallucinations in our imagery and the objects

that we filmed somehow merged with my consciousness? I don't know.

TED: But what was the problem? I mean you never said who was following you.

MARY: I doesn't matter now Ted. what mattered then and matters now is trust. Between people. Between us. You did not believe me. 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.

TED: What was I supposed to do. You were seeing things in everything Mary. You were hearing voices in the apartment, you thought the telegraph poles we passed were passing messages about you. You tried to get me to paint them. To camouflage them so they'd disappear. You started to read messages in the flower beds in public gardens. Some secret floral code that was passing information around us. I mean, come on, what was I supposed to think?

MARY: I needed you. I needed to trust someone.

TED: But it was too much Mary, you needed help and I didn't seem to be able to help you. 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! 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: You wrote 'weak and difficult to convince' and 'crystal clear' in an email. That could have been interpreted as a low concentration explosive liquid or chemical. I could not 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 the Stazi spied on lovers.. you know all that, it still goes on. Those words about my cheek bones. Beautiful words Ted, really they were (MARY LOOKS AT TED)I remembered them. But they are open to interpretation you know. Someone else could read some other content in them. Something that was aligned with their particular intentions. You know when you're looking for something. Something specific. Things you're looking at can start to mould into what you're looking *for*. Like you said, there maybe words in flower beds, or in this garden? (MARY LOOKS AROUND IT)

TED: The buildings?

MARY: Yes, Architecture has its own codes. (MARY TOUCHES THE BUILDING) They are saying more than we think. You just need to know the code.

TED: (GESTURING TO THE AUDIENCE) And the people? The public?

MARY: (MARY LOOKS AT THE AUDIENCE) Look at how they are positioned. They relate to us and the words we are saying but they form their own positions, they move round us, they communicate a lot through their bodies, how they are standing together, how far apart from each other they are willing to stand. Faces that follow dialogue and those that drift off to other thoughts, quite rightly, to another place, and then back here with our words. You can see that in expressions and in their bodies. Do they Follow us?

TED: Do they care?

(MOVEMENT)

MARY: (REFFERRING TO THE WORKS IN THE GALLERY) Why so dark?

TED: I don't know.

MARY: What are we supposed to think? All these lines and blackness.

MARY: I never know how we're expected to read? If we are supposed to get close to something? Some particular meaning or intentions you know? An answer maybe?

TED: I'm not sure, its difficult to say.

MARY: when does someone's direction end and another's interpretation begin? And when do you decide to trust each one? I mean who's right? Me or the thing I'm looking at?

TED: Probably you. You're always right.

MARY: Don't be silly. I'm trying to be serious. This is important.

TED: No you're right. It is. Sorry. I was thinking.. you know when we talked about the transit zone. And you talked about the internal nature of it. Feeling like we were locked away from the world? And we talked about the globe as a shape which represents everything. It represents all that was external to that internal hell.

MARY: It was not hell.

TED: Well whatever. It was for me. And we talked about the image of that incarceration on the symbol of the outside, of the globe.

MARY: Yes I remember that. I started dreaming again, just after... I started dreaming of spheres with images of rooms painted on them. Floating in space at night in the darkness.

TED: cold blackness?

MARY: No that black was not cold it was velvety you know, dense, with colour in it somehow.

TED: Like your closed eye lids? Your 'inner
Blackboard?'

MARY: Yeh I suppose, any way they were floating,
hovering all together, like some constellation,
or an astronomical diagram.

END

JESSE

GOTO WORKS. VIDEO WORKS. Iron nodule.clay.impressionsions.

MARY:

TED: I thought we talked about it? About how our work
would act as a formal counter to all that.
Something that massaged the eyes, that worked
with optics, bending light and objects, creating
relations between things without having to
describe a particular message, and that forming a
relation to optics was political in itself, it
was about looking, about activating the visual
sense.

MARY: But we were seducing too, together we wanted to
take our audience somewhere unthinking,
psychedelic, *hallucinogenic*, we openly talked
about making a visual form or material substance
to escape within, to dream with, like opium or
absinth or whatever, we were making an

alternative, another landscape of mental activity. 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 LOOS AT TED ACCUSINGLY).The very beginning of mass propaganda.

TED 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: 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 through my framing? This is absolutely ridiculous!

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 sign off texts the same. TN, LOL...

MARY: (INTERRUPTS WITH A DRY SMILE) Until I informed you that it meant 'Laugh Out Loud' not 'Lots Of Love'...

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 mean... 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 your role in the industry, my role in directing, 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) Sometimes it felt like we both lost control, that we became characters in someone else's story, it felt like external pressures where conducting our relationship and external actors were taking advantage of what was happening internally.
- 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 underlying tensions, I don't think we ever really addressed.

Ted: Like what?

MARY: (CONTINUES, IGNORING THE QUESTION) Lets be honest, (LOOKS AT TED FOR CONFIRMATION) let's be open for once. We were literally at war a lot of the time...

TED: (LOOKING CONFUSED, SHOCKED) Honest?

MARY: What?

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

MARY: (CONTINUES) We were vulnerable, we had no stability. And it was at that time when larger powers got involved, they started to direct us. They demanded our complicity for their support.

TED: (INTERRUPTS, SLOWLY, LOOKS INTENTLY AT MARY) 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.

PAUSE. TEDS HEAD DROPS. MARY WALKS OVER TO SEATED TED, SHE TOUCHES HIS SHOULDER, LOOKS DOWN TO HIS LOWERED HEAD HE LOOKS AT THE FLOOR—ELBOWS ON KNEES. MARY WALKSTO THE PROJECTOR. SHE SWITCHES IT ON AND STANDS WATCHING. TED'S HEAD STILL DOWN. SHE WALKS OVER TO OBJECTS ON TABLE, LOOKS AT ONE OR TWO, TURNS THEM GENTLY IN HER HANDS, SELECTS ONE WHILE THE PROJECTOR CONTINUES. SHE HOLDS THE OBJECT IN THE LIGHT OF THE PROJECTOR, AND SLOWLY, DREAMILY TURNS IT IN THE LIGHT. TED LOOKS UP AND WATCHES. AFTER ABOUT 30 SECONDS TURNING THE OBJECT IN THE LIGHT, MARY SWITCHES OFF THE PROJECTOR AND RETURNS TO HER SEAT WITH THE OBJECT.

MARY: (LOOKING AT OBJECT IN HER HANDS) Do you remember when we went to the convention?

TED'S HEAD IS DOWN AGAIN, MARY CONTINUES FONDLY ALMOST TO HERSELF WITH A GENTLE SMILE.

We went by train, for some reason we wanted a change, you said you wanted to travel in a straight line (SMILE). We received text messages when we crossed borders, telecommunication companies 'welcoming' us to each new territory. I remember that. No one else welcomed us, just those companies. The guy next to us was playing some car game on his mobile handset, miming a steering wheel, turning left and right as if there were corners, you whispered 'he hates straight lines' (SMILE) anyway I'm diverging. I remember, we sat in the convention centre waiting for the audience to fill up, we were early, we talked about the staging, they were still making final adjustments to the stage. You couldn't help yourself, you started framing up (MARY MAKES HER HANDS INTO A VIEWFINDER MOVES IT AROUND THE ROOM, LIKE A CAMERA FINDING THE RIGHT SHOT. SHE AIMS TOWARDS THE AUDIENCE, THE OBJECTS ON THE TABLE, EMPTY PROJECTION SCREEN AND THEN TED. SHE CONTINUES) Right, slow zoom, to focus, pan left. Wide shot 1. You started finding your own shapes in that cathedral of ideology, with all that banging and drilling going on. The microphones being tapped (MARY TAPS HER CHAIR)- stage directors and events management rushing by, a red lecturn, blue staged stairs, back stage screens

TED RAISES HIS HEAD LISTENING

and that politician speaking on mental health.

TED: (SMILING, REMEMBERING) Yes that's right

MARY: He talked about his own personal experience inspiring his work, he had a condition where he had a compulsion to do things in fours.

TED: Yes that's right.

MARY: And he did, he repeated himself, four times, often throughout his speech, and no one knew if it was his condition or his script..

TED: (SMILING) Great.

MARY: (SMILING) Great.

ACTORS PLAYING TED AND MARY DECIDE HOW MANY TIMES THEY REPEAT 'GREAT' TO EACHOTHER.

TED: (PAUSE) Do you remember your therapist used to get her aphorisms, sayings all mixed up?

MARY: (SMILING) 'It's the big pink elephant in the room'

(TED AND MARY SMILE TOGETHER)

TED: You never mentioned it to her in the end did you?

MARY: No, and she kept using it, repeating it. I couldn't help smiling, it was one of those things, if you leave it too late and you don't say something, like when you forget someone's

name, you have to leave it forever, you have to live with it.

TED: Live with a pink elephant in the room?

MARY: Or a nameless friend.

TED: (TED SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS) Not so bad...

MARY COMES NEARER

(PAUSE) We went to the convention on a Tuesday. We went on the train because the car was at the garage (RAISES EYEBROWS AT MARY). I don't remember that guy playing with the virtual steering wheel, you have an amazing memory, I forget that about you. We sat next to each other on the train, at a table facing backwards. You would ask me to turn the pages of the book you were reading, you often did that (SMILES SHAKING HIS HEAD). You wouldn't tell me when you'd come to the end of the page, I'd have to guess! For some reason I never asked why we did that..

MARY: Well, I guess I enjoyed loosing control of my own reading. Sometimes I'd miss bits or sometimes you'd give me the time to re-read parts. It was a way of reading together. I was trying to become familiar with this sense of a shared editorial process, you know for our work, for the films. I'm not sure it worked though. (PAUSE) I think I was reading Vladimir Nabokov's *The Original of*

Laura on the way to the convention. Do you remember?

MARY LOOKS AT TED, TED'S EXPRESION
SAYS 'I CANT REMEMBER'.

That book stayed with me (PAUSE). The idea of how the bone structure of a persons face could act as structure for a novel, or a story, or for narrative. I started looking then, right there, on the way to the convention and I never stopped—trying to read novels in peoples' faces. I couldn't help it with the convention speakers. I must have read so many novels during those speeches.

TED IS LOOKING CAREFULLY AT MARY'S
FACE.

Soft, bright, warm eyes laying the foundations of trust. Or more angular cheek bones rising from the hiding recesses of sunken eyes—as a landscape to place a public, or even a policy? The surprise of rising eyebrows sometimes in honest excitement at other times to communicate a carefully considered 'openness' to the audience. (PAUSE, GENTLY FEELING THE SHAPE OF HER OWN FACE) I started thinking about my own face, my own portrait (PAUSE). In the toilets in the convention Centre, it was a hot day and there was no air conditioning in there, I remember because I started thinking about how the redness of my cheeks would affect or sculpt my own novel. An

image of embarrassment? Or social unease? I forced a smile at myself in the mirror and watched how that lie broke the lines round my eyes and shifted the lobes of my ears ever so slightly.

TED: (PAUSE) So can you describe *your* story?

MARY: Do I have to? Well, a novel, or a story that meanders between a formal structure, you know, where all the components: scene, narrative, character development are interrupted by frequent deviations that lead nowhere, blind alleys, back inwards upon themselves. Maybe I lose myself, or I don't know myself? I don't know. (PAUSE CONTINUES) Footprints in the snow on top of existing footprints—disfiguring previous journeys and making something more squashed together, more abstract—shoe prints loosing their indent. More a mark of presence rather than a particular notation of direction. The story, my story, becomes a puddle, a mess. You know, a battle between an ordered, readable structure and the inevitable failure in all of that.

TED: (FRUSTRATED) Typical. That's not a story—that's a mist, a fog concealing a story. It's just a group of words working overtime to keep us from any sense of a story. Any sense of you. Another mask, a screen, a filter. You're using words that talk about structure to obscure your own story. Maybe you read your own face as a surface that disfigures your truth. I don't know.

MARY: (INTERUPTS AND SMILES) You see, you have changed, you never used to speak like this.

TED: I have had a lot of psychoanalysis over the years (SMILING).

MARY: The pink elephant in the room.

TED: (SMILES AND CONTINUES)

We learn from childhood to make our expressions lie for us. Maybe you read your own reflection as a layer of protection from any kind of reading?

MARY: Where did you get that from? I mean this is simply not you. Not the *you* I remember anyway.

TED: (IGNORES MARY AND CONTINUES) I see your face differently. I read it as a story that *wants* to be open but is trapped by its contours. (TED LOOKS CLOSER AT MARYS CHEEK). The way your cheek bone descends to the curve in your nostril. That smoothness feels at the same time, sort of open like some hillside in spring and there's this peak, quite angular, it looks precarious, somewhere where you might benefit from the view but at the same time worry about the drop.

MARY: (SHAKING HER HEAD AND SMILING) 'A hillside in spring'. Jesus Christ.

TED: You see, I feel I can read your face *directly*, not abstractly. I can make real sense of it for myself. I don't need to rely on the indulgences of conceptual ambiguity. I think I can read your childhood in your face.

MARY STARTS TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE,
VULNERABLE, NOT ENJOYING THE ANALYSIS.

When we first met you'd talk to me of your childhood. That you were never encouraged to escape into your imagination and when we looked back at those photographs in the apartment, of you as a child, we could see it in your face then. We talked about it, well maybe I talked about it: a child with nowhere to go. And I see it now.

MARY: (GESTURES TO TED AS IF TO SAY 'ENOUGH NOW') Ted.

TED: (CONTINUING REGARDLESS) Don't you remember, at the apartment?

MARY: (RELUCTANTLY) Yes.

TED: (PAUSE) I wonder how many characters you've played since then? I mean you escaped all that torment by hiding in another face, another character. And then another, and another. Like you were acting yourself out, some charade of transparency.

MARY FEELS PRESSURED, MORE UNCOMFORTABLE, ANXIOUS. SHE REACHES INTO HER BAG AND SLOWLY TAKES OUT A BOOK. IT IS THE *TRANSPARENCY OF THINGS* BY VLADIMIR NABOKOV. SHE BEGINS TO READ.

MARY: When we concentrate on a material object, whatever its situation, the very act of attention may lead to our involuntarily sinking into the history of that object. Novices must learn to skim over matter if they want matter to stay at the exact level of the moment. Transparent things, through which the past shines!

Man made objects, or natural ones, inert themselves but much used by careless life (you are thinking, and quite rightly so, of a hillside stone over which a multitude of small animals have scurried in the course of incalculable seasons) are particularly difficult to keep in surface focus: novices fall through the surface humming happily to themselves, and are soon reveling with childish abandon in the story of this stone, of that heath. I shall explain. (MARY LOOKS UP FROM THE BOOK TO TED). I shall explain. A thin veneer of immediate reality is spread over natural and artificial matter, and whoever wishes to remain in the now, with the now, on the now, should please not break this tension film.

MARY CLOSES THE BOOK, HOLDS IT IN HER HANDS CAREFULLY.

TED: (PAUSE. LOOKING PERPLEXED) What?

MARY: What do you mean 'what'?

TED: You still reading Nabokov! (PAUSE) Cant you use your own words for once? I've got no idea what you're trying to say. You're using someone else's words to say something and I've got no idea what. What a waste of time! What am I doing here anyway?

MARY: (GLARES BACK AT TED) Wasn't that what we were doing with Universal?

TED: (CONFUSED) what?

MARY: We were being used. We were speaking someone else's words? We were completely seduced.

TED: (GETTING IRATE, EXASPERATED, SMILING) Oh, you told me exactly what you thought of seduction alright. You talked to me about seduction, and about scrutiny and how you lost your critical facility through the persuasiveness of seduction. You said it was me who made you lose your questioning nature..

MARY: (INTERRUPTS) I said that seduction was dangerous because you can lose your established anchors, and that its richness and excitement and unknown nature can also be a veil that separates us from the ground, from reality. We can lose our navigational tools when we are being seduced, and

this I suppose, is why it is so tempting and desirable. We are convinced to take a foreign path, one that we have to trust without grounding. We have to administer faith when there is no reason to.

TED: You make impulses, emotion and instinct into a science, or some sort of academic study...!

PAUSE. THEY BOTH LOOK AT EACH OTHER,
LESS ANGER MORE FONDNESS. SHARINGIN A
SLOW CAREFUL SMILE

Your idea of seduction was more like some sort of contract that had to be implemented line-by-line.

MARY: I just became weary of the vulnerability of being seduced. (PAUSE) You might be right, maybe I analyzed it too much? I started to distrust people that sent invitations and proposals. I started to demand they made a pledge to hold, or I would demand a new settlement or look for support for a major revision.

TED: Again! You talk as if you are an institution!

MARY: (LOUDER FIRMER) It is my institution that we're talking about. Isn't it?

TED: (SIGHS AND SAYS SLOWLY, CALMLY, ALMOST DESPARINGINLY) You know what I mean.

MARY: (FASTER. MORE ON EDGE) I felt that I was losing control, and that I was being told when and what to feel. And so I lost my independence. I could not read for myself any longer. (PAUSE) Its funny you talk about *institutions*, because, I started to think of my body, like a body, you know, like an organization, something cold like that, that was being directed by a number of voices rather than my own. (PAUSE, SLOWLY IN REALISATION) I think I lost my voice.

TED: A body that could reach binding settlements?

MARY: If only. We never got there.

TED: I suppose it was a good starting point?

MARY: what?

TED: seduction.

MARY: but I lost faith in it. I stopped trusting it. It became flimsy. There was no weight to it..

TED GETS UP, MOVES TO THE PROJECTOR AND TURNS IT ON. HE GOES TO THE TABLE OF OBJECTS AND PICKS UP 2 OBJECTS. HE HOLDS THEM INFRONT OF THE PROJECTION LIGHT. MARY WATCHES THE PROJECTED IMAGE ON THE OBJECTS. HE SWITCHES OFF THE PROJECTOR AND COMES OVER TO MARY WITH THE OBJECTS, SITS NEX TO HER AND HANDS HER ONE OF THE

OBJECTS. THEY SIT TOGETHER HOLDING AN
OBJECT EACH.

TED: I was reading about this new material. Graphene. They call it a 'super' material. Its just one atom thick! Just a sheet of carbon molecules. So almost completely transparent and at the same time, conducts electricity really well. They're going to use it for the next generation of touch screen surfaces. Mobiles, Ipads...

MARY LOOKS AT TED AS IF TO SAY 'AND?',
WHY ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THIS?

Well, they won a Nobel prize for discovering the material and now governments are supporting the industry, investing in new factories...

MARY FROWNS. CONFUSED

TED: (LOOKING TOWARDS THE PROJECTION SCREEN AND THEN DOWN TO THE OBJECT IN HIS HANDS). It sounds like amazing stuff. Barely visible. But strong. Carrying information. (PAUSE) Do you remember that stuff we found at the beach that time? What was it?

TED LOOKS AT MARY, SHE SHRUGS, HE
CONTINUES.

Mica! That's right. So soft and lightweight, splitting readily into very thin layers. Miners talked of the largest Mica crystals like books.

Books of Mica, appearing as if constructed by tightly packed 'leaves'.

MARY: (INTERRUPTS) You told me about white mica or muscovite, and you explained its popularity in Russia. You said 'it was a book of white lies'— 'the lies of communism' you said. That Stalin had changed the very form of your ideals. I remember so clearly, even now. You kept a piece of Mica in a wooden box as a symbol of your distrust and that if you were to ever have a child you would want to try and change this association, that your child would be different, your child would make it better, make a purer material—one that did not depend on its self reflexive concealment. you didn't want your child to feel like he or she should hide, like I did, you wanted your child to be 'open', to be 'transparent'.

TED: (UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSE) I'm not sure I want to talk about that. Look I need to go.

MARY: About what?

TED: Mica?

MARY: The material or the..

TED: (FINISHING MARY'S SENTENCE) Child.

PAUSE. TED GETS UP AS IF TO GO.

MARY: IM SORRY.

TED: Well its been nice, I'm not sure exactly how, but you know, nice to see you. (PAUSE) I miss you.

MARY: We've been through all that. It was years ago now. Sometimes I enjoy looking back.

TED: It doesn't seem like it.

MARY: You can make up new memories, or at least erase the inconveniences. They do it in trauma therapy. (PAUSE) I remember the sound of the Velcro on your jacket. It sounded like tyres on wet gravel. I used to pretend we had a drive (SMILE). Or touching the mug on the window sill to see if it was still warm and you had been near recently. Or if it had been warmed by the sun and you'd been gone for hours.

TED: (PUTTING ON HIS COAT) Do you remember how you used to read newspapers?

MARY: Still do.

TED: Every morning, before we started work. You'd read every word. The stock prices, Wind speeds and temperatures in South America, Wall St mergers, football fixture lists. You never talked much about all that information. I used to wonder where you put it all?

MARY: I'm not sure.

TED STARTS TO LEAVE. MARY CATCHES HIM
BY HIS ARM.

The last time we met You talked about Stockholm.
About Immigration. About keeping people apart
while propagating a symbol of equality and
tolerance. About people being pushed to places in
cities for housing, for work. To keep them away
from places they are not welcome.

TED: I was talking about the snow pushers. That in the
centre, you see the low paid on the rooves, high
above the city, out of the way, pushing snow off
the rooves in the thaw.

MARY: And cleaners clean at night.. Do you remember the
film The Night Cleaners?

TED: I need to go.

MARY: The Berwick St collective. (Dreamily) They got a
lot of criticism from the left for aestheticising
the issue.

TED: I need to go.

MARY: I'm sorry it never worked out.

TED: Me too.

TED AND MARY EMBRACE, KISS ON THE CHEEK,
LOOK INTO EACHOTHERS EYES. TED LEAVES.
MARY WALKS TO THE PROJECTOR. SWITCHES IT

ON. WATCHES FOR A 10 SECONDS THEN
LEAVES.

CURTAIN.