

THE ART OF CONVERSATION

adapted for the screen by
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from the play
"UGLY ART: Coming of Age"
by
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INT. STUDIO - DAY *

Pitch blackness. Suddenly, as music kicks in, yellow splatters all over the black. Hands with cookie cutters swirl the paint around, creating odd shapes and swirls of yellow on the black background. *

The artist, BARNARD SURIO steps back to look at his work. Satisfied, he grabs another cup, this time green, and splashes it on one of many other black boards that surround him. *

Barnard gets into it, using a variety of cookie cutters to create his "art". Only one left now. He grabs a cup of red, tossing straight at the camera. SPLAT! The screen turns red, then fades into... *

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT *

It's the opening night of a brand new art gallery. We can now see the final results of Bernard's work. The paintings are of various sizes, but each has a black background, and one single monochromatic color in the foreground. *

In the center of the room is the one sculpture - a rainbow colored Mobius strip. The artistic eye will notice that if one travels from painting to painting, they actually form the color wheel. *

However, none of the four people in the room are looking at the art at the moment. *

EVELYN, a young art teacher, takes a sip of wine as she patiently listens to JILL, who is the wife of the principal of the private school that Evelyn teaches at. As she patiently listens, she can't help but glance across at... *

ROBERT, a young architect who is forced to participate in a conversation with one of his overly chummy clients, PATRICK. Robert would much rather be introducing himself to the beautiful Evelyn, but nods and tries to listen respectfully. *

Right now Jill and Patrick's conversations are muffled and unintelligible. But, as the music continues to punch their simultaneous conversations, they finally fade in to clarity. *

INTERCUT BETWEEN CONVERSATIONS... *

EVELYN'S CONVERSATION

JILL
 ...but that's not important. Are you here by yourself?

EVELYN
 I came with Joyce. You know Joyce. We teach together, but she had to leave and I thought, I'm here so I've got a little time and I'm an art teacher... so... it's good to see you. How have you been doing?

JILL
 Wonderful. Now that Elliot's contract as principal has been renewed, the doors to Yale are wide open for the children. They'll be home from boarding school for Thanksgiving. Do you have any plans?

EVELYN
 No plans. I might go to my mother's. I don't know... shop. Maybe eat turkey, if I go to my mother's, but I don't know. Maybe just stay around here. I've got tons to do. What about you? Didn't you say that you and Elliot were going sailing or something?

ROBERT'S CONVERSATION

PATRICK
 ... think the design is superb. Thanks again. What brings you here anyway?

ROBERT
 I came along with a guy I work with, you know Anthony. He knows the artist so...

PATRICK
 I thought you were just a sky-scraper man. I never figured you for the art-loving type.

ROBERT
 (shrugs)
 I like art galleries...
 (sips his wine)
 so what's new?
 Thanksgiving's here, long weekend...

PATRICK
 Ugh! Don't remind me.

ROBERT
 You got big plans...?

PATRICK
 The usual family reunion hell. What about you?

ROBERT
 Me? Watch some football... eat some turkey.

PATRICK
 That's it?

ROBERT
 I got things to do. I don't know, probably hang around. What about you? Going anywhere?

JILL
Oh yes. We are.

EVELYN
That sounds like fun.
Going sailing.

JILL
We're going to Cancun.

EVELYN
Cancun?

JILL
The Bahamas.

EVELYN
Oh. The Bahamas.
That's right. The
Bahamas. Just up and
go...

JILL
Why don't you come
with us? You can bring
that boyfriend along.
Alfred right?

EVELYN
We're just friends. I
don't see him any
longer. We...

JILL
Oh. I see. Are you
seeing someone new
then?

EVELYN
No, no one particular.
I'm glad to have some
time just for myself.
I've been thinking
about taking a pottery
class... and you know...

JILL
I love pottery! Maybe
we could take it
together?

PATRICK
We're all meeting up at
Uncle Harvey's in Florida.
For Aunt Bertha's sake.
She can't see very well
anymore and doesn't like
to travel.

ROBERT
Going to Florida. That
sounds like a lot of fun.
Florida. Disney World.

PATRICK
Yeah, at least the kids
will have a great time,
assuming they survive Gramma
Bailey. They hate it when
she pinches their cheeks.

ROBERT
Yeah. You just pick up
the kids and go. Just up
and go.

PATRICK
What ever happened to
Cynthia?

ROBERT
I don't really see her
anymore. We're...

PATRICK
Friends?

ROBERT
We go out occasionally,
but...

PATRICK
Yeah, I gotcha. Anyone
else wander into your life?

ROBERT
No, no one... so lately
just been kicking around.
So...

*
*
*
*

EVELYN
So sure...

JILL
Well sugar, I need to
get going. Elliot and
I still have a lot of
packing left.

EVELYN
Sure. I need to leave
too and do a few things.

JILL
Bye then.

EVELYN
Bye. See you later...

JILL
Let's have lunch next
week?

EVELYN
Yeah. Enjoy sailing.

JILL
Will do. Bye Evelyn.

EVELYN
Bye.

PATRICK
Well, buck up, it'll get
better.

ROBERT
Sure...

PATRICK
I better head out. Nat's
waiting at home for me. I
just swung by to pay my
respects.

ROBERT
See you around. I'm going
to look at some of the
stuff here and I've got to
head out in a few minutes
myself... so...

PATRICK
See ya later then.

ROBERT
I'll see you...

PATRICK
Chin up, you'll meet
someone.

ROBERT
Right.

END INTERCUT

INT. ART GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

As Jill and Patrick leave, Robert and Evelyn glance at each
other, and at once both look away. *

They each casually start at their respective sides of the
room, feigning interest in the paintings. As they wander
around, they both end up in front of the one painting that
hasn't been seen. It's, well, red. *

They can't ignore each other anymore. Robert opens his mouth
to speak, but Evelyn beats him to the punch. *

EVELYN
Hi. *

ROBERT
Hi.

Robert moves close, seems to study the painting, almost nudging Evelyn aside.

EVELYN
Go ahead...

ROBERT
I'm sorry... excuse me... you were standing here first.

Robert moves aside for Evelyn.

ROBERT (cont'd)
Some exhibit, hunh?
(refers to painting)
Wow. Red.
(reads the plaque)
Dancing Woman With Red Flowers.

EVELYN
I really like what he's done... with color.

ROBERT
Knocks me over.

Actually it doesn't. It's really bad.

EVELYN
I think very vibrant... strong colors... I like it. It really makes a statement.

No it doesn't. It's dreadful.

ROBERT
I like it too.
(liar)
Would you like some more wine?

EVELYN
No thanks.

Robert glances at the "open bar" table, which only has wine and soft drinks. Stretches for something to say.

ROBERT
No hard stuff.

EVELYN
Apparently not.

Silence.

ROBERT
 Pretty good food. The shrimp's good.
 Did you try the shrimp? It's big
 shrimp.

EVELYN
 I don't think it's shrimp. Prawns.

ROBERT
 What?

EVELYN
 They're called prawns... the shrimp...
 they're called prawns.

ROBERT
 Yeah, oh yeah, is that right. Prawns.

Suddenly, very passionately, his thoughts boil into a
 existence. He tries not to look in her direction too much.

ROBERT (V.O.) (cont'd)
*I've been to five gallery openings
 hoping you'd be there and I walk
 in... and here you are. I mean.*

Her thoughts surface as well. She tries to pretend she is
 interested in the painting.

EVELYN (V.O.)
*You're the guy that's Anthony's
 friend...*

ROBERT (V.O.)
*We met at Anthony's party. You were
 wearing this long red dress and your
 hair was longer then. The whole...*

EVELYN (V.O.)
*...night I couldn't do anything but
 look at you...*

ROBERT (V.O.)
*You never saw me. I asked Anthony,
 who's the girl. He says some friend
 of Joyce's, art teacher...*

EVELYN (V.O.)
*I've been thinking, how am I going
 to get a chance to ever meet him
 again and...*

ROBERT
 (spoken aloud, by accident)
 ...my God you're beautiful and I'm
 talking about prawns. I never heard
 of prawns.

EVELYN
 Excuse me?

ROBERT
 (stumbles awkwardly to
 explain)
 They look like shrimp.

EVELYN
 Prawns.

ROBERT
 Prawns. Yeah.

EVELYN (V.O.)
*I think you are the most gorgeous
 man I have ever seen, probably in my
 whole life... you fit... do you
 understand what I'm saying... you
 fit.*

(aloud)
 I think, my God, you fit.

ROBERT
 What?

EVELYN
 (stumbles awkwardly to
 explain)
 Just trying to fit in, you know,
 I'm new in town. I'd like to become
 involved in the community... I like
 art.. I'm an art teacher. So...
 are you a painter or something... is
 your work in here?

ROBERT
 No. I like art. I'm not an artist...
 I like art. I'm a collector.

EVELYN
 Oh. Good. I'm Evelyn Loman.

ROBERT
 Hi. Robert McCanlass.

EVELYN

Hi.

There's an awkward hand shake, a pause, and then they both return to looking at the painting.

ROBERT

Vibrant. Powerful. Jumps right out at you.

EVELYN

It certainly does.

ROBERT

Gutsy. Bold. Makes a statement.

EVELYN

Yes, bold, yes.

ROBERT

Defiant. There's a certain rawness.

EVELYN

Of course.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I like your hair. It's the kind of hair I just want to get all into. I like how it falls about your face... like a couple of minutes ago you were getting some of those shrimp -- prawns -- and how you had to pull your hair over to pick 'em up... and you looked up and saw me staring. I love ankles too, and you've got great ankles... sexy ankles... perfect ankles... I loved your ankles in that long red dress at Anthony's party.

INSERT - ANTHONY'S PARTY - NIGHT

A flash to the past as Robert, rather buzzed, is entranced with Evelyn in her long red dress. It's one heck of a wild party. Barnard is there, along with Anthony, Joyce, Klive and other common friends...

EVELYN (V.O.)

Burgundy... I bet he like me in my burgundy skirt.. at Anthony's he was looking at me or my feet.

EVELYN'S P.O.V.

It's the same party, but it's not nearly as crazy as Robert remembers. She's clearly sober. Everything is just slightly different than what Robert remembers.

EVELYN (V.O.) (cont'd)
Why didn't I wear my burgundy skirt tonight?

INT. ART GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Flash back to reality.

ROBERT (V.O.)
I just love a girl in a red dress... and then that hair... I bet it smells good.

(tells himself, sternly)
Robert, put your hand in your pocket or you're going to touch her hair and make a fool of yourself...

EVELYN (V.O.)
I can't think of anything to say to him.

ROBERT (V.O.)
I take you home tonight to meet my mother and we're married tomorrow. What do you think the chances of that are?

(mumbles aloud)
 She doesn't even know you exist.

EVELYN
 Excuse me?

ROBERT
 (stumbles awkwardly to explain)
 Art must exist, don't you think? You're an art teacher?

EVELYN
 First year.

ROBERT
 Teacher.

EVELYN
 High school.

ROBERT
High school.

EVELYN
Art.

ROBERT
Art, sure.
(beat)
You know Anthony?

EVELYN
Anthony? No, not really.
(beat)
We met.

ROBERT
Oh.

EVELYN
I'm a friend of Joyce's. Anthony's
friend, Joyce.

ROBERT
Right. Joyce. Anthony's friend,
Joyce.
(beat)
I'm an architect.

EVELYN (V.O.)
*What would it be like for us to be
snowed in... an isolated cabin just
you and me and we're stranded for a
month, no five months... at first we
hate one another but we have to work
together to survive and...*

ROBERT (V.O.)
*What's the worst that can happen? I
ask you out and you say no. Then
you go back and tell Joyce, "That
guy at Anthony's party, the architect,
asked me out. What a creep."
Everybody'll know I asked you out
and you said no...*

EVELYN (V.O.)
*I'm standing here and he doesn't see
me...*

ROBERT (V.O.)
...And we finally meet.

EVELYN

Excuse me?

But this time, his thoughts weren't out loud. He stumbles even more awkwardly than before. A bit confused...

ROBERT

Didn't we meet at Anthony's party?

EVELYN

Did we?

ROBERT

Maybe not.

EVELYN (V.O.)

...Why don't we leave here and have the most romantic, most lovely night of two lovers in the history of mankind... fall perfectly in love... spend the rest of our lives blissfully together? And passion like you couldn't even write about in a book. We like everything the same together... share our worlds...

ROBERT

What?

Again, Evelyn wasn't speaking out loud. Though she thinks maybe she did. She stumbles awkwardly to explain herself...

EVELYN

Art should be shared with the world.

ROBERT

You're right.

EVELYN

Yeah.

A beat.

ROBERT

I usually don't stay long at these receptions.

(his thoughts; V.O.)

Make an appearance, right... smiling... party talk...

EVELYN (V.O.)

Our first date...

ROBERT (V.O.)

Dinner.

EVELYN (V.O.)

And wine.

ROBERT (V.O.)

The best bottle of wine.

EVELYN (V.O.)

*We don't take our eyes off one another
the whole evening.*

ROBERT (V.O.)

*I'm nervous, but you think I'm
charming.*

EVELYN (V.O.)

You look at me and I blush.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Our eyes melt together.

EVELYN (V.O.)

*Our hands touch and it's like
electricity.*

ROBERT

(out loud)

Your perfume drives me mad with
passion.

EVELYN

Excuse me?

ROBERT

(really embarrassed. Tries
to recover.)

Uh... I like the passion of this
guy's work.

(pause)

I thought I'd have a small glass of
wine. Could I get you something?

EVELYN

Thank you, but no.

ROBERT

Right.

EVELYN (V.O.)
*Kiss me or something.
 Don't be stupid, he
 can't kiss me here.
 Ask me out, I love
 Italian restaurants.
 At least touch me...
 a little encouragement.
 just a smile... I'm
 dying.*

ROBERT (V.O.)
*Help me out. Smile for
 God's sake. Touch my arm.
 I'm sending the vibration...
 touch my arm... touch my
 arm... touch my arm...
 touch my arm...*

EVELYN (V.O.)
*You're probably the type who likes
 long hair. Why'd I cut my hair so
 short?*

ROBERT (V.O.)
*Oh forget it. Like a girl like you
 would be interested in me.*

EVELYN
 Excuse me?

Did he speak out loud, again!? No, but he's not sure. It's just gnarly how that keeps happening, isn't it? Robert stumbles to explain himself.

ROBERT
 Interesting work... the art.

EVELYN
 Yes.
 (her frantic thoughts,
 V.O.)
*Can I make it more obvious... I
 WANT YOU!*

It wasn't out loud, but Robert reacts as if it may as well have been.

ROBERT
 What?!

EVELYN
 Excuse me?
 (blurts out)
 Italian.

ROBERT
 Italian? Italian...

EVELYN
 I like Italian food.

ROBERT
Yeah. Anything Italian.

EVELYN
Yeah. Italian restaurants.

ROBERT
Yeah so...

EVELYN
Well...

ROBERT
I think I'm about partied out.

EVELYN
Me too. I better get on home. See
you around maybe.

ROBERT
To your husband, boyfriend?

EVELYN
No. Two cats. You?

ROBERT
No cats. Just me.
(His thoughts, V.O.)
I'm going to take you in my arms.

EVELYN
Excuse me?

ROBERT
I bet two cats are an arm load?

EVELYN
I like cats. Well... It was a
pleasure meeting you.

ROBERT
Good to meet you too.
(gets enough courage,
finally)
I was thinking about leaving and
stopping off some place for a cup of
coffee or something.

EVELYN
Yeah. Well...

ROBERT
Maybe some hot tea.

EVELYN
See you around.

ROBERT (V.O.)
Coffee... tea... coffee, tea, coffee,
tea..
(aloud)
You like hot chocolate?

EVELYN
Were you asking me if I wanted to go
with you?

ROBERT
Yeah.

EVELYN
It's late. Do you know some place?

ROBERT
Yeah.

EVELYN
Yeah?

ROBERT
Yeah. I mean there's this great
coffee shop just across the street...

EVELYN
(cutting him off)
You like cats?

ROBERT
Cats?

EVELYN
You don't like cats?

ROBERT (V.O.)
Yeah. Cats? I probably
like cats. I could
learn to like cats,
probably. Maybe.
Cats. I guess.

EVELYN (V.O.)
Even though I think you
are the most perfect man I
could ever meet in my whole
entire life, if you don't
like cats this is going no
further.

ROBERT
Can I have a dog?

EVELYN
A dog? A dog dog?

ROBERT
A big hairy lick-you-all-the-time
dog.

EVELYN
Well... I'll think about it....

As they turn to leave together, they leave behind ghostly outlines of themselves, as their inner thoughts continue the discussion without their corporeal bodies.

EVELYN (cont'd)
*When after we're married we go to
your parents' on Christmas Eves...*
(*SHE likes the idea*)
*Then we spend Christmases at my
mothers'. My mother'd die if I'm
not there.*
(*it's settled*)
*We spend Christmases at my mother's
and I'll grow my hair out... just
for you...*

ROBERT
*But it's not like it's really all
that short.*
(*off her dagger stare*)
*Not that I mind it as it is. I like
your hair.*

EVELYN
I'll grow it down to my waist.

ROBERT
Down to your waist?

EVELYN
*Down to my knees and I'll never ever
cut it... not even split ends.*

ROBERT
Yeah?

EVELYN
Oh, yeah. Sure.

The ghostly images turn to leave and catch up with their corporeal selves.

ROBERT
*I love cats. Did I say I didn't
like cats?*

EVELYN

*Good. Because we're not getting a
dog.*

And the ghostly thoughts fade out as their corporeal bodies
exit. Time flies in fast forward as other patrons come in
and out, looking at the art, drinking the wine, finishing
off the prawns. *

Then the janitor come in, and looks at the "RED" painting. *

The one Robert and Evelyn were staring at.

JANITOR

That sure is some ugly art.

He flips a switch.

BLACKOUT. ROLL CREDITS.