

An Excerpt From:

WE HATE THE WORLD!

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Scene III

[It is evening. EMILY sits, feet up. She is exhausted. She doesn't move. Her eyes are closed. Pause. Then, gunfire. MEL enters, rushes in, slams the door and dives for the floor. He immediately crouches under the window.]

EMILY

Mel, Mel!

MEL

Ssssh!

EMILY

Mel, I gotta tell--

MEL

Shut up willya!

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

[From offstage, booming megaphone] We know you're in there Baxter and we don't appreciate it!

MEL

[yells] Well that ain't my fault Mr. Blue!

EMILY

[shocked] Mel, who is that -- [drops to her knees]

MEL

Ssssh!

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

This time we know it's you whose been painting that cubist rendering of the mayor's face on the Burger King Wall!

MEL

Oh yeah? How?

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

It's the dominant sense of abstract expressionism that we've become accustomed to on all of our various public buildings. It matches the richly-orchestrated dadaist mural of the Library Board done on the highway overpass. An art historian that we've hired told us that. She's my daughter.

MEL

Well give her a raise but I'm stickin' right here!

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

Don't be a fool. [friendly] We just want to *talk* to you about hidden mother archetypes that continually present themselves in your work...

MEL

I'm not that stupid, Mackey! The closest thing you know about art are airbrushed tits on this month's *Hustler*!

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

I resent that!

MEL

Good!

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

Okay, that's it. Boys, let's move in -- What? [listens. Pause.] Alright Baxter, this time you're lucky. As poorly-timed as these things are, a novice arsonist has just set fire to his own house! We've got to book ...

MEL

Oh, that's too bad...

POLICE SGT. MACKEY [VO]

Keep talkin', son. I've just hired a team of thirty Freudians with orders to find phalluses in every-inch-of-your-work. You'll be laughed out clear to beatnikville. See ya around, Picasso ...

[Police sirens wail off. They're gone.]

MEL

[stands, walks to kitchen for something to eat] Stupid art critics...

EMILY

Mel, what was that?

MEL

That was some fun. What?

EMILY

They're coming closer.

MEL

Am I supposed to duck?

EMILY

Not that. It's the window.

MEL

It's broken.

EMILY

[She takes a handful of pebbles out of her pocket and lets them drop] I know.

MEL

What's that?

EMILY

Driveway gravel. Those kids on 10-speeds threw them in before you arrived. They had notes attached.

MEL

Each one?

EMILY

Sorta. Each one had a letter of the alphabet. I pasted them together. [hands him a pieced-together piece of paper] Here.

MEL

Well look at this...

EMILY

I know...their mother types really well.

MEL

The local gangs. Bunch of preteen posers are upset with me painting on their "territory." Boy, they really start them early! "Territories"...

EMILY

Well, you better stop! Their mother wrote they have guns!

MEL

Oh yes? [proud, sarcastic proclamation:] Well I-HAVE-ART!!!

EMILY

You should escape. I think if there's a dead end in town, then start again new!

MEL

Uh-huh. Well why don't you go to Wyoming?

EMILY

I can't.

MEL

Why not.

EMILY

I don't know. It's just...things are easy this way.

MEL

No. I am *not* hearing this, a result of four months?...

EMILY

You know what I mean. For now, this fits...

MEL

Four months, this fits. Boy, we're playing it easy aren't we! We know it in months!

EMILY

It's just temporary, I'm not going to do this for the rest of my life...

MEL

Then what?

EMILY

Well, it's...very different. I've got a secretary and a desk. People ten years older than me ask me to go to lunch with them. Last night I got voice mail and a secret passcode!

MEL

And this is the goal you've mapped out in years. Have you put pictures up yet? Try to make it a home and pretend it's not for shit?

EMILY

I'm not ready for a change.

MEL

Ready is long gone. [sprays the air] This is for ready. See this? You're through.

EMILY

What do you mean?

MEL

You're through. You're doing nothing. You're scared and squirrely and you're gonna roll in your hole until someone

wakes you up for a pension. [sarcastic] Boy, that'll be swell. Life begins at 80!

EMILY

These kids are looking for you. You've marked up everything in this town with your name and they're coming.

MEL

[painting] So what?

EMILY

They'll catch you at work. In the alley or train, their mom knows where you work and she'll drive them. They'll go undercover.

MEL

As what? Primer? I don't care.

EMILY

Why not?

MEL

Because you forget your original *plan* if all that *intrudes...*

EMILY

Is that what you think?

MEL

Yes. Apparently you did but you don't. You artists. Wills are so weak, your noggins flip-flop whenever there's cash. You all are so "free" but wander off dumb because you forgot what you *do*.

EMILY

I still write. I can write. Maybe there's less time but I can still write.

MEL

Oh yes. "The housewife who writes." It's such a good hobby, neighbors think it's so cute. Little cards. Ditties. You're right. Keep it alive.

EMILY

All kinds exist.

MEL

That's what I thought. Senior year I'm studying art with all of us majors with our *portfolios* and our *haircuts* and our *cigarettes*. Then came May and what's an artist to do? Well, give it a few months and it all comes clear: draw logos for gum and shampoo OR go back and teach *other shits* how to draw logos for gum and shampoo! There is no art!

There's reality! Art is a crock, honey, it's corrupt, so if you're going to do it, go to Wyoming where your conscience can *pretend* that you're significant cause life isn't that deep! It's following rules. It's not following rules. There's no in-between! Our noble little collegiate attempts to create something beautiful are all so sad. It's when you get out that the truth flattens your skull like a rock.

EMILY

Well I don't think--

MEL

I hate art. I hate fashionable artists who've raped the whole thing and cheapened all feeling so now it's about networking and fashion and their old, tired egos. Pathetic poor souls who want to be loved so they write a nice play or paint a sad scene. Look at you. A hack rhyming words. "Make It Pretty."

EMILY

What's there to paint if art is corrupt?

MEL

[with spraycans] This? [mock serious] This is an extension of the cultural repression that has bound me since childhood. [laughs] Get that? This is messy! [sprays] This is not for poets! This is not for college! This is ugly and loud and oozing in alleys! Get that? That's all that's left true! Trashy! Hidden! I'm going to paint you...

EMILY

I'm getting out of here.

MEL

Good. Let me tell you something: the most noble thing you can do? The highest form of all art? [pause] Silence.

EMILY

I'm going to Wyoming.

MEL

Go.

EMILY

I'm going.

MEL

Get out of here before you're boring and whine about love or pierce your left tit. [shouts and sprays violently]

EMILY

There's vacation time coming up...

MEL

Months! Years! The time out is now. Don't romanticize routine.

EMILY

I'm not. I'm being realistic. Things have to wait.

MEL

You're numb. Oh Emily, you're sinking in already. You've turned it all off so there's nothing to face. Get out of here!

EMILY

It's not all that easy, you think it on through...

MEL

How many times has he touched you at work? Like college: how many times does your body turn cold?

EMILY

Don't.

MEL

Do we pick what we look past? Are we selective?

EMILY

I like my job.

MEL

It's going to explode. Lit like a fuse.

EMILY

I've got a career.

MEL

Oh, what a word. You're lit ... How long's your fuse? It'll grow every year ...

EMILY

I'm going.

MEL

Your frustration, building per year--

EMILY

I'm going.

MEL

See you. Don't trip.

EMILY

[turns] What?

MEL

[points] Your tail.

[Blackout]