

# regret not speaking

Richard Kwietniowski

# Characteristics

- 3A A true Londoner not born in London. Loves the anonymity and irresponsibility of urban life. For now.
- 3C North American snowboarder (semi-pro). Prone to accidents and sweeping assumptions.
- 3D Hugely successful lawyer and entrepreneur. Enjoys her femininity. Hates bad language.
- 3F Cultural diplomat with good eye and unexplored interest in S&M. Has read Freud.
- 1D Manager of small café-bar, where racy staff teach her promiscuous word play.

## The Collector's Wife

Actress renowned for infrequent but challenging roles.  
Currently prefers to shop.

## The Collector

Acerbic TV personality with eclectic taste and great curiosity. Once stood for parliament. Future CBE.

1 TITLES OVER 1

Streaks of grey, white, black and brown whip mysteriously down the frame at enormous speed.

They suddenly recede, revealing that we are looking at the patchy surface of a runway - from under a plane as it takes off.

The ground grows further and further away, eventually bearing the plane's hulking shadow: a long-haul flight.

2 A RIVER BANK -EXT -DAY 2

A vapour trail from the plane cuts across a blue sky. An ANGLER squints up at it, pouring from his thermos flask.

ANGLER

I wonder... are they drinking tea  
or coffee?

3 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 3

AIR HOSTESS

Champagne? Champagne for you?

She works her way down the rows to seats 3a and 3c. The occupants bring a smile to her face: two young men, both with a broken arm in a cast and sling.

AIR HOSTESS (cont'd)

Are you two together?

They glance warily at each other for the first time, and react with astonishment.

3A

Wow!

3C

Coincidence or what?!

3C has a North American accent.

AIR HOSTESS

(offering her tray)  
Champagne for you?

3A

Is there something to celebrate?

AIR HOSTESS

Er... take-off?

3C  
 (grabbing a glass)  
 You're flying Business Class for  
 free?

3A  
 How d'you know that?

3C  
 No one pays for themselves in  
 Business Class.

The AIR HOSTESS indicates other options on her tray.

AIR HOSTESS  
 Some juice? Or water for you?

3A  
 What kind of water is it?

AIR HOSTESS  
 (struggling to remember)  
 A breath of fresh air from the  
 Peak District.

3A  
 Can I have it without ice?

She nods with a fixed smile.

3C  
 You don't like ice?

3A  
 It'll be made from London tap  
 water.

3C  
 That's bad?

3A  
 It's been drunk seven times  
 already. On average.

3C  
 Wow. Hey one of them could have  
 been the Queen of England!

4 SERVICE GALLEY -INT -DAY

4

The AIR HOSTESS flicks ice cubes out of the glass.

AIR HOSTESS  
 3A and 3C are going to be  
 trouble.

STEWARD  
1F's diabetic. And 3D's a bitch.

5 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

5

3C  
(raising his plaster)  
Quite a coincidence, huh?

3A  
Someone's idea of a joke, seating  
us together.

3C  
Yeah well. They gave us the best  
seats...

The AIR HOSTESS hands 3A the glass icily.

AIR HOSTESS  
No ice.

3A  
Thanks.

3C  
Hey you're lucky it's your left  
arm.

3A  
Not really. I'm left-handed.

3C  
Bummer. So what happened?

3A  
It's a long story.

3C  
It's a long flight.

3A  
Er, you go first.

3C  
I tried a triple 360 on the half-  
pipe. And only managed one and a  
half.

3A is clueless.

3C (cont'd)  
Snow-boarding. It was the wrong  
kind of snow for a triple.

3A  
There are different kinds?

3C  
(deadly serious)  
Grease snow. Sugar snow. Brush  
snow. Frazzle snow...

3A  
Frazzle?!

3C  
There are over a hundred  
Inuktitut words for snow!

3A  
...Eskimos

3C  
(nodding)  
Cool, huh? I mean, what does the  
English language have a hundred  
words for?

3A  
...Sex?

3C  
A hundred?

3A  
If you included slang, perhaps.

3C  
(inspired)  
There's jerking off. We got more  
for that.

3A  
In England you just use wank. Or  
toss off.

3C  
You don't spank the monkey?

3A  
No.

3C  
Slap the salami?

3A  
Never.

3C  
Tame the trouser snake? Choke the  
chicken?

3A shakes his head.

3C (cont'd)  
Hey do you think there's only one  
Inuktitut word for jerking off?

As they laugh, the business-woman across the aisle in 3d  
stares at them, appalled, and stops a passing STEWARD.

3D  
Excuse me. I'd like to change  
seats.

STEWARD  
I'm afraid that's not possible,  
madam. Unless we down-grade you.

A look of horror crosses her face.

6 SERVICE GALLEY -INT -DAY

6

The AIR HOSTESS peels cellophane off a salad. A wasp flies  
out. She gasps and leaps back, colliding with the STEWARD  
as he comes in.

7 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

7

3C  
You totalled your BMX. And used  
your arm to prevent head  
injuries. Right?

3A  
Wrong.

3C  
You paraglided into the White  
Cliffs of Dover?

3A  
No!

3C  
You tombstoned off Big Ben and...

3A  
(rounding on him)  
You really think that stuff is  
dangerous? You have no idea!

3C  
So what happened, dude?

3A  
(with a sigh)  
I answered an ad, in a paper.

3C  
A dangerous ad?!

3A  
Well. A special kind of ad, yeah.

The AIR HOSTESS just happens to be passing, looking for the wasp with a rolled up newspaper at the ready.

3C  
Hey. Can I borrow that?

He swipes it off her, and hands it to 3a.

3C (cont'd)  
Show me.

On the other side of the cabin, the STEWARD walks up the aisle with a fly-swatter hidden behind his back.

3A  
They're near the Personal ads, usually.

3C  
Personals are just... sad.

3A  
These are different. They're put in by people who've seen someone - a stranger, who they want to meet properly. There you go - at the bottom.

He hands over the paper.

3A (cont'd)  
Read one.

3C  
Wednesday. Victoria Line. You reading Harry Potter. Me too. You saw and smiled. Wish I'd said something. Meet for magic?

3A  
Sounds familiar...

3C  
How d'you mean?



3A

...A lot of them happen on public transport.

3C

And why is that?

3A

You're in close contact with strangers. Often for a lot longer than expected. Read it again.

3C

Wednesday. Victoria Line. You reading Harry Potter. Me too. You saw and smiled. Wish I'd said something. Meet for magic?

This time, 3A counts the words on his fingers.

3A

Perfect. There's a skill to it. Describing the person, yourself, the situation. All in twenty words.

3C

(sceptically)

You read the Personals too?

3A

Never. Personals are a shot in the dark. These are about something that really happened.

3C

I don't get it.

3A

You've never fantasized about strangers?

3C

...Sure.

3A

Well the chances are, strangers have fantasized about you.

3C

(not minding this idea)

I guess.

3A

So this is just a way of finding out if there was a connection.

3C

Sounds kind of dumb. I mean,  
what's the success rate?

3A

Who knows? The thing is, when you  
read them, you always hope the  
next one will be about you.

3C

But it never is.

3A

(after a pause)

What would you do if it was?

8

EUSTON ROAD -EXT -DAY

8

Seen from inside an expensive car, a soapy sponge lands on  
the windscreen and swiftly coats it in suds.

A rubber edge wipes the screen clear, revealing 3A with a  
snorkel mask strapped to his head.

The traffic light changes to green. Cars honk. 3A  
approaches the driver's window hopefully, then suddenly  
darts away.

A policeman pursues him. His escape is impeded by the  
frogman's flippers on his feet.

9

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

9

3C

Flippers?!

3A

Yeah. People are more likely to  
give you money if you make them  
smile.

3C

What has this got to do with how  
you broke your arm?

3A

A lot.

10

3A'S SQUAT -INT -DAY

10

In a kitchen heaving with overuse and neglect, 3A eats  
cereal reading a listings magazine. His spoon halts in mid-  
air.

3A (V.O.)  
 Euston Road at Eversholt.  
 Amphibian in porcine pursuit has  
 gone to ground. Collector seeking  
 pearls offers business proposal.  
 No strings.

11 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

11

3C  
 Huh?

3A  
 Pretty classy. Twenty words  
 exactly.

3C  
 You knew it was you?

3A  
 Of course. Amphibian - frogman.  
 In porcine pursuit. Pursued by  
 pigs - police. Collector seeking  
 pearls. You have to dive for  
 pearls, right?

3C  
 Why didn't it just say Frogman  
 Chased by Cops?

3A  
 It was a test, I suppose. And a  
 way of telling me this was going  
 to be something special.

3C  
 (dubiously)  
 You're telling me you replied?

3A  
 You've never been on a blind  
 date?

3C  
 This is different.

3A  
 It's better. You've been singled  
 out. Chosen.

3C  
 For what, exactly? Some weirdo  
 wants his windscreen washed?

12 3A'S SQUAT -INT -DAY

12

In a well-worn but much-loved dressing-gown, 3A scoops up the mail and walks into the kitchen discarding bills and junk mail over his shoulder.

At the table, he opens an envelope with a jam-smeared knife. Inside is a letter. Typed. No name or address. And a black and white photograph. Of an old painting.

3A

Oh what?!

It depicts a young man lying in bed under a white sheet, which covers the mountain peak of his erection.

3A is struck by the fact that the youth bears an uncanny resemblance to him.

A flatmate in improvised pyjamas sniffs his way past him to the kettle.

FLATMATE

All right?

3A quickly crams the photograph back into the envelope.

13 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

13

3C

So... what exactly was the business proposal?

3A

Five hundred pounds to model the painting. For half an hour. At midnight on Friday.

3C

(after a pause)

Oh man. Including...

3A

(nodding)

Slapping the... What was it?

3C

Salami. Oh man. There are some weirdos about. Even in England.

3A

(smiling)

Five hundred pounds for half an hour's work.

3C  
You didn't do it?!

3A  
I was tempted. Really. But only  
for a second. It was too weird.

3C  
Too right!

3A  
But I wanted to find out more.

3C  
Like who placed the ad?

3A  
And the painting. It was old. You  
could tell. And it really looked  
like me. Even his feet.

3C  
Yeah right. Like his feet matter.

3A  
So on Friday, when a letter came  
with half the money and an  
address, I checked it out during  
the day. But it was just a  
basement in this really quiet,  
leafy street.

14 A QUIET, LEAFY STREET -EXT -DAY

14

The only movement is leaves rustling in the breeze.

3C (V.O.)  
Did you see anyone?

3A (V.O.)  
Only a postman.

A postman emerges from a gate and disappears through the  
next one. Birds twitter. The postman is suddenly chased out  
by a barking dog.

3A(V.O.) (cont'd)  
It was just so... ordinary.  
Definitely more sitcom than porn-  
shoot, if you know what I mean.

3C (V.O.)  
Nothing sleazy.

3A (V.O.)  
Nothing at all.

15 A QUIET, LEAFY STREET -EXT -NIGHT

15

A matt brown car suddenly pulls up sluggishly and idles.

3A (V.O.)

So that night, I got a mate to  
drive me over and wait, in case I  
got into trouble. Just so I could  
return the money, and find out  
what I could.

3C (V.O.)

(agog)

What happened?

16 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

16

3A rings the bell. Nothing. He flips open the letter-box.

3A

Hullo? Anybody home?

He notices a string and pulls up a key. Bemused, he lets  
himself in. Silence. The reassuring tick of a clock.

He wanders around cautiously. The rooms are spotless, and  
carefully furnished. Each contains unusual items - a table  
lamp in the shape of a pineapple, old wooden soldiers on  
the mantelpiece, portholes screwed to walls in a bedroom...  
But one room remains firmly locked.

In the kitchen, homely items are laid out for him to make  
tea. On the table is an envelope with the rest of the  
money.

A clock starts to chime. He checks his watch: midnight. The  
chime ends. Silence. The lock on the closed door clicks  
open apocryphally. He jumps a little.

He opens it wide enough to peer in, and experiences  
something strange. It is decorated and furnished in every  
way to duplicate the painting, down to the tiniest detail.

He steps in. Into the painting. And experiences an  
undeniable degree of excitement.

He is drawn to a position where the room looks exactly like  
the painting, and notices a cabinet on the wall behind him.

He opens the door and smiles. A video camera stares, its  
red light blinking patiently.

3A (cont'd)

I should have guessed.

He turns from it to the room, and back again. With only the slightest shrug, he starts to remove his clothes.

17

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

17

3C stares at 3A in amazement, as their lunches arrive.

3C

You... actually did it?

3A

The easiest money I've ever made.

3C

But what about the...

3A

Salami? No problem.

AIR HOSTESS

Salami? You want salami?

3A

Er, no.

They smile. 3A drops his voice.

3A (cont'd)

It wasn't too difficult. I was under the sheet, and it's not as if there was anyone there. Just the camera.

3C

But someone was watching. Right?

3A

Well yeah. Somewhere.

3C

And you were OK about that?

3A

Not exactly, but... Everything was so organized. Like it really mattered.

3C

So what happened?

3A

After half an hour, a cuckoo clock went off - it's in the painting. I left pretty quick, without nicking anything.

(MORE)

3A (cont'd)  
And my mate was still waiting  
outside. He'd fallen asleep,  
actually.

3C  
What did you tell him?

3A  
I said it was drugs.

3C  
Did you tell anyone?

3A  
No way. And the next Friday there  
was a party. So no one noticed  
when I slipped out.

3C  
You... did it again?!

3A  
(after a pause)  
Thing is...

3A stares at him, debating whether or not to continue.

3A (cont'd)  
Something happened, the first  
time.

Across the aisle, 3D and 3F have been unable to resist  
eavesdropping. They glance at each other, spellbound.

18 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 18

We see 3A's face in the bed, eyes closed, expressionless.

The cuckoo clock starts to chime. His face suddenly  
contorts, struggles, then heaves with release.

19 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 19

After a pause, 3C explodes into laughter, appalled.

3C  
No way!

3A  
It just... happened. I could have  
turned away or something, made it  
less obvious, but I didn't. It  
just happened.

3C  
But... why?



3A  
I don't know. I wasn't exactly in control.

He looks up defensively.

3A (cont'd)  
Have you ever done it in front of a mirror?

3C  
Er... yeah?

3A  
Did it make things happen faster?

3C  
Er... yeah?

3A  
Well maybe it was something like that. I don't know. Thing is, it meant I'd got something out of it. I mean, there was the evidence.

3C  
Gross.

3A  
So I was into doing it again. Doing it better, this time. More like in the painting. And it did mean another five hundred.

20 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

20

3A lets himself in, whistling. On the kitchen table sits a bottle of malt whisky.

3A sits sipping a large glass of scotch, studying the photograph of the painting. He copies the angle of the figure's head, feeling the muscles in his neck.

The clock strikes. The lock clicks open. He smiles.

In the Room, he improvises around the pose, creating a before and after for the painting. It gradually becomes a living, breathing thing.

21 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

21

3C  
Did you...?

3A

No. But it made me really horny.  
I couldn't wait to get back to  
the party.

22 3A'S SQUAT -INT -NIGHT

22

On top of everyone's coats on a mattress, 3A makes love  
frantically to a bored woman swigging from a bottle of  
beer.

The sound of voices and thumping music intensifies as the  
door opens, casting a beam of light over them.

FLATMATE

...Oops. Sorry mate.

The door closes. There is laughter outside. Then the door  
opens again.

FLATMATE (O.S.) (cont'd)

Hey. Can we watch?

23 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

23

3C

(slowly)

I get it. You had to take back  
control. Right?

3A

I just wanted to share the buzz I  
got from it. That's all.

3C

(after a beat)

And you still hadn't told anyone?

3A

I knew they wouldn't understand.  
I mean, how could they, when I  
didn't? That's why I moved out.

3C

You moved?

3A

Yeah. Into the basement.

3C

You... lived there?!

3A

It made sense. It wasn't used for  
anything else.

3C  
You're kidding.

3A  
My own flat. Rent free. And an allowance. For half an hour's work a week. I even had a key to the room, on condition that it was only used for the sessions - and when the cleaner came. I'd never had a cleaner before...

24 THE BASEMENT -INT -DAY

24

In the Room, the CLEANER runs a duster expertly over surfaces. 3A stands in the doorway, watching her nervously.

3A  
You don't need to bother in here.  
It's fine. Really.

CLEANER  
Oh no. What about my professional pride?

She yanks the sheets off the bed.

CLEANER (cont'd)  
Everything must be exactly the same. Even the stain on the floor.

3A  
Who told you that?

CLEANER  
It's in my instructions. They came in the post with the key.

3A  
And that's all you know?

CLEANER  
All I know is you're not eating properly. Look at you! Nothing but skin and bone!

3A  
Wouldn't you like to know who you're working for?

CLEANER  
Not as much as I'd like to give that stain a jolly good scrub.

They both stare at it.

25 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT

25

A monitor sunk into a wall bears the camera feed of 3A in the Room, from exactly the same perspective as the painting. The slightest breath or rustle confirms that it is a living image.

3C (V.O.)

So... you still didn't know who was watching?

3A (V.O.)

I didn't have a clue. But I knew there was more to it than someone just getting off.

3C (V.O.)

(sarcastically)

Yeah right.

26 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

26

3A

No really. Every week I got a letter telling me more about the painting. Or the artist. He'd been part of this movement. In Berlin. Neue-something...

3F (O.S.)

Neuesachlichkeit?

They both turn to stare at the impeccably-dressed diplomat seated beyond 3D.

3A

(impressed)

Yeah. Yeah that's it.

3F

It means New Realism. I... couldn't help overhearing.

He turns back to his paper, but the power-dressed woman in 3d beside him seizes the opportunity to join in.

3D

Neither could I. You do have the right to know who you work for, you know... I'm a lawyer.

3A

Lots of people don't. Not really. Just corporations. Or governments.

3C

Yeah but they don't usually stick  
a camera in your bedroom, do  
they?

Everyone laughs.

3A

(slowly)

There was a good reason,  
actually. For the secrecy.

3D

A public figure? I knew it.

3F

A politician? It usually is.

3C

(awed)

Royalty?

27

VILLAGE HALL -INT -DAY

27

An extract from a TV programme: a line of locals stand  
clutching objects retrieved from attics.

The COLLECTOR sits at a table examining a porcelain  
figurine. He is distinguished and playful, with the  
confident manner of a popular media figure.

COLLECTOR

You've had this for some time?

LOCAL

It was my grandmother's. She  
always had it in pride of place.  
On the mantelpiece.

COLLECTOR

(bemused)

Strange isn't it, what people  
keep and don't keep?

LOCAL

We were wondering about the  
value. For insurance purposes.

COLLECTOR

Ah.

He looks at its base.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
 Completely worthless, I'm afraid.  
 She probably won it at a fun  
 fair.

He hands it back smugly. The LOCAL's bottom lip trembles.

28 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

28

3A  
 Which accounted for all the old  
 stuff in the flat. He called it  
 Miscellanea. Somewhere to store  
 his Miscellanea. He kept the  
 serious art where he lived.

3F  
 Including the painting?

3A  
 I didn't know any of this, until  
 phase two.

3C  
 Phase two?

3A  
 Yeah. He sent a letter, as usual -  
 with a proposal.

29 THE BASEMENT -INT -DAY

29

3A opens an envelope at the kitchen table.

3A (V.O.)  
 He wanted to install more  
 cameras, to sort of go inside the  
 painting and explore it. I  
 thought it was a great idea, and  
 I knew it would give me a tool to  
 bargain with.

3A smiles cunningly over the letter.

30 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

30

The cuckoo clock goes off in the Room. 3A climbs out of bed  
 and holds a sheet of paper up to the camera: "ONLY IF WE  
 MEET".

31 THE BASEMENT -INT -DAY 31

At the kitchen table, 3A opens an envelope. On the sheet inside is one typed line: "Are you sure?"

32 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 32

In the Room, 3A holds another sheet up: "I'LL RISK IT". He lowers the sheet and grins into the camera.

33 VILLAGE HALL -INT -DAY 33

The COLLECTOR examines an ingenious Victorian toy, checking its moving parts. He is enchanted.

COLLECTOR

It really is marvellous. In perfect working order, too. Very wise of you to keep it out of the reach of children.

LOCAL II

We don't have any.

COLLECTOR

Posterity will thank you for that.

LOCAL II

We weren't... able to.

COLLECTOR

(chastened)

Ah. Well, it's very collectible. At auction, I'd say anywhere between three and four thousand.

LOCAL II

You've got to be joking!

COLLECTOR

Maybe more!

LOCAL II

We'd never sell it, of course.

COLLECTOR

Of course.

LOCAL II

... But in the case of dire need, where would we take it?

He looks at her slyly.

34 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 34

3A spins about the place tidying, but in reality making bigger piles of clothes and papers in different places.

The doorbell rings once. Abruptly. He freezes.

35 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 35

A huge smile on his face, 3A sits in the living-room facing the COLLECTOR.

COLLECTOR  
You're comfortable?

3A  
(settling in his chair)  
I'm fine, yeah.

COLLECTOR  
(with a smile)  
I meant, in the flat.

3A  
Oh.

COLLECTOR  
The furnishings are... ?

3A  
...Great.

COLLECTOR  
Not your taste, perhaps?

3A  
I like all the, er...

COLLECTOR  
Miscellanea.

3A  
Do you get them from the programme?

COLLECTOR  
(flinching)  
You watch?

3A  
No. But everyone knows who you are.

COLLECTOR  
A mixed blessing.



3A  
I understand now. I understand  
why I couldn't know who you were.

COLLECTOR  
And why is that?

3A  
Well... The tabloids.

The COLLECTOR lets out a dismissive laugh.

COLLECTOR  
If we'd met face to face two  
months ago, you'd have accepted  
my proposal?

3A  
I... don't know. Maybe.

COLLECTOR  
I doubt it! I hope you didn't  
find the situation too sinister?

3A  
Not really.

COLLECTOR  
A little, perhaps?

3A  
(shrugging)  
I like a challenge!

COLLECTOR  
It's remarkable how many people  
read those ads, isn't it?

3A  
I always read them.

COLLECTOR  
(after a pause)  
You know, this is a little  
strange for me too. I've only  
known you as an image. But now  
you're three dimensional!

3A  
I never thought of it like that.

COLLECTOR  
Rather like meeting a character  
from a long-running soap-opera!

3A  
 (drawn in)  
 How do you mean?

COLLECTOR  
 An actress I know was in one.  
 Someone sidled up to her in the  
 supermarket and told her in a  
 whisper that her brother was  
 buried under the patio - or  
 whatever the programme's big  
 secret was.

3A  
 (grinning)  
 That's ridiculous.

COLLECTOR  
 I think it's enviable! To be so  
 possessed by fantasy! The reality  
 of an actress buying frozen peas  
 didn't get a look in.

3A  
 So I'm... like an actor in a  
 soap?

COLLECTOR  
 (nodding)  
 And right at this minute, you're  
 buying frozen peas.

3A likes the analogy.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
 It really was frozen peas she was  
 buying. We ate them that  
 evening... I wonder why she  
 bothered to buy them frozen?

3A  
 They taste different. Frozen  
 peas. Sort of sweeter.

COLLECTOR  
 Really.

36 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

36

The kitchen table is covered in sketches of the painting  
 from new positions, aerial views, and wiring diagrams.

3A  
Five cameras?

COLLECTOR  
With overlapping fields of vision. But they must be invisible to each other.

3A  
Is that possible, in such a small room?

COLLECTOR  
It's crucial. Nothing must come between the viewer and what is viewed.

3A  
Why not?

COLLECTOR  
It's the nature of illusion, I'm afraid... And standard practice in live television.

3A  
Did you get the idea for all this from your programme?

COLLECTOR  
(dismissively)  
It's not live. We just pretend it is. And get by with two cameras. One on me. And the other waiting for those wonderful reactions, when I estimate the value.

3A  
That's why people watch. For that bit.

COLLECTOR  
The money shot, the crew call it.

3A laughs.

3A  
Is it hard to do?

COLLECTOR  
Only remembering what I did with my hands.

3A  
Your hands?

COLLECTOR  
We do a close-up afterwards. Of the object being examined. I have to fake it!

3A  
Which is sort of what we're  
doing!

COLLECTOR  
(after an acerbic pause)  
It is?

3A  
...Isn't it?

COLLECTOR  
It must seem strange, modelling a  
painting eighty years after it  
was finished, but faking it?  
Absolutely not.

3A  
So what are we doing, then?

COLLECTOR  
Re-inventing it!

3A  
(hesitantly)  
Is there a reason for all this?

COLLECTOR  
Of course.

3A  
Are you going to tell me what it  
is?

COLLECTOR  
I don't know if I can.

3A  
Why not?

COLLECTOR  
(with a wry smile)  
Because not even I can estimate  
the value of everything.

37 THE NATIONAL GALLERY -INT -DAY

37

3A stands with a mobile phone in front of Holbein's The Ambassadors - two figures in front of shelves bearing globes, geometrical devices, musical instruments.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
(through the phone)  
What do you see?

3A

Two blokes with a load of stuff  
on shelves.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

Stuff?

3A

The sort of things people bring  
to your programme.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

(with a tolerant sigh)

What else?

3A

Quite a nice floor, and... hold  
on. Something sort of leaning on  
it. Or is it floating?

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

What is it?

3A

No idea. A mistake?

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

Go and stand on the right of the  
frame. Slowly.

As he does so, the blurred object condenses until, at an  
acute angle, he sees a perfectly realized skull.

3A

Oh what? It's a skull!

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

How's your German?

3A

Er...

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

What's the artist's name?

3A

(reading)

Hans Holbein.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

Hohle Bein. German for hollow  
bone. Skull. How's your Greek?

3A

Er...

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
 This is anamorphic art. Ana-morph-  
 e: to re-shape. Or re-invent.

Fascinated, 3A moves back and forth between the two spots, watching the skull diminish and reappear.

38

THE BASEMENT -INT -DAY

38

In the Room, furniture is covered. Four new cameras are mounted on the wall, with wiring cut into the plaster.

A CARPENTER fits beautifully made cabinets around each one. 3A watches him in the doorway, eating an apple.

CARPENTER  
 That's that one done.

3A walks over and checks the motion of the door as the CARPENTER moves on to the next one.

CARPENTER (cont'd)  
 Looks like someone's going to  
 have a load of fun in here.

3A does not respond.

CARPENTER (cont'd)  
 What's it all for, then? If you  
 don't mind my asking?

3A  
 Dunno. I just work here.

CARPENTER  
 Internet stuff, I'd imagine.

3A shrugs.

CARPENTER (cont'd)  
 Yeah. Everyone's at it, these  
 days. Expanding market, kind of  
 thing... But you know what I  
 don't get, mate?

3A  
 What's that?

CARPENTER  
 Well. If everyone's doing this  
 kind of thing, who's left to do  
 the watching, eh?

39 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

39

3A's audience is brimming with comments.

3D

He has a point. All those surveillance cameras in the street. I often wonder who's watching them all.

3C

A load of them are fakes. So you just think you're being watched.

3F

A deterrent? It doesn't work. It's been proved many times.

3D

They do make me feel safer though, I suppose.

3A

If you've done nothing wrong, what's the problem?

3F

I don't object to being filmed if I'm breaking the law. But not when I'm not.

3D

But how could they only film criminals? It's impossible.

3F

That's exactly my point. The cameras treat us all like criminals!

As everyone ponders this philosophical point, the AIR HOSTESS imposes herself with a tray of pastries.

AIR HOSTESS

French fancies, anyone?

40 THE NATIONAL GALLERY -INT -DAY

40

3A stands in front of Van Eyck's Arnolfini Marriage: the couple in the foreground are reflected in a convex mirror behind them, which reveals the whole space.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

Where is your eye led?

3A  
To their hands touching.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
And then?

3A  
The... mirror behind them.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
What do you expect to see in it?

3A  
The artist painting the picture?

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
What do you see instead?

3A  
Other people. Wedding guests.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
Where are they standing?

3A  
Where I am, kind of thing?

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
So you can see yourself?

3A  
Er...

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
Where does the space of the  
painting end?

3A  
...Behind me?!

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
Bingo!

41 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT

41

As a clock chimes dully, light suddenly floods the monitor sunk in the wall, revealing 3A opening the door of the original camera.

In the elegant, velvet-draped room, the COLLECTOR presses a button on an incongruously hi-tech console. The screen reverts to black until 3A opens another cabinet door, revealing the first of several new angles.



As 3A walks around the room, the COLLECTOR cuts rapidly between the cameras. The effect is interesting, a simple movement fractured and unified simultaneously.

COLLECTOR  
Hmm. Rather Cubist.

He uses a joystick to adjust angle and zoom on each camera, and creates a sequence as a way of travelling into the painting. The image comes alive in time and space.

42

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

42

3C  
That was phase two?

3A  
Yes.

3C  
What was phase three? Doing it in a stadium?

3D  
(ignoring him)  
Did it make a difference, knowing who was watching?

3A  
I thought it would. It had to. But all I could think about was five cameras. I was surrounded. Like swimming with an octopus.

3C  
An octopus? An octopus has five legs?

3F  
Eight. Octo is Latin for eight.

3A  
I really panicked at first, but once I gave in to it, it was great. Really intense, actually.

3F  
(smiling)  
A film star once told me the same thing, about going back to the stage. She loved the fact that she couldn't hide anything!

3D

That's why I prefer the theatre.  
It's a shared experience. No  
manipulation. Marvellous.

3C

(awed)

Who was the movie star?

3F

You won't have heard of her.  
Strictly 'art movies'.

3C

(after a beat)

I met a stripper once.

3D

Hardly theatre.

3F

That's debatable. It's definitely  
live performance.

3C

She said she really liked her  
job. Except when people didn't  
watch her.

Pregnant pause.

3D

(confidentially)

I think I know what she means...  
Perhaps you do too?

She smiles up at 3A, and continues impulsively.

3D (cont'd)

Not even my husband knows this...  
but I was a life-model once!

Everyone is surprised. She is a little embarrassed.

3C

...What, butt-naked?

3D

Oh yes. But they used the word  
nude.

3C

Like there's a difference.

3A

(intrigued)

Do you still do it?

3D

Oh God no. It was when I was at law school. I had a crush on an art student. He suggested it and I was flattered, I suppose.

3C

Did he like what he saw?

3D

He didn't come. He had a puncture. I was told I was very good. Very still. Frozen with fear, most likely. It was very cold. There was a little bar-fire, but it didn't do much good.

She turns to 3A.

3D (cont'd)

I know what you mean - about being scrutinized from every angle...

3C

The octopus.

3F

Was there anything... erotic about it?

She looks at him uncertainly.

3A

(keenly)

Did you like it?

3D

I was treated very well. When I took the robe off, you could have heard a pin drop. It was quite powerful, that moment. Perhaps that's what I liked - the power?!

She pauses, disturbed by her conclusion. Then covers it up:

3D (cont'd)

I bumped into one of the students in a cafe. He was so embarrassed! Because I was wearing clothes, I suppose.

The others laugh.

Clustered around a woman's naked body and a bar fire, students peer round easels, measuring, scrutinizing every aspect of her.

44

3A stands in front of Velazquez' Toilet of Venus: a woman reclines naked on a bed, studying her face in a mirror held by a winged Cupid.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
Anything you like about the  
Rokeby Venus?

3A  
Yeah. Her arse.

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                COLLECTOR (O.S.)
...Anything else?

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3A  
The mirror. We can see her face in it, so it's like she's looking at us, not herself. She can see us watching, but she doesn't care. It's quite sexy, that.

There is silence on the line.

Hullo? 3A (cont'd)

COLLECTOR (O.S.)  
I think the time has come.

3A's eyes widen in anticipation.

45

The COLLECTOR pulls back a curtain, revealing the wall bearing the monitor. But it is carefully placed as the fourth in a row of five paintings. A narrative sequence. All feature the youth who looks like 3A.

3A's grin of expectation evaporates. He spins round.

3A  
...It's not here! The painting.

COLLECTOR  
Everything but.

3A peers tentatively at the first picture. In breeches, the figure leans out of a window to gaze at a mountain range which looks exactly like the white sheet in his painting.

3A

I'm in this one, too!

COLLECTOR

Even the back of your head is similar. Although I wouldn't expect you to know that.

3A

I think I do, actually.

COLLECTOR

From the barber's perhaps, when they do that little trick with the hand mirror.

3A

And the mountain range. It's just like the sheet on the bed.

COLLECTOR

It's identical.

In the second painting, the figure crouches cutting his breeches open with a strangely curved knife. The mountain range is reflected in the blade.

3A

Here it is again. Reflected in the blade.

3A glances up. A very similar knife hangs on the wall above the second painting.

3A (cont'd)

It's not the real one?

COLLECTOR

(smiling)

No more than you are.

In the third painting, the figure looks over his shoulder at his reflection in a mirror.

3A

No snow in this one.

COLLECTOR

Are you sure? What do you see in the mirror?

3A

His arse.

COLLECTOR  
Nothing else?

3A  
There is nothing else.

COLLECTOR  
What do you see between his legs?

3A  
The... shape of the mountain!  
That's got to be an accident,  
right?

COLLECTOR  
(slightly offended)  
Hardly. The mirror is carefully  
placed. For us. Not him. At that  
angle, he couldn't possibly see  
himself in it. Just like the  
Rokeby Venus.

3A makes the connection. Impressed, he steps up to the  
monitor in place of the fourth painting.

3A  
This is where I come in.

He steps up to the final one. On the floor of the empty  
room is a neat pile of snow, in the shape of the mountain.

3A (cont'd)  
The mountain again. The  
mountain's the climax?

COLLECTOR  
It's temporary, like all  
climaxes. It will melt, leaving  
no trace of itself.

3A  
Is this what they call...  
conceptual art?

COLLECTOR  
Or an erotic comic strip?

He smiles, as 3A turns back to the fifth painting,  
fascinated.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
You see the mirror on the wall?

3A  
It's become the first painting!  
What's it doing here?

COLLECTOR

Repetition. A cycle. As soon as it's finished, it starts again. Rather like the nature of pleasure, don't you think?

46

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

46

3D

So you were completing the series for him!

3F

And the original was lost. During the War, no doubt.

3A

Oh no. He knew who had it. Another collector.

3C

So why didn't he just buy it?

3A

He couldn't.

3D

But he must make a fortune from his show. They repeat it all the time.

3A

He'd been trying to buy it for years, but the guy would only sell it on one condition. He had to solve the mystery first.

3D

(rubbing her hands)  
There's a mystery? Oh lovely.

3A

That's why he hired me, you see. To help him solve the mystery. So he could buy the painting.

3C

And you believed him?

3A

...Yeah?

3C

It didn't occur to you it might just be an excuse to get you to keep... 'performing' for him?

3D

What was the mystery? Tell us!

They all lean forward. 3A opens his mouth, but the AIR HOSTESS suddenly barges through with a trolley.

AIR HOSTESS

Duty-free anyone? Any perfume for you?

3A

Betrayal!

AIR HOSTESS

(pausing)

Betrayal? I haven't got Betrayal. I've got Secret Affair?

He holds up a bottle of 'Secret Affair' perfume.

3D

(waving her away)

For goodness sake... That was the mystery?

3C

Huh?

3A

Why was the painting called 'Betrayal'?

They stare blankly at him.

47

JAPANESE RESTAURANT -INT -NIGHT

47

COLLECTOR

Or, to give the title in full, The Room, brackets, Betrayal, close brackets. Things in brackets are often more significant than they seem.

3A

It's like putting a frame round something, I suppose.

COLLECTOR

(impressed)

Very good!

Sushi dishes encircle them on a conveyor belt.

3A

But... does it have to mean something?



COLLECTOR  
In such a carefully constructed  
series? It has to.

3A  
And that's what we're trying to  
find out.

COLLECTOR  
Through our own repeated cycle of  
pleasure. Appropriately.

He glances at the passing sushi dishes.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
You must try the hamachi.  
Yellowtail. Here it comes now.

3A fumbles and misses.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
(amused)  
Oh. Too late. It'll come around  
again soon.

3A  
What d'you think the artist would  
have thought, about what we're  
doing?

COLLECTOR  
I'm sure he'd be amused. And  
flattered.

3A  
You don't think he'd mind, having  
his work dissected?

COLLECTOR  
We're doing the opposite. We're  
re-creating it. Even the moment  
of conception, when someone  
looking remarkably like you  
walked into a room remarkably  
like yours...

3A  
And suggested the title, perhaps?

COLLECTOR  
I doubt it.

3A  
Why not?

COLLECTOR

Because he's a part of it. He never saw the whole picture.

3A

So... only the artist sees the whole picture. That makes sense.

COLLECTOR

No no. Only the viewer. There are things even the artist is not aware of. Or able to explain.

3A

Including the title?

COLLECTOR

It's a possibility. In the same way perhaps that I can't fully explain why it fascinates me so. But the viewer is king. Remember that.

3A nods, the perfect student.

3A

Hey I bet the artist would be happy no one's solved the mystery yet.

COLLECTOR

(nodding)

In spite of our technology.

3A

Like all the tests on the Turin Shroud. D'you think it is real?

COLLECTOR

I'd like to think so. It would make it the world's first photograph. As my wife put it.

48 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

48

3C

His... WIFE?!

49 JAPANESE RESTAURANT -INT -NIGHT

49

3A

(more muted surprise)

Your... wife?

COLLECTOR

The actress buying frozen peas,  
as a matter of fact. She has a  
very good eye.

50 EUSTON ROAD -EXT -DAY

50

A soapy sponge lands on a windscreen, as before. Inside the car, the COLLECTOR'S WIFE stares in astonishment at 3A.

51 JAPANESE RESTAURANT -INT -NIGHT

51

COLLECTOR

When she said you were the  
spitting image, I knew you were.  
Even wearing a snorkel.

3A

So she knows about...

COLLECTOR

She suggested it.

3A

...She doesn't mind?

COLLECTOR

Why would she mind? I indulge  
myself for half an hour a week.  
Hardly a burden on any marriage.  
She'd see less of me if I was an  
Arsenal fan.

3A

And she's OK about me living in  
the flat?

COLLECTOR

We bought it as an investment.  
And somewhere to store the  
Miscellanea, which she hates. But  
she likes the paintings. She even  
bought one at auction for me. In  
disguise of course.

3A

Why of course?

COLLECTOR

A soap-opera star buying  
erotica?!

52 AUCTION ROOM -INT -DAY 52

In Jackie Onassis headscarf and oval sunglasses, the COLLECTOR'S WIFE raises a number on a stick. The bidding reaches a hundred thousand. The crowd around her gasps.

53 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 53

3C

His wife was OK about it?! What kind of a marriage is that?

54 JAPANESE RESTAURANT -INT -NIGHT 54

COLLECTOR

There should be room for fantasy in a relationship, don't you think?

3A

Oh yeah. Definitely.

COLLECTOR

Does it always have to involve the partner?

3A

I suppose it might be better if it does?

COLLECTOR

What if both indulge equally? Equally but separately?

3A's chopsticks freeze in midair.

3A

What? She does the same thing?

COLLECTOR

In a manner of speaking. Oh - here comes the yellowtail again...

55 DEPARTMENT STORE -INT -DAY 55

The COLLECTOR'S WIFE cuts a gracious, confident figure. She pauses by some silk scarves and holds one up. It slides out of her hands to the ground.

She stoops down gracefully, rips off the security tag, kicks it out of sight, and stuffs the scarf in her pocket.

As she meanders out, one hand clenched in her pocket, her breathing intensifies with almost unbearable excitement.

SHOPLIFTER (O.S.)

Excuse me.

The COLLECTOR'S WIFE freezes. The blood rushes from her face. A woman steps up and takes her firmly by the arm.

SHOPLIFTER (cont'd)

Come with me.

The COLLECTOR'S WIFE falls to the floor in a faint.

56

CAFE -INT -DAY

56

The women face each other over a cup of tea.

SHOPLIFTER

Are you feeling better?

The COLLECTOR'S WIFE nods, terrified.

SHOPLIFTER (cont'd)

You used to be on the telly,  
didn't you?

COLLECTOR'S WIFE

Is there... any way we could keep  
this out of the papers?

SHOPLIFTER

You're lucky it was only me that  
saw you. You'll get nicked in no  
time if you go round swiping  
stuff like that.

COLLECTOR'S WIFE

(confused)

Who are you?

SHOPLIFTER

I'm a professional. Only part-  
time, mind. I get a list from me  
neighbours. Mainly essentials.  
The odd luxury item. And sell it  
on at half price. It helps them  
out a bit, and I make a little  
extra.

COLLECTOR'S WIFE

You... steal to order?

SHOPLIFTER

Only the big stores. They write  
off a percentage, anyhow.

(MORE)

SHOPLIFTER (cont'd)  
So no one suffers. You might say  
it's quite ethical, really.

COLLECTOR'S WIFE  
Are you intending to blackmail  
me? It won't do any good, you  
know. I was just... researching a  
role.

SHOPLIFTER  
Pull the other one!

She leans forwards confidentially.

SHOPLIFTER (cont'd)  
I know your sort.

COLLECTOR'S WIFE  
My... sort?

SHOPLIFTER  
You get a buzz from it, don't  
you?

The COLLECTOR'S WIFE glares at her, then wilts suddenly.

COLLECTOR'S WIFE  
I don't know what came over me.  
It's never happened before.  
Really.

The SHOPLIFTER smiles understandingly.

COLLECTOR'S WIFE (cont'd)  
I don't even wear green.

57 JAPANESE RESTAURANT -INT -NIGHT

57

COLLECTOR  
It's true. She never wears green.

3A  
So what happened? Was she  
blackmailed?

COLLECTOR  
On the contrary, the ethical  
shoplifter took her under her  
wing.

3A  
She kept doing it?!

COLLECTOR  
Only on Fridays. They meet up in  
the West End and make a day of  
it.

3A

And you're OK about it?

COLLECTOR

Not entirely. They are breaking the law.

3A

Couldn't she get help?

COLLECTOR

Oh yes. If she wanted it... Did you know Freud considered kleptomania a sexual perversion? One of only two female-identified ones.

3A

(intrigued)

What's the other one?

COLLECTOR

(with some significance)

...Exhibitionism.

58

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

58

3D

It's true that more women are prosecuted for shoplifting. Usually young mothers stealing milk. Or butter. Very sad, really.

3C

Girls shop more than guys. They're really into it. Guys just... buy stuff.

3F

So it's logical that more women are kleptomaniacs.

3D

Well I've never stolen anything in my life.

3C

Not even when you were a kid?

3D

(tight-lipped)

No.

3F

What about exhibitionism?

3D

Well. I do wear make-up. Does that count?

3F

Would you answer the door without make-up?

3D

I'd prefer not to.

3C

Even if it was just a friend?

3D

Especially if it was a friend.

3F

Aha.

3D

Aha what? Make-up is one of the pleasures of being a woman.

3F

So you agree that women take pleasure from being looked at?

3D

Well I suppose so. If you pressed me.

3C

And guys like doing the looking. Fact.

3D

Can it be that simple, though?

3F

I wonder which pleasure is greater?

3C

Looking.

3D

Looked at.

3F smiles and turns to a startled 3A.

3F

Perhaps only you can tell us!



59

THE NATIONAL GALLERY -INT -DAY

59

3A stands in front of Botticelli's Venus and Mars: in a flowing white dress, Venus gazes on a sleeping, almost naked Mars while satyrs play with his armour.

3A

Are they gods or something?

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

Of love and war, yes.

3A

Well it looks like love and war have just had sex, and he's pretty knackered. But she's not. At all. And she's still got her clothes on. Which is odd.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

And why is that?

3A

You'd expect it to be the other way round. Him looking at her naked. It usually is, isn't it?

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

So... he's feminized?

3A

No. He's really masculine. But exposed. So yes. Maybe. Yes and no?

The COLLECTOR chuckles.

3A (cont'd)

Oh I get it. The painting's showing us how she sees him. Through her eyes, kind of thing.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

Interesting.

3A

(cockily)

Or, as you'd be more likely to say, she's put a frame around him!

60

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

60

3D

Would it have made a difference  
if it had been a woman watching  
you?

3A

I didn't know who it was at  
first.

3D

But you must have guessed it was  
a man.

3A

I suppose so.

3C

Because guys get a buzz from  
looking.

He turns to 3D.

3C (cont'd)

Hey why don't women like porn?

3D

We don't see the point of it.

3C

You don't know what you're  
missing, man.

3D

Is it a power thing?

No one says anything.

3F

I personally find such things  
insulting. So... obvious.

3C

You never got off on porn?

3F

I prefer the imagination.

3C

If some hot babe did for you what  
he's been doing every Friday, you  
wouldn't get off on it?

3F

I'd prefer to imagine it.

3C  
Yeah right!

3F  
No really.

3D  
I'm not sure I believe you  
either.

3F  
(cautiously)  
May I speak frankly?

3D  
Of course.

3F  
A colleague once told me about  
something he'd seen in Amsterdam.  
Something I know I would have  
found sordid and degrading, but I  
often find myself imagining it.  
With considerable pleasure. I  
have no idea why. The unconscious  
is a remarkable thing, is it not?

3D  
Well what was it?

3F  
What?

3D  
The thing? The something in  
Amsterdam?

3F  
That's hardly relevant. My point  
is that we are none of us in  
control of ---

3C  
Why don't you just tell us? And  
we'll decide if it's irrelevant.

3F looks trapped.

3F  
(with a sigh)  
Very well. The woman's feet were  
bound together. And the man's  
hands were tied behind him.  
That's all.

3C  
Bondage!

3F

Not exactly. It was just a gimmick, to demonstrate their skill. They were apparently very... inventive.

Possibilities flicker through everyone's mind.

61 NIGHT CLUB -INT -NIGHT

61

On a threadbare but gaudy stage, a couple wearing the restraints hold positions like illustrations in an instruction manual.

3F (V.O.)

I'm happily married, and have no desire to submit myself to such restraints. Really. But it remains a very active fantasy. Perhaps it is my own Friday night at midnight?

62 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

62

In the Room, 3A lies in bed as the cameras look on. He is completely absorbed in his performance, with the dedication of a sportsman and the assurance of a rock star.

63 AUCTION ROOM -INT -DAY

63

The COLLECTOR confidently bids for something with the slightest nod of his head, eliminating all but one opponent. It becomes a duel of nerves.

3A sits beside him, covered in sweat, holding his breath, willing the Collector on to victory. He closes his eyes and waits as the opponent falters.

The hammer falls. The COLLECTOR has won. 3A reacts as if he's scored the winning goal in a World Cup final.

64 JAPANESE RESTAURANT -INT -DAY

64

The COLLECTOR and 3A eat amidst the encircling sushi.

3A

You don't think that's a lot of money to pay - for a duck?

COLLECTOR

It's an antique decoy. Early nineteenth century. I bought a beauty last week, too.

3A  
Another duck?

COLLECTOR  
A pintail drake. More delicate.  
With a long neck. Would you mind  
collecting it for me?

3A starts to stand, nodding.

3A  
Where from?

COLLECTOR  
(with a smile)  
...New York!

3A sits back down slowly, hardly believing his luck.

3A  
I'd be back by Friday?

COLLECTOR  
Of course.

3A  
Hey I was thinking... what if I  
had an outfit - like the one the  
bloke wears in the paintings?

The COLLECTOR looks up in surprise.

3A (cont'd)  
To help me get into character,  
kind of thing?

COLLECTOR  
(deeply satisfied)  
I'll attend to it immediately.

65 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

65

3D  
Such dedication! But didn't all  
this have an impact on your...  
private life?

3A smiles significantly.

3A  
Not at first, no. Not until --

The AIR HOSTESS appears, briskly handing out cards.

3D  
Another menu? Oh goody.

AIR HOSTESS  
Landing cards.

They all groan, and fumble for passports and reading glasses.

66 SERVICE GALLEY -INT -DAY 66

As the AIR HOSTESS enters the Galley, she hears a ruckus in Economy. She opens the curtain a little and peers in.

67 ECONOMY CLASS -INT -DAY 67

Amid the chaos of slumped, contorted bodies, a woman flaps her arms about - as if she's frightening off a wasp.

Then the same thing happens further down. And again, on the other side. Then stillness.

The AIR HOSTESS waits ominously, then suddenly has to fend off the wasp herself.

68 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 68

3C leans over to take a look at 3A's landing card.

3C  
Art technician? Your occupation's  
art technician?!

Everyone smiles.

3A  
Well, what should it be?

3D  
Life model.

3F  
...Exhibitionist?

3C  
Salami slapper.

3A  
(defensively)  
I was more like his assistant, by  
now.

3F  
But you continued to do the  
sessions?

3A

Every Friday. Without fail.

3D

And the mystery remained?

3A

(nodding)

I wasn't complaining. I mean, I didn't want to be out of a job... So... I was flying back from New York...

3D

With the antique decoy.

3A

With the duck, yes. When something happened. Something everyone hopes will happen, actually...

69

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -NIGHT

69

The dimmed cabin is dominated by a sports team. Identically dressed, they slumber childlike despite their bulk.

3A dozes in the front row, the wrapped duck wearing a seat belt next to him. He opens his eyes hazily. Across the aisle in 1d, a woman meets his gaze.

He closes his eyes, then after a few seconds opens them again. She is still looking at him, smouldering.

He closes his eyes and enjoys the sensation of her looking up and down his body. And hears the clunk of her seat-belt being unbuckled.

Heart thumping, 3A watches as she strolls down the aisle to the toilet door. She pauses, beckons to him, and steps in.

He looks away. Catches his breath. Makes a decision. Tries to stand up. But is dragged down again by his seat-belt.

He makes his way stealthily past the sleeping goliaths. One opens an eye and clocks him.

He tries the handle and steps in like a burglar.

70

BUSINESS CLASS TOILET -INT -NIGHT

70

3A

(whispering)

What's your name?

She pushes him back against the door, her mouth immediately upon his. Their arms flail around until they find a clinch.

71 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 71

3A

Then I had this really scary thought. What if there was a camera in there? For security reasons?

72 BUSINESS CLASS TOILET -INT -NIGHT 72

We see the viewpoint of an aerial camera as they struggle to find flesh under clothing in the cramped space.

73 COCKPIT -INT -NIGHT 73

The pilots relax, watching the show on a little monitor.

74 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 74

Everyone chuckles. 3D stops the AIR HOSTESS as she steams past.

3D

There aren't cameras in the toilets, are there?

AIR HOSTESS

If you're desperate to smoke, I can get you a patch. We all wear one.

Exasperated, 3D turns back to 3A. The AIR HOSTESS hovers.

3D

What happened?

3A

Well... Not much, actually.

3C

Oh what?

3A

Do you have any idea how small it is in there, with two people? I just don't know how anyone's managed it. Ever.

He looks up at the AIR HOSTESS, who blushes.



75 BUSINESS CLASS TOILET -INT -NIGHT 75

From the aerial camera, we see 3A and 1D try a series of desperate formations (not unlike the nightclub couple) - against the door, on the toilet seat, over the sink...

76 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 76

They have now been joined by the STEWARD.

STEWARD

The toilets are forty percent larger on Scandinavian. With a window. It's asking for trouble, as far as I'm concerned.

3C

So... did you join the Mile High Club or not, man?

3A

I bumped my nose and it started bleeding. So she went back to her seat. A little sooner than I'd have liked, actually...

77 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -NIGHT 77

As 1D returns down the aisle, the same team player opens his eye a chink, and glances at his watch.

78 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 78

3A

She never said a word. I tried to talk to her later, but she pretended she was asleep. Then she changed her seat.

79 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAWN 79

There is a guffaw of male laughter from the back of the cabin. 3A peers round his seat, bleary-eyed.

The woman from 1d sits surrounded by adoring members of the team, hanging on her every word. He turns back and shrugs.

3A (V.O.)

Naturally enough, I thought that was the end of that, until...

80 THE BASEMENT -INT -DAY

80

3A eats cereal in the kitchen over a magazine. He stops and gives a little snort of surprise. At another ad.

3A (V.O.)

1c: mile high over Nova Scotia.

1d regrets not speaking.

81 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

81

3A

It was funny. I knew those ads were going to play a part in my life again. It was just a question of when.

3F

Or a question of why?

3A

(shrugging)

Everyone secretly wants to be in one. And I've been in two.

3F

A desire to be controlled?

3D

It is a rather passive way of living your life, isn't it?

3A

It's fate!

3F

Fate? Perhaps it's fate that brought us together today, to share our darkest secrets.

3D

(impatiently)

Anyway. You replied, of course.

3A

Of course. And she just turned up one night...

3C

Did she speak?

3A

Oh yeah. Loads.

82 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

82

The wooden soldiers watch them lounging on the sofa. 3A is a little wary of her, still.

1D

I wanted to pretend I was someone else. That's all. If I'd spoken, that would have been me...

3A

Anonymous sex? A lot of guys fantasize about that.

1D

...But not you?

3A

It was a bit scary, to be honest.

1D

You think I'm scary?

3A

Not now. Just then.

1D

I got the idea off this guy at work. When he picks someone up, he never uses more than four words at a time.

3A

What? Why?

1D

So he doesn't give too much of himself away.

3A stares at her, nonplussed.

1D (cont'd)

You can still say quite a lot: What-are-you-drinking? Do-you-want-another? How-about-a-dance? Want-to-come-home? I'll-get-my-coat. Let's-take-a-cab.

3A roars with laughter.

3A

That's brilliant!

He has a go, counting on his fingers.

3A (cont'd)  
What-do-you-like?

1D  
Please-do-that-again.

3A  
Thanks-that-was-great.

1D  
Let's-get-some-sleep.

3A  
Do-you-want-breakfast?

1D  
You-were-the-best.

3A  
Give-me-your-number.

They chuckle at their ingenuity.

3A (cont'd)  
Do you want something to eat?

1D  
That's six words.

3A  
No. I mean, are you hungry?

1D  
Got-any-more-wine?

3A  
I could go round the corner and  
get some.

1D  
It's too late. Isn't it?

3A  
It is?

1D  
It's midnight.

He freezes. The clock starts to chime.

3A  
Oh shit.

1D  
Tea would be fine, actually.

83

THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT

83

3A unlocks the door and dashes into the Room. He looks around, checking everything is the way it should be.

He kicks his shoes off and opens the door of a cabinet.

1D

What's going on?

She stands in the doorway. He slams the cabinet door shut.

3A

Nothing.

1D

What are those?

3A

I don't have time to explain. I know this sounds a bit weird, but can you give me half an hour?

1D

...What for?

3A

It's just something I have to do. Something... work related.

1D

So tell me what.

3A

I can't.

They stare at each other. She doesn't budge an inch.

3A (cont'd)

I have to start.

1D

So start. I'll stay here. You won't even notice me.

With a huge sigh of reluctance, he moves her into a corner.

3A

You have to stay here. And you can't move. At all.

1D

(loving it)  
OK. Fine.

3A  
Or talk. I have to concentrate.

1D  
Fine. So start.

He races around the room revealing the cameras.

1D (cont'd)  
Oh what?!

3A  
Sssh.

He removes his clothes and zips under the sheet. She watches, incredulous, amused.

The cameras whir, undergoing adjustment.

84 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT 84

On the monitor, we see a sequence of shots from the different camera positions. 1D has been placed in a blind spot, the only corner that the cameras cannot see.

85 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 85

His eyes closed, 3A breathes heavily, trying to concentrate. He is tense and apprehensive.

There is a rustle of clothing, and a soft murmur. He opens his eyes slightly, straining to catch sight of her.

A flush has broken across 1D's face as she watches him, beguiled. She gently starts to remove her own clothes.

86 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT 86

On the monitor, 3A is in profile, close-up.

His head appears to rock slightly. His eyes shoot open in alarm. He wriggles, trying to retain the pose.

The camera pans down his body under the sheet. The mountain range seems to be undergoing an earthquake.

The monitor cuts to the original camera position. A second body crawls under the sheet until her head meets his groin.

87 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 87

3A struggles, resists, and gives in, defeated. He drops his head back onto the pillow and turns to the cameras.

3A

I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm...

88 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT 88

3A's face in close-up mouths the word 'sorry' once more.

89 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 89

The cameras' red lights blink off, one by one.

3A watches ominously. He lets out a long groan, two parts despair, one part pleasure.

90 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 90

3A looks around, shaking his head remorsefully. The group of listeners now includes the CAPTAIN, on walkabout.

CAPTAIN

Sounds like an awkward situation.

3D

You must have felt terrible.

3F

I have some sympathy for the Collector, as well.

3C

Unless he got off on it.

3F

But he turned the cameras off.

3C

Yeah. But not at first, right?

3A

No. Not for quite a while.

3C

I mean, he'd paid for a solo, right? But he got something much better. A live sex act. Just like your bondage thing.

3F

It was not bondage. Not exactly.

CAPTAIN

Bondage? Did I miss that bit?

No one wants the story to go backwards.

3D  
Is anyone flying this plane?

CAPTAIN  
Good point.

He hurries back to the cockpit, dispersing the AIR HOSTESS and STEWARD as well.

3F  
Aren't you forgetting something important about the Collector?

3C  
What?

3D  
It's the painting he finds erotic. Not 'live sex acts'.

3F  
Exactly.

3C  
Yeah but... he's still a man.

3D  
Yes. A very cultured man. Who'd be above such things.

3C  
(holding up his hands)  
Hey. The cameras stayed on. I'm telling you, he got off on it.

3D crosses her arms combatively.

3D  
Well then. Perhaps you can explain why. What does anyone get from watching... that?

3C chuckles, having to explain what to him is obvious.

3C  
It makes you want to join in. That's all.

Silence.

3D  
Is that true?

Another silence.



3F

Basically, yes. It offers a very primitive form of identification: you imagine you're the man.

3C

Or the woman.

Everyone looks at him in surprise.

3C (cont'd)

...Only sometimes.

3A

Why do you think that?

3C stares at everyone, suddenly paranoid.

3C

Because of... something that happened, when I was boarding in Switzerland with a buddy.

He screws up his face.

3C (cont'd)

I can't believe I'm telling you this. Oh man...

3F

I've been very candid. We all have.

3D

We're landing soon and we'll never see each other again. Get on with it.

3C

(slowly)

There was a girl working in this bar. And we... had a threesome.

3A

I don't know if I could handle that. I mean, seeing a mate with a hard-on would be weird enough.

3C

That was kind of weird.

3F

Did it inhibit you?

3C

(shaking his head)

Mine was bigger.

3F

I mean... it didn't put you off?

3C

It was kind of interesting,  
seeing him turned on. Like he was  
a different person.

3A

Was there any physical contact  
between you?

3C

No way, man.

3A

None?

3C

We were real careful about that.  
But we did talk. Which was kind  
of funny.

3D

What about?

3C

Things like 'This is pretty good,  
huh?' or 'D'you wanna change  
places?'

3D

Charming. Did she have a say in  
any of this?

3C

It was her idea. She made us do  
everything.

3F

...Everything?

3C

...You know what double entry is?

3D

Yes. Book-keeping.

3F

In this context, perhaps not.

3D

(after a think)  
Oh goodness! Really? Is that  
possible?

3C

Thing was, she was between us. Obviously. But we were much taller, so me and my buddy were staring at each other. And I had this freaky feeling. Like she wasn't there. Like it was just the two of us. Like he was doing me, or something.

91 SWISS HOTEL ROOM -INT -NIGHT

91

In a story-book chalet room, 3C and buddy stare panting at each other over the Swiss girl's head. She has Heidi plaits.

On the wall beyond, a cuckoo-clock goes off.

92 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

92

Everyone ponders the implications. 3F opens his mouth. 3C raises a forefinger sharply.

3C

But I am telling you, man. That is something no one is ever gonna get to do. Ever.

The AIR HOSTESS appears, distributing hand wipes.

AIR HOSTESS

Hand wipes, anyone?

3D

Are we landing soon?

AIR HOSTESS

Very soon, yes. God willing.

3D

Oh no! Not yet.

AIR HOSTESS

You're enjoying our flight so much?

3D

We have to hear the end of the story.

3F

If there is an end?

3A

There is an end. It's the reason  
I'm on this flight!

He smiles mysteriously. They lean forwards, agog. He makes himself comfortable, enjoying the anticipation, then leaps into the air.

3A (cont'd)

OW! ...I think I've been stung!

He reaches under him and finds something.

3C

Is that a wasp?!

AIR HOSTESS

It's dead? Thank God!

She recovers her professional poise.

AIR HOSTESS (cont'd)

You'd better come with me.

3D

You're not taking him away? You  
can't!

AIR HOSTESS

(with relish)

This could be an emergency!

She leads him past a woman in 2c doing a crossword who looks up suddenly.

2C

A dog barking on a plane?

Her husband stirs reluctantly.

2A

How many letters?

2C

No. I just heard a dog barking!

Her husband snorts and turns away.

A small dog in a cage whimpers at its confinement.

Nearby, two unusual items nestle together amongst passenger luggage: a snow-board in a sports bag covered in logos - and a mysterious crate marked 'artwork: FRAGILE'.

94

BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

94

3A's audience waits anxiously.

3D

The suspense is unbearable, isn't it?

3F

This is what I love about travel.

3D

What? The waiting?

3F

No. Finding out how different the world is.

3D

I've found it much the same. Especially the hotels. There's a bed, and a phone.

3F

But people even answer the phone in different ways!

3D

They do?

3F

Oh yes. In Italy they say pronto - I'm ready. In Poland they say slucham - I'm listening. And in Japan they say moshi moshi - which doesn't mean anything at all.

3D

...So why do they bother saying it, then?

3F is nonplussed.

3C

Hey guys. I been thinking. How would you have reacted, huh? If you were the Collector?

They are intrigued by this question. 3D smiles, thinks, and shrugs fancifully.

3D

Well...

95 VILLAGE HALL -INT -DAY

95

Examining another object for the TV programme, the COLLECTOR pauses and addresses the camera.

COLLECTOR

I have appreciated your dedication. But I'm sure you understand why our contract must come to an end. It was based on trust. And you chose to break that trust. I've decided to put the paintings up for auction and devote myself to my wife, who is now receiving treatment for kleptomania.

96 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

96

3D

Unlikely, I know.

3F

But honourable.

3D

What about you?

3F

Well... He would be fired, of course. Without question. For betraying the Collector's trust. But that may not be the end of the matter...

97 VILLAGE HALL -INT -DAY

97

A wizened old man with a foreign accent sits at the table.

COLLECTOR

Come along now. Don't keep us in suspense.

The man pulls a tea-towel off an unframed canvas.

LOCAL III

Oh. Is wrong way.

Even upside down, it is unmistakably the Missing Painting. He turns it right way up. The COLLECTOR is electrified.

LOCAL III (cont'd)

(with a glint)

You are shocked?

The COLLECTOR wrenches it from his hands.

COLLECTOR

Where... where did you get this?

LOCAL III

From my attic. De family bring it. Before War. My wife she say is pornografia, but I say it leave room for imagination. Yes?

98 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

98

3C

That's neat.

3D

But improbable. He knows who's got the painting. It's not in some old man's attic.

3F

That's true, I suppose.

They look around desperately for 3A.

3C

Hey how serious is a wasp sting?

3F

A wasp is not a bee.

3D

I hope they're not making a meal of it.

99 SERVICE GALLEY -INT -DAY

99

The AIR HOSTESS dabs 3A's left buttock fondly.

100 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

100

They sit fidgeting. 3C gathers his thoughts.

3C

OK. How about this? I think he'd wanna go say he's sorry. And explain - about the hot babe from the plane. But the Collector's not mad at him at all. In fact, he couldn't be happier...

101 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT

101

Beaming, the COLLECTOR draws back the curtain, revealing the series with a crucial difference. The monitor has been replaced by the Missing Painting. 3A is amazed.

3A

I don't believe it! You did it!  
You solved the mystery?!

COLLECTOR

I did something much simpler.  
Something I should have done a  
long time ago... A straight swap.

3A

For what?

COLLECTOR

I sent the collector copies of  
your... better performances.

3A

You did what?!

COLLECTOR

He was impressed. Very impressed.

3A

You... betrayed my trust?

COLLECTOR

(with a wry smile)  
I thought it would make us equal.

3A

How could you do that?

He turns airily away from him.

COLLECTOR

You will vacate the basement by  
the end of the week. The  
collector will contact you  
directly regarding travel  
arrangements and accommodation.  
He will pay you the same  
allowance for the same terms.  
Friday. Midnight. Half an hour. I  
hope you'll be very happy  
together.

3A

(confused, abandoned)  
...What are you saying? You  
traded me for the painting?!



COLLECTOR  
I consider the matter closed.

102 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

102

3F  
Extremely ruthless.

3C shrugs, pleased with himself.

3D  
But plausible - if you think of  
the Collector as a manipulator.  
Which I do, I suppose.

The AIR HOSTESS breezes past.

3D (cont'd)  
How's he doing?

AIR HOSTESS  
He will live.

3C  
Well where is he?

AIR HOSTESS  
Upstairs in the cockpit. The  
Captain wants to catch up on the  
Neverending Story.

This is not good news.

3D  
How selfish.

3F turns back to 3C.

3F  
I like your idea. But our friend  
seems very fond of the Collector.  
Don't you think he'd make more of  
a protest?

3C thinks again, nodding slowly...

103 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT

103

3A  
(confused, abandoned)  
You traded me for the painting?

COLLECTOR  
I consider the matter closed.

3A  
Well I don't.

The COLLECTOR pauses, surprised.

3A (cont'd)  
What about... us?

COLLECTOR  
I'm sorry?

3A  
I thought we had something  
special here. Something that was  
important to both of us. A  
relationship, you might say...

COLLECTOR  
A business relationship.

3A  
What about how I feel? Doesn't  
that count for anything?

COLLECTOR  
Think of it as a transfer. Like a  
footballer, transferred from one  
club to another.

3A  
You can't just... sell me.

COLLECTOR  
I didn't. I traded you.

3A  
For what? A lousy painting?

COLLECTOR  
For the real thing.

3A  
Oh yeah? I'll show you how real  
it is.

He prizes the knife off the wall, wild-eyed.

COLLECTOR  
Good God! What are you doing?!

3A plunges the knife into the canvas.

104 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 104

3F

Out of the question. The painting means too much to him.

3D

He'd be destroying something of himself!

3C concedes, and thinks again.

105 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT 105

3A prizes the knife off the wall, wild-eyed, and lunges at the canvas.

But this time the COLLECTOR stands in front of it. They struggle. The COLLECTOR forces him to the ground, and bangs his arm repeatedly until he is forced to drop the knife.

3A

My arm... You've broken my arm.

106 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 106

Everyone is laughing.

3F

Very good. Ingenious.

3D

I think we've left reality behind. He probably slipped in the bath.

3F

I believe I never had the chance to introduce myself. My name is --

3D

Sssh!

3C

What?

3D

I just heard a dog bark!

They strain their ears. A sad, muffled bark.

3C

Oh yeah!

3F

Wasps? Dogs? What is this? A  
flying circus?

The well-heeled woman in front in 2d suddenly turns to  
them, her face almost tear-stained.

2D

It's so cruel! I was prepared to  
buy a seat for her, but they  
wouldn't allow her in the cabin.

3F

(under his breath)  
Thank goodness for that.

3C

You checked in your dog?!

2D

I had no choice. It was a  
terrible wrench. Your friend was  
very kind. The one with the  
painting.

3C, 3D AND 3F

The painting?!

2D

He was as worked up about parting  
with it as I was about Tiffy. She  
means more to me than my  
children, now. To be honest.

They all stare at her.

3C

Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

3D

He's got the painting?

3F

We've been sitting on top of it?

3D

But... how?

3F

Perhaps he stole it?

The woman doing the crossword swivels round.

2C

With the help of the ethical  
shoplifter?

As the cabin starts to teem with suggestions, the curtain suddenly parts theatrically. Everyone stops talking. 3A lowers himself gingerly into his seat.

3D  
Thank God... How are you feeling?

3A  
A bit sore, that's all.

3C  
What did you check in, man?

3A  
...What?

3C  
You checked in a painting, right?

3D  
The painting?

Others in the cabin leap up out of their seats and gather round him. He smiles - but before he can reply, an announcement commences.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Well folks, We're just starting our descent, so please return to your seats immediately, and observe the fact that the seat-belts sign has now been turned on. We'll be landing very shortly.

The entire cabin is horrified.

3D  
We can't land yet! We have to hear the ending!

As the group disperse reluctantly to their seats, the AIR HOSTESS steps up and hands 3A a microphone.

AIR HOSTESS  
Would you mind? The Captain wants to hear the end of the story.

Everyone heaves a sigh of relief. Except 3A, who experiences stage fright, as the cabin lighting is suddenly dimmed, dramatically spotlighting him.

3A  
Er... Where was I?

3C leans into the microphone.

107 ECONOMY CLASS -INT -DAY

107

3C (O.S. OVER THE P.A.)  
You were in bed with this girl.  
On camera. With your boss  
watching.

Every Economy passenger is instantly gripped. A horrified mother covers her little boy's ears.

108 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

108

3A  
(into the microphone)  
Oh yeah... God, what a mess. I  
couldn't believe it had happened.  
I wanted to explain, of course.  
And apologize. But deep down, I  
knew this was one thing I  
couldn't talk my way out of. I  
knew it was over.

Silence. The cabin waits. In Economy, the mother stills her restless boy. In the cockpit, pilots glance at each other. In the service galley, the AIR HOSTESS fixes her make-up.

3C  
(softly)  
So what did you do, man?

3A's voice drops, as he speaks from the heart.

3A  
...Nothing. I even got the room  
ready the next Friday, as if  
nothing had happened. Kidding  
myself it was business as usual.  
I didn't want to face up to what  
I'd done, I suppose. But you have  
to understand something. This  
wasn't just a job. It was what I  
was born to do. Don't ask me why,  
because I can't tell you. The  
bloke in the painting was me - in  
a former life or something, I  
don't know. But it was me. It  
made more sense than anything  
I've ever done. And now I'd  
thrown it all away. I'd thrown  
everything away.

109 THE BASEMENT -INT -NIGHT 109

In the Room, the cabinet doors are open, but the cameras remain switched off. On the bed, 3A lies curled in a ball, wearing the figure's outfit from the paintings. The cuckoo clock goes off, but he does not stir.

110 VILLAGE HALL -INT -DAY 110

The COLLECTOR turns to address the camera.

COLLECTOR

And that ends this series. We'll be back in the Autumn. I wish you happy rummaging. And remember, the true value of anything is what it means to you. Goodbye.

111 OXFORD STREET -EXT DAY 111

3A wanders aimlessly through the crowds. The surveillance cameras swivel imperiously, uninterested in him.

We lose sight of him as he is eaten up by the crowd.

112 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 112

3A

I used to like the fact that anywhere you go in a city, you're never alone. Even at four in the morning. Or graveyards. Someone's always got there before you. But a crowd can be the loneliest place. People look right through you, like you're invisible... I think that's why I like those ads so much, because they're telling you you're not just part of a crowd. You can be special, to someone. But I realized there's something I really hate about them too. They're for people who don't have the guts to take a chance and say how they feel, when they have the opportunity... It took a couple of weeks, but I decided I didn't want to be like them. I had to apologize, and say I know it's over, but thank you. Thanks for everything...

113 COLLECTOR'S HOME -EXT -DAY

113

3A crosses the road, approaching a large, tumbledown detached house almost obscured by garden foliage.

3A (V.O.)

So I went round, before I could change my mind. I had it all prepared, what I was going to say. His wife let me in. She was a bit surprised. Told me to go and wait in his room until he got back...

114 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -NIGHT

114

3A waits, contrite, embarrassed. He glances round. He cannot resist pulling the curtain back, to see the paintings for the last time.

His mouth drops open. The series is complete: the monitor has been replaced by the actual painting.

Its colour is intense, more luminous than the others. He approaches it slowly, awed by its presence. But suspicious.

He steps even closer, until he can see the turbulent pattern of brush strokes. He runs his fingers over it, as if to check it is dry. And real.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)

It fulfils your expectations, I hope?

3A spins round to face the COLLECTOR, who has come in silently. He is speechless.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)

I know the real thing can disappoint. Like the Mona Lisa. People expect it to be bigger. Life-size, perhaps. Like the prostitutes who used to stand outside the Louvre adopting her pose.

3A

(suspicious)

What's it... doing here?

COLLECTOR

(smiling)

Completing the series.

3A's face suddenly clouds over.



3A  
You've had it all along?!

The COLLECTOR looks at the ground.

3A (cont'd)  
You've just been playing a game  
with me!

COLLECTOR  
Have you forgotten about the  
mystery?

3A  
What mystery? There is no mystery  
- is there?

COLLECTOR  
Not any longer.

3A  
I can't believe I've been so  
stupid!

COLLECTOR  
I suppose I have been playing a  
game. To see where you'd take me.

3A  
Oh yeah? I hope you enjoyed it.

COLLECTOR  
I believe we both did.

3A  
Well let me show you. Let me  
really show you how much I  
enjoyed it...

Furious and humiliated, he casts his eyes wildly about the  
room, and lunges at the knife on the wall.

COLLECTOR  
Dear God. What are you doing?

But 3A is unable to pull it off. He gives up, and spins  
round confrontationally.

3A  
TELL ME THE TRUTH! I JUST WANT TO  
HEAR THE TRUTH!

COLLECTOR  
OK. OK! I... didn't solve the  
mystery.

3A  
(seething)  
Because there IS no mystery!

COLLECTOR  
You did. You solved it. You and  
your... guest.

3A stares at him.

3A  
You expect me to believe that?

COLLECTOR  
(hurriedly)  
Where did you hide her?

3A  
...In the corner.

COLLECTOR  
Which corner?

3A  
(cruelly)  
The one I knew you couldn't see.

COLLECTOR  
The bottom right hand corner?

3A  
Yes! You know which one!

COLLECTOR  
Where there's a stain on the  
floorboards.

3A  
YES!

COLLECTOR  
It's not a stain. Not any longer.

3A looks round at the painting.

3A  
It's a stain! What else could it  
be?

COLLECTOR  
(mystically)  
A shadow!

3A looks again, drawn in a little.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
 I didn't notice at first. Not  
 until it moved. I thought I was  
 going mad. But when she stepped  
 into view, it was obvious!

3A  
 Oh it was, was it?

COLLECTOR  
 Absolutely.

3A  
 ...What?

COLLECTOR  
 The mystery of 'The Room,  
 brackets, Betrayal, close  
 brackets'!

3A is torn between despising him and wanting to hear more.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
 Don't you see? If the stain is in  
 fact the shadow of someone hiding  
 in that corner, the only corner  
 we never see in any of the  
 paintings, it means the figure is  
 not alone. He has... a guest.

3A  
 Just like me.

COLLECTOR  
 Just like you.

3A  
 (with a sneer)  
 The model betrayed the artist?

COLLECTOR  
 (forgetting his fear)  
 Forget about the artist. The  
 artist is just our servant. Or in  
 this case, a court jester. We are  
 king. The viewer is king.

3A  
 (losing patience)  
 What are you trying to say?

COLLECTOR  
 (with passion)  
 What do we have here? An intimate  
 little peepshow, with everything  
 arranged for our pleasure.  
 (MORE)

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
But it's not being performed for  
us at all. It's for someone else,  
someone who's actually there in  
the room. Who could walk into  
view at any time and depose us.

3A  
So what?

COLLECTOR  
When your guest took it upon  
herself to... put herself upon  
you, what happened?

3A  
Well...

COLLECTOR  
(smiling)  
I don't mean literally.

3A  
(with some resignation)  
...I betrayed you, I suppose.

COLLECTOR  
And who was I?

3A  
My boss.

COLLECTOR  
Who was I, every Friday at  
midnight...?

3A  
My... viewer?

COLLECTOR  
So who's betrayed?

After a few seconds, the mists clear:

3A  
Anyone who looks at the painting.  
Because my performance - his  
performance, isn't for them at  
all.

COLLECTOR  
(nodding earnestly)  
A bit like when someone waves to  
you in a crowd, and you wave back  
- then discover they were  
actually waving to someone behind  
you. Very embarrassing.

They stare at each other. The hostility dissipates.

3A

That's it? That was the mystery?

COLLECTOR

(sitting at his desk)

The collector who owns the painting agreed, somewhat reluctantly. But he kept his word and permitted the sale. I was vague about our methods of discovery, of course!

He hands him a cheque. 3A's eyes pop at the amount.

3A

What's this?

COLLECTOR

I believe I promised a bonus on solution.

3A

I... don't deserve this. I mean, you have no idea how bad I've been feeling - about what happened. I did everything I could to keep her out, but...

COLLECTOR

I'm very glad you didn't...

The COLLECTOR strolls over to the painting.

3A

(treading water)

I had all these ideas. About what we could do next. Like performing the whole series. I really thought that might get us somewhere. But... there's no need now.

COLLECTOR

No need at all.

The COLLECTOR becomes lost in the painting, gazing at it the way a parent looks at a new-born child.

3A hovers, feeling increasingly redundant.

3A

So... you've got the real thing.

COLLECTOR

Finally.

3A  
Well that's it, then. End of  
story...

The COLLECTOR does not look at him.

3A (cont'd)  
I'll be off then.

3A pauses at the door, his hand on the handle.

3A (cont'd)  
I can't do this. I can't take  
this. I don't want it.

He tears the cheque into pieces and throws them back. The  
COLLECTOR turns to look at him curiously.

With a sigh, he takes the painting off the wall, revealing  
the monitor beneath it. He holds out the painting. 3A  
hesitates before stepping forward to take it.

COLLECTOR  
Would you like to spend a few  
days with it - before it goes  
back?

3A  
...Back where?

COLLECTOR  
To the collector.

3A's brow furrows.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
Perhaps you'd like to return it  
yourself. Business class, of  
course.

3A  
You're... giving it back?!

COLLECTOR  
Yes.

3A  
...But why?

COLLECTOR  
Let's just say, I have no desire  
to be taken out of the picture.

3A stares at him, baffled.

COLLECTOR (cont'd)  
Perhaps you haven't, either?

3A  
What are you saying?

COLLECTOR  
I'd expect you to be back - by  
midnight - on Friday?

3A  
You mean--

The COLLECTOR taps the monitor.

COLLECTOR  
Do we understand each other?

3A  
I think we do.

They both break into a broad smile.

115 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY

115

3A  
And then... And then he said this  
really interesting thing. About  
mysteries. He said the  
destination is never as important  
as the journey!

He looks round to see the impact of his words. Everyone  
stares at him wide-eyed, appreciative, pensive.

Complete silence is suddenly broken by an announcement.

CAPTAIN (O.S.)  
Well folks, that really has to be  
the end of in-flight  
entertainment for today. Cabin  
crew to stations for landing,  
please. Cabin crew to stations.

The entire cabin bursts into applause. 3A smiles bashfully.  
The HOSTESS rushes in to reclaim the microphone, her  
patience worn thin.

3A gradually becomes aware that 3C is staring at him.

3C  
(whispering)  
You still haven't told me, man!

3A  
...What?

3C  
How you broke your goddamn arm!

3A  
 (grinning)  
 Oh yeah! It's not broken. Not  
 really.

3C's jaw drops.

116 THE COLLECTOR'S ROOM -INT -DAY

116

COLLECTOR  
 The collector will know why I'm  
 returning the painting as soon as  
 he sees you, of course.

3A  
 Because I'm the real thing!

COLLECTOR  
 (nodding)  
 I'd love to see the look on his  
 face. The shock may kill him!

3A  
 If it doesn't, he might want me  
 to perform for him, too!

The COLLECTOR's face clouds over.

3A (cont'd)  
 Hey don't you think it'd be funny  
 if that was impossible?

COLLECTOR  
 How do you mean?

3A  
 Well. If I couldn't use my left  
 arm.

The COLLECTOR looks a little shocked, then roars with  
 laughter, nodding.

COLLECTOR  
 OH YES! But how?

They both wrack their brains. 3A's face suddenly lights up.

117 UNDERGROUND TRAIN -INT -DAY

117

3A enters a carriage. All the seats are occupied. He  
 proudly displays his left arm in a brand new cast and  
 sling. But no one gives him their seat.

He shrugs and grabs an overhead rail. As the train moves  
 off, he notices a man reading Harry Potter glance up.



Opposite him now sits a woman also reading Harry Potter. She looks up. They smile at each other, then shyly hide back behind their books.

118 BUSINESS CLASS -INT -DAY 118

Everyone braces themselves for landing. Except for 3C, who is doubled over with laughter.

Pleased by his reaction, 3A smiles, removes his left arm from the cast and scratches his head.

119 PLANE -EXT -DAY 119

From under the plane, the patchy surface of a runway comes closer and closer at enormous speed.

A caption fades up:

*"I challenge any collector to love a painting  
as much as a fetishist loves a shoe."*

**GEORGES BATAILLE**

As the wheels touch the ground, the screen cuts to black.

ROLL CREDITS

**Hans Holbein**  
The Ambassadors



**Van Eyck**  
Arnolfini Marriage



**Diego Velasquez**  
Toilet of Venus



**Sandro Botticelli**  
Venus and Mars

