

THE OPENING

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. MANSION - EVENING

Long shot of a very contemporary mansion with a limo parked in front. The DRIVER is leaning against the driver's door waiting. He is dressed in a gray uniform with white shirt and gray silk tie. The CAMERA holds on the scene, then moves past the Driver to a CLOSE UP of a large tree in bloom. It has white, very sensual and voluptuous blossoms. The CAMERA holds on them then moves past them to a lighted window through which we see LAURA sitting at a dressing table.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Laura, a very beautiful and elegant woman in her early 40's, is finishing her preparation for her gallery's erotic art opening. The CAMERA explores her and her clothing. She is wearing gray and white and black with perhaps just a touch of blue. Everything about her is very cool and smooth and closed off, except for an exotic blossom in her hair. Her dressing table is marble with lacquer and stone boxes and crystal bottles. There is no softness or warmth. We see more of the sterile room as her HUSBAND enters. He is dressed in evening clothes.

LAURA

Are you ready?

HUSBAND

The car is here.

The Husband stands looking at her as she struggles to clip a piece of jewelry around her neck. He doesn't offer to help. Finally he turns and leaves. She looks in the mirror to see him disappear out the door.

EXT. MANSION - EVENING

Laura and her Husband exit the house. The Driver snaps to attention and runs to open the door of the limo. As Laura and her Husband get into the car the Driver catches her eye and smiles discreetly. Laura looks away.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Laura sits looking out her window. Her Husband sits looking out of his. The Driver gets in, starts the car, and drives off.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

We see an attractive YOUNG MAN arranging a large bouquet of very exotic and erotic flowers.

INT. CAR - EVENING

The car travels through the streets. Both Laura and Husband continue to ignore each other. Then she looks up and sees the Driver staring at her in the rear view mirror. She locks eyes with him but then looks away.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

CATERERS are preparing a table with very colorful, sensual and exotic food.

EXT. GALLERY - EVENING

The limo pulls up and the Driver gets out, opening the door for Laura and her Husband who get out and move towards the art gallery. There is a sign in the front window announcing the opening of the Erotic Art Show.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Champagne bottles are lined up at the bar. The foil and wire collars are removed. They look surprisingly phallic. On the wall behind the bar is a painting of rare and imagined flowers. As the CAMERA pulls back we see that the bouquet spurts from an ejaculating phallus. The CAMERA continues to move through the gallery establishing the exhibit of EROTIC ART. The caterers are completing the finishing touches for the opening. The BARTENDERS and SERVERS are all young and extremely attractive. In the distance the CAMERA picks out Laura and her Husband at the entrance. She gives instructions to one of the Gallery WORKERS. Her Husband wanders off to the bar. Laura moves through the gallery to RANDY, the Caterer.

LAURA

(looking around)

Randy, the food looks wonderful and the flowers are exquisite.

RANDY

Thank you.

He reacts to her beauty and places his hand on her arm.

RANDY (CONT'D)

As exquisite as you are.

Laura smiles coolly and withdraws her arm.

EXT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Cars are pulling up and couples and groups are arriving for the opening. Most are dressed in evening dress. Though some of the "art crowd" are more eccentrically dressed.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Guests are filing into the gallery, anxious to see the art, but pretending not to notice it as they head for the champagne and food first. However, they sneak surreptitious glances as they pass.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

As the CAMERA moves around the room we hear bits of German, French and Japanese from this international crowd. A MAN and a WOMAN are examining a sculpture of a couple making love. It is somewhat abstract and they are puzzling over who is doing what to whom, and what part belongs to which body. They go through considerable contortions themselves trying to make sense of it, imitating the sculpture itself.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

A young PUNK GIRL with bright red hair approaches a larger than life rubber sculpture of a limp penis. A sign says "touch me". She smiles and tentatively touches it. It begins to rise accompanied by strange sounds. It rises to full erection, then there is the sound of an explosion and it becomes flaccid again. She reacts with surprise, amusement and embarrassment. She runs to fetch her GIRL FRIEND and they try it again, collapsing together in giggles.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

A group of life sized sculptures of people, very realistic, very sexy and provocatively dressed. People stand around studying them. One cannot tell the guests from the statues. A MAN reaches out and pokes one of the sculptures, not believing it is not real. While a WOMAN reaches out to another sculpture and squeezes its tit. However, it is not a sculpture at all, but a REAL WOMAN, who reacts with great surprise. The first Woman is very embarrassed.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Two LESBIANS are walking casually through the gallery. They come to a marble statue of a phallus. They pause for a moment and look at it. They look at each other with mild disgust and move on.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

An older ART CRITIC, is making notes about the art. He is accompanied by a YOUNG MAN. Laura passes by, nods, smiles and continues.

YOUNG MAN

Who is that gorgeous woman?

CRITIC

Laura, the owner of the gallery. Affectionately known as the Ice Queen.

YOUNG MAN

Oh really? Why?

CRITIC

Because, my dear, as far as we know no one as ever been able to melt that arctic heart of hers.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

An ARTIST is showing his work to a COUPLE. The painting is very bold, abstract and non-subjective.

MAN

(to the Artist)

How do you figure this is erotic art?

ARTIST

It's called "Libido in Santa Fe."

MAN

(unconvinced)

Hum.

ARTIST

You see, the explosion of the red coming, as it were, into the yellow expresses the latent fear and loathing that the modern male feels for the post-feminist female.

The Man and Woman continue to study the painting for a moment with some skepticism.

WOMAN

(pause)

I don't know. I think that libido's in Santa Fe have more green.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Laura and her Husband are chatting with a group of guests. An attractive YOUNG WOMAN makes her way through the crowd and gives a sly smile and locks eyes with the Husband as she passes. Laura catches that and his pleased response.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

A HANDSOME MAN is standing alone in front of a painting looking at it with focused attention. To his left a YOUNG WOMAN is studying him. To his right a YOUNG MAN is also studying him.

The Handsome Man gradually realizes he is being stared at. Slowly he turns to his left and examines the Woman. Then he turns to his right and examines the Young Man. He smiles very slyly to the Young Man and moves on. The Woman is left alone as the Young Man follows the Handsome Man.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Laura is with a COUPLE who have just bought a work of art. She is placing a red dot on the corner of the card. It is a large painting that is very much like a Georgia O'Keeffe flower - like a vagina. The Man is obviously delighted with it. The Wife less so.

LAURA

I think you're going to be very happy with this. The artist had a sold out show recently in San Francisco. A very wise investment. Already her works have appreciated more than two hundred percent in the past year.

MAN

Yes, an excellent investment.

WIFE

(apprehensive)

But where are we going to hang it?

MAN

How about over the fireplace?

WIFE

(sarcastically)

How about the laundry room?

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

An older GENTLEMAN is ogling a very young LOLITA. She is standing behind a sculpture with multiple large breasts like an Etruscan Earth Goddess. The Young Woman's head appears just over the top of the sculpture, so it looks as though she is actually part of the sculpture. The Older Gentleman is on the other side. He has a plate of food and as he stares at her he eats with great sensuality trying to get her attention. She looks at him with a blank stare and blows a huge bubble from her bubble gum.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

Laura is surprised to see a young man appear at the entrance. It is DAVID, mid 20's. He is sexy and in contrast to the other guests very casually dressed. Laura immediately reacts to his entrance. She is surprised to see him. He surveys the room, sees her, and starts towards her. She excuses herself from a group and starts towards him. They meet.

LAURA

So, you decided to come after all.
(surveying him)
But you're not dressed.

DAVID

(laughs)
I thought artists were exempt from
monkey suits.

Laura glances nervously towards her Husband who is deeply engaged in conversation with the Young Woman who smiled at him.

LAURA

Well then, how about a drink? Oh,
and I've got a possible sale of one
of your paintings to the
Eisenbergs. I'll let you know when
it closes.

She turns and starts back towards the group, but David catches her arm.

DAVID

Don't treat me like this, please.

She turns back to him and looks him in the eyes.

LAURA

(firmly)
David....

David reaches into a pocket

DAVID
I have something for you.

He hands her a small wrapped box. She stares at it.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Open it.

LAURA
You're embarrassing me.

DAVID
How? You sell my work, I give you
a little gift as a token of
my....appreciation.

LAURA
(turning away)
No.

DAVID
(suddenly intense)
Why do you do this?

LAURA
Because it's inappropriate.

DAVID
But you know how I feel about you.

She struggles for a moment for a reply but decides against it.

LAURA
I'm leaving.

She turns. He grasps her arm again.

DAVID
No, first open the gift, then I'll
leave.

Laura looks around the room. Everyone seems occupied. She heads to her office. David follows.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

The Critic and the Young Man approach the "touch me" sculpture. The Young Man reaches out to touch it. The Critic slaps his hand.

CRITIC
(joking)
Don't you dare.

They laugh and move on. As they leave the Young Man reaches out and touches the sculpture behind the Critic's back and smiles as the sculpture rises.

INT. GALLERY OFFICE - NIGHT

Laura opens the gift. Inside is a very beautiful Egyptian perfume bottle. Very old, delicate and expensive. She is surprised.

LAURA
Why, this is exquisite. Egyptian
isn't it? Twelfth dynasty?

DAVID
You like it?

LAURA
Yes, but I can't accept this. It
must have cost you a fortune.

DAVID
It's probably worth painting or
two.

She shakes her head and holds out the bottle for David to take it back.

LAURA
No. I can't.

But he doesn't take it. She can't resist and opens the bottle and sniffs. Her reaction is sudden and strange.

LAURA (CONT'D)
How did you know?

DAVID
What?

LAURA
(after a pause)
This is from your father, isn't it?

David hesitates then answers.

DAVID
Not at all. I know your tastes.

LAURA

It's the perfume he always gave me.

David takes the bottle from her and smells it's delicate fragrance. He looks at her deeply. He touches his finger to the bottle and traces the perfume behind her ear and down the side of her neck, then down the edge of her dress towards her breasts. She doesn't resist. In fact she surrenders very softly. She doesn't speak, but looks him in the eyes. Then:

LAURA (CONT'D)

(softly)

Thank you.

David nods.

DAVID

Now, as I promised. I'll go.

David turns and starts to leave.

LAURA

(stopping him)

How is your father?

DAVID

Fine. He speaks of you often.

LAURA

Say hello.

He nods, then turns and leaves. She follows him out of the office.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

She watches him leave the gallery. She stands lost in thought. She closes her eyes feeling the effect of the perfume. She traces along the line of her dress where he put the perfume. She opens her eyes again and looks around the gallery. She notices things she did not see before. The sensuality of a BLACK MAN's forearm as he pours wine. A Man's hand on the base of a Woman's back. A Woman whispering into the ear of her female partner. Laura's Husband leaning in close to the Young Woman. The lushness of the flowers. The rise and fall of a Woman's breasts under sheer fabric. Suddenly she hears off screen.

MALE VOICE

(v/o)

Can you tell me the price of that Brandise over there. Number eighty- three.

Laura turns towards the voice - a Man with a catalog.

LAURA
I'm sorry.

MAN
Number eighty-three. The price?

Laura stands looking at him unable to answer.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

The last of the guests have gone. The Caterers have taken down their tables and are carrying out the last of their equipment. Laura stands at the front of the gallery lost in thought. Laura sees her Husband through the window saying good-bye to the Young Woman, who then walks off down the street, glancing back at the Husband with a wave before she disappears. Randy comes up to Laura.

RANDY
That's it. We're off.

LAURA
(gazing off into space)
Thank you. It was perfect.

RANDY
Interesting crowd.

LAURA
Wasn't it?

RANDY
Shall I turn out the rest of the lights?

LAURA
Yes, please.

The caterers turn out the lights and leave. Laura leaves the gallery and locks the door.

EXT. GALLERY - NIGHT

The limo pulls up. The Driver hops out and opens the door for Laura and her Husband.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The car pulls away. The two sit in silence, lost in their own thoughts.

HUSBAND
(with a sigh)
What a delightful evening.

As the car drives along, Laura sits back in her seat discreetly tracing the places where David put the perfume. As the limo drives down the street it comes to a stop sign and stops. In a shop doorway David steps out of the darkness and stares at Laura. She sees him, leans forward and smiles at him as the limo starts up again.

LAURA
Yes, wasn't it. A most successful opening.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The limo drives off down the street and around a corner. We see a close-up of David's face as he smiles, then turns and walks away.

FADE OUT:

THE END