

“FALSE GODDESS”

A Dramatic One-Act by PJ Sallans

3 Female/ 2 Male

SYNOPSIS

A romance illustrating how expectations and technology polarize modern relationships,

CHARACTERS

THE PAINTINGS

THE WOMAN IN RED (F): Charming young woman dressed in something red. Romantic, and at times, manipulative.

PORTRAIT OF A MAN WITH FRUIT (M): Man dressed in a Renaissance-style frock, lounging with a bowl of fruit. Takes himself too seriously.

ABSTRACT WOMAN IN ACRYLIC (F) : Mature woman with abstract, “pop-art”-esque make-up. Filled with motherly wisdom.

THE PEOPLE

ALEXA (F): Woman in a fine arts program. Writes poetry and is logical in her thinking.

MARK (M): Man who’s in the same program as Alexa, studying drawing. Has misguided intentions.

Lights up on stage where three actors are up on platforms posed as paintings in a museum. The WOMAN IN RED is in the middle and the two other paintings are on her left and right. (It's not necessary for the actors to stay still as they talk, even though they are paintings.) ALEXA stands in front of the MAN WITH FRUIT, writing in her notebook.

MAN WITH FRUIT: What do you suppose she's writing?

ABSTRACT WOMAN: *(Crane's neck to see)* I can't quite make it out.

MAN WITH FRUIT: C'mon, try harder.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: She's too far away.

MAN WITH FRUIT: *(Sighs)* Nevermind.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: If I had to guess, it's probably something like "Dear diary, today I witnessed the most grotesque painting I've ever seen."

MAN WITH FRUIT: *(Scoffs)* You're not funny.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: "Even now as I write this, I'm suppressing the violent urge to vomit."

MAN WITH FRUIT: Why do I even ask you-

ABSTRACT WOMAN: *(Cuts him off)* "Surely the artist was under some sort of duress, or perhaps was enduring a violent brain fever when he painted this work of art."

MAN WITH FRUIT: Just stop it.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: "If you can even call it that."

WOMAN IN RED: Enough, already. Give it a rest. *(Playing along)* Anyways, I'm sure it's more like- "Dear Diary, today I saw the most incredibly handsome woman."

ABSTRACT WOMAN: “Is it a crime to fall in love with a painting?”

WOMAN IN RED: “It took everything I had not to rip all my clothes off then and there in that museum and start to-”

MAN WITH FRUIT: Okay, I get it!

ABSTRACT WOMAN: (*Laughs*) Oh, it’s just too easy, darling. You’re so sensitive.

MAN WITH FRUIT: All we do is get stared at all day long. (*Fixes plumage.*) It can start to affect a woman.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Why? It’s not like you can do anything about what you look like.
(*ALEXA leaves*)

WOMAN IN RED: And besides, we all know what she was writing anyway; some sort of fanciful trash for an “Intro to Art History” essay - (*Imitating the girl*) “I really appreciated the artist’s use of paint.”

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Or maybe she’s a blogger! (*Also imitates*) “The artist successfully juxtaposed the darkness of the atmosphere with the brightness of the attitudes from the period.
(*Pause*) Here’s a recipe for burritos!”

MAN WITH FRUIT: Give the girl some credit. We can’t know for sure.

WOMAN IN RED: It’s always the same. People in and out of this museum to satisfy some sort of requirement. Extra credit, a homework assignment, a mandated field trip.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Everyone has a motive.

WOMAN IN RED: (*She looks dreamily at MARK who enters*) Well... not everyone.

MAN WITH FRUIT: Here we go.

WOMAN IN RED: I didn’t even say who I was thinking about.

MAN WITH FRUIT: Well, it’s pretty obvious.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: He’s always who you’re thinking about, dear.

WOMAN IN RED: Can you blame me?

ABSTRACT WOMAN: You're verging a bit on obsession. He is a human, you know.

WOMAN IN RED: (*MARK takes out a sketch pad, sits in front of her and starts to draw*) Yes, I know. But he's not like all the others. He doesn't just come in once, jot down some nonsense and leave- never to be seen again. He keeps coming in and spending time with me. And when he's here he studies me, as if he's forgotten my face and needs to see it again.

MAN WITH FRUIT: (*Takes a fruit out of his fruit bowl*) Maybe he's got dementia. (*Bites into it*)

WOMAN IN RED: Joke all you want to. I know there's something between us.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Do you even know his name?

WOMAN IN RED: I don't. And I don't care.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Guard your heart, darling. Nothing can ever come of this.

WOMAN IN RED: I appreciate your concern, but it's too late. And my heart doesn't need guarding. He feels it too. (*Lights fade on everyone but the WOMAN IN RED and MARK*) I see the way you look at me. (*He stops sketching and looks up at her*) Your eyes follow every curve. Each one of my brushstrokes is an ode to an impossible desire. I'm the ideal woman. (*She reaches her hand out to him*) You know nothing about me. I can be whatever you want me to be. (*MARK approaches her slowly*) I'm beautiful. And silent. I'll never say anything that upsets you. I'll never break your heart. (*She lifts her hand, beckoning him to take it. He slowly reaches his hand out to her*) No woman will ever live up to the idea of me. (*They're about to touch, but MARK withdraws his hand and retreats. Lights rise on everyone. MARK returns to sketching*) He's someone who can actually appreciate beauty when he sees it.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Speaking of- have you seen the moon tonight?

MAN WITH FRUIT: No. It's impossible to see out the window from where I'm hanging.

WOMAN IN RED: Then let me describe it to you. It's full and it's ripe, just waiting to be picked. It's looking over us; willing anything to happen.

MAN WITH FRUIT: Your poetry's moving, but it doesn't make up for my lack of a view. Nor does it make me feel better about you being the one everyone's always fawning over.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Now don't be jealous. That girl who was here earlier was paying attention to you. We all get our turn. (*ALEXA enters and sits on a bench in front of ABSTRACT WOMAN*) See? (*MARK sees ALEXA and recognizes her. He sits on the bench as far away from her as possible. He then scoots over slowly, trying to get her attention*)

MAN WITH FRUIT: What's he doing?

ABSTRACT WOMAN: I believe it's some sort of human mating ritual.

MARK: (*Realizes it's not working, gestures to ABSTRACT WOMAN*) Should we tell her there's something on her face?

ALEXA: (*Looks at MARK, then at ABSTRACT WOMAN, laughs*) Ooh, yeah, that's embarrassing. Someone better let her know.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: (*Alarmed*) There is?

MAN WITH FRUIT: No. He was making a joke.

ALEXA: (*She recognizes MARK*) I'm sorry... but is your name Mark?

MARK: It is.

WOMAN IN RED: Mark.

ALEXA: I thought so. I think we had "Intro to Art History" together, right?

WOMAN IN RED: Called it. (*Other paintings snicker*)

MARK: (*Fakes ignorance*) "Intro to Art History..."

ALEXA: Yeah, with Professor Miller? It was, like, two semesters ago?

MARK: Miller..? (*Fakes realization*) Oh. Oh, yeah! Remind me of your name again.

ALEXA: Alexa?

MARK: Alexa! Duh! Sorry, I have a terrible memory.

ALEXA: No, that's alright. Crazy running into you here.

MARK: Well, I don't know if it's that crazy. We're in the same arts program, right?

ALEXA: Yeah, I guess you're right.

MARK: Anyways, what brings you here? Working on a new project?

ALEXA: You could say that. Not for class, though.

MARK: Oh?

ALEXA: It's a personal project. I'm writing a book of poetry.

MARK: Get out.

WOMAN IN RED: *(Malicious)* Yes. Get out.

ALEXA: I'm serious. I was stuck in a bit of a rut so I decided to come down here and get some inspiration.

MARK: Did you find any?

ALEXA: I did. *(Gestures to MAN WITH FRUIT)* With this fellow here.

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Well, look at that. You gave her inspiration.

WOMAN IN RED: And you were complaining about not getting any attention.

MARK: Did you write a poem about her?

ALEXA: No, not yet. I need some more time for that. I was just writing down some words she made me think of.

MARK: Such as... *(ALEXA opens her notebook and flips to the page)*

MAN WITH FRUIT: The anticipation is killing me!

ALEXA: "Plump for the picking, purposefully passive, preposterous plumage." *(The women paintings laugh)*

MAN WITH FRUIT: *(Offensively)* The nerve!

MARK: *(Laughs)* You had a “p” theme going, I see.

ALEXA: I did. *(Checks notes again)* Oh! I missed one! “Peculiar.”

MAN WITH FRUIT: Peculiar?!”

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Don’t take it personally, dear, we all get critics every once in a while.

ALEXA: It’s not her fault. Her face reminded me of a professor I had once who tried to fail me because he didn’t like my essay. She told me my opinion was wrong and he gave me a “D.”

MARK: What a dick.

ALEXA: She was. But the semester after that she got fired for having thousands of feet pics on her school hard drive.

MARK: Yikes.

ALEXA: Yeah, so all’s well that ends well, I guess.

MAN WITH FRUIT: Who would want pictures of feet?

ABSTRACT WOMAN: Humans are complicated creatures.

ALEXA: Enough about me and my woes. *(Puts away notebook)* What are you doing here?

MARK: *(Stammers a bit)* I, uh, well-

WOMAN IN RED: Say it.

MARK: I’m also here for inspiration.

ALEXA: What kind?

WOMAN IN RED: You’re here for me.

MARK: Well, you know I draw-