

Menage a Sartre

By Mike Mariano

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(A hotel room. Three people—JOE, LIZ, and CHANEL—lie asleep on the bed, their bodies intertwined. The debris of lovemaking surrounds them—clothes, condom wrappers, sex toys, etc. The room's television set is on, displaying the freeze-framed face of a porn star. Slowly JOE begins to stir. He removes CHANEL's leg from around his neck and props himself up. He looks around. LIZ also wakes.)

JOE:

Is it night?

(He stands. JOE is wearing a vaguely "cowboy" costume. He wears leather chaps, a vest, and a canary yellow thong. He grabs a cowboy hat off of a night table, puts it on, and goes to the window. He begins to push the curtains aside.)

LIZ:

Do you really want to open that window?

(JOE stops.)

Just for a peek?

LIZ:

Dressed like that?

(JOE considers. He retreats from the window.)

JOE:

I suppose not. There's no telling who'd see us.

LIZ:

(Propping herself up by her elbows:)

It's not who sees us, it's how much of us they see.

JOE:

It would be nice, though, to see the moon. Or the sun; whatever's outside. Only to get some sense of what time it is.

LIZ:

Look at the clock.

(JOE looks at the night table; there is no clock there. He looks down at the floor, and from underneath the mess, pulls an alarm clock up by its cord. He looks at it.)

What time is it?

JOE:

6:15.

LIZ:

Morning or night?

JOE:

(Dropping the clock:)

I don't know. We've been here too long. Look at you. Liz, you are gorgeous. I wouldn't ever want to give up what the three of us shared last night, and the night before, and however long before that. But let's look at this for what it is.

LIZ:

For what?

JOE:

For what? It's an orgy. Wild, sexual revelry. Complete abandon. But it has to end.

LIZ:

Does it?

JOE:

Yes! At some point, yes. And I think sooner rather than later.

LIZ:

You think Chanel will go for that?

JOE:

I don't think I need to care.

LIZ:

Well, I can certainly see your point. I've almost had my fill of having my fill, but do you know I am not in any way tired? What you're talking about, Joe, is a fatigue. You're seeing this as repetition. In and out, back and forth, two fingers or three. It's a rut.

JOE:

Isn't it?

LIZ:

(Smiles:)

I'm still having fun. There's something about you two, both you and Chanel. I've discovered things that make you squirm, but you never squirm in the same way. A touch on the same spot of Chanel's body elicits a gasp, a moan, a sigh, a giggle. I see the differences.

JOE:

There's a reason for that, you know. The first time, it's good. The second, feels a little numb. The third, that's really chafing. That's the definition of a rut: it wears you down. And I think I'm worn raw all over.

LIZ:

Poor Joe. All rested up and still sore. And Chanel; she's still asleep. But me, I'm up...

(Liz stands. She is wearing a strap-on sex toy.)

And I'm up.

(She approaches JOE, putting her arms around him.)

So how about a game, just the two of us? We'll play Spanish-American War: I'll be the Rough Riders, and you be San Juan Hill.

JOE:

Big stick diplomacy.

LIZ:

Now you're getting the idea....

(Liz takes a bottle of lubricant and pours a small amount into her hand. She begins to apply the lubricant to her strap-on. JOE watches.)

The question is, what part of your body is healed enough to...speak softly to?

JOE:

Listen to yourself. You're talking like a drug addict, trying to find a usable vein.

LIZ:

I'll take a usable vein, if that's what you want to offer me.

JOE:

That certainly sounds erotic.

LIZ:

It is for some people, Joe. But then I suppose you're not the kind of guy who'd want to give himself a Doubting Thomas.

JOE:

A Doubting Thomas? I'm sure I don't want to know what that is.

LIZ:

It's for stigmata fetishists. Men get surgery to put holes in their hands wide enough to...praise the Lord.

JOE:

Amazing.

LIZ:

Human ingenuity! If you don't like the holes you have, make a new one.

JOE:

I'm sure it's a wonderful arts and crafts project, Liz, but I'm not at all in the mood. If anything, I'd like a little more rest.

LIZ:

Have it your way. I guess it's about time for Chanel's wake-up call, anyway.

(She gets onto the bed and kneels, preparing to assault CHANEL.)

JOE:

Liz, leave her alone.

LIZ:

Why?

JOE:

Why? She's in the middle of...

(He walks over to the television.)

Look, Liz; we've got the rest of this video.

(He reads from the box:)

Peeing and Nothingness. Starring Greg Morgan, Perrin Lafayette, and Mariah Wind. So use your imagination and your imaginary phallus, and...whatever.

LIZ:

With two warm bodies in the room you want me to love the latex?

JOE:

Really, I don't care.

LIZ:

You claim you're bored with all this so you want me to sit down and watch TV? That's a lot more boring to me. You complain about your "rut", but watch this and she just

LIZ: (cont.)

does the same thing over and over again.

JOE:

You don't need a weatherman to tell Mariah Wind blows.

LIZ:

Exactly. Just look at her. Is that all there is?

JOE:

Sometimes that's all you need. A girl and a smile. Accessories sold separately.

(JOE glances around; frowns.)

Do you think it's past noon?

LIZ:

Why? Is that the time Mrs. Joe comes home for lunch?

JOE:

(Taken aback; recovering:)

That's quite an interesting question—

LIZ:

I don't expect an interesting answer.

JOE:

Why do you think there is a Mrs. Joe? I haven't said one word.

LIZ:

You don't need to.

JOE:

I make love like a married man.

LIZ:

(Assents:)

You couldn't hide it if you wanted to. Monogamists. You want it all or nothing, and you always get neither. No matter what Chanel and I do that your wife doesn't—and believe me, she doesn't—once you've committed to us you're just as bored here as you are there.

JOE:

My wife does do, in fact. Marlena is willing, and giving—she's sexy. But when we're together, I don't know what's wrong.

LIZ:

A seven year itch, Joe?

JOE:

I don't know.

LIZ:

Let's scratch it.

JOE:

We have. I'm hungry.

LIZ:

Too bad; I'm not taking this off.

(JOE rummages for food.)

JOE:

I don't suppose we planned ahead...?

LIZ:

You mean food? Take some granola along the happy trail?

JOE:

Packing every conceivable vibrating or gliding device: that we don't have a problem with. It's only basic human necessities where we hit a snag. Ah, here's a banana.

(JOE picks it up and begins to peel it.)

LIZ:

That's Chanel's.

JOE:

I'm not the only one taking advantage of a sleeping woman.

(He bites into it.)

LIZ:

She didn't bring it to eat.

JOE:

(Disgusted:)

Oh God....

(He spits out the remaining banana.)

I need something to....

(He grabs a bottle from the dresser and swigs.)

LIZ:

And that's not water.

(JOE spits.)

JOE:

Oh, geez!

LIZ:

But it is water-based.

JOE:

Oh, I'm drinking lube!

(JOE collapses onto the bed and wipes his mouth.)

LIZ:

It helps the banana go down easier.

JOE:

(Recomposing himself:)

Liz, I can't do this anymore. There's nothing to drink, nothing to eat. And let's face it, nothing to screw.

LIZ:

I'm sure I can find something.

JOE:

Liz, Liz; listen to yourself! The way you think.

(Beat.)

I want to know: Liz, do you know what OPP stands for?

LIZ:

OPP?

JOE:

Yes.

LIZ:

I'm down with it.

JOE:

Naughty by Nature. In the song, OPP is Other People's Property. Property's being used as a euphemism for our genitals. There are a million words they could have used for that, but they chose "Property". And I don't think you realize how well that word fits. When you trespass on my "property", it feels like you trespass on my property. I'm violated. And when you vi—

CHANEL:

(From the bed, muffled:)

What are you— Why—? Joe? Chanel?

JOE:

(CHANEL sits up, making herself more visible. She wears feet pajamas with the zipper half-undone and is younger than either JOE or LIZ. She is blindfolded and handcuffed to the bed.)

CHANEL:

Joe, you're boring! Boring! Why are you two talking? Have seeeeeeeeex!

LIZ:

Joe doesn't want to.

CHANEL:

Joe....

JOE:

Chanel, enough is enough.

LIZ:

Joe decided instead to spice things up by giving a little lecture about rap music.

CHANEL:

Are there any rap guys here?

LIZ:

No honey; it's just me and Joe, just as it's always been.

CHANEL:

(Pouting:)

Oh, that's horrible. The things you two put me through. You blindfold me, tie me to the bed, and you don't even have the courtesy to find rap stars to rape me.

JOE:

I've become an endless source of disappointment, Chanel. Just ask Liz.

CHANEL:

Liz, what is he—?

LIZ:

You don't have to shout; I'm right next to you.

CHANEL:

You are? Where are—?

(With her limited reach, CHANEL grabs LIZ's arm. She feels her arm, the side of her body, and, lastly, her strap-on phallus.)

Oh, there you are.

LIZ:

Joe says he's bored, Chanel. He thinks it's time to check out of the hotel and get on with our wives.

CHANEL:

Joe! You have a wife?

JOE:

I'm deeply sorry if I—

CHANEL:

And you want us to get it on with her?

JOE:

What I want, Chanel, is a brand new day. One entirely unlike this one. One where I get up, get out the door, and go to work.

CHANEL:

Work's not much different for me; I'm a teen porn star.

JOE:

And you don't see the monotony in all this?

CHANEL:

Not with the blindfold.

(LIZ removes her blindfold. CHANEL looks at JOE, then laughs.)

Oh, "Boo hoo; I have a wife. I don't want to make love anymore. I'm returning your used panties." I've heard this all before.

LIZ:

(Slyly; an idea:)

Joe, give us twenty minutes.

JOE:

Twenty minutes?

LIZ:

Twenty minutes of abstinence. That will prove our point. After that you can walk out the door, though I very much think you'll stay to play, instead.

JOE:

You seem to think that I'm throwing a temper tantrum. And this is my time-out.

LIZ:

I prefer to discipline with spankings but I think you'd take that the wrong way.

JOE:

You're right.

LIZ:

So, are we agreed to put a moratorium on the orgy?

CHANEL:

I'm not; I just woke up. I don't want to wait.

JOE:

I agree, Liz.

LIZ:

Can we have a show of hands? Those in favor?

(She and JOE raise hands.)

Any opposed?

(She and JOE leave their hands at their sides. CHANEL looks at her bonds, then at LIZ.)

CHANEL:

Oh, ha ha. Ha ha ha.

LIZ:

(Overlapping:)

Then we're decided. For twenty minutes, we'll put aside what we came here for and enjoy a break from the action.

(LIZ sits on the bed and takes out a magazine—Martha Stewart Living?)

CHANEL:

Joe, you don't really want to—?

(But JOE takes his hat, covers his face with it, and lies down against the bed. LIZ flips a page. JOE sleeps. CHANEL looks at them.)

Can I say something?

LIZ:

We won't listen, but go right ahead.

CHANEL:

I think that looking at the two of you like this is scary. You're not doing anything! Meanwhile, I'm wasting valuable time in these restraints.

(JOE snickers.)

What?

JOE:

Valuable? Can you really put a value on your time tied up or on the countless hours that we've spent here? It's been days. If it were up to you, it would be a week more.

CHANEL:

It wouldn't be a week of talking, I'll tell you that.

JOE:

Oh, I'm sure that in a week we could both put our tongues to better use. But for at least the next twenty minutes, I want a break.

CHANEL:

Seriously?

JOE:

After that we have all the time we need.

CHANEL:

I don't.

(CHANEL makes a face.)

Well then, untie me. Please?

JOE:

I don't know, Chanel.... It's keeping you out of trouble.

CHANEL:

You don't tie someone up if you don't want trouble.

JOE:

Liz?

LIZ:

(Throws down her magazine:)

Fine, Chanel; you'll get your freedom.

CHANEL:

Thank you....

(LIZ begins untying CHANEL.)

LIZ:

(To JOE:)

You tie a good knot.

JOE:

I was a Boy Scout.

LIZ:

You should have worn the uniform.

(JOE wags his finger. LIZ frees CHANEL.)

Better?

CHANEL:

I'm horny.

JOE:

I'm hungry. Neither of us are getting what we want.

CHANEL:

Hungry?

JOE:

There's nothing edible in this room.

CHANEL:

Of course there is....

(CHANEL reaches into her outfit and rips off a pair of edible underwear. She throws it at JOE. He stares at it.)

JOE:

(Shrugs:)

Why not?

(He begins to eat the underwear.)

CHANEL:

(Coldly:)

Glad I could satisfy you.

LIZ:

Cheer up, Chanel. After this is over we'll play Spanish-American War. You'll be the soldiers who go down on the Maine. I'll be the Maine.

CHANEL:

OK, but no yellow journalism.

LIZ:

It's a deal.

(LIZ returns to her magazine. CHANEL reaches down and picks up a vibrator. LIZ notices.)

Chanel, what do you think you're doing?

CHANEL:

My vagina.

JOE:

Oh no....

CHANEL:

No one else will!

JOE:

Chanel, I wanted to give you the benefit of the doubt, but it really seems like you don't understand the concept of "no sex for twenty minutes." Why don't you occupy yourself with a magazine like Liz?

CHANEL:

I don't think it would fit. Unless you roll it up.

LIZ:

Chanel—

CHANEL:

(To LIZ:)

Aren't you worried about paper cuts?

LIZ:

Chanel, Joe isn't going to stop his moaning unless we show him a little good faith. So why not put that down for a while?

CHANEL:

No.

(She twists on the vibrator. Nothing happens. She tries again. Still nothing.)

It's out of batteries!

JOE:

(Unsympathetic:)

Oh no!

CHANEL:

I must have left it on all night. Did either of you bring any extra?

LIZ:

No.

JOE:

Sorry.

CHANEL:

What am I supposed to do?

LIZ:

We have jumper cables.

CHANEL:

That won't do any good. Why do we have jumper cables?

LIZ:

Ask Joe's nipples.

(JOE begins to cough, uncomfortable.)

What now?

JOE:

(Feeling his throat:)

What? Nothing. Just a...hair in my food.

CHANEL:

I guess I missed a spot.

JOE:

It's quite all right.

CHANEL:

(To LIZ:)

What about the camera? That has batteries.

LIZ:

It has a battery pack.

CHANEL:

Ohhh!

JOE:

Chanel, perhaps you're not getting the hint. We are ending this endless orgy.

LIZ:

For a limited time.

JOE:

For however long, it means that this is not playtime.

CHANEL:

So that means no batteries.

JOE:

That's right.

LIZ:

Or you could just use the vibrator without any power.

JOE:

No.

CHANEL:

No, I need motion in my ocean. Joe's right.

(She discards the vibrator.)

JOE:

Thank you.

CHANEL:

Oh? Well thank you for nothing. You sure know how to treat a teen porn star; this three-way is going nowhere. Honestly, I shaved my pubes for this?

JOE:

I asked myself the same question. Chanel, you just woke up. Why don't you freshen up—get your head cleared?

CHANEL:

Fine.

(She gets off the bed. The rear flap of her pajamas is unbuttoned, leaving her exposed. She rummages through a bag.)

Here we go.

(Whatever CHANEL has in her hands emits an audible buzz. JOE and LIZ look over.)

LIZ:

Chanel....

CHANEL:

What?

(She displays the object.)

It's an electric toothbrush!

JOE:

Used for what?

CHANEL:

For brushing my teeth!

LIZ:

And what's in that tube?

CHANEL:

Toothpaste!

LIZ:

(To JOE:)

She's got us there.

JOE:

Then brush away....

(CHANEL applies toothpaste and begins to brush. She stands and begins to walk offstage.)

CHANEL:

(Unintelligible, still brushing:)

I need water; I'm heading to the bathroom...

(Before she exits, CHANEL turns and faces JOE, her mouth still full.)

You know, you tell me to freshen up, but why should I freshen up if nothing's going to happen? The mood you're in is terrible. Dental hygiene isn't going to get you hard.

JOE:

What?

(CHANEL grabs JOE's hat and spits into it. She wipes her mouth and tosses it away.)

LIZ:

Chanel's right. Suddenly you've become this soggy, mopey mess. It's embarrassing. And it's because of that wife of yours.

JOE:

It is not because of Marlana.

LIZ:

She can't help it. She's the wife. Monogamy has made both of you into self-flagellating, pleasureless drones. And I believe no one should flagellate himself. It's so much more fun to let other people do it.

JOE:

Liz, I'm not beating myself up. Not over adulterer's guilt. I've had too much of a good thing. That's all. It's the hedonistic equivalent of an ice cream headache.

LIZ:

I don't believe you.

JOE:

Then don't. But know this: I don't make love to you thinking, "Oh, my poor wife. How can I do this to her?" I kiss Chanel and I don't think, "My marriage is a sham. I'm living a lie." I kiss Chanel thinking of Chanel. And I love my wife.

LIZ:

Joe, I'm losing my erection. What's your point?

JOE:

As long as we're being personal, Liz, let me ask: do you have a husband?

LIZ:

Husband? Oh, no no no....

JOE:

Because you certainly seem to be an expert—

LIZ:

Experience. This is what I know. Warning signs.

JOE:

Thank you. I'm just not sure how valid those signs are. Who knows, maybe Chanel's married.

CHANEL:

Oh, no.... I'm way too young....

JOE:

(Overlapping:)

Maybe the only person who should be talking about my wife is her husband. The two of us together—the two of anybody together—only we know what we know.

CHANEL:

I'm not married.

JOE:

Congratulations; you're on the right path to living Life By Liz. All you need is your own strap-on.

LIZ:

Can I talk about somebody I do know?

JOE:

A significant other?

LIZ:

A former significant other; yes.

JOE:

Liz, by all means: be sentimental.

LIZ:

That's not what I'll be doing. Joe, Chanel: this is a warning. Like many people, young and full of hormones, I experimented with monogamy.

JOE:

The gateway drug.

LIZ:

Joe, you're a monogamist. You have at least a few lovers, but you have only one wife. Till death do you part. And you like it that way.

JOE:

I do.

LIZ:

So did I. I had Florence. She was funny, beautiful, a natural blonde. And she loved me. As awful a person as I can be, she was never anything but smiles and kisses. And while I wasn't looking for a significant other, I let it happen. Soon Florence moves in. Soon she's making me dinner. Soon we go to barbecues. With couples. Who have babies.

JOE:

You're only human.

CHANEL:

And it's so romantic, Liz; that's not a bad thing.

LIZ:

You'd think that.

CHANEL:

It sounds like the perfect marriage.

LIZ:

Oh, Florence and I weren't married. She was. I preferred to call what we had—

JOE:

Excuse me, Liz: Florence was married?

LIZ:

She had a husband.

JOE:

But she was living with you?

LIZ:

This is beside the point. Florence and I: we were the couple. Her husband? Her child? You'd be surprised how malleable the sacrament of marriage can be. Just as long as you end up with a one-on-one couple in the end.

JOE:

It doesn't sound like monogamy to me.

LIZ:

I'm sure it wouldn't. Look at us, in this hotel room, sealed up, even from the sunlight. You seem to think of extramarital activity as some sort of disease. Some potential catastrophe. Let it loose and it spreads. Your monogamous world breaks down; all the happily married couples writhe naked in the streets with the neighbors. Block party intimacy.

CHANEL:

It's what's known in my field as the "gray goo" theory.

LIZ:

But there is no breaking point for monogamy. If Florence came home and found me naked with the paperboy, it wouldn't make a difference. Florence wasn't low-maintenance; she was no-maintenance. I never bought her flowers or jewelry. I bought her chocolate once. A specialty brand in a small box; something she liked. We had a function that night; we were dressed up. And afterward we went out to dinner. I gave her the chocolate; no big deal. I came back from the bathroom and Florence told me that the waiter watched me give her the box. He told her that he thought I was going to propose. I looked at Florence and said, "Well, you know better."

JOE:

A true romantic.

LIZ:

That was Liz the Monogamist; I was bad! But monogamy doesn't care how bad you are. Abusive husbands are perfect monogamists; so are battered wives. Maybe they'll die chained to a radiator, but it's better than dying alone. Florence knew that.

CHANEL:

(Jealous:)

You never chained me to a radiator.

LIZ:

I didn't with Florence, either; verbal abuse was enough. I made her unhappy. And she did what unhappy wives do.

JOE:

She left you?

LIZ:

Joe, you of all people should know, bad relationships don't end in breakups, not for the truly committed. For monogamists there's only one way out.

JOE:

I don't like this.

LIZ:

Florence considered it the best option. One night she got up, walked to the kitchen, blew out the pilot light, and turned on the gas. Then she crept back into bed.

CHANEL:

She suffocated.

LIZ:

I suffocated, too.

CHANEL:

But you both recovered, right?

LIZ:

The paramedics were putting oxygen masks on us when I finally asked myself: was I breaking her heart? Did I mean life and death to Florence? I'm not that important. No one's that important. Sex and love deserve better than one-on-one, forever-and-ever. Open hearts deserve open relationships. Joe, don't make Marlana play the suffering wife. Chanel, don't let your porn stars grow up to be housewives. Life's too short.

JOE:

Not in this hotel room.

LIZ:

Florence isn't in this hotel room.

JOE:

My history with monogamy is different, Liz. Let me share.

LIZ:

I don't want to hear about Marlana.

JOE:

This is a high school romance; a different story.

LIZ:

Please, Joe; no one wants to hear about how you never got to second base with Stacey Q. Prom Dress back in the ninth grade.

JOE:

Her name was Margaret A. Prom Dress, actually. And I got past second base.

LIZ:

I underestimated you. In one department.

CHANEL:

I'm impressed, Joe. Most guys in ninth grade never get their hands down to third. Some of them don't even know the way.

LIZ:

Not our Joe. He's the man with his finger on the button.

JOE:

Wait wait wait; that's not third base.

CHANEL:

Of course it is.

LIZ:

Chanel's right. Third base means your fingers—or your lips—are right where they should be.

JOE:

No; that's home plate. Any way you get there is a home run.

LIZ:

Oh, no. A home run is a home run.

JOE:

Not in ninth grade!

CHANEL:

Joe, what did you do with this girl?

JOE:

I got to third base—what I call third base. My hands were definitely under her shirt.

(LIZ and CHANEL groan.)

Oh, come on.

LIZ:

Bra or no bra?

JOE:

(Hesitant:)

I didn't go past the Maidenform.

(LIZ and CHANEL groan louder.)

CHANEL:

Boys are so dumb!

JOE:

My hands went places on a sixteen year old that they'll never be again. I'd like to think that counts for something.

CHANEL:

Not third base!

LIZ:

Your hand up her shirt? Joe, what's first base? Good table manners?

JOE:

None of this matters. The point I wanted to make wasn't about baseball. It's about the soul. You demonize marriage, Liz, but we have soulmates. Each one of us.

LIZ:

Listen to our Joe. A strictly platonic man in a casual encounters world.

JOE:

Somewhere out there is someone who completes you. Who fills in every gap you have.

LIZ:

I've filled in your gaps, Joe. But I guess you mean Marlana.

JOE:

Marlana is wonderful. She is warm, honest, faithful. My wife is everything I'm not.

LIZ:

Opposites attract.

JOE:

But they don't get any less opposite. Marlana has qualities—good qualities—that I've never understood. I've been envious of her. I can't equal her, in any way. And I can't look at her without seeing that.

(To LIZ:)

I wasn't lying when I said none of this would be out of bounds for her. Anything that went on in this hotel room she would have participated in and enjoyed. But she can't do what I need the most. She can't be imperfect.

LIZ:

Boo hoo.

JOE:

Go ahead; laugh. But you're the same as me; none of us can equal my wife. Marlana does things for me neither of you could do.

CHANEL:

She lets you pee in her mouth?

JOE:

No.

CHANEL:

Because I wouldn't do that.

JOE:

That's not what I'm talking about, Chanel.

CHANEL:

People have tried, but I say—

JOE:

Chanel, I do not pee in my wife's mouth.

(Beat.)

Besides, I can't go while someone's watching.

CHANEL:

She could close her eyes.

LIZ:

She should close her eyes anyway.

JOE:

I think this proves my point; I bare my soul, and you two mistake it for something else.

LIZ:

Sorry....

JOE:

No; no it's my fault. I should think the next time before I start to wax nostalgia.

CHANEL:

Who's Nostalgia? Is she stubbly?

JOE:

Chanel, you amaze me.

CHANEL:

(Crossing to the phone:)

That's why I'm a Jeremy Award winner. What's your phone number?

JOE:

Why?

CHANEL:

I'm calling your wife.

JOE:

To expose me?

CHANEL:

To invite her!

JOE:

No, Chanel—

CHANEL:

Yes. Joe, why should we have all the fun?

JOE:

Chanel—

CHANEL:

You're married to her; you like her. She likes pee....

LIZ:

Chanel, I'm not sure we should all at once reveal ourselves to Joe's wife.

CHANEL:

Oh, if Joe's been here this long she must know he has some secrets. Joe didn't tell us about Marlana until now; he's concealing something from everybody. It's just like Albert Camus said: "We all have a face that we hide away forever, and we take them out and show ourselves when everyone has gone."

JOE:

"The Stranger?"

CHANEL:

(Gently correcting his French:)

"L'Étranger".... So come on, Joe; what's the number?

JOE:

You're not calling my wife.

CHANEL:

I'm calling your wife.

LIZ:

(To CHANEL:)

Tell her to buy batteries on the way.

CHANEL:

Definitely.

JOE:

I'm not going to give you the number, Chanel; put down the phone.

CHANEL:

Can I just say that is selfish of you, Joe? That is really selfish. You coop your wife up at home when she could be here with a teenage porn star and a lady with a big penis. I want to tell her that.

LIZ:

Well, Chanel, we should be truthful.

CHANEL:

I know it's not a real penis...

LIZ:

I'm talking about you, Chanel. You're not a real teenager.

(CHANEL sets the phone down.)

CHANEL:

Excuse me?

LIZ:

You see it, don't you Joe? She's not 18 or 19.

CHANEL:

I'm sorry, have you seen my movies? I'm not described as "Lean, Obscene and Totally Twentysomething" on the packaging.

LIZ:

I could care less about your film credits; I've seen your driver's license.

(CHANEL gasps.)

Your purse is right over there, wide open. And you're no teenager.

CHANEL:

Liz....

LIZ:

(To JOE:)

Our damsel this evening is the ripe old age of 25.

CHANEL:

Oh my God....

LIZ:

Just this week, actually. Happy Birthday.

CHANEL:

(Advancing on her:)

How could you, Liz?

LIZ:

I'm sorry; I should have bought a present.

(To JOE:)

Twenty-five years is silver, right?

JOE:

Only in a relationship.

LIZ:

(A gasp of mock surprise:)

And here we are, in a relationship! Do you need any flatwear, Chanel?

CHANEL:

Leave me alone!

(CHANEL sulks, JOE approaches her.)

JOE:

Chanel, you're 25.

CHANEL:

Joe, don't remind—

JOE:

You're the youngest person in this room. And you're beautiful.

LIZ:

You're a quarter-century of loveliness.

JOE:

Chanel, no one could possibly think that getting a little older has taken any of your appeal away from you.

CHANEL:

You're wrong there.

JOE:

My opinion of you hasn't changed in the least, and no matter what Liz says she feels the same.

CHANEL:

Do you know how I spent my birthday?

JOE:

No.

CHANEL:

I spent it at work.

JOE:

Then I think I can guess.

CHANEL:

I began the day under the impression that I would be receiving a contract and shooting schedule for "Double-Stuffed Debutantes Volume Six". Instead, my producer Ezra Pounds pulled me into his office and told me he was letting me go. I said, "Ezra, don't do this!" But he said that the company has a policy of "All Teen, All the Time". And my violations were in violation.

JOE:

So, five years after your teenage years, you're all of a sudden no longer a teen porn star.

CHANEL:

Ezra said he could get me a job with something non-teen, but what does that mean? That's just a step away from granny porn.

JOE:

Chanel, can't you just do "porn"? Do they still make "porn" porn? Or nowadays does everyone have to have a fetish?

CHANEL:

Nobody hires a general practitioner anymore.

JOE:

Well, Chanel, I don't know what to tell you.

CHANEL:

There's nothing you could say! I've spent the last thirteen years of my life as a teenager. I don't know how to be anything else!

LIZ:

That's the beauty of being here, Chanel. It doesn't matter what age you are. Joe and I aren't going to fire you.

CHANEL:

But it's gone! As recently as last week on the set, I could be a teenager. No matter what my license said. Then I lost that. When I came here, it was the only refuge I had left. But you found out.

LIZ:

But we never believed you.

CHANEL:

Well it's the same result. I'm old and I'm unemployed and I've lost my appetite for sex.

(She stands.)

Where's my jacket?

LIZ:

You're leaving?

(CHANEL takes a jacket from the floor and begins to put it on.)

CHANEL:

Why not? The illusion is gone. I wanted my fantasy teen porn star fantasy, and you took that fantasy away from me!

LIZ:

Chanel....

JOE:

Never reveal a woman's age, Liz.

CHANEL:

Thank you.

(JOE also stands, ready to leave.)

JOE:

And Liz, as much as I've enjoyed your company this era, I think Chanel has the right idea. All good things must come to an end.

LIZ:

If not at the end.

CHANEL:

Or in her end.

JOE:

I think the end is now. Happy birthday, Chanel.

CHANEL:

Don't remind me.

JOE:

(Slight wave:)

Liz....

LIZ:

Are you really going to drive home to Marlana dressed like that?

JOE:

Perhaps.

(A beat.)

You know, I'll remember this as a beautiful thing.

(No reaction.)

Well, goodbye.

(JOE grabs the doorknob as CODY enters. He is wide-eyed and resembles an overgrown fraternity brother. He carries a bag.)

CODY:

Hey Joe! Liz, Chanel; I am the man, I am the provider. I'm Santa Claus and here's my bag of toys.

JOE:

Cody.

CHANEL:

Hi, Cody.

(CODY sets the bag down and begins removing sex toys.)

CODY:

All right, Chanel, I found just what you wanted: your own personal Jesus.

(He tosses her a toy.)

CHANEL:

Thanks, Cody.

CODY:

Reach out and touch faith.

CHANEL:

Who's Faith?

CODY:

And my dear Elizabeth, I have something you can wear to work: Adam Smith's Invisible Hand.

(He presents her with a butterfly vibrator.)

LIZ:

Cody, what can I say? You know me.

CODY:

Ha, you bet I do. Hey, Joe?

JOE:

Cody?

CODY:

Get away from the door. Have a seat; Santa's not done.

JOE:

Am I getting coal in my stocking?

CODY:

Not in your stocking, dude.

(He throws a toy at JOE.)

JOE:

Cody, what is this?

CODY:

It's a mouth, man; just look at it. It has a tongue. You know what to do.

JOE:

(Displaying it:)

Cody, it has a mustache.

CODY:

So?

JOE:

So, I— It has a mustache!

CODY:

What do you want me to say, man? Just close your eyes and think of Tom Selleck.

JOE:

Thank you.

CODY:

So that's it. I came bearing gifts. And what did I miss during this passion mash?

LIZ:

I would say everything, Cody. Joe and Chanel just announced they were ready to leave.

CODY:

Leave?

JOE:

Well....

CODY:

No, that's wrong; that's an indignity! You three are on your way to beat the record! You can't quit now!

CHANEL:

There's a record?

CODY:

Yeah, I think the Longfellow Brothers had something like a week and a half.

JOE:

And who records this, Guinness?

CODY:

I'll record it. And yes, I'd love a Guinness.

LIZ:

What a noble effort. Chanel, make yourself back up; we owe it to history.

CODY:

You got it, Liz; rock out with your prosthetic out! This is what I came here for! Let me hit the W.C. and then we'll get to it.

(He exits to the bathroom.)

LIZ:

(To JOE:)

I thought you said Cody wouldn't be here.

JOE:

He said he had another orgy.

CODY:

(Offstage:)

Hey, what a bathroom! You three really went all out!

LIZ:

Did we?

(CODY returns, wearing a bathrobe.)

CODY:

And that shower stall; right on! You could fit a man, a woman, another woman, and a cameraman in there!

CHANEL:

I know.

CODY:

But I guess you couldn't test that out, huh? It's only been the three of you. Man, I really regret that I didn't make it earlier. But hey, I'm here now; that's why dildos come with erasers, right?

JOE:

Cody, that's a pencil.

CODY:

Dude, anything shaped like that that says "Number Two" on it, I can figure out what it's used for.

(CODY pulls his robe tighter.)

It's cold in here; I'm like a mushy walnut. Are any of you...?

(He eyes them.)

Hey, what's got everybody so down? Chanel, where's your youthful teen exuberance?

CHANEL:

I have youthful teen exuberance?

CODY:

You're nubile, baby!

CHANEL:

I'm not African....

(Or "Well, I am African....")

CODY:

So what's wrong, then?

CHANEL:

Oh, nothing you can't take care of, Cody.

CODY:

(Taking off her jacket, he looks her over:)

She knows how to talk to me....

(CODY tosses the coat on the floor. He notices a bottle and picks it up.)

Hey, what's this? I told you guys to change your anal lube every three months or every 3,000 miles.

JOE:

Miles of what?

CODY:

Wouldn't you like to know.

CHANEL:

Don't pay any attention to him, Cody. He's been in a foul mood ever since his wife wouldn't let him pee in her mouth.

CODY:

Well, Joe, you've got to be careful with that. Does she have any piercings? Cause then your sun tea, it might rust it away, uric acid and all that. That's unless it's a silver piercing; then it's like a tarnish. And don't eat any asparagus.

LIZ:

(Getting up:)

Cody, stop talking and bend over.

CODY:

Huh?

(He notices her phallus.)

Whoa! Now that's an oil rig!

LIZ:

Just call me J.R. Ewing; I'm drilling for black gold.

CODY:

I don't know Liz; that might be too fleshy for me.

(Liz looks down and pulls the phallus out of the strap. She replaces it with a more modest model.)

LIZ:

Mazel Tov.

CODY:

Liz, I've got to tell the truth; I can't do any backend server maintenance. I was at this wild party last week—and I mean really wild. I'm talking about I still have the electric bug zapper marks on my back. And the helium balloons. I'm still in recovery. I mean, I found my Ben-Wa balls, but I still can't find my keys. And every time I sit down, my trunk pops open.

LIZ:

Pity.

CODY:

But that doesn't mean we can't pretzel ourselves some other way. My Vlassic is primed and pumped.

(He puts an arm around CHANEL.)

What do you say, Chanel? You want Liz to get over here so you can rotisserie for a while?

CHANEL:

Mmmm, that's tempting....

CODY:

Don't tease me, Chanel, do you want it? You want my Spool-Aid? My Wang-Tang? My Slutty Delight? My Hawaiian Munch? My Welch's Grape Jizz? In your juice box?

CHANEL:

I do....

CODY:

And you, too, Joe. Room for one more.

JOE:

Cody, your enthusiasm is commendable, but I'm going home.

(LIZ and CHANEL groan.)

LIZ:

What is it about men, Cody? We sodomize you a little bit and you turn into big babies.

JOE:

That's a completely different fetish!

CODY:

This is not a male issue. People just get hung up. It happened to me last night. I'm with this girl—young girl; younger than Chanel. We're aligning the chakras, and I feel that I'm getting close. I ask her where she wants it, cause I don't know if she wants to make a meal out of it, or get the shampoo plus conditioner, or maybe even a little return- to-sender; you know, I can be into that. So you know what she tells me? she tells me to go nuge in her sink. In her sink, man! And it's not even like it's in the room; I have to walk down the hall into the bathroom to take the shot. And I'm thinking what's the point? That's not sexy. It's not intimate at all. Even if she's not into the swim team, she's got to know you completely chill the mood when you say you don't want to be in the same room as an orgasm. And it's such a double standard, man; such a double standard. So I have to have my face halfway up to her navel when she's percolating, but when I'm doing it it's got to be in the bathroom? Some girls, man.... And I drank a lot of pineapple juice for her....

(He walks to CHANEL.)

But you wouldn't do that to me, right Chanel?

CHANEL:

Hmmm?

CODY:

Oh, look at you. You're good to me. You'd let me gumdrop on you, right?

(CODY begins undoing his robe.)

CHANEL:

(Preoccupied:)

Oh....

CODY:

Yeah, we can make it happen.

CHANEL:

Can I ask you a question, Cody?

CODY:

Fire it up.

CHANEL:

How old do you think I am?

CODY:

(He stops, with his robe loose at his ankles.)

Oh, this is one of those "women and their ages" questions....

CHANEL:

It is, it is; I'm sorry Cody. But I really need to know.

CODY:

Aw, well honey, you know, I'd have to say... 22.

(CHANEL gasps. Immediately, CODY responds.)

CODY: (cont.)

23?

(CHANEL lets out a cry and turns away.)

Ah, 2? 1? Aw, Chanel. Chanel, baby, I'm sorry.

CHANEL:

Oh, Cody. You think I'm too old!

CODY:

No, honey, I never think that.

CHANEL:

But you wouldn't think I was 18 or 19?

CODY:

Well, Chanel, you know, you're an advanced girl. A teenager, she's still perfecting her technique; no teeth and everything. But you, you've got all that down. You're no amateur.

CHANEL:

But I am! Trailer Park Teen Amateurs I, II, and IV!

JOE:

You didn't grow up a trailer park. Your family owns a resort.

CHANEL:

Joe, I'm an actress. I was playing a trailer park teen.

LIZ:

So why can't you now play someone who's 25?

CODY:

(To CHANEL:)

Whoa, you're 25?

CHANEL:

Oh! You see? No one wants me!

CODY:

No, Chanel, that's not true; that's not true at all! Every time I look at you, I can't go a minute without thinking about my prong in your gash!

CHANEL:

(Anguished:)

But I'm 25!

(CHANEL breaks down in tears. CODY brings her closer, allowing her to cry on his shoulder.)

CODY:

Oh, baby; baby, don't cry....

(CODY pats CHANEL's back in support. At the same time, he removes her arm from around his neck, placing her hand on his crotch.)

CHANEL:

25!

CODY:

No, that's not old, Chanel.

CHANEL:

(Breaking away:)

But you don't think I still look like a teenager?

CODY:

Oh, baby, I think you can look the part, but you know, it's not about looks, it's about—like I said—it's about the experience.

CHANEL:

So I don't act like a teenager?

CODY:

Oh, you know, honey....

LIZ:

Cody, enough of this. Just tell her to stop doing teen porn.

CODY:

(Turning to LIZ:)

Now wait a minute; I think—

(CODY takes one step and falls flat onto the ground, tripping over his robe. Silence. Then a high-pitched squeal from CODY.)

LIZ:

Are you all right?

CODY:

My love sprinkler!

(A collective rolling of the eyes.)

I'll never walk again!

JOE:

Of course you will.

CODY:

Not on my third leg!

(LIZ and CHANEL help CODY to his feet, banging his head into LIZ's phallus on the way up. CODY limps around, testing his bearings. Pulling his briefs from his body, he inspects himself.)

It's V-shaped!

CHANEL:

Oh, Cody!

JOE:

Well, it's official. What began as sexual ecstasy has ended in genital mutilation.

CODY:

End? What do you mean by—?

JOE:

Cody, you've damaged yourself, and I—

CODY:

You're staying, Joe. This thing is bigger than you, bigger than all four of us! You've created something beautiful here—AAH!

(LIZ has forced CODY to his knees.)

What are you doing?

LIZ:

Grab hold of something.

(CODY grabs her phallus with both hands. Without another warning, LIZ lifts his back leg, spreading his leg from his body and holding it there. CODY cries in pain. LIZ spans him once for effect, then releases him. CODY collapses on his back.)

Feel better?

CODY:

Yes?

JOE:

What did you do?

LIZ:

Something to stop the rush of blood to his head.

CODY:

(Frozen in position:)

Joe, if I don't make it through, you have to take my place. You have to stay.

JOE:

I've had too much of a good thing, Cody. Not even Liz has a cure for that.

LIZ:

Of course I do:

(She pushes CODY to the ground—still part of the therapy.)

More.

CODY:

Hey, it worked!

JOE:

Cody, I have cabin fever.

CHANEL:

Cabin fever? Joe, you said you were clean!

CODY:

Hey, listen—

CHANEL:

Now my career is really over!

CODY:

No, Chanel, you don't have cabin fever.

CHANEL:

Well, I'm still old!

CODY:

Hold up a minute, all right? Joe wants a change of scenery, Chanel wants to be young again, and Liz...?

LIZ:

I just want to get laid.

CODY:

Right. And I've got the solution for all of you—another orgy!

JOE:

What?

CODY:

Another orgy! With Ambrose Jones at his beachhouse! A bunch of his buddies will be there. And a half-dozen honeys, not even counting you two. Six women! That's like a golf course!

JOE:

Cody, what makes you think we're even interested in—?

LIZ:

Oh, shut up, Joe; of course we are, right Chanel?

CHANEL:

Right.

LIZ:

Is that good enough, or do you want to take another vote?

JOE:

What I want is not here, and it's not with Ambrose Jones.

CODY:

Don't say that, Joe; 'Bro has got one regular who I think is your type. She's got this raven hair that goes halfway down her back, real straight. And—

JOE:

Please, Cody.

CODY:

No, Joe, all the guys I've seen her with agree. She is a natural beauty, a total natural. Even the way you hold her, man. She's got these two birthmarks. One's shaped like a crescent moon for your right hand, halfway between her belly button and her left side. The other's around her back, just at the...

JOE AND CODY:

(Together:)

...top of her right shoulder blade.

(CODY stops.)

JOE:

Shaped like a strawberry.

(Beat.)

Marlena.

(CHANEL gasps. LIZ begins to laugh.)

CHANEL:

(Amazement:)

Joe, oh my God!

CODY:

What?

LIZ:

(Still laughing:)

She's his wife!

CODY:

Marlena's your wife? Geez, Joe, I didn't know!

CHANEL:

Neither did he!

CODY:

I mean, she wasn't wearing a ring. On her finger.

LIZ:

Joe, if you want to go home, go home. But if you want the loving embrace of your wife....

CODY:

Looks like you should come with us, man.

JOE:

To see my wife. Do you think I'll have to stand in line?

CODY:

Heh, you must be this tall to ride. Joe, don't worry about it. This just means that you know you've found the right girl for you...and others.

LIZ:

I think this clinches it. We're taking a field trip. Start packing, Chanel.

CHANEL:

(Already stuffing items into a duffel bag:)

I am.

CODY:

All right; yeah! Let's turn that lubricant into "lubri-can"! And hurry up, too; this is one of those things where you don't want to come late. Like when you have to eat the cookie in the basement in middle school.

CHANEL:

What?

CODY:

Don't worry about it.

LIZ:

I think there's a lesson in this for you, Joe. I really do. You're not the only one who feels overwhelmed. But when other people say "Stop the world, I want to get off," they mean something completely different.

JOE:

Cute.

CODY:

Joe, relax! Think of it like a family reunion. There's even a sack race!

LIZ:

Are you packed?

JOE:

I never had anything to unpack.

LIZ:

Then let's go.

CODY:

Excellent! This is going to be so sweet. Oh, Chanel, you'll know someone there, too.

CHANEL:

Oh yeah?

CODY:

Yeah, Ezra Pounds.

(CHANEL freezes, JOE and LIZ look on.)

CHANEL:

Ezra?

CODY:

Yeah, isn't he your producer?

(CHANEL is silent.)

Yeah, what a guy. Every time I see him he's got a teenager on each arm, and another on his—

CHANEL:

I can't go.

CODY:

Huh?

CHANEL:

I can't face him, not now.

CODY:

He could take you from the back.

CHANEL:

No!

LIZ:

Chanel, come on....

CHANEL:

Liz, he's done with me! I'd only be reminded of what I don't have.

JOE:

(Retreating from the door.)

That's how I feel.

CODY:

OK, wait; now all of a sudden everybody's not going?

JOE:

It would be a change of scenery, but the same miserable situation. Liz can go.

LIZ:

(Looking from CODY to JOE and CHANEL:)

No.

CODY:

So it's just me. Alone with a dozen other people. Ankle-deep in Astroglide.

LIZ:

Have fun, Cody.

CODY:

I'll miss you guys.

(He starts to exit.)

JOE:

Cody. When you see Marlana....

CODY:

Don't worry, dude. I'll pull out.

(He exits.)

CHANEL:

(To herself:)

I can't go out anymore....

LIZ:

Chanel....

CHANEL:

I don't have a job. I don't have a social life. I don't have my youth!

LIZ:

Chanel, calm down.

JOE:

Why? She's right. What do any of us have outside this room? Everything's changed.

LIZ:

Joe.

JOE:

I don't know how to go home anymore.

LIZ:

Joe, Chanel, the two of you: stop moping. Watch the video.

(JOE looks at the paused film while CHANEL plays idly with the surrounding toys. JOE approaches the television. He stares at Mariah Wind. He laughs.)

JOE:

You know, Mariah Wind only had to do this once. We're watching this for the sixth or seventh time; we could put it on repeat forever. But she only has to live it once. We don't get that luxury. Liz, I was telling you before about Naughty By Nature. OPP. But other people's property, that's not the messy part. It's not our physical entanglements, it's the social ones that explain why Mariah Wind gets to act and walk away while we stay on and on and on. I'm looking at this woman on the screen and I understand. There's no need for the last P. OPP is other people!

CHANEL:

(Staring at the "Personal Jesus".)

You haven't taken that off since we got here....

JOE:

What?

CHANEL:

I mean Liz. Her and that strap-on.

LIZ:

I haven't heard any complaints until now.

CHANEL:

No one's gotten to you. You boss us around and you hide behind that thing all the time.

LIZ:

What can I say? I am comfortable in control.

(CHANEL turns on her vibrator.)

CHANEL:

I'm going to make you lose it.

(CHANEL approaches LIZ, who backs toward the bed.)

LIZ:

Chanel, I honestly don't see how this is an issue. If you wanted—

(CHANEL silences LIZ with a full kiss on the lips. In the same instant, CHANEL pushes the vibrator beneath LIZ's panties and pins her to the bed. LIZ struggles and the two tumble off the other side of the bed, now unseen. They both grunt, LIZ begins gasping. After a moment LIZ begins moaning, pulling the covers off the bed and towards her. She stops struggling and lets out a series of deeper moans in release. CHANEL stands, walks around the bed, and blows across the "barrel" of her vibrator. LIZ peeks her head out, grinning.)

Was I convincing?

CHANEL:

You faked it?

LIZ:

Straight out of the Meg Ryan playbook. Oh, you crazy creature; there's no getting to me.

CHANEL:

But I—my Personal Jesus!

JOE:

You didn't change a thing, Chanel. We started this way and we're stuck this way.

CHANEL:

Forever and ever....

LIZ:

Well, Joe, as long as I have this off....

(She picks up a saddle with a phallus mounted on it for the rider.)

Shall we saddle up?

(JOE looks at LIZ. Then at CHANEL. He gets on all fours.)

JOE:

Well, well, let's get on with it.

(LIZ comes around with the saddle as the lights fade.)