

08_Seeing the Thing_Dave-Rhonda_30s-40s

limits of Almost, Maine. Rhonda and Dave — the snowmobilers — enter, kicking the snow off their boots. They are carrying their snowmobile helmets and are dressed in layer upon layer upon layer of snowmobile/winter clothing. Dave has a present — a wrapped painting — behind his back. Beat.

RHONDA. *(She is not comfortable with having Dave in her house. This is a first.)* Okay. This is it. You're in. You're inside.

DAVE. This is the porch. *(He'd like to go further inside.)*

RHONDA. It's winterized. *(This is as far as he's getting. Beat.)* So, Dave: *What?!* What do you gotta do in here that you couldn't do outside?

DAVE. Well, I got somethin', here, for ya, here. *(He presents his wrapped gift, creating "awkward present beat #1.")*

RHONDA. What's this?

DAVE. It's — . It's — . It's — . *(Changing the subject, explosively dispelling the tension.)* Boy, that was fun tonight, Rhonda! >

RHONDA. Yeah, was!

DAVE. I mean, twenty miles out there, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. beans and franks at the Snowmobile Club, >

RHONDA. Yeah!

DAVE. twenty miles back, coupla beers at The Moose Paddy!

RHONDA. Awesome!

DAVE. Yeah, and, boy, you flew on your new sled, // man!

RHONDA. It's a Polaris *(Say, "pull-AIR-iss." Polaris is a brand of snowmobile.)*, man!

DAVE. I know, and you whupped *(“Whupped” sounds like “looked” or “cooked.”)* my butt!

RHONDA. Yeah! That's what you get for ridin' an Arctic Cat: *(Arctic Cat is a competing brand of snowmobile.)* Ya get yer butt whupped! And I whupped it!

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped your butt!

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped it!

DAVE. I know!

RHONDA. Whupped your butt, Arctic Cat-Man!!

DAVE. I know, I know, I'm not sayin' ya didn't!

RHONDA. *(Settling down.)* That was fun. *(Beat. Everything stops)*

again. They look at the wrapped gift. Call this “awkward present beat #2.”)

DAVE. So, this is, um ... Well, we been ... together now —

RHONDA. (*Scoffing.*) Together?

DAVE. Well —

RHONDA. Together?!? What are you *talkin'* about, “together”???

DAVE. Well, we been friends for quite a few years // now, and, well —

RHONDA. You gettin' all girl on me?

DAVE. — *shh!* — and, and, and — ... And, here. (*He presents her with his gift.*)

RHONDA. (*These two don't give each other presents.*) What are you doin' here, bud?

DAVE. Open it.

RHONDA. “Together.” Hmm. I don't know about this ...

DAVE. Just open it.

RHONDA. (*She opens the present downstage center. The present — a wrapped canvas painting — must be opened in such a way that the audience cannot see what it is. Once Rhonda opens it, she props the painting up against a crate — still so that the audience can't see it. She has no idea what it is a painting is of. Beat.*) What is it?

DAVE. What do you mean, what is it? Can't you ... see what // it is —

RHONDA. It's a picture ...

DAVE. Yeah ...

RHONDA. A paintin'.

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. Where'd you get this? It looks homemade.

DAVE. What do you mean, it looks homemade?

RHONDA. Looks like someone really painted it.

DAVE. Well, someone really *did* paint it.

RHONDA. (*Realizing.*) Did you paint this?

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. For me?

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. Oh ... (*She has no idea what it is, what to make of it.*) Why?!?

DAVE. Well — ... (*He painted it 'cause he thinks the whole world of her.*)

RHONDA. I mean ... thank you! // Thank you, thanks, yeah.

DAVE. There you go!, that's what people say!, there you go! You're

welcome.

RHONDA. (*Sitting in chair, center, staring at her painting.*) So, Dave ... I didn't know you *Painted*.

DAVE. Yeah. This is — ... (*Turns his painting right side up — Rhonda propped it up wrong. Then:*) I'm takin' adult ed art. At nights. Merle Haslem over at the high school's teachin' it, it's real good. And this is my version of one of those stare-at-it-until-you-see-the-thing things. Ever seen one of these? Some of the old painters did it with dots. They called it — ... (*Searches, but can't quite come up with "pointillism."*) somethin' ... but I did it with a buncha little blocks of colors, see, and if you just look at the blocks of colors, it's just colors, but if you step back and look at the whole thing, it's not just little blocks of colors, it's a picture of something.

RHONDA. Picture of what?

DAVE. I'm not gonna tell you, you have to figure it out.

RHONDA. Oh, come on, Dave!

DAVE. No, it takes a little time, it can be a little frustrating.

RHONDA. Well, why would you give me somethin' that's gonna frustrate?!?

DAVE. No, no, no, I just mean you gotta not *try* to look for anything, that's what'll frustrate you. You gotta just *kinda* look at it, so it doesn't *know* you're lookin' at it.

RHONDA. What're you talkin' about?

DAVE. You gotta trick it! (*Demonstrates "tricking it" — steals glances at it as he walks by it.*) Trick it! (*More demonstrations.*) See? Trick it, trick it! Gotta not let it know. And hopefully you'll eventually see what it is. It's a common thing, it's somethin' everybody knows. (*Rhonda tries "trickin' it" a few times, like Dave did. This "trickin' it" business should be pretty darn funny.*) There ya go, there ya go!

RHONDA. (*Gives up on "trickin' it."*) This is stupid. I don't see anything.

DAVE. No, you were doin' good!

RHONDA. Dave!

DAVE. All right, all right, then, do this: Do what you usually do around the house at night, and check it out real casual-like, (*Demonstrating.*) and —

RHONDA. I usually have a Bud and talk to you on the phone.

DAVE. Well, do that. Where's the kitchen? (*Starting into the house.*) // I'll get you a Bud, and you can talk to me —

RHONDA. (*Stopping him — she doesn't want him going inside.*) N-

n-n-n-no! >

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. I'm outta Bud. Only got Natty Lite.

DAVE. (*Starting back into the house.*) All right, I'll get you a Natty Lite, // and you can have your beer and talk to me —

RHONDA. (*Stopping him.*) N-n-no!

DAVE. Why not? Come on, let's go inside and get us a coupla beers! >

RHONDA. No! (*Back to the painting.*) We gotta trick this thing, right? See? I'm trickin' it, I'm trickin' it! Trickin' it, I'm trickin' it!

DAVE. It's what people who've known each other for a long time do. *Come on!! HEY!!!* (*Stopping her "trickin' it" routine.*) Quit it!! How many years I know ya, I come all the way out here every Friday night, and I never been inside your house for beers?! That's unnatural. It's unnatural, // Rhonda! So let's do what's the *natural* thing to do and go inside and have some beers — !

RHONDA. I don't care what it is, I gotta trick this thing. Hey! Hey-hey-hey, *DAVE!!* Quit runnin' your *suck!!* I gotta look. At this thing. (*She sits; stares straight at the painting, which frustrates Dave.*)

DAVE. You're doin' it wrong!

RHONDA. Shh!

DAVE. You gotta trick it, you gotta trick it! —

RHONDA. Hey-hey-hey!, okay, okay!! I got somethin'!

DAVE. Yeah?

RHONDA. Yeah! Yeah-yeah-yeah: Roadkill.

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. Roadkill. Dead raccoon in the middle of the road.

DAVE. What? No! That's not what it is! —

RHONDA. Okay, deer. Dead bloody deer // in the middle of the road —

DAVE. What?!? No!! Rhonda! It's not // a dead deer in the middle of the road!!

RHONDA: Okay, moose. >

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. Dead bloody moose in the middle of the road.

DAVE. *RHONDA!!!* No!!! No!!! That's not somethin' I'd wanna *paint!!!* // That's not even close to what it is! Dead *moose!!!* Come on!!!

RHONDA. Well, that's what I see, I don't know what it is, don't get *mad*, Jeezum Crow!

DAVE. You don't see what it is!?

RHONDA. No.