

VOLLARD PLAY, by Bill True -- SCENE CUTTING

(RENOIR'S studio. MADAME RENOIR enters with a handful of paintbrushes.)

MADAME RENOIR

I have clean brushes. I know that you are never satisfied when Gabriele washes them, so I have taken it upon myself. Here are six.

(She places the brushes in a cup on RENOIR'S worktable. She bustles around, but stops. She looks at RENOIR, sitting in his wheelchair and staring into space.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

What is this? No painting?

RENOIR

I am taking a break.

MADAME RENOIR

Are you feeling all right? Are you ill?

RENOIR

I am fine. It is just a break.

MADAME RENOIR

Do not take too long. Your pot of flowers will wilt, and fifteen francs will be wasted.

RENOIR

These flowers will see life before they die. Never worry, mademoiselle.

MADAME RENOIR

I am no mademoiselle.

RENOIR

Ah...but you are.

MADAME RENOIR

Your brain is as twisted as your hands, Auguste Renoir. I am an old woman, and you are an old man.

(RENOIR pinches her behind. She jumps.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

A very dirty old man.

(He reaches for her again.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

I have no time for games. I am an old woman.

RENOIR

Nonsense! You are the most fresh, most exquisite flower to have ever graced my sight. More so than the day I met you.

MADAME RENOIR

You are delirious.

RENOIR

If only a flower had your radiance.

MADAME RENOIR

When did you last take your medicine?

RENOIR

Take off your dress.

MADAME RENOIR

Auguste!

RENOIR

Let me paint you in the nude.

MADAME RENOIR

You are mad! I will do no such thing!

RENOIR

But you must. You are ravishing.

MADAME RENOIR

You have Gabriele and all of her assistants. You want a plump and voluptuous and young thing to do your painting with. Not an old hag.

RENOIR

In the presence of your beauty, mademoiselle, everything else pales. Even this lovely bouquet, which you have brought for me today to paint.

(He motions to the bouquet.)

RENOIR (Continued)

And I will say that today's arrangement is quite exceptional. How I admire the way you arrange flowers. Such caprice. So natural. Thrown together so in that clay pot...effortless.

MADAME RENOIR

Oh, yes. Without so much as a thought. Thrown together.

(She turns to leave.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

I am going downstairs. I will be in the garden if you need anything.

RENOIR

Art truly is an enigma, is it not?

MADAME RENOIR

What are you muttering?

RENOIR

Art. Painting. The art of painting a picture is a mystery, do you not think?

MADAME RENOIR

I know nothing about painting, Auguste.

RENOIR

Which is exactly my point. Does it bother you that you know nothing about it?

MADAME RENOIR

Now you are rambling. Take your medicine.

RENOIR

There is a point to this. Is it a bother to you?

MADAME RENOIR

No. No...it is not a bother. Except, of course, that most days I wish I understood what happens in that head of yours.

(He looks at her like an expectant puppy. She softens, grows wistful.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

Possibly, I wish...

RENOIR

What? What do you wish?

MADAME RENOIR

It does not bother me. Why do you ask me such questions?

RENOIR

Vollard. Poor Vollard, that is why. So resolute, he is. So ardent, his desire to paint a picture for himself. He cannot, and it devastates him. And I am left perplexed.

MADAME RENOIR

Not everyone in the world is meant to be a painter.

RENOIR

Painting is the universal communicator!
(MORE)

RENOIR (Continued)

Art is the cement that binds our world together. Makes it whole! Comprehensible!

MADAME RENOIR

They are pretty pictures.

RENOIR

I would die here and now if I could will all of my talent to Vollard!

MADAME RENOIR

How you talk!

RENOIR

It is true! I have lived a full life!

MADAME RENOIR

And that would leave me with nothing but a dead and cold body, which I would have the trouble of burying, while poor Monsieur Vollard-

RENOIR

He deserves it!

MADAME RENOIR

It that so? And you--you alone decide this? Who deserves what?

(She starts down the stairs.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

I am going to my garden.

RENOIR

Are you angry with me?

MADAME RENOIR

I am not angry.

RENOIR

You are, too, angry. I always know that you are angry when you say, I am not angry.

(She takes a moment.)

MADAME RENOIR

Not everyone must live the life of the artist, Auguste. It is not meant for them.

RENOIR

What do you mean?

MADAME RENOIR

He has a wife and a family...a very good family. A good life. Monsieur Vollard should concern himself with that. He has a good life.

RENOIR

And we..? Have we not had a good life?

MADAME RENOIR

That is not what I am saying.

RENOIR

Are you happy?

MADAME RENOIR

What kind of question is that?

RENOIR

The kind that I am asking.

MADAME RENOIR

We live in this fine chateau now. We have Gabriele and all of her assistants. You are known in some of the most illustrious circles. I have my garden.

RENOIR

Yes. But are you happy?

MADAME RENOIR

You are a foolish old man.

RENOIR

I love you.

MADAME RENOIR

I know that.

RENOIR

Do you love me still?

MADAME RENOIR

Stop being ridiculous.

(She starts down the stairs again.)

MADAME RENOIR (Continued)

Of course I do. You should know that.

(She exits.)