

had given me all my second chances rolled into one. And I'd never again have any others. Do you see what I'm saying? For me, it's once or never. Let me kiss you.

*(He reaches her. They kiss.)*

Do you hear my heart? It's beating so loud that I think it must make you deaf. You are a saint. An angel. No, I don't care about that. You are more beautiful than she is. I never loved her.

URSULA: You did.

VINCENT: Oh, once I did. I thought . . . how can I say it? Half of me thought I was in love. Now half of me knows. Don't puzzle your head about it.

*(He has unbuttoned her dress. Stands back.)*

URSULA: What is it?

VINCENT: Let me look at you.

# The Shape of Things

BY NEIL LABUTE

When Evelyn became Adam's girlfriend everything about him began to change. Under Evelyn's tutelage, his hair and clothes became more stylish, and he improved his physique through exercise and healthier eating. Adam, a not very confident young man, feels lucky to have a lovely, sexy, and sophisticated girlfriend like Evelyn and will do anything to please her. They both attend the same small college. Adam is majoring in English. He is twenty-two but still a junior because he had to work to save money for school. Evelyn is a passionate artist, studying for an MFA.

What Adam doesn't realize is that *he* is Evelyn's latest work of art; she will present his transformation, including videos of their lovemaking, as her graduate thesis—and he will learn that most of what she has said to him has been a lie. In the following scene, they are in a doctor's lounge. (Note: "P D A" refers to public displays of affection.)

*(The doctor's lounge.)*

*(A glistening white room with relaxing color schemes on the walls and furniture. End tables filled with magazines.)*

*(ADAM and EVELYN sit on opposing couches, flipping through separate*

EVELYN: Bullshit. Take a look . . .

ADAM: Where . . . ? (He moves over to her, studies her nose.) I don't see anything.

EVELYN: Exactly.

ADAM: You had your nose done? Honestly?

EVELYN: At sixteen. My parents' birthday present . . .

ADAM: Thoughtful.

EVELYN: No, I asked for it. I has this terrible hook. "The Jewish Slope," we called it in Lake Forest . . . the only ski run for miles around!

ADAM: (smiling) I can't believe it . . . I can't tell . . .

EVELYN: That's the idea, isn't it?

ADAM: Yeah, but . . . you could be lying to me.

EVELYN: And what would be the point of that?

ADAM: To get me in here. To watch chunks of my flesh get torn away . . . you could be a sadist, for all I know . . .

EVELYN: Hey, quit sweet-talking to me . . .

ADAM: Well, they did an amazing job. (beat) Wait a minute, your name's "Thompson," that's not Jewish . . .

EVELYN: On my mother's side, you dope. That's what makes me Jewish . . . her maiden name is "Tessman."

ADAM: Oh.

EVELYN: We don't have to stay here, Adam . . .

ADAM: No, it's alright, it just makes me a little jumpy . . .

EVELYN: It's cosmetic, not corrective . . . it's no big deal. I promise . . .

ADAM: If it's cosmetic, why can't I just put some powder on it or something, or shade it in on the side like they do for Richard Gere in photos . . .

EVELYN: You mean, before?

ADAM: . . . he had it done!

EVELYN: Take a look at *American Gigolo* and then at any picture of him today. I'm serious. Lots of guys do it . . . Joel Grey.

ADAM: Okay, that's it, let's go . . .

EVELYN: (laughing) Kidding! What about Sting?

*copies of InStyle. After a moment, ADAM glances up and checks his watch.)*

ADAM: . . . what time did they say?

EVELYN: Like, ten-thirty . . .

ADAM: And it's ten-fifty now . . .

EVELYN: No big deal, you always wait at the doctor's office.

ADAM: I know, I just have to be at work by twelve.

EVELYN: Today?

ADAM: Yeah, I told you that . . .

EVELYN: No, you didn't.

ADAM: I did . . . I always work Wednesday.

EVELYN: Really?

ADAM: Yeah, every Wednesday.

EVELYN: Damn. I hope they . . .

ADAM: It's okay. I guess I could be a little late if I have to . . .

EVELYN: Sure?

ADAM: Uh-huh. It's alright . . . I mean, they hate it but I can

make something up.

EVELYN: We can go.

ADAM: No, I wanna do this. I do . . . (beat) Who wouldn't want

to get their nose chopped off?

EVELYN: Come on! It's not . . .

ADAM: I'm kidding. No, I think you're right about it . . .

EVELYN: It's just shaving it . . . "Shaving" your nose off . . .

ADAM: Yeah, that's much better.

that settles the nerves.

EVELYN: You're only talking to them, anyway, that's all.

ADAM: I know, it's just weird to think . . .

EVELYN: People do it all the time. Especially out *here* . . .

ADAM: Right, no, you're right, I just never imagined myself one

of those people . . .

EVELYN: I'm one of those people. Would you ever've guessed

that?

ADAM: What? You are not . . .



EVELYN: Oh come on . . . you've bitten more skin off from around your fingernails than a doctor would ever trim off your nose. It's true . . .

ADAM: Yeah, but that's just . . .

EVELYN: . . . what? It's the same thing. Now, that grows back and this wouldn't, but that's about the only difference. *(Beat)* How did you get that scar on your back?

ADAM: Which, the . . . ?

EVELYN: Yes. The raised one . . .

ADAM: A kid, ummm, threw a stick at me . . . first grade.

EVELYN: Stitches?

ADAM: Yeah. Thirty-three . . .

EVELYN: And is that terrible? Are you disfigured because of it . . . ?

ADAM: Well, I don't like to wear tanktops . . .

EVELYN: . . . and you should be respected for that . . .

ADAM: *(giggling)* I'm serious . . . it bugs me . . .

EVELYN: Okay, but why? Because it looks ugly or because you think other people will think it looks bad? Which?

ADAM: I dunno . . .

EVELYN: What's the matter with scars? Not a thing . . . *(Pulls up sleeve)* Look at these, see there?

ADAM: What're those?

EVELYN: They're scars . . . lots of little scars. You didn't notice them before?

ADAM: Yeah, I guess I did, but I didn't think anything . . .

EVELYN: Sure, you did. Of course you would, they're on my wrist. You know what they are . . .

ADAM: . . . did you try to . . . ?

EVELYN: No, not really. I mean, I cut on myself a little, tried to get attention when I was a teenager, but I didn't want to slit my veins open. Or I would have . . .

ADAM: Oh.

EVELYN: I'm a very straightforward person.

ADAM: Yeah, I'm getting that . . .

EVELYN: It's the only way to be. Why lie?

ADAM: Yeah, I knew he did. Looked totally different in *Quadrophenia*. I used to rent that video all the time, my "Mod" phase . . .

EVELYN: That must've been cute . . . *(beat)* Does he look better now? Sting, I mean?

ADAM: I suppose so . . . maybe it's just all that yoga, though.

EVELYN: I think you'll look great. You have a good face, a nice shape to your nose, actually, but it's just got that bit of . . .

ADAM: What?

EVELYN: . . . bulb . . . at the end. Not a bulb, exactly, but . . .

ADAM: No, I got it, sort of the "Rudolph" effect. At least I can guide your sleigh tonight . . .

EVELYN: You can guide my sleigh any night.

*(They look at one another, kiss.)*

ADAM: P D A.

EVELYN: Indeed . . .

ADAM: Shall I check the men's room?

EVELYN: I dare you . . .

ADAM: Shut up!

EVELYN: I'm serious . . .

ADAM: You're crazy . . .

EVELYN: Quite possibly. I still dare you . . .

ADAM: What if they call us?

EVELYN: Then they'll just have to wait, won't they?

ADAM: I suppose they would . . .

EVELYN: Can you afford to be late, that's the question. Will you take the risk . . . ?

ADAM: Is this, like, my last meal or something? A conjugal visit before I'm drawn and quartered . . .

EVELYN: Stop being so morbid . . . it's just flesh.

ADAM: Yeah, I see what you mean . . . "It's just flesh," that's not morbid at all.

EVELYN: It isn't. It's one of the most perfect substances on earth. Natural, beautiful. Think about it . . .

ADAM: I'd rather not.

ADAM: You're right.  
 EVELYN: Exactly. *(beat)* So, is my arm unattractive to you, then, because of those, or not? Tell me . . .  
 ADAM: No . . .  
 EVELYN: Are you lying?  
 ADAM: No, not at all, I love your arm.  
 EVELYN: "Love" is a big word . . .  
 ADAM: I know that. That's why I used it. I don't throw it around, believe me . . .  
 EVELYN: Either do I.  
 ADAM: I love your arm. It's beautiful . . .

*(He takes hold of her wrist gently, kisses it.)*

EVELYN: They're like rings on a tree. They signify experience . . . make us unique.  
 ADAM: I can see that.  
 EVELYN: And that's all this is, the idea of you having some surgery. It's an experience . . .  
 ADAM: I know, it just makes me . . .  
 EVELYN: . . . what, nervous? Of course you should be nervous, why not? It's something you've never done . . . but that's the adventure.  
 ADAM: "It's a far, far better thing I do than I have ever done . . ."  
 EVELYN: Something like that. Is that from a book?  
 ADAM: Yeah, Dickens . . .  
 EVELYN: Huh. Well, I don't know about better, but at least different.

*(Another quick kiss.)*

EVELYN: So, are you gonna go check?  
 ADAM: What? . . . You mean, the rest room?  
 EVELYN: Uh-huh.  
 ADAM: Ummm . . . okay. What if they call my name, though? Seriously . . .

EVELYN: What if they do?  
 ADAM: *(smiling)* I smell trouble . . . which I may not be able to do after this.  
 EVELYN: Just go . . .  
 ADAM: *(standing)* Okay, why not? Then I can show you something . . .  
 EVELYN: What?  
 ADAM: Just a little thing I had done. For you.  
 EVELYN: Wait, what . . . show me now.

*(He looks around, can't wait. He pulls open his pants and lets her glance inside.)*

ADAM: Look . . . a big religious no-no. *(Pulls at his waistband)* Nice, huh?  
 EVELYN: "Eat." Lemme guess . . . you couldn't afford the "me."  
 ADAM: No, you goof! Your initials. Like it?  
 EVELYN: *(touching it)* I do, I like it. And I love the gesture . . .  
 ADAM: "Love" is a big word.  
 EVELYN: I know that. That's why I used it . . . *(Beat)* Go check the "handicapped" stall. I'm suddenly very hungry . . .

*(He slips off, out of the waiting room. EVELYN goes back to reading her magazine, when a voice calls out.)*

VOICE: Mr Sorenson. Adam Sorenson, please . . .

*(EVELYN looks up, glances toward where ADAM has disappeared but says nothing. She smiles.)*