

"The Comet Gazers"

A Short Play

by

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CHARACTERS

Lance – 50s, virile and lazy but contemplative. Wears “city guy gone desert” attire.

Carl – late 20s/early 30s, dressed in designer clothes but doesn’t have the confidence or sophistication to back it up. Has a nervous energy he’s learned to disguise, and is uncomfortable in a desert environment.

Renee – getting older and is angry about it. Pretty and has a girlish bitchiness. Wears shorts, a top and wedgies.

TIME / PLACE

Present; a small house with a feeble yard in the ongoing suburban sprawl just outside of the Mojave Desert.

(LANCE and CARL sit in yard chairs, with beers. RENEE enters at some point and stands nearby, hoping to get the men's attention.)

LANCE

You know when you try to hook up with a woman, there's always something wrong. She has the softest skin you've ever fucking felt, but can't cook. I mean, can't even boil water. Or, she doesn't care how much money you make but has bad breath, like she's been buried alive for a week or something, *and* had to walk the few miles to get to you. It's never perfect. But we can't seem to give up the idea of that, finding the perfect woman. Why do you think that is? In the city, you can take them downtown to those creepy little Korean karaoke bars. Then to look at the skyscrapers. That's something I miss. The metallic violence of the architecture. (pause) Out here you may meet a woman that's toothless. Or she may believe in chupacabras. But she can suck you nasty, and dry. I'm really torn. I love my house. I threw away my TV. Shit, you should have seen me those first few weeks. I became so bored, I went insane. At one point I was screwing everything in the house. Go to the Circle K on Sage and Walnut street and you won't find any large loaves of Wonder Bread sitting around there anymore. No siree. But then. Well, I never thought sitting in my yard would be enough, you know? I mean, look at this. This is *mine*.

CARL

Yeah, but it's in Mojave.

LANCE

The sky is so clear and black. There's so many stars I'm starting to dream about other life forms. Crawling out of floorboards. Touching me. (pause) Gliding over planets. The elegant silence of space.

CARL

Yeah, do some cocaine out here and I bet you'll really disappear!

(Carl and Renee have eye contact.)

LANCE

Time passes strangely here, if at all. . .

CARL

(suddenly stares at something on the floor)
What the heck is that?!

LANCE

Oh, it's my neighbor's snake that got out. (yells) Hey,
Lucien! We found your snake!

CARL

Jesus, how big is it?

LANCE

It's a boa. It can and will eat a goat.

CARL

(trying to calm himself down)
Look, I thought you were talking about alleys?!

LANCE

Oh yeah, I had to get to Santa Monica from Los Feliz.

RENEE

I hate Los Feliz. I got priced out of there faster than an
earthworm dries up out here.

CARL

(stands, nervous)
That's weird, there's no earthworms here?

RENEE

That's not exactly what I said now Carl, is it?

(Carl sits back down.)

LANCE

I got in my car, and for a few miles was able to drive only
through alleys. I saw people, barely surviving. A piece
of lipstick with a nail through it, and ants crawling all
over it. I saw a cat biting a child's throat. In LA,
you're always driving. In alleys, you can't go fast, so
you see more.

RENEE

Did you even stop to save the child?

LANCE

Well, it's weird. I think I did. I can remember
strangling a cat in an alley, because it was a bad cat with

bad inclinations. But actually, I might have wished it happened, so I made it up, and convinced my brain that it was a memory. What's really weird is I didn't do this consciously. Some part of my brain made this decision, and acted accordingly.

RENEE

When you talk, I tune out. Nobody knows what you're talking about. I'm the best judge of that. I live with you.

LANCE

No you don't.

RENEE

Well maybe not but nobody knows what you're talking about. And I bet you don't care. Because you're a narcissist.

LANCE

It's true. I like to fantasize about myself, in various situations. Saving people, getting awards.

RENEE

The people who moved in next door are retarded. They're from Pacifica. Why would someone leave the coast to come here? It's fucking stupid.

CARL

It's a little bit of hell here. Or worse, it's between things. Like a corner.

LANCE

Hey, LA is just right over there.

CARL

Yeah?

RENEE

(giggles)

Yeah.

(Renee stops giggling and stares at Carl. He goes to her. She takes a popper out of her pocket and they split it, and share a deep kiss. Carl comes back to his chair, sits.)

LANCE

When I was younger, everything turned me on. And things you wouldn't understand, too. I can still always have sex if I want it. You know that gym around the corner? In the steam room, just about anything can happen.

CARL
Yeah?

RENEE
Look Carl, don't do us any *favours* by your visit here. We hung out with you in LA and now you're here and it's all the same. You're not thinking of moving out here, are you?!

(takes a step, looks out)
Sometimes there's a whole day when I don't see a car. And then, you can see them in the distance. Headlights, way down the road. Can't anyone afford a house in LA anymore? I do graphic design, so I can be anywhere. I used to hear people brag about that, I can work from home, or a beach in Hawaii! But work is work. I'm home, in a sari with my bush hanging out, trying to make some stupid deadline for some cockbrain and his ad. Nothing of me is in my work. .and you!

(to Carl)
You've got a trust fund! Secret money that you won't admit to! And what do you do? You don't have to work. Do you know how much I'd get done, if I didn't have to work? I'd have time for my blog. I'd drum up an interest in Feminism here. Maybe I'd start a coven. The truth is, I hate all that female "running with the wolves" shit. The truth is, every girlfriend I've ever had was cuter and thinner than me. I hated them all, and secretly wished car accidents on every one of them. But you'd never know it by my actions. I can't tell you how many times I was a smiling fucking bridesmaid. The truth is, I'm jealous and find it hard to be around anybody.

(exits)

CARL
She's right. I've always had a substantial sum of money I could lose, that wouldn't affect my quality of life at all.

LANCE
Listen, I haven't really been to the market since I moved out here.

CARL
Yeah?

(checks his cellphone for messages)
Well, that's weird! No messages, for a Friday night.
There must be something wrong with my phone.
(fiddles with it)

(Renee creeps back out.)

LANCE

I've been killing things. And I'm good at it.

RENEE

Yeah, I go visit my mom and she says, why are you so
skinny? You try eating a prairie dog, I told her.

(to Lance)

And I don't care what it's been marinated in.

(scared)

Hey, how long does it take to starve to death?

CARL

About a month. Because. Wait, you knew that about me
right? Sometimes I. Like to stop eating. Just to see
what would happen. I've been hospitalized twice. It's not
because I don't like myself. You should see all the
expensive skin care products I have at home. A person who
hated themselves wouldn't buy those. I take vitamins. See
this bag?

(pulls out an empty bag)

It used to be full of vitamins, but I ate them. People
call me and invite me to things. Hey Carl, come hang out
they say. It's not a party until you arrive. And then
gradually they start to ask for favors. Do you want to
invest in this? Can I borrow some money? I'll pay you
back. . .I know none of them are my friends. But LA is
great! I can't complain! I can walk to Patina from my
house. The one in Hollywood, not the Valley. And it's
like I died and went to Heaven. There's always women
there, horny and beautiful. Clustered over one appetizer.
They can't afford anymore. A plate of Jalepeno poppers is
about \$40 bucks there, but that's because it's made from
three cheeses, and one is aged 20 years from France. I go
there, sit at the bar, the staff all know me. They let me
order things that aren't on the menu, like Elk burgers.
The women I meet, hot vegans, or thin little wisps of what
they once were. They sit across from me, picking at their
roasted beet salad. They carefully put all the candied
pecans and blue cheese in a pile. They pretend they don't
want a bite of Elk, but they do. When they think I'm
looking at their tits or whatever, and I often am, I see

their eyes dart to my plate of food, and stay there. I'll get you an order of truffle fries I say, and they say no. After dessert, a caramel mousse with some berries and crème fraiche or whatever, I take them back to my house. Not one of them has ever said no. I've got a deck that overlooks the whole city and I wouldn't mind sitting out there. Talking. . .but they just want to get right to fucking. They act like they want it all night long, like I'm the best lay ever. One wanted me to keep sticking things up her ass. I said, I don't really want to do that. But she insisted, and at one point I had my Braun Sterling juicer, you know the one that looks like a landed alien ship? Right on up there. She kept moaning like she liked it, but I saw her face through the mirror, and she was crying. We don't have to do this. . .they just want to be with someone who has money. I could be anybody. A few days later I ran into that same woman at Urth Café, the one on Melrose, not Beverly Hills. That's the better one. I said hi, but she didn't remember me at all. I mean, had no clue, and then she got bitchy. We're all screwing each other, but no one remembers a face. . .when she saw my Hermes tennis shoes, and that I was buying a couple pounds of their new gorillas in the mist blend - it's made from a rain forest that's almost gone or something and it's really expensive - she got all sweet and rubbed her tits on me when I got out of line. (pause) But.

(to Renee)

I mean, you followed him to the Mojave so you must love him, right? Can you. I mean I'm just curious. What's it like to have someone love you?

RENEE

Jesus, Carl.

CARL

I just want to know what it's like.

RENEE

I don't know!! (pause) It's like. . .a spell. It's wonderful. And then it ends, and the person that was everything to you becomes nothing. And then you have photographs.

LANCE

I'll tell you this. I once saw bodies with the blood drained out of them. All on a sofa bed, in Sherman Oaks. I don't miss Los Angeles.

CARL
I don't want to be single anymore.

(Renee takes a step, looks out.)

RENEE
More cars are coming now. They're all flooding the desert from LA.

CARL
Hey, thanks for inviting me out here. I've never seen a comet before. What does it look like?

RENEE
(looks up and keeps her eyes there)
I don't know what the big deal is.

(Lance and Carl look up too.)

CARL
Is that it? What is a comet?

RENEE
Jesus, Carl.

LANCE
It's from another part of the universe, probably a parallel one.

CARL
Wow. Well. What's it made of?

LANCE
Ice.

CARL
Ice?

LANCE
And rocks.

CARL
Ice and rocks?

LANCE
Yeah.

CARL

Hmmm.

(The End.)