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Dramatic Publishing

SKETCHING THE SOUL

A Play in Two Acts
by
JACQUELINE LYNCH



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(SKETCHING THE SOUL)

ISBN 0-87129-965-8

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“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

**For the Centennial Community Theatre of
Chicopee, Massachusetts.**

SKETCHING THE SOUL

A Play in Two Acts
For 2 Men and 4 Women

CHARACTERS

CHELSEA LOGAN: An artist gaining celebrity, but struggling with the conflict between her new life and her Amish upbringing; about 30.

MIKE GRIMALDI: Her live-in boyfriend, a corporate lawyer, about 35. He is intelligent, funny, but as bored with his work and life as Chelsea is challenged. Their relationship is strained by how she handles her celebrity and her past.

SARAH RICHTER: Chelsea's sister, 22 or 23. She has remained Amish and arrives unexpectedly upon the death of her husband. She wears Old Order Amish clothing, black for mourning, which will not necessarily show that she is four months pregnant.

NANCY: Chelsea and Mike's neighbor, late 20s to early 30s. She works behind the scenes on a TV game show. Outgoing, frenetic, and much more caught up in Chelsea's new celebrity than she is.

MAUREEN NASH: Writer for an arts and entertainment magazine who arrives to interview Chelsea. She is stylish, aggressive, and much more impressed with herself than any of her cover stories.

ARTHUR COAKLEY: Maureen's photographer. He is quiet, bored, and gets pummeled by Chelsea.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

SETTING: *New York apartment of CHELSEA LOGAN and MIKE GRIMALDI. He moved in months ago, but the apartment still looks very much like CHELSEA's space. (See Production Notes for detailed set description and floor plan.)*

AT RISE: *It is the present. Early evening. MIKE exits from the kitchen with roses in a vase. He sets them on the dining table. He is still in dress slacks and a white shirt from work, but his sleeves are rolled up, his tie off. He crosses and exits the bedroom hallway on the left, returning a moment later with a small, gift-wrapped ring box. There is a jiggle at the doorknob, as if someone is using a key. MIKE hurries to the door and CHELSEA stumbles in. She wears jeans, a sweater, a long army-style winter coat, carrying a nylon duffel bag.*

MIKE (*stuffing ring box into his pocket*). You're back! (*They kiss.*)

CHELSEA. Did you think I was never coming back?

MIKE. Well, if you were to go out again and come back later, I could catch the second half of the game.

CHELSEA (*hangs her coat*). Oh, go watch your old football game.

MIKE. I could have picked you up at the airport. Why didn't you call?

CHELSEA. I like finding my own way home. (*They embrace.*) I always have so far.

MIKE. So, how was it? Go ahead, I know you're dying to tell me all about it.

CHELSEA. I'm too tired. Go watch football.

MIKE. It's killing you, I can see. Go ahead, tell me how successful your show was. Tell me how wonderful the gallery owners think you are, how the future of art lies in your hands, how showings of your paintings are going to open all over the country. Tell me how your artist friends are worshipping you and calling you their queen.

CHELSEA. No point now, you already know.

MIKE. It went well.

CHELSEA. It couldn't have been better. It couldn't have been better. Well, it could have been. You could have been there.

MIKE. I had to work.

CHELSEA. You hate my friends, my associates, and the art world in general.

MIKE. That too, but it's nothing personal. God, I missed you.

CHELSEA. How's work?

MIKE. I'm not the toast of the art world, but I discovered I'm still employable. Oh, I almost forgot. (*He exits to the kitchen.*)

CHELSEA. You're still employable? What does that mean? You used to have such interesting cases to talk about. What's the matter with you lately? You're so boring. (*Checks out mail on table L.*)

(MIKE returns with champagne and two glasses, which he brings to the coffee table, opens bottle.)

MIKE. Champagne! I haven't had any *interesting* cases in six months, where have you been? (Sits down on ring, pulls it out of his pocket, sets it on table.) Oh, silly me, you've been preparing for your show.

CHELSEA. I haven't been that busy.

MIKE (*kidding*). You're never busy as far as I can see. You slap a little paint on a canvas and think you're working. You call that work?

CHELSEA. You always know how to bring me down to earth, don't you? Here I've been flying across country for hours, thinking I'm a wonderful, commercially successful artist, and you knock me down.

MIKE. Commercially successful artist? Whoa, be careful there, Chelsea. Watch your step. (*Pours wine.*)

CHELSEA. Why?

MIKE. Stay on that higher plane you've achieved. Something purely intellectual and emotional. Don't chuck it for a campy caricature... well, I thought you weren't into designing Happy Meal boxes, T-shirt logos, the covers of romance novels, or whatever it is *commercially successful* artists do. (*Offers her glass.*)

CHELSEA (*takes glass*). I've been a starving artist for ten years. Let me bask in decadent success for a few minutes, will you? I want it to go to my head. I want to silk screen my own face on T-shirts. I want to be totally obnoxious for at least two weeks before I have to come back down to earth.

MIKE. It's hard to come back to work after you've done the press junkets... and slowed down on a steady diet of wine and cheese.

CHELSEA (*growing serious*). Hey, what is this? Really? What's up?

MIKE (*clinks glasses*). To you. (*He drinks.*)

CHELSEA (*sips reluctantly*). What are you driving at? Did you have a bad day today, if so, don't take it out on me.

MIKE (*hands her ring box*). Here, I'd better give you this before we start screaming at each other.

CHELSEA. I never scream at you. What are you talking about? You're being too cute, Mike.

MIKE. Open it.

CHELSEA (*opens box*). It's a ring.

(Doorbell rings, MIKE gets door, NANCY enters.)

NANCY (*runs to couch, sits next to CHELSEA, hugs her*).

You're back! I read the reviews, you little money-making celeb, you! Not that I understand any of this neo-impressionist stuff, but hey, when your name becomes a joke on Letterman, you're big, girl. You are big.

CHELSEA. I'm a joke on Letterman?

MIKE. Don't ask me. I go to bed at ten, remember?

NANCY (*gasps, grabs ring*). What is that?! What is that?! It's a ring!

MIKE. That's right, Nancy.

CHELSEA. God, she can spot a diamond at fifty paces.

NANCY. Oh, let me see! Have I interrupted something?

CHELSEA. Stop gushing, Nancy.

MIKE. Your enthusiasm is embarrassing her. Tell her to put it on.

NANCY. Put it on!

CHELSEA. Mike, why did you do this?

NANCY. Put it on!

MIKE. Just to torture you and make you unhappy.

NANCY. Put it on!

CHELSEA (*puts on ring*). Okay, okay, it's on.

NANCY (*grabs CHELSEA's hand*). Oh, let me see! Let me see!

MIKE. I'm glad you like it, Nancy.

NANCY. Oh, I do! I do! It's beautiful! Must have cost you a chunk of change. I'm so happy!

CHELSEA. This is an engagement ring, isn't it?

MIKE. You could call it that, although *you* probably won't.

CHELSEA. Let's talk about this, only not now. Let's wait 'til Nancy goes away.

MIKE. I don't want Nancy to ever go away. Nancy likes my ring.

NANCY. Oh, I do! I do! (*Drops CHELSEA's hand*.) What's the matter with you? Even if you don't want to get married right away, it's still a great ring! It's about time you wore some kind of jewelry, your hand looks so naked.

CHELSEA. They usually have paint on them, anyway.

NANCY. You never wear any jewelry. No earrings, nothing. You don't even wear a watch. Nuns wear more gold than you do.

CHELSEA. Let's just drop this for now, okay?

MIKE. She's overwhelmed with emotion.

CHELSEA. Will you knock it off?!

NANCY. I have big news, too.

MIKE. Oh, tell us! Tell us!

CHELSEA. Cut it out.

NANCY. What?

CHELSEA. Not you. Him. Go ahead, Nancy, what's your news?

NANCY. I got a promotion. I am now second assistant stage manager.

CHELSEA (*beat*). What were you before?

NANCY. Third assistant stage manager.

MIKE. God bless this land of opportunity.

NANCY. Oh yeah, I'm moving up. The big time.

MIKE. I should say, second assistant stage manager on one of the most popular TV game shows going. (*Imitating announcer.*) Ladies and gentlemen and viewers at home, it's time to get "Filthy RICH"!

NANCY. It's *the* most popular. Don't sweeps mean anything to you people? And it's not called "Filthy Rich," it's called "*Stinking* Rich."

MIKE. Oh yes, filthy, *stinking*, whatever. I'm sorry.

CHELSEA. What is it you do now?

NANCY. I cue the big-breasted prize girl. She flashes a perfect smile at camera 2, pulls a lever, and dollar bills fall out of a box mounted in the catwalk, showering the winning contestant, who jumps up and down, screaming, and kissing the lecherous host.

MIKE. We are a nation of culture and refinement.

CHELSEA. Yeah, well. I'm glad you're moving up, Nancy. Have some champagne. (*To MIKE.*) Go get another glass, please.

NANCY. Don't mind if I do.

MIKE. Anything for Nancy. I'll bet you make first assistant stage manager inside of a year. Then you'll get to cue the host after the commercial break. (*MIKE exits to kitchen.*)

NANCY. From your mouth to God's ears. Oh, the joke. On Letterman? It was part of a monologue, and I don't remember most of it, but the punch line went: "Chelsea Logan had a farm, E-I-E-I-O."

CHELSEA. I don't get it.

NANCY. Your barn pictures.

CHELSEA. Uh-huh. Okay.

NANCY. It was funny.

(MIKE returns with glass.)

MIKE. Artists don't like to be laughed at, Nancy, they like to be revered.

CHELSEA. What has gotten into you?

MIKE. But mostly, they like to be misunderstood.

NANCY. Roses! You bought her roses, too! You're so romantic!

MIKE. I know.

NANCY. If you don't appreciate this guy, I'll take him off your hands.

MIKE. You hear that, Chelsea? I have other offers.

CHELSEA *(to NANCY)*. You want a nice ring, cheap?

MIKE. Oh, speaking of rings, not that we were, I have a phone message for you. Your agent called.

NANCY. You got another show!

MIKE. No.

CHELSEA. What?

MIKE. You're being interviewed for a cover story in *American Style* magazine.

NANCY. Oh my God. That's even bigger!

MIKE. Tomorrow.

CHELSEA. Tomorrow?

MIKE. Why is that bigger than another showing of her paintings, Nancy?

NANCY. You've got to be kidding! *American Style*? Girl, you are hot. You are *so* hot.

MIKE. Why? Because she's a good artist, or because some pretentious, snot-nosed magazine wants to exploit her.

NANCY. Don't be stupid. Good press is better than paintings, it's money in the bank. You know that, Michael.

MIKE. So, her face will greet you at the supermarket checkout, right next to Nostradamus' predictions for your love life or the end of the world, whichever comes first, and that other pamphlet on how to lose thirty pounds in a half hour. C'mon, what will this magazine really do for your work? Is good press better than good painting, Chelsea?

CHELSEA. Tomorrow?

MIKE. Tomorrow afternoon. They have to strike fast, you might not be hot in another week.

CHELSEA. Thanks a lot.

NANCY. Oh, she's good for a few weeks, at least.

CHELSEA. *American Style*.

MIKE (*without enthusiasm, but raising his glass*). Congratulations, Chelsea. You're hot.

CHELSEA. Tomorrow.

NANCY. Wear the ring.

CHELSEA. The ring?

MIKE. She forgot already.

NANCY. They're going to ask you about it. And wear a little makeup, for God's sake. You'd better let me help you with this. Successful or not, you know nothing about show biz.

CHELSEA. Show biz?

NANCY. Will you stop repeating everything I say! What's the matter with you?

MIKE. Congratulations, Chelsea. You've just passed the pinnacle from talented artist to successful artist, to celebrity. You can't get any higher than that. We'll have to go through your portfolio for something to hit them with. Oh, that's right, you haven't done any painting lately. You've been too busy doing lunch.

CHELSEA. What are you, my foreman?

NANCY. No, no, no! Not those farm paintings. I'm sorry, Chels, but if you've seen one barn, you've seen them all. They want pictures of you.

CHELSEA. Pictures of me?

NANCY. Is she taking any of this in? What's the matter with you? Snap out of it. We're talking about your career, here.

CHELSEA. My career?

NANCY (to MIKE). You have to be here, too. They'll want her significant other. Take a shower.

MIKE. Will do. Should I bring out my lawyer briefcase?

NANCY. No, just Dockers, your black turtleneck, and don't talk too much. Just look macho and mysterious.

MIKE. Will do.

NANCY. When are they coming?

MIKE. One.

NANCY. I'll be here.

MIKE. What are *you* wearing?

NANCY. Please, Michael, it's not about me. Chelsea? Are you all right?

CHELSEA. I don't think I want to do this.

NANCY. Don't even joke about that.

MIKE. Too late now, Chelsea. You're famous. There's nowhere to hide.

CHELSEA. I think I'm going to be sick.

NANCY. This is no time to be camera shy. Oh, hey, hey, did you hear about that Amish guy and the bus?

MIKE. You've got a million of 'em, don't you, Nancy?

NANCY. No, no, this was a news story. This really happened. This guy, this Amish guy was riding in a buggy, a horse and buggy? This was in Pennsylvania somewhere, Amish country, and a bus full of tourists trying to get his picture got too close and drove him off the road. He got killed.

MIKE. That's terrible. I didn't hear that, when was this?

NANCY. A couple days ago. I forget, but you see, if the poor guy had just smiled and waved instead of trying to outrun the bus, he'd be alive today. You can't outrun your destiny, Chelsea.

MIKE. Especially in a horse and buggy.

CHELSEA (*angry*). Are you out of your tiny, little mind? They had no business taking his picture. He was just a man on his way somewhere, not a sideshow. Stupid tourists down there think Lancaster County is some sort of Disney theme park. Jerks.

NANCY. He shouldn't have been driving a horse and buggy on a busy highway.

CHELSEA. Where should he be? Down some quaint dirt road, lined on either side by camera tripods?

MIKE. Take it easy, Chels.

CHELSEA. Shut up!

MIKE. Chelsea.

CHELSEA. What's the punch line to this one, Nancy?

MIKE. Chelsea, stop it.

NANCY. What are you getting so worked up about?

CHELSEA. What time is it?

MIKE (*checks watch*). Nine-thirty, why?

CHELSEA. Nothing. Nothing. (*She walks to her drawing board, looks at her corner.*) It's late, that's all. It's just way too late. (*She looks at ring on her hand. Fade to black.*)