

Great Exxxpectations

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February 27, 2006

It is around 5:00 in the evening on a beautiful summer day in the present, but you couldn't tell it, because we find ourselves on a set for a movie, in a windowless room with two video cameras.

GABRIEL, the director, is a tall, slim, 35-year-old with a black beret precariously perched on his head, and is standing off to the side. DIANE, an attractive and scantily-clad 22-year-old, is lying on a bed in the center of the film's set. Camera operators and assistants are also on stage, but in the background.

GABRIEL

(into megaphone)

Quiet on the set! *The Great Gasping*, scene 23, take 41. And... action!

An assistant shuts the clapper, and moves out of the way. Beethoven's Für Elise begins playing in the background.

DIANE

Oh... Gatsby... Yes! Oh! You're worth the whole damn bunch of them put together! Yes!

GABRIEL

Cut! Cut! Cut! *(the music stops)* That was *terrible*. Absolutely horrendous. F. Scott Fitzgerald would have punched you in the face if he were here right now. I've never seen something so outrageous in my entire care—

DIANE

Aw, go to hell, Gabriel. We've done this scene dozens of times and you never like it. I don't know what to tell ya, this is what you're going to get.

GABRIEL

First of all, it's Ga-bri-el. And second, we're going to do this until we get it right.

DIANE

(sarcastic)

Whatever you say, Ga-bri-elllle.

The camera crew repositions itself for the next take.

GABRIEL

(into megaphone)

Alright, let's do it right this time! All quiet on the set! *The Great Gasping*, scene 23, take 42. And... action!

The music begins again.

DIANE

Oh, yes! Gatsby! Ohmigod! You're worth, oh yea!, the whole damn bunch... of them, put together!!

GABRIEL

Cut! (*music stops*) I try and I try and I try with you people, but all you give me is crap, crap, crap.

DIANE *gets off the bed, puts on a bathrobe, lights up a cigarette, and walks towards*
GABRIEL.

DIANE

Look, buddy, I don't know what you're trying to do here, but I'm telling you what: I am not doing that scene again.

GABRIEL

Non, non, non! We must do it until it is perfect!

DIANE

That *was* perfect. Each of those past 42 times was perfect. Give me a break, it's just porn.

GABRIEL

Just porn?

DIANE

Yeah, that's what I said.

GABRIEL

Just porn? Excuse me? I did *not* spend six years at NYU film school to have my work called "porn."

DIANE

Naked women and sex? Sounds like porn to me.

GABRIEL

(with disdain)

How deliciously typical of you. Is the *Venus de Milo* porn? Certainly not! The problem is that you cannot comprehend my bold experiment.

DIANE

Is that so? Well, I'm not going to do that scene again, so you've got a bunch of time to explain it to me in detail.

Enter JUSTIN, a 21-year-old football player at the local university and an avid fan of GABRIEL's work.

JUSTIN

Dude! No way — are you Gabriel Lerouge? I totally love your work, man!

GABRIEL

Finally! Someone who appreciates me!

JUSTIN

The name's Justin. Hey, can you sign this for me? I've been dying to get your autograph. (*Looks over at DIANE*) You too, cutie.

DIANE
(*annoyed*)

I have a name.

JUSTIN hands the DVD to GABRIEL, who signs and returns it.

GABRIEL

Don't be rude, Diane. (*To JUSTIN*) So you like my work, then?

JUSTIN

Totally. *Alice in Wonderland* is one of my all-time faves.

DIANE
(*excited*)

The cartoon classic? You were a part of that?

GABRIEL

Euh... *non*. He was referring to my 2003 erotic film version.

DIANE rolls her eyes.

GABRIEL

So what did you think of *Gropes of Wrath*?

JUSTIN

Man, that movie was the only reason I passed the English Lit. final exam senior year.

GABRIEL

How about *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Naked Woman*?

JUSTIN

A masterpiece.

DIANE

No way.

GABRIEL

I take my work quite seriously. *Nineteen Eighty-Whore*?

JUSTIN

One of the few books I actually ever read in high school — I loved the part where Big Brother was *actually* watching. Now that's genius if I've ever seen it.

GABRIEL

You know, I wanted to film it in black and white in the style of the *film noir* to better emphasize Winston's struggle, so to speak, but the studio would unfortunately not allow it.

JUSTIN

Bummer.

DIANE
(to JUSTIN)

Wait... you actually watch this trash? How much of it have you seen?

JUSTIN

Dude, it's not trash. I've seen it all. *Catch Her in the Rye, The Sale of Two Titties, Roaming Ho and Juliet*. . . the man is a genius. (To GABRIEL) What inspired you?

GABRIEL

Well, when I was studying *le cinéma*, I found myself often asking why—

DIANE

This is ridiculous. Gabriel, I don't care what you say, who you are, or what you've made, I'm not doing this scene again.

GABRIEL

Diane, *ma chère*! This is not easy for me, either! But we have an obligation to our audience. We must inspire them!

JUSTIN

He's right, you know — all my friends love this stuff.

DIANE

The only "inspiration" our audience needs is in their pants. And I think I've done that part just fine.

GABRIEL

That's exactly what someone set in the old ways would say. You don't understand that I am a visionary! Like Gutenberg with his printing press, I am trying to spread the great stories of our day in a form that the common man will appreciate!

JUSTIN

Dude... Gutenberg! Right on.

DIANE

You think you'll teach people about literature by making porn versions of classic novels?

JUSTIN

Well, it was easier than reading the book...

GABRIEL
(*annoyed*)

Art, Diane, not porn. I am an artist, I make art.

DIANE

Oh. My. God. You're actually serious.

GABRIEL

Yes. Quite. Now you will redo this scene at once.

DIANE

Like hell I will. You've already made half of the movie with me — you *need* me, and I'm done for the day.

JUSTIN

I'm down with the sass! Where did you find her?

GABRIEL
(*Ignoring* JUSTIN)

That is what you think! But I know you won't, because if you leave now, you won't get paid at all.

DIANE

Sure, but you won't be able to finish your project.

GABRIEL

Peut-être. Or maybe I will just use another young blonde — I'm sure Justin has some recommendations. No one will notice, and those that do will know that it symbolizes Nick Carraway's changing views on East and West Egg. . .

DIANE

Uh-huh. Good luck with that. Don't think I'm coming back: there are plenty of opportunities for young, attractive women.

GABRIEL

Oh? Like what?

JUSTIN

Wait, wait, wait. Let me guess — I think I've seen this one before. You could be a stripper, waitress, French maid, babysitter, secretary, schoolteacher, nurse, confused college co-ed looking to experiment, lonely housewife. . .

Ooh, wait, even better! You could be a young college graduate who can't afford to pay the rent for her apartment, when suddenly the plumber arrives, but you get taken to the hospital, where a hot nurse and a pizza boy. . .

DIANE

That's enough. I'll leave you two alone — you're perfect for each other. I quit.

GABRIEL

Please, you cannot leave! I'll double your salary!

DIANE

Too bad I'm through with your stupid production. And seriously, you're not fooling anyone with that accent. We all know you're from Kansas.

DIANE walks off the film set and exits.

GABRIEL

Diane. Don't make me beg. Please, I need you! (*Yells*) Diane!!

JUSTIN

Sorry, man, she's gone.

GABRIEL

My life's work, ruined! (*Pauses*) Unless... could you wear a wig?

The End.