

Early Sunday Morning

by
Dara O'Brien

© Dara O'Brien
106 Pinehurst Avenue Apt B51
New York, NY 10033

917.821.5732
dara@daraobrien.com

EARLY SUNDAY MORNING

Characters:

Edward Hopper: Male, early 40s, tall and taciturn. He is a painter with a large circle of professional acquaintances; many of them are far more successful than he. He has sold only one painting, and that was ten years ago. He supports himself as an illustrator, and he loathes doing it. He is highly intelligent, reserved (some would say aloof) and has a dry sense of humor.

Jo Nivison: Female, early 40s, petite, gregarious, high energy. She is a painter and was in art school with Edward—they have known each other for twenty years. In the past she has dabbled in acting. She is a former public school teacher who is now painting full-time. She is driven and ambitious.

Synopsis

After twenty years of creative and professional struggle, the American painter Edward Hopper reconnects with his old schoolmate, the artist Josephine Nivison. The joining of their lives brings seismic change to both. In the summer of 1923, Edward and Jo, both unrecognized painters in their early forties, become reacquainted at the Gloucester Artists Colony. Jo, the more established of the two, inspires Edward to try watercolor, a medium he does not use. The results are exciting. At summer's end, they return to New York's Greenwich Village, now courting as a couple. Jo arranges for Edward to participate in a watercolor show at the Brooklyn Museum, where he wins the show's purchase prize and sells his first painting in ten years. As their relationship continues, Edward seeks more from Jo, who resists, focusing on her career. He convinces her to marry him, and newfound intimacy escalates their conflict. Jo is caught between her interdependence with Edward and her need to maintain her own identity as an artist. She becomes both his fiercest advocate and a deeply resentful competitor. Within a few months of their marriage, Edward attains long-awaited creative and commercial success. As his reputation skyrockets, Jo's declines. **What is the price of genius, and who pays?**

Dialogue Sample: Act II, Scene 4

SCENE 4

LATE OCTOBER, 1924, NIGHT. EDWARD'S STUDIO.

JO and is seated by the window in the dark. She is wearing her black lace dress. EDWARD enters hurriedly, turns on the light and looks around until he sees JO. He rushes to her.

EDWARD

What the hell happened? I didn't know where you went.

JO

Didn't care is more like it.

EDWARD

What happened?

JO

I don't stay where I'm not wanted.

EDWARD

What are you talking about?

JO

You barely introduced me to anyone tonight.

EDWARD

Don't be ridiculous.

JO

And when you did, it was just as your wife, you never said anything about my work, or that I was also a painter.

EDWARD

This was my opening. Not one of your tea parties.

JO

Which is why it mattered how you introduced me.

EDWARD

Calling you an artist won't get you a dealer.

JO

If you start in again on my work not being good enough then I'm leaving and this time I won't come back!

EDWARD

You want people to know about your work, tell them yourself.

JO

Well it's for sure you're not going to.

EDWARD

Why? Because I didn't cart you around and shove you in people's faces?

JO

Because you didn't treat me like an artist.

EDWARD

How about you treating me like one?

JO

Oh, for God's sake.

EDWARD

It was my opening tonight. My work. You left.

JO

Well, if you had—

EDWARD

You left, Jo. You walked out on my opening. On me.

JO

I stayed until after the speeches. I was there for the important stuff.

EDWARD

Everything was important.

JO

I didn't think you'd even notice.

EDWARD

Yes, you did.

(Beat.)

Do you want some tea?

JO

Thanks.

(EDWARD goes to kitchen and puts water on for tea.)

JO

It was a great turnout.

Yes. EDWARD

Some pretty impressive folks. JO

I didn't know half of them. EDWARD

Who was that dark-haired man you were talking to? Rehn brought him over to you right after his welcome speech. JO

Jack Spaulding? EDWARD

I don't know, I guess. Sounds familiar. Who is he? JO

Collector from Boston. EDWARD

Rehn's got good connections. JO

He bought four. EDWARD

What? Spaulding ? He bought four paintings? JO

Yes. EDWARD

Which ones? JO

"Haskell's." " Glouster Mansion." " Squam Light." " Beam Trawler." EDWARD

"Gloucester Mansion." Best of the bunch. JO

Rehn thinks he'll sell the rest by the end of next week. EDWARD

That's tremendous news. JO

EDWARD

I wanted to tell you, and you were gone.

JO

I didn't know.

EDWARD

I'll earn more from this than I ever made in a year.

JO

No more commercial stuff. You can kiss Scribner's goodbye.

EDWARD

I think so.

JO

Congratulations. Well done.

(She goes to him. They embrace.)
Now you can buy that damn overcoat.

EDWARD

And for you?

JO

I don't care that much about things, that's not what I care about.

EDWARD

I know.

JO

I hate for there to be a war between us. And I know how long and how hard you've worked.

EDWARD

I know that.

JO

Couldn't you even want to throw me a little crumb?

EDWARD

I don't know what you expect me to do.

JO

Yes you do.

EDWARD

Tonight was not the time, Jo. I'm barely established myself.

JO

It's where you belong, and you know it.

(The tea kettle whistles. EDWARD prepares the tea. JO crosses to the rocker and sits.)

JO

I saw Margaret Bruening tonight.

EDWARD

I saw she was there, but I didn't talk to her.

JO

She remembered me very well, but she didn't know I was your wife until tonight.

EDWARD

You were willing to admit it?

JO

She said she didn't realize I'd given up painting. I said I hadn't. She said something like, oh, good for you dear. But I could see. I'm not the artist anymore. I'm the artist's wife.

(EDWARD gives her her tea and sits in the other chair.)

EDWARD

You don't have to keep trying, not if you don't want to.

JO

You know I do.

EDWARD

Then there you have it.

(They drink their tea.)