

**Marlin Barton**

**In the Visionary Company of Love**

(a story as one-act play)

— after Peter Taylor

*Cooper, a man of fifty-two with mostly gray hair and a thick beard and mustache, trimmed, but not too neatly, sits at a small dining table in an artist studio on the second floor of an old Victorian-style house, which is evidenced by a high ceiling and tall windows. An easel stands near one of the windows, a small, paint-stained table beside it. Across the large room, on the right, is a loveseat with two cushioned chairs on either side, all arranged around a coffee table. Beyond the dining and sitting areas, toward the back of the room, and at its center, is an opening to a kitchen where part of a counter is visible and beyond that an open outside door with a closed screen. An outside white light illuminates the top landing of a set of metal stairs. Beside the opening to the kitchen hangs a small oil painting. It appears to be a portrait, or perhaps a self-portrait, of a young man. Larger acrylic paintings of curb market scenes, circus performers, and one of ladies eating lunch in a restaurant hang between the elongated widows. All the paintings are similar in style, the faces in them not quite natural but not grotesque. Cooper takes a final bite of food, pushes his plate away, and lights a cigarette. He then takes a drink from a tumbler.*

*Seth, in his early thirties with moderate length hair and a trim beard, sits across from him. He is of slender build and wears a plaid, flannel shirt in contrast to Cooper's dress shirt and well-matched suspenders. Seth drinks from a bottle of beer and takes a final bite of food from his plate.*

Cooper (in a resonant voice, Southern) . . . So everything tasted all right? I thought maybe the pork chops were a little tough.

Seth No, not at all. And the fried okra was great. I said how good it all was.

Cooper Yeah, you said. (takes a drink) I'm glad you took me

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up on my invitation. I don't get much company up here.

Seth I've dropped in before. And it's not like you never get out, never see anyone.

Cooper (*stares at the tumbler in his hand before putting it down*)  
First time I ever had Scotch I thought, my God, where has this been all my life?

Seth (*laughing*) I never could develop a taste for Scotch, or bourbon. Guess my tastes are too simple.

Cooper I never had to *develop* a taste for any of it. It was just there, waiting on me. Course, I didn't start 'til late, mid twenties. I used to be the most shy, innocent boy you ever saw in your life.

Seth That's pretty hard to believe.

Cooper You don't *want* to believe me, but it's true. Even when I was in the army, in Germany. This was before Vietnam got started good. I got drafted. A friend and I made what you might call a very hesitant trip to a whorehouse. He knocked on the door because I was too scared. The madam took one look at me and started laughing so hard she couldn't even talk. She shut the door on both of us. I know I looked like a Catholic altar boy — which I'd been. (*smokes his cigarette, takes a drink*) Sure don't look that way now.

Seth How old were you? You must have at least finished high school if you got drafted.

Cooper Catholic High, class of '59. Other day at the bar, I heard somebody say they were Huntingdon College, class of '81. I said, "Meadhaven, class of '83, Bradford Clinic, class of '84, Bridge House, class of '88." (*laughing*)

Seth So you graduated from all of them. Did they give you a diploma? (*a pause*) I shouldn't make a joke like that. I'm sorry. But I figure you, of all people, can take it.

Cooper You never been to a whorehouse, have you? (*takes a drink, smokes his cigarette*)

Seth (*looks away, then back at Cooper*) You can probably guess the answer to that. But if you want to know, there was a strip joint on the Black Fork River near where I grew up. I used to sneak in with friends. From what I understood, some of the ladies would take you outside, for a price.

Cooper But you were too scared to do that. Too innocent. (*in a slightly exaggerated Southern accent*) Pussy scared you. (*pauses*) I'm getting a little drunk. Was maybe a little drunk when you got here.

Seth I thought maybe so. (*drinks his beer*) Guess I wasn't exactly experienced. That's true enough.

Cooper You were too saintly to do something like that. That's what it was. Saintly.

Seth Now you're being facetious, and maybe a little mean, too.

Cooper No, I meant it, though I know I can get, well, *slightly* mean when I'm drunk.

Seth Like when you told that woman at the bar she looked just like Ethel Merman.

Cooper (*takes another drink*) Yeah, like that. (*pauses*) But I wasn't being facetious. I do think of you as saintly. And I'm Catholic. So I know what a saint is.

Seth I'm no saint, Cooper.

Cooper Well, you've probably at least had some pussy by now. (*laughing*) You're a better person than me, though. Better than anyone I know. You have a good heart. Not everyone would come up here and have dinner with a old drunk like me.

Seth You're not old.

Cooper I just look old. (*takes a drink*) But I am a drunk. And I feel worn out.

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Seth That's not how I think of you.

Cooper So how do you think of me? (*smokes the last of his cigarette, stubs it out on his plate*) You've only known me a year or so.

Seth I think of you as an artist. That's what you are. You're talented, and you're one of the funniest people I've ever met.

Cooper I'm a whore. *That's* what I am.

Seth Why would you say that?

Cooper You already know why. 'Cause I have to paint the kind of shit you see up on these walls so I can make money. (*in a barker's voice*) "Come get you some of this, you rich old biddies. I got some good stuff here. Want me to put a little more blue in it so it'll match your living room walls?" I've done that, you know. And people want to come up to this studio, see "my work." I don't let them. They think I got paintings leaned all up against the walls everywhere. I have to sell this shit fast as I can paint it. (*Cooper slowly rises, walks over to a small shelf in a corner of the room that's filled with liquor bottles. He picks up a bottle of Scotch, turns back toward Seth, and pours a drink into his tumbler.*) This one (*shakes the bottle in his right hand*) was winking at me. They'll do that sometimes when I walk by. Proposition me. You know, one whore to another.

Seth I saw your last show at the gallery. You can't tell me there wasn't anything in there you didn't like. I know I saw good paintings.

Cooper (*still standing beside the liquor bottles, eyeing him with suspicion*) What do you know? And by God, don't say, "Well, I know what I like." (*laughing, walks back toward the table with the bottle in his right hand, tumbler in the other, sits down and takes a drink*) Well, there were the two nudes I kind of liked. All the old biddies were probably saying, (*in a mocking tone*) "There goes Cooper painting those nasty pictures again." (*lights a cigarette*) And I did like the bar scene, mostly. Wish I'd had more time with it.

Seth I loved all those. And I saw where you put yourself in that bar painting. You're peeping out of the crowd.

Cooper Yeah, I'm the Alfred Hitchcock of painters. The old ladies eat that up. "Oh, look at Cooper in there." They hang me in their bathrooms, and I have to look down at them in their tubs. *(takes a drink)* So you liked the show?

Seth Of course.

Cooper Oh, you don't know shit. You're a historian. You only like paintings if they're old. *(laughing)* That's what people say about me. "His old stuff. It's so good." That's what they want to buy. People sell it for ten times the original amount, and I don't get a damn dime more. *(takes a drink)* I never know where my paintings end up. They're the children I'll never have, my very own no-neck monsters, and I don't know where they are. They're probably all out there being molested.

Seth I've heard other painters, at the Oak Room in the afternoons, they say how much they respect you. Say you should have stayed in New York, not come home to Montgomery.

Cooper What clichéd old bullshit. Sounds like something from a Tennessee Williams play. *(smokes his cigarette)* I was only there for one damn summer, after I left the artist colony in Maine. Somebody let me have their apartment while they went to Europe. I was still so Young then, but out of the army, thank God. I spent whole days at the museums. *(pauses)* It was wonderful.

Seth You could get more money for your paintings. The artists here, they complain you don't charge enough for them. Say you undersell everybody else. I think it pisses them off. *(pauses)* Which you probably like doing, knowing you. People tell them, "I can get one of Cooper's paintings for less than this."

Cooper But I can't wait months for somebody to finally pay a high price. *(smokes his cigarette)*

Seth Looks like Bethany Gardner makes a living at it.

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Cooper (*cocks his head, eyes him with suspicion again*) Just what the hell are you trying to do? Don't get me started on her. (*takes a drink*) You know she had a stroke a few months ago?

Seth I heard.

Cooper Yeah, she had a stroke all right, a stroke of genius. (*laughing*)

Seth Her paintings are kind of similar in style to yours, all those angels she does.

Cooper No shit, boy. She's been copying me for years, but she's the one making the damn money. All those beatific angel faces. *Mine* ain't quite as beatific. My angels been flying through fire. Hers been flying with god damned butterflies. And people can't see the difference. But I tell you what they can see, if the color matches their fucking living room walls. (*smokes, stubs out his cigarette*) Tell you what I did once. *Miss* Bethany had a party. I went to drink as much of her liquor as I could possibly get a hold of. Found me some fancy goblet on one of her shelves and started drinking from it. When I left, I walked out the door with it full of liquor.

She come running after me. (*in an exaggerated Southern accent*) "Cooper, Cooper, you can't leave with that." I turned around and said, "You just as phony as those pearls around yo' neck." (*laughing*) I dropped the damn goblet onto the grass. (*pauses*) But I'm not bitter, mind you. (*laughing*) Though I can get a little hateful, you know, just sometimes.

Seth So do you hate her?

Cooper (*takes a drink, puts the tumbler down slowly, speaks quietly*) It's not her I hate.

Seth (*after a long silence*) I shouldn't have brought her up. I was curious and that was mean.

Cooper Maybe it was, a little.

Seth I told you I'm no saint.

Cooper People like to see me riled up. It *entertains* them. "Cooper's so dramatic." That's what people say. But you've apologized. So now you're a saint again.

Seth No, I'm not.

Cooper (*takes a long swallow of his drink*) There's something I wanted to ask you. Next week, there's a show that opens at the art museum in Atlanta. I want to go. It's the Impressionists. Would you go with me? (*pauses*) We could spend the night. I'd rather not go alone.

Seth (*drinks from his beer, looks toward the kitchen, takes another drink, looks around the room*) Maybe. I don't know. I'll have to see.

Cooper You don't want to. I can tell.

Seth I didn't say that. I'd *like* to see the Impressionists. It depends on how busy I am.

Cooper We could maybe go to a play, too. (*pauses*) If you wanted.

Seth You mentioned Tennessee Williams a while ago. I've heard you quote him a lot.

Cooper Well, I told you how dramatic I am. I love Tennessee Williams. Another old drunk like me. I've read his plays, seen his plays, seen the movies made from them, even read his short stories. I love his words and his characters. (*takes a drink, holds the half-full tumbler high above his head and looks upward as light shines off the glass*) This is my paper lantern. It colors everything for me. Softens the world.

Seth That's from *Streetcar*.

Cooper I guess you don't just read history. (*continues looking at the tumbler he holds aloft*) "I have always depended upon the kindness of strangers."

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Seth Seems like you quote Blanche DuBois more than any of the other characters.

Cooper (*lowers the tumbler, drinks from it, and sits it down carefully, as if it might break otherwise, then, again in an exaggerated Southern voice*) I am Blanche DuBois. (*laughing, but stops abruptly*) "And so it was I entered the broken world to trace the visionary company of love." Bet you don't know where that's from.

Seth No, but it's beautiful.

Cooper Glad you think so. It's the quote from Hart Crane at the beginning of *Streetcar*, or part of the quote, at least.

Seth (*drinks the last swallow of his beer and both are silent a moment*) Let me take these plates to the kitchen, and I'll get another of the beers I brought out of the refrigerator. (*rises from his chair and picks up the plates and his empty bottle*)

Cooper You're going to have to drink faster to catch up with me.

Seth (*laughing*) I wouldn't count on that happening. (*walks toward the kitchen, stops beside the door, and looks at the small painting there, studies it*) Is this a self-portrait?

Cooper Yeah. It's what I used to look like, before I went all to hell.

Seth It's good. I can see you in it, and no beard yet. Date says '67. And it's oil.

Cooper It's shit, is what it is. Sometimes I absolutely hate seeing it.

Seth (*mildly irritated*) Then why don't you just sell it?

Cooper (*takes a drink*) I wish somebody would steal the damn thing.

Seth No, you don't. If you did you wouldn't have kept it all these years. Stop bullshitting.

Cooper Hush. That's enough of you trying to prop me up.

*(Seth walks into the kitchen, sits the plates and bottle down onto a counter, then disappears from sight, reappears with another beer, and walks back into the larger room, sits down at the table.)*

Cooper *(lifts his arm and points to the nearest corner of the room)* You see the crack in that plaster wall? *(Seth turns and looks.)* It drew itself into its own shape. Made itself. It didn't need any damn painter, and I love the lines of it. *(takes a drink)* I know just how that crack feels.

Seth How does it feel?

Cooper It's full of woe. *(pauses)* Lord, listen to me. I'm so affected. Of course, affectation becomes me. *(laughing)* You know Tennessee and Truman were good friends, until they fell out.

Seth Capote?

Cooper No, Harry. Of course Capote. What other Truman would I be talking about? *(pours a drink, sips it)* I met him once, years ago. There was kind of an odd moment that happened between us.

Seth Really? How was that?

Cooper Why don't we get up from this table and go sit over there where it's more comfortable, where I've got an ashtray?

Seth All right.

*(Both rise and move toward the two chairs and the loveseat. Cooper carries his drink and pack of cigarettes, Seth his beer and the bottle of Scotch. Cooper sits in one of the chairs, and Seth takes the loveseat, places the Scotch at the corner of the small coffee table nearest Cooper, and slides an ashtray next to it.)*

Cooper They were filming a movie of one of Truman's stories, "A Thanksgiving Visitor." It was in an old abandoned farmhouse south of town. A bunch of old goats had been living in it — the

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four-legged kind, I mean. Not people. *(laughing)* A friend of mine found the location for them, and they gave him a part as an extra. So he was there a lot, and he took me down one afternoon. Maybe he knew Capote was going to be around that day. *(picks up the pack of cigarettes and a lighter from his lap and lights a cigarette, then puts the pack and lighter on the table and takes a drink)* So we'd been there a little while. I'd seen how they'd taken out the ceiling over this great big dining room table so they could shoot down from the attic. Some of the actors and crew were milling around, including Geraldine Page, who I got to meet. She was very nice, or at least *pretended* to be. Which was nice of her. *(laughing)* Do you ever pretend to be nice?

Seth Maybe sometimes. You know, the way I pretend to be a saint.

Cooper No, you're too nice to pretend anything. *(smokes his cigarette)* Or maybe you pretend to be mean sometimes. You know, just to see how it feels. Try it on. Like when you brought up that Bethany Gardner a while ago, knowing it would piss me off.

Seth I am sorry for that. I thought I was forgiven. *(laughing)*

Cooper Boy, you were born forgiven. *(takes a drink)*

Seth Weren't we all?

Cooper If anything, I was born damned.

Seth Damned how? With talent?

Cooper Talent? Shit. I told you I'm a whore.

Seth You've worked hard. Maybe the Muse has inspired you some, too. I hope so.

Cooper The Muse. You know what the Muse is?

Seth What?

Cooper The Muse ain't nothing but a pot-bellied, bucktooth

whore. (*laughing*) And you want her!

Seth So have you ever had her?

Cooper (*takes a drink and smokes his cigarette*) What are you asking?

Seth Just making a joke.

Cooper Maybe she's had me, but not as often as I wish. Lord, that's the truth. You know Capote wrote a book about a drama company called *The Muses Are Heard*. Maybe I need to listen harder.

Seth You were going to tell me about meeting Capote.

Cooper Alcohol gets my mind to wandering in the damnedest directions. But Truman. All right. I went outside on the porch and sat in an old swing that had birdshit all over it, and just as I got settled and looked up, I see him get out of a car. There's a woman with him, but I'm not really looking at her. I'm a little startled to see him. And he starts walking toward the house, toward the porch steps, which are kind of high, and steep. So he puts his hand on the rail and looks up. He sees me, and I'm looking at him, and he just *stops*, doesn't move, just keeps looking at me. He *sees* me the way I see things. I'm cursed with seeing, like that crack in the wall. You thought I was being funny.

Seth No, I didn't.

Cooper (*smokes his cigarette*) I do know how that crack feels. I know how it drew itself, every hurting line. When I was young, I was in the car with my mother on a rainy afternoon. Just give me a minute to tell you this. We stopped behind an old pickup, and the rain came harder and the wind did too, really blowing. There was a black man in the back of the truck holding a dirty old tarpaulin over his head, and the way the wind caught that thing and kept it whipping around, covering his face and then revealing it. I remember his eyes, his looking at me, staring, the darkness of his face and the heavy canvass, the way he held it so tight in his hands. He looked otherworldly. It frightened me. It was like I saw past the everyday, past what everybody else sees, and I don't

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think I've ever seen the world the same since.

Seth (*a pause*) Did you ever try to paint that?

Cooper I've tried. Never have gotten it right. You might say the Muses stayed silent. (*takes a drink*) That man's hands looked huge, and strong. Hands are so hard to draw. Truman's hand, on the rail, it was delicate and fine, but there was strength in it too. I wanted to draw it. But I was drawn to his eyes. Knew how he saw me. And then the moment broke, cracked, you might say. He came on up the steps, nodded at me, and went inside with the woman following him.

Seth Who do you think she was?

Cooper (*smokes his cigarette*) Oh, I know who she was. I recognized her just as she passed. Word was out she might be with him.

Seth Who?

Cooper Lee Radziwill, Jackie Onassis's sister. She was quite beautiful, and married to a prince at the time.

Seth Prince of what? Or I guess I should say of where?

Cooper Prince of some damn where. Who the hell knows? Prince of money is what he was. I'm sure he had plenty. (*smokes the last of his cigarette, stubs it out, takes a drink*) So I finally get up and go inside, and I see this squat little girl, some no-neck monster in a frilly dress who's an extra in the dinner scene. She walks up to Lee Radziwill, just beaming, so fat and beatific, and says, (*again in an exaggerated Southern voice*) "My daddy says you're a princess." And then the little girl turns to Truman. "And he says you're a queen." (*breaks into hard laughter*)

Seth (*laughing too*) So how did Capote take that?

Cooper He just stared at her. Didn't laugh. Then walked off. In a little while they started filming, so I had to go outside and keep my distance. I guess I can't say that I really met him, but there was that one odd moment.

Seth (*a pause*) Well, maybe not that odd. Moments like that happen between people.

Cooper Why, whatever do you mean, boy? (*leans forward toward the coffee table, reaches for his pack of cigarettes, lurches, and has to grab the corner of the table to keep from slipping off his chair*) Uh, oh. The drunkenness has got me. I'll be on the floor if I'm not careful. Wouldn't be the first time. (*reaches for his drink and swallows what remains in the tumbler*) I didn't look then like I do now. I wasn't bad looking.

Seth You think he was attracted to you?

Cooper How should I know? What difference does it make?

Seth It must have made some difference to you. You wanted to tell me about it.

Cooper I didn't bring you here to tell you anything. Or ask you anything. That what you think? I brought you here to tell you something?

Seth No. I thought you invited me as a friend. But you did ask me something, to go to Atlanta with you.

Cooper Maybe I invited you here as my patron saint. That's what all artists need, a patron. And with you I get a saint, too. Or so you pretend.

Seth Are we back to that?

Cooper I'm trying your patience. Do you have the patience of a saint? (*laughing*)

Seth Now you're talking in circles.

Cooper That's what one does when one can't walk, or talk, a straight line. One sits and talks in circles. It's a fine way to exist. (*leans backward in his chair and tilts his head toward the ceiling, as if he might want to sleep*) Those water stains up there, they look just like female genitalia. (*Seth looks upward.*) Don't you think?

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Seth Not sure about that.

Cooper Oh, I can see them. It's pussies everywhere. (*lowers his head, leans forward again, drunkenly, then looks directly at Seth*) I'll tell you one thing. I have had my girls, and I have had my boys. (*Seth slowly nods and drinks from his beer. Cooper waits to see if Seth will speak.*) You can't look at me now, can you? Do I disgust you?

Seth No, Cooper. Of course not. (*laughing, nervously*) I know you've been with, well, not girls and boys but women and men. You've told me about a few of the women.

Cooper (*angrily*) You've known all this time I've been with men? And pretended you didn't? You shit! And you *laugh* at me? How did you know? Am I effeminate?

Seth I didn't pretend anything. And I'm not laughing at you. I just laughed from surprise at your reaction. And no, you're not effeminate. Or maybe a little when you quote Blanche DuBois, when you're drunk. But that's just you playing the role.

Cooper Oh, I've played the role, darling. I've played lots of roles. But I still want to know how you knew. Did some busybody tell you?

Seth (*picks up his bottle of beer but doesn't drink from it*) I honestly don't remember if anyone told me. I've just known.

Cooper You liar. (*lets out a drunken, guttural sound*) You think I'm awful. And I've tried so hard to . . .

Seth To what?

Cooper (*has begun to slide down into his cushioned chair*) Hide it from you.

Seth There was no need for that. I'm sorry. It must have been hard. Maybe that's why you invited me tonight.

Cooper To tell you? Oh, you shit. You *shit*. You made me . . .

Seth Why am I a shit?

Cooper (*his tone suddenly shifts, becomes gentle in the way only someone very drunk can manage*) Oh, you're not. I am. And a whore. You're a saint. (*in a Blanche DuBois voice*) You're too beautiful for this world. And I'm not being facetious. (*slides a little farther down in his chair and looks upward at the ceiling, as though he's looking through it at the night sky*) I can see the stars in the heavens, all the constellations. No more pussies, just stars. (*suddenly looks at Seth*) Tell me, do you have a pretty dick? I bet you've got a pretty dick.

Seth (*shaking his head in mild disbelief*) I really wouldn't know one way or the other, I don't guess. (*laughing*)

Cooper I bet you do have a pretty dick. (*pauses*) Now I *know* I've disgusted you.

Seth (*looks away from Cooper, then down at the floor*) Can't say I'm crazy about this topic of conversation, but no, you still haven't disgusted me. It's all right.

Cooper You always pretend to be so calm. But you're not. You just hold everything in — all your worries and fears. I know your fears. I can see them like I see that crack in the wall. You're scared. That's what you are. You try to hide in all that history you read, cover yourself up in dates and battles and dead soldiers and (*again in an exaggerated Southern voice*) sins of the past. I know what you are. You're scared of women. You like women, but you're scared of them. You've spent too much time alone, like me, and you don't know how to be close to anyone. So tell me, does pussy still scare you?

Seth (*stands, beer bottle in his hand*) Maybe that's enough, Cooper. All right? (*in a harder voice*) Enough.

Cooper (*looking up at Seth*) Why don't you just go ahead and get mad? I've never seen you mad. Try it out. See how it feels.

Seth (*takes a step toward Cooper — voice slightly raised, but not into the high register of full anger*) I've seen you get drunk and turn on people, lash out at them, insult them, even strangers, alone, like when you told that woman she looked like Ethel Mer-man. Did you see the hurt on her face? Did you see that? I did.

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She was crushed. So let me ask you something. Why do that to people? You almost said it a little while ago, when we were talking about Bethany Gardner — whether you hated her. But you held back, didn't you? Just said it's not *her* you hate. Why hold back? Who do you hate?

Cooper I need a drink. This bottle's empty.

Seth You don't need a drink.

Cooper For me to answer would be like me telling you the sky is blue or the grass is green. What any fool can see doesn't have to be told. *(a pause, then a sudden shift in tone, his voice softening into the sound of a lament, again in the way only someone very drunk can manage)* I don't hate anybody in this world, no matter how I might sound. But I know I'm awful. I'm filled with awful. I confess it.

Seth *(slowly kneels down beside Cooper's chair)* At the risk of sounding like a fool, you don't have to hate yourself. You're not awful. No more than anybody else at their worst. Forgive yourself.

Cooper *(looks up at the ceiling and back down at Seth)* The way you're kneeled there, I feel like I should anoint you, but I'm not worthy.

Seth Don't start with the saint business again. Let go of that, okay?

Cooper *(leans toward Seth)* Kiss me here. *(points to his cheek)* Just once.

Seth *(in a gentle voice)* No, but here, take my hand.

*(Seth reaches out with his right hand and Cooper reaches with his right, their hands clasping, palms together, thumbs locked)*

Cooper One kiss.

Seth Hold my hand, Cooper. Just hold my hand. It's all right.

Hold it as long as you'd like. And tomorrow, when you remember all this, don't feel bad. You don't have to be embarrassed.

Cooper (*leans his head backward again, is slumped far down into his chair, remains silent for quite some time, then looks toward Seth again*) You're holy. You are. Oh, you are.

Seth Stop saying that. When you do, I feel like an awful fraud, like I'm pretending something and don't mean to be, but am. As well as you can see me, you're seeing me only the way you want. I wish I could do something to show you that you're wrong.

Cooper (*lets out a deep sigh*) That's a beautiful speech. You're too good for this world.

Seth (*continues to hold Cooper's hand, shakes his head in exasperation*)As much as you can usually see, you sure can't hear.

Cooper (*leans backward again*) I need to rest my eyes. Will you sit with me while I do?

Seth You want to sleep?

Cooper Maybe. I don't know.

Seth I'll sit with you. You just rest.

Cooper In peace?

Seth Yes, in peace.

*(Seth draws his hand slowly out of Cooper's, guides Cooper's freed hand onto the arm of the chair, and carefully and quietly rises from his kneeling position. He goes and sits again on the small sofa. Moments pass. He drinks the last swallow of his beer, places the empty bottle on the floor, and looks around at the paintings on the walls. He rises again, steps quietly toward the painting between the nearest windows, studies it, then moves to the other paintings, studying each one. Finally he moves to the self-portrait beside the door to the kitchen, looks at it, then looks toward Cooper and back at the painting, then toward Cooper again, as if with each look he is comparing the man now with the young man he*

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*was. He walks lightly toward Cooper, up to his chair, looks down at him, and sees that he is passed out. Seth touches his shoulder, leaves his hand there a moment, completely still, then turns and picks up his beer bottle off the floor. He walks toward the kitchen, stops beside the self-portrait, and looks again back at Cooper. He hesitates, then removes the painting from the wall, holds it in one hand, the empty beer bottle in the other, and walks into the lighted kitchen. Cooper slowly raises his head, watches him. Seth places the bottle on a counter and walks out the door onto the stair landing beneath the glare of the outside light, the painting still in his hand. His steps sound against the metal stairs, then fade.)*

Cooper (clearly to himself) It's yours. You blessed shit.

Curtain