

# Seeing the Thing

DAVE. Well—

RHONDA. *Together?!? What are you talkin' about, "together"???*

DAVE. Well, we been *friends* for quite a few years now...

RHONDA. Yeah, so?

DAVE. And, well—...

*Dave searches for but can't find the words to convey what he wants to say.*

RHONDA. Well what?!?

DAVE. *Shh!*—and—and—and—... And here.

*Dave shoves his gift on Rhonda.*

*Rhonda doesn't know what to do with it, because these two don't give each other presents.*

RHONDA. What are you doin' here, bud?

DAVE. Open it.

RHONDA. "Together." Hm. I don't know about this...

DAVE. Just open it.

*Rhonda opens the present Dave gave her.*

*We soon learn that it's a piece of stretched canvas—a painting.*

*It's best if the audience can't see what it's a painting of.*

*Rhonda stares at the painting for a while.*

*And Dave hopes that, when Rhonda sees what he has painted for her, she will want to be "together" with Dave and they will live happily ever after.*

*But that's not what happens.*

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→

RHONDA. What is it?

DAVE. *(Stunned by the question.)* What do you mean, what is it? Can't you...see what // it is?

RHONDA. It's a picture.

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. A paintin'.

DAVE. Yeah.

RHONDA. Where'd you get this? It looks homemade.

DAVE. What do you mean it looks homemade?

RHONDA. It looks like someone really painted it.

DAVE. Well, someone really *did* paint it. [Like...someone like me!]

RHONDA. (*Realizing that Dave painted this painting for her.*) Did you paint this?

DAVE. Yeah!

RHONDA. For me?

DAVE. Yeah!

RHONDA. Oh...

*Rhonda doesn't quite know what to make of the fact that Dave painted a picture for her.*

Why?!?

DAVE. (*Crestfallen that Rhonda would ask such a question.*) Well—...

RHONDA. I mean...thank you! // Thank you., Thanks., Thanks.

DAVE. There you go!, That's what people say!, There you go! You're welcome...

*Rhonda props the painting up against a crate—it's best if the audience still can't see it.*

*And she sits in a chair and stares at Dave's artwork.*

RHONDA. So, Dave...I didn't know you *painted*.

DAVE. Yeah. This is—...

*Dave turns the painting right side up—because Rhonda propped it up against the crate upside down.*

I'm takin' adult ed art. Tuesday nights. Merle Haslem<sup>19</sup> over at the high school's teachin' it—it's real good—and this is my version of one of those stare-at-it-until-you-see-the-thing things. Ever seen one of these? Some of the old painters did it with dots. They called it—... (*Searches for—but can't quite come up with—“pointillism.”*) ... somethin'...but I did it with a buncha little blocks of colors, see, and if you just look at the little blocks of colors, it's just a buncha little blocks of colors, but if you step back and look at the whole thing, it's not just a buncha little blocks of colors: It's a picture of something.

19 Pronounced, “HAZ-lum.”

RHONDA. Picture of what?

DAVE. I'm not gonna tell you, you have to figure it out.

RHONDA. Oh, come on, Dave!

DAVE. No, it takes a little time., It can be a little frustrating.

RHONDA. Well, why would you give me somethin' that's gonna frustrate?!?

DAVE. No-no-no, I just mean you gotta not *try* to look for anything, that's what'll frustrate you. You gotta just *kinda* look at it, so it doesn't *know* you're lookin' at it.

RHONDA. What're you talkin' about?

DAVE. Well...you gotta trick it! >

RHONDA. Huh?

DAVE. You gotta trick it!

*Dave demonstrates "trickin' it."*

*He walks by the painting, stealing glances at it as he does.*

Just...trick it!

*Dave demonstrates how "trickin' it" works again.*

See? Walk on by, and...trick it!

*He demonstrates "trickin' it" again.*

See? Trick it!

*Dave demonstrates again.*

Just gotta walk on by and trick it!

*He demonstrates again.*

RHONDA. (*Amused and irritated.*) Dave—what are you doin'? What're you talkin' about?

DAVE. You gotta not let it know. And hopefully you'll eventually see what it is. It's a common thing—it's somethin' everybody knows. Go ahead—try it!

RHONDA. (*Skeptically.*) Okay.

*Rhonda reluctantly tries "trickin' it" a few times, like Dave did.*

*[Note to the actors playing Dave and Rhonda: Feel free to play with adding language in the above "trickin' it" section. Just make sure it's all about "trickin'" the painting. And—have fun!]*

*This “trickin’ it” business should be pretty darn funny.]*

DAVE. There ya go, there ya go!

RHONDA. (*Giving up on “trickin’ it.”*) This is stupid. I don’t see anything.

DAVE. No, you were doin’ good—!

RHONDA. (*Putting an end to this ridiculousness.*) Dave!!

DAVE. All right, all right, then, how about do this: Just do what you usually do around the house at night, and check it out real casual-like, like...

*Dave demonstrates how to check out the painting “real casual-like”: He finds a mundane task or activity like tying his boot or polishing the furniture as he casually checks out the painting.*

*[Note to the actor playing Dave: Feel free to give words to whatever it is you choose for your mundane task. A lame example: Oh, Jeez, I gotta polish the furniture...and then polish some furniture and check out the painting casually. This should be stupid and silly and hilarious.]*

*Rhonda watches Dave as he checks out the painting “real casual-like.”*

*And marvels at what a goofball he is.*

RHONDA. Well, I usually have a Bud and talk to you on the phone.

DAVE. Well, do that! I’ll get you a Bud, and you can talk to me! Where’s the kitchen—?

*Dave has started making his way into Rhonda’s house, but Rhonda stops him almost immediately: She does not want him going inside.*

RHONDA. N-n-n-n-no! >

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. I’m outta Bud. [I] Only got Natty Light.

*Dave starts back into the house.*

DAVE. All right, I’ll get you a Natty Light, and you can have your beer and talk to me—

*Rhonda stops Dave again.*

RHONDA. No-no-no!

DAVE. Why not? Come on, let's go inside and get us a coupla beers and hang out! >

RHONDA. No! (*Focusing on the painting.*) We gotta trick this thing, right?

*Rhonda resumes the "trickin' it" business.*

See? I'm trickin' it!, I'm trickin' it! Trickin' it!, I'm trickin' it!

*[Note to the actor playing Rhonda: Have a blast with this "trickin' it" business. Riff on what Dave has done to "trick it." And/or just trick it in your own way.]*

DAVE. It's what people who've known each other for a long time do: They have some beers and hang out! Hey! Come on!! Hey!! HEY!! QUIT IT!!

*Dave's raised voice puts a stop to Rhonda's "trickin' it" routine because this guy doesn't raise his voice very often.*

How many years I know ya?, I come all the way out here every Friday night, and I never been inside your house for beers!?! That's not natural. It's unnatural, // Rhonda! So let's do what's the *natural* thing to do and go inside and have some beers and hang out!

RHONDA. I don't care what it is, I gotta trick this thing. Hey! Hey-hey-hey, DAVE!! Quit runnin' your suck!! I gotta look! At this *thing*!

*Rhonda pulls up a chair and sits and stares straight at the painting, which frustrates Dave.*

DAVE. You're doin' it wrong! >

RHONDA. Shh!

DAVE. That's not [how you do it]—. You gotta trick it!, You gotta trick it!—

RHONDA. Hey-hey-hey!, Okay, okay!! I got somethin'!

DAVE. Yeah?

RHONDA. Yeah! Yeah-yeah-yeah: Roadkill.

DAVE. What?

RHONDA. Roadkill. Dead raccoon in the middle of the road.

DAVE. What?!? No! That's not what it is!

RHONDA. Okay, deer. Dead bloody deer // in the middle of the road.

DAVE. What?!? No!! Rhonda! It's not // a dead deer in the middle of the road!!

RHONDA. Okay, moose. >

DAVE. What?!?

RHONDA. Dead bloody moose in the middle of the road.

DAVE. RHONDA!!! No!!! No!!! That's not somethin' I'd wanna *paint*!!!  
// That's not even close to what it is! Dead *moose*?!? Come on!!!

RHONDA. Well, that's what I see!, I don't know what it is!, Don't get *mad*!, Jeezum Crow!

DAVE. You don't see what it is?!?

RHONDA. No!

DAVE. Well, can I give you a hint?

RHONDA. Yeah!

*Dave suddenly swoops in and kisses Rhonda smack on the lips.*

*That's the hint.*

*Rhonda immediately gets up and pulls away from or pushes Dave off her.*

*Then, angry/flustered:*

What are you doin'?!? What was that?!? Why did you do that?!?

DAVE. 'Cause I was givin' you a hint.

RHONDA. Well, you can't just do that to someone!

DAVE. Well—

RHONDA. And don't ever do that again! >

DAVE. Okay—

RHONDA. To me! >

DAVE. Okay—

RHONDA. Ever, okay?!?

DAVE. Okay—I'm sorry.

RHONDA. And GET OUTTA HERE!!!

*Rhonda storms off into the rest of the house.*

*Beat.*

*Dave is stunned.*