

SCAB
by Sheila Callaghan

ANIMA -- 23 year old woman
CHRISTA -- 22 year old woman
JENNA / ANGEL ONE – 20's-30's woman
ALAN / ARTIE / DAVIE / ANGEL TWO -- 32 year old man
MOM / KELLEEE / MARY-ANDROGYNE -- 40's woman

MOVEMENT ONE

A phone rings thrice in the blackness.
Lights full on ANIMA in the apartment,
lying sideways on the floor and wheezing.
A large bucket of dead wildflowers festers
in the corner and a beat-up second-hand sofa
lingers crookedly in the center of the room.
Slats of morning light blanch the floor and
ANIMA's rumpled clothing, which appears
not to have been changed for days. There is
a knock.

CHRISTA (off-stage)

Hello?

Another knock. CHRISTA enters with her
suitcase.

CHRISTA (cont.)

My goodness you're on the floor well I'm here it took me long enough it's a five hour
flight the bus system here is appalling is that my room?

CHRISTA steps over ANIMA and exits.
ANIMA wheezes.

The slats of light creak across the floor and
it is now afternoon. CHRISTA re-enters the
room with her camcorder poised at her eye.

CHRISTA (cont.)

Wow, you're still on the floor well I have nothing to do until my meeting at seven with
my new classmates over coffee how grad school of us I'm going to check out the
neighborhood right now you have an interesting place or should I say we

CHRISTA aims the camcorder lens at her face.

Well here's my new apartment and there's my new roommate on the floor and here's my first day in Los Freaking Angeles

She exits.

Lights move again and fade to a blue shade of evening. ANIMA is still on the floor. CHRISTA enters holding a white deli bag.

CHRISTA (cont.)

There you are again, ha, do you ever get up to pee, boy I'm exhausted I already have seminar tomorrow my cohorts are geniuses they all came from ivy leagues I can't finish this sandwich if you want it jesus christ will you just look at me

ANIMA does not move. CHRISTA kneels on the floor next to ANIMA.

CHRISTA (cont.)

It always helps me to verbalize when I'm miserable

CHRISTA touches ANIMA, who jerks violently.

I have to prepare for this thing

CHRISTA exits.

ANIMA

This is it:

It was the third one that did it at three thirty in the morning in the night or the night/morning that no one can seem to make up their mind about which is it really, not even the sky that stays dark until it's damn good and ready to lighten up even when you are not.

The third ring that shot me out of bed and for no apparent reason made me feel urgency. Not fear urgency. It was like I remembered a pot of boiling water on the stove that was spilling over and wetting the pilot light that for some reason didn't go out when it got wet.

The ring, the ring. I leaped up and I was naked and as I ran to the phone I felt the cellulite of my ass bounce a little and I involuntarily sucked in my gut because that is what I have learned to do now when I am naked or in a bikini or ashamed of the little womanly curve above my pubic bone that was sexy on Marilyn Monroe. And my breasts

that are round and lovely in my wonderbra but point out to either side like the eyes in the head of a lizard were doing just that as I ran to the phone the phone the phone

Ring and I picked it up and my eyes were wide in the dark and I saw colors, the black was segmented into photograph pixels like a color shot in a magazine, the grainy kind like in Paris Match not the glossy super American high fashion perfection of Vogue or Vogue or that other Vogue/Cosmo/Teen nonsense. The black gets divided in colored pixels at night now and then ever since I did acid my sophomore year in college in that wonderfully large cathedral club in new york where everything was frightening and hysterical and put there for my entertainment and not real. not real.

My hand on the phone. My elbow touching the coiled cord as the phone was lifted to my ear. My arm was naked, the cord was cold. Coiled. Cold coiled cord and I said oh God I said why did I say it I said could I really have said it but I said. Hello.

ARTIE steps into the light, holding the phone.

ARTIE

Annie. It's Artie. Daddy died this morning.

ANIMA

Oh. Can you call me back?

ARTIE disappears.

I must have hung up the phone because it rang later, not five but seven, twenty, a hundred years later that night again but I don't remember placing the receiver back down. I remember my inner skin being cold and my outer skin being hot and I walked in to my room and picked up my shirt and pulled it over my head but

Funny. I can't recall if I told Him before or after I put my shirt on.

ALAN steps into the light, sleepy and naked and wearing a sheet.

He had heard the Ring Ring and Ring as well but it meant little to him because HIS phone sounds different than MINE so the mental alarm that goes off when your phone rings very late/early didn't go off for him so he was unprepared for what. I. Said.

ALAN is shocked and sympathetic-looking.

He was skinny and naked and nine years older than me and suddenly I couldn't see him. I saw an outline of who I thought he was, but his center had just dripped out right before my very eyes ladiesandgentlemen

ALAN

Oh Annie I'm so sorry

ANIMA

This skinny naked needle of a man whom I respected because he was in my field and better, I thought, than me but maybe not maybe just different but I thought better, in my grad program and here he was NAKED shhh don't tell anyone big secret hee hee we're fucking, don't you know, yep what fun

ALAN reaches out to hug ANIMA.

don't

No embrace, please, no arms, there's something not right about all this and I don't really need to be consoled I just have to figure it out. Give me a second. Give me five minutes. Ten years. I've got time.

ALAN disappears. The phone rings.

ANIMA (cont.)

Artie, again. Paramedics, dogs barking, grandma crying, Mom did CPR because she's a nurse how is Mom finefinefine, and even though he lost weight it took them twenty minutes to carry him down the spiral staircase in a big orange tarp IT WAS NOT PRETTY.

Put Mom on.

MOM appears, wearing a housecoat and an old-fashioned nurse's cap.

Mom hello you sound so tired how are you... Mom says this and this and this and then she says

MOM

Are you sure you want to come home?

She disappears.

ANIMA

After the phone went down again I told naked Him that she had asked me that. She's not thinking right now, he said, with all the authority of a piece of wet seaweed.

I called her back and you know what I was thinking? Boy, when I get phone bill next month I'm going to see this date and this call and remember it was the day I lost my male parent. I also thought about meeting new people years from now and telling them about this and them asking me

PEOPLE

(off-stage)

Are you okay?

ANIMA

And me tucking a flyaway hair behind my ear and saying, "I'm okay now. It was difficult at first. But I'm okay now."

SO. I made phone calls up the wazoo while Mr. Helpful Caring Seaweed-- sorry, he was wonderful and I am evil but I'm relatively okay with that-- made a list of stuff for me and people to contact while I was gone oh fuck I have to get a plane ticket from LAX to Jersey but it will be nice to be on the east coast again because GOD I HATE IT OUT HERE no one wears black and it is always sunny and the smog gives me acne worse than a prepubescent boy working the grill at Roy Rogers and they don't even have Roy Rogers out here only Arby's can you believe that and I don't own a car and I miss the city and I miss the bars that don't close at one in the morning on a Saturday night and the rain and people who look fat and ugly in bathing suits and our creepy little Jersey-ghetto apartment with the moldy bathroom tiles and my father.

Called the airlines and got stuck in a pot hole until I screamed BEREAVEMENT RATE or something equally dramatic and they hopped to it like I was bathed in sepia tones shooting at their heels yelling dance dagnamit dance

Then.

I danced and He danced until my bag was packed buh-bye I'll miss you little apartment too bad I don't have plants or I'd tell you to water them while I was gone so you could come into my empty apartment and fill it up a little at a time so it wouldn't be so empty when I came back. But I have no plants because plants and me aren't copacetic you see because I kill them and they DIE.

But even dead plants would be welcome as I said goodbye to the inorganic walls and the plasticmetalwood that I knew I would eventually return to, only much different then. Now was my last time to look upon my refrigerator and my coffee table and the wine bottle covered in dripped wax that my roommate and I had been so giddy over before she fled the coop and my computer that I had gotten such a good deal on and my closet space that is too big for one small person with no money, my last time to gaze upon this dome of wreckage before it became wreckage, the last time to see these objects in the BEFORE and not the AFTER,

the fat and not the skinny,

which began

right now

ANIMA curls up onto the floor in her former position and resumes her wheezing.

CHRISTA enters with a tape player and a life-sized kneeling plastic statue of the Virgin Mary, complete with exposed bleeding heart.

CHRISTA presses play. James Taylors "Sweet Baby James" begins to play. CHRISTA starts to cry.

ANIMA

Who okay cramp what tongue floorwax ow forehead I need a drink.

CHRISTA

You have a bucket of dead flowers moldering in the corner

ANIMA

I don't own a vase

CHRISTA

Can I throw them out

ANIMA

No

ANIMA gestures to the statue.

What is that

CHRISTA

The Mexican family next door is having a yard sale, I think it's a lawn ornament, it was only three bucks

ANIMA

You a Jesus freak

CHRISTA

No, I just thought she would be nice company, bring some luck/

ANIMA

(Mexican accent, overlapping)

Ave Maria, Nosotra Mujer

CHRISTA

...at least she's vertical

ANIMA
(slowly rising)

I'm getting there... I prefer the room bare

CHRISTA

It's a shame for you I'm paying half the rent

ANIMA

Just ace the music and we'll be fine... if it were up to me we'd have a great ceremonial burning of all the folk tapes in the western world and watch them melt into big stringy puddles of toxins while we all get high on the fumes

CHRISTA

I'll buy headphones

CHRISTA shuts her tape player off.

ANIMA

Why are you crying

CHRISTA

Nothing, the brainiac bastards in my cohort were slicing me to bits on the steps of the history building

ANIMA

Why?

CHRISTA

I wasn't exactly luminous in seminar

ANIMA

Fuck 'em. Would you like a drink?

CHRISTA

No, thanks

ANIMA gets up to fix CHRISTA a drink.

CHRISTA (cont.)

She walks. Beginning to think you were stitched to the carpet

ANIMA

You figured if you stepped over me enough times I'd eventually/

CHRISTA

Should I have called an ambulance, what

ANIMA

No, it's what I needed, my lollipop roommate straddling my line of vision twice a day so I could check out her lacey underpants

CHRISTA

That's nasty

ANIMA

There was no where else to look, hell of a lot more interesting than the carpet

CHRISTA

I thought you were in the throes of some massive emotional calamity

ANIMA

I was. Your underpants got me through it

They both laugh. CHRISTA touches ANIMA's arm.

CHRISTA

How are you though, really/

ANIMA jerks away angrily.

ANIMA

No

CHRISTA
(frustrated)

Christ, I don't know how to act here

ANIMA

Don't act for starters, your compassion reeks like old garbage

CHRISTA

Okay, roommate, as long as I am living here with you I flat out refuse to tiptoe around you anymore or feel sorry for you or kiss your lumpy ass unless you make an effort to wipe the drool off your chin once in a while

ANIMA

That. That's how I want it between us. No bullshit.

ANIMA hands CHRISTA her drink.

CHRISTA
What is this?

ANIMA
Jack Daniels

CHRISTA
Aren't you supposed to put something in it

ANIMA
What, like a straw

CHRISTA
No, like Pepsi or something

ANIMA
Um, no.

CHRISTA
Well. To no bullshit.

They clink and drink. CHRISTA gags.

ANIMA
You get used to it.

ANIMA lights a cigarette.

Last week I bit my tongue in my sleep and warm blood filled my mouth and I woke up choking on it so I ran into the bathroom and spit into the sink and watched my mouth-blood drip down the drain and I kept thinking, somewhere beneath the dirty streets of Los Angeles my blood was mingling with the blood of bitten tongues and bloody gums and children's elbows and addicts' noses and teenage girls' underpants, and for the first time in weeks I wasn't lonely.

You. Make it bloody.

A beat.

CHRISTA
Six years ago my sister and her adonis boyfriend and I were at a county fair and she wanted to go up in the ferris wheel but no one else did so she went up by herself and after a minute the gears stuck and adonis was standing next to me laughing through his nose making snort sounds and in a blinding moment I saw he didn't love her and then he had me behind the slurpie hut with my flower print dress hiked up around my waist and my hair wrapped around his knuckles. I bled a little.

Cocksucker. ANIMA

I asked him to. CHRISTA

Oh. ANIMA

A beat.

CHRISTA
I never told anyone that before. Sounds so strange out loud.

ANIMA
Better out loud than forever echoing in the caverns of your unrequited guilt

ANIMA smiles. CHRISTA drinks.

Lights up on CHRISTA in seminar.

CHRISTA
And so, this text can most persuasively be read as an imaginative reconciliation of historically-contingent tensions in social identification, thus awarding us insights into a bohemian woman's complex and under-analyzed notions of selfhood.

She looks up. Silence.

Um, and ultimately I, um, plan to show how such females imaginatively reworked the definition of une femme bourgeoise, selectively patching together deeply embedded, um, Republican ideals of work, marriage, and, um, intellectual cultivation.

Silence.

That's all.

Lights up on JENNA, KELLEE and DAVIE smoking Marlboros with their heads tilted at very condescending angles. They are wearing one large outfit that connects them all.

DAVIE, JENNA KELLE
Tripe. Utter tripe. A waste of my fucking imagination..

Her thematic premise was

JENNA

Unsupported

KELLEE, DAVIE

Her argument was

JENNA

Sprawling

KELLEE, DAVIE

He research reeked of flabunosity

JENNA

Is this what the state schools are churning out these days

DAVIE, KELLE

Clearly.

JENNA

Ga ga ga ga.

DAVIE

And she was so

KELLEE, JENNA

Apprehensive, mousy

KELLEE

I don't think she has the chops

DAVIE

She's altogether

KELLEE, JENNA

Chopless

DAVIE

They cackle. CHRISTA enters, wearing a
flower print skirt. They do not see her.

How in the world is she fully funded?

JENNA

KELLEE

She's fully funded?

DAVIE

She's got the Klemer grant AND the Walker AND a TA-ship.

JENNA

So arbitrary! Fa-da ga ga

DAVIE, JENNA

Fa-da ga ga!

KELLEE

And her skirt

JENNA, DAVIE

No

KELLEE

Elastic waist

JENNA, DAVIE

No

KELLEE

Flowerprint

JENNA, DAVIE

Ross Dress For Less

They cackle. DAVIE spots CHRISTA.

DAVIE

Christa...

CHRISTA

Hi.

JENNA

Hi.

KELLEE

Hi.

CHRISTA

Hi.

KELLEE, JENNA, DAVIE

Congrats on your presentation today.

DAVIE

Tough break, being first and all

KELLEE

Ambitious topic

JENNA

You seemed rather....

DAVIE

How do you think it went

KELLEE

Ga ga?

CHRISTA

It's hard to say... I'm late for a meeting... see you...

She exits.

DAVIE

Bye.

JENNA

Bye.

KELLEE

Bye.

A beat.

DAVIE

Snooty-patooty.

Back in ANIMA and CHRISTA's apartment. CHRISTA is sitting on the couch studying. ANIMA has her books on the floor, trying to study, eating chips loudly. She can't concentrate. She walks over to the bar and makes two drinks. She hands one to CHRISTA.

CHRISTA

It's only five o'clock

Not in Fiji... everything is relative

ANIMA

Do you do this every day?

CHRISTA

Yes.

ANIMA

I don't know if I can keep up.

CHRISTA

Your job isn't to keep up. Your job is to be infinitely fascinating to me...

ANIMA

ANIMA leans over and checks out
CHRISTA's work.

So what do you study?

It's boring history stuff

CHRISTA

Then bore me.

ANIMA

I study the conflict of women in bohemian circles at the turn of the century in France

CHRISTA

What was their conflict

ANIMA

They were caught between the need to remain reserved and orderly versus their desire to tear through the streets and engage in lascivious practices

CHRISTA

Oooh, what, like pagan rituals, virgin sacrifices

ANIMA

No, no. Sex. Booze. Café life, theatre houses, music halls.

CHRISTA

Jeepers. I kinda pictured them all dainty, spinning parasols and nibbling baguettes

ANIMA

CHRISTA

(giddy)

They were a little wild. They dressed in men's clothing, they smoked opium, they had many many lovers of both sexes... YET. They saved money scrupulously. They made and mended their own clothes. They kept records of their expenses. They retained every last one of their domestic sensibilities.

ANIMA

Why?

CHRISTA

Their education required it.

ANIMA

That's pretty lame.

CHRISTA

THAT is a new model of the bourgeois female.

ANIMA raises her glass.

ANIMA

LaVie Boheme....

ANIMA drinks.

CHRISTA

Am I getting insipid yet?

ANIMA

Don't worry, you'll have plenty of warning. My eyes will start to roll in concentric circles.

CHRISTA

What should I do?

ANIMA

Hose me down. Feed me pastries. Send for back-up.

CHRISTA

Got it.

They giggle and drink.

Lights up on CHRISTA filming her room.

CHRISTA

As you can see, Camera, my room is nearly complete. Books arranged by genre, clothing in ascending quality order, tapes and CD's filed by temporal mood sequence. Even got my posters up. I suggested to The Roommate we put that one in the living room, but she started howling, "I HATE Anne Geddes, who the fuck thinks sticking a kid in cabbage is cute?" I thought everyone did.

But we talked again today. We're talking. She intrigues me. I like her. I like her, Camera.

Lights up on the apartment. A tidy tower of video tapes is stacked in the corner where the dead flowers used to be, along side the empty bucket.

ANIMA passes CHRISTA a joint and lights it for her.

ANIMA

If your cohort could see you now

CHRISTA

They'd roast me alive over their glowing cigarette butts

ANIMA

Ah, they're all a bunch of puffed up ass-lickers

CHRISTA

I want them to like me

ANIMA

You want them to respect you

CHRISTA

That too. But their minds think differently than mine, more analytically and globally and philosophically

ANIMA

That's training, not intellect

CHRISTA

You don't understand

ANIMA

I'm in grad school too

CHRISTA

It's different

ANIMA

How so

CHRISTA

You study theatre.

ANIMA

Um, fuck you?

CHRISTA

Your masters is terminal, you don't get all the academic posing that goes with a PhD.

ANIMA

Right.

CHRISTA

I don't know how to act around them. I know my field, it's not like I'm incompetent, why can't I just... I lack.....

ANIMA

My flowers

CHRISTA

What

ANIMA

In the bucket, where'd you put them

CHRISTA

I threw them out

ANIMA

When

CHRISTA

This morning, I was cleaning, what

ANIMA

You just threw them out, I asked you not to/

CHRISTA

There was grey fuzz growing on the stems, they stank up the corner, sweetie, we'll buy more tomorrow

ANIMA

I don't fucking want more

CHRISTA

Then we'll get something else, a plant, something that won't die when you stick it in a bucket

A beat.

I'm sorry/

ANIMA

Fine. Whatever. They were dead.

CHRISTA

I didn't realize/

ANIMA

Forget it.

A beat.

CHRISTA

You want to read my paper?

ANIMA

Now?

CHRISTA

Yes... No... Whenever...

ANIMA

I may not understand everything...

CHRISTA

I think you will. I'll print it out for you. Later.

ANIMA

Okay.

CHRISTA

Good. 'Cause it's hot shit.

CHRISTA takes another hit. There is a knock on the door.

ANIMA (cont.)

Who the fuck is it

CHRISTA stands and peeks out the peephole.

Some skinny erudite-looking fellow

CHRISTA

ANIMA stands and looks through the peephole.

Excuse me...

ANIMA

ANIMA runs out of the room.

Ann...

CHRISTA

Another knock. CHRISTA opens the door. It's ALAN.

Hi... does Annie still live here?

ALAN

Yes, I think she's in the bathroom. I'm Christa.

CHRISTA

Alan, friend from school. I live around the corner.

ALAN

I just moved in. First year grad student.

CHRISTA

Theatre?

ALAN

History.

CHRISTA

I studied history in undergrad.

ALAN

Really?

CHRISTA

ALAN

What's your field?

CHRISTA

French intellectual history. Belle époque

ALAN

Ah, the fin de siècle

CHRISTA

Why do you say it like that

ALAN

The last gasp of a decadent society confident in its own inevitable progress

CHRISTA

But the greatest challenge to the Enlightenment's notion of reasonable man, n'est pas?

ALAN

Oui, c'est vrai...

A beat.

I just came to return some CD's

He hands her a bag.

There are a few T-shirts in there too

CHRISTA

Don't you want to come in?

ALAN glances in the direction of the
bathroom.

ALAN

I think maybe no. I've got a ton of work.. Please tell her I stopped by and I hope she's
feeling better.

CHRISTA

No problem.

ALAN

Maybe I'll see you on campus.

CHRISTA

Nice meeting you

ALAN exits. ANIMA enters.

CHRISTA (cont.)

Why did you run off?

ANIMA

Is he gone?

CHRISTA

Yes. He was cute.

ANIMA

What did he want?

CHRISTA

He hopes you're feeling better and brought you these

CHRISTA hands ANIMA the bag. ANIMA looks inside.

ANIMA

Wow. That, that hurts

She kneels on the floor.

CHRISTA

Ann...

ANIMA

In a bag

CHRISTA

Who is he, an ex, what...

ANIMA curls up on the floor, wheezing.

Come on, sweetie, let's talk about it, talk to me...

She does not. CHRISTA sits on the floor next to ANIMA and strokes her back.

ALAN returns and begins circling ANIMA. CHRISTA does not see him.

ALAN

I am thirty two, nine years older than you. I have penetrated nineteen women, not including you, with my average sized penis. I played the viola all through college and a

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!!

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for the published version.**

Thank you for reading!