

The Salty Part of the Animal

By

Erin Mallon

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Erin Mallon
www.erinmallon.com
www.erinmallon.net
mallonerin@yahoo.com

Cast of Characters

Steve: 30s - 40s

Trish: 20s - early 30s (she may
or may not have a Brooklyn
accent:)

Scene

A classroom/art studio at Kingsborough Community College

Time

Evening, after-hours

Lights up on a classroom/art studio at Kingsborough Community College. Steve sits sketching a wooden drawing model. A door slams. Trish enters the room wearing headphones and gnawing on a piece of fruit.

STEVE

Hey! Good to have some company.

She doesn't appear to see or hear him. She rocks out to the music on her headphones, mumbling indecipherable lyrics under her breath.

STEVE

I was starting to think I was the only one who took advantage of the studio after-hours.

She throws down her bag and sets up her space.

STEVE

It's Trish right? People call you Trish?

She takes a hard look at the model and shakes her head, disgusted.

STEVE

Oh, if you don't like his pose, feel free to adjust it. I was going for an "I'm a Little Teapot" sorta thing.

Steve chuckles. He gives up and returns to his sketch. Trish pulls out a small rubber ball from her backpack and wedges it between her upper back and the wall. She rolls on it and lets out a bloodcurdling scream. Steve leaps to his feet.

STEVE

Holy shit!

Trish notices him and pulls off her headphones.

TRISH

Oh hey.

STEVE

Are you ok?

TRISH

Yeah. Just rolling out my trapezius. Why?

STEVE

No reason.

Steve returns to his seat and sketches. Trish moves the ball to her mid back and screams again. Just as loudly, but in a deeper tone. Steve is startled but stays in his seat. He looks at her.

TRISH

What. My erector spinae are tight.

STEVE

Alright.

Steve draws. Trish moves the ball down to her lower back and lets out one more scream, this one is the deepest, most guttural, utterly primal sound yet. Steve openly stares at her now.

TRISH

Am I bothering you or something?

STEVE

What would make you think that?

Trish puts her ball in her backpack.

TRISH

If you must know, I need to loosen up and align my vertebrae before I sit down for long periods of time.

STEVE

Gotcha.

TRISH

Ohmygod, fine! When I was a kid my next-door neighbor Mandy Swanson had a big butt. Mandy Swanson was gorgeous and she made me want to have a big butt too, so I made the misguided decision to stick my ass out all the time which led to the unfortunate case of lordosis I now suffer from.

STEVE

Fair enough.

TRISH

That's where you're wrong Steve! There's nothing fair about lordosis! Nothing! Now do you think we can move on?

STEVE

Yeah "we" can. Can you?

TRISH

I'm here to draw. Not to talk.

STEVE

(under his breath) Are ya sure?

She glares at him then settles into her seat and starts sketching. It's quiet for a few moments.

TRISH

So. Tell me about yourself.

STEVE

You uh- you called me Steve.

TRISH

Huh?

STEVE

Before, you called me Steve.

TRISH

Is that not your name?

STEVE

No, it is. I just didn't know that you knew it was.

TRISH

I'm an omniscient. (quick beat) Dead wife?

STEVE

(startled) What?

TRISH

Is that your deal?

STEVE

Why would you think-?

TRISH

Please. A guy like you enrolling in a figure drawing class at the local community college? You've either just read *The Artist's Way*, or you're trying to reinvent yourself after an earth-shattering loss.

STEVE

Um-

TRISH

Plus you've got the grief face.

STEVE

Ok, I can't tell if you're rude or refreshing.

TRISH
Refreshing.

She smiles. They draw.

TRISH
I see you've met Splinter? He's the worst. How Saunders expects us to create compelling art working offa this shmuck is beyond me. Thank god the 1st nudie is coming in next week, huh?

STEVE
The "1st nudie"?

TRISH
Yeah, Gerald should be kicking things off on Tuesday. He's the best! He's got these killer love handles that are suh-weeet for working on your shading. You'll love him. Oh and Cheryl??? Please god, let Cheryl still be in town because you've never seen calves like this. It's like she's smuggling a pair of huge pulsating golf balls behind her knees. Amazing.

STEVE
How many times have you taken this class?

TRISH
Oh, I take it on loop. (quick beat) Since 2005.

STEVE
You must really like it then.

TRISH
Eh.

It's silent a few moments as they sketch.

STEVE
I'm uh- I'm a little freaked out about that actually.

TRISH
About what?

STEVE
The uh- "the 1st....nudie"?

TRISH
Flaccid penises make you nervous?

STEVE
Um. Well, sure. Of course they do- under certain circumstances, yeah. Wait, what??

TRISH

Don't worry, you'll get over it. I thought it would be weird drawing naked people too, but it's not. It's actually really beautiful and peaceful and probably the most honest part of my week.

STEVE

Oh. Good.

TRISH

You'll be fine. Just lose that stick-up-the-assy thing you do and you'll be fine.

STEVE

Stick up the-?

TRISH

Assy! Come on dude, loosen up!!

She jumps out of her seat and playfully squeezes his shoulders. As soon as she makes contact....

STEVE

DON'T-!

Steve responds with a full body violent jerk. Trish holds her hands up.

TRISH

Whoa.

STEVE

I'm sorry, I just didn't expect you to- I'm not used to it when people-

TRISH

No it's me. I'm super touchy-feely and it doesn't always work out in my favor and-

STEVE

NO IT'S ME! IT'S DEFINITELY ME!!!!

Beat. Trish sits. They resume sketching.

TRISH

Your voice is really boomy, huh?

STEVE

Boomy?

TRISH

Yeah, it's loud, like when it comes out of your face? That's the first thing I thought about you when you

TRISH
joined class. What was the first thing you thought
about me?

STEVE
Is it loud? Or resonant.

TRISH
Loud.

STEVE
Oh.

Beat.

TRISH
(softly) But Steve?

STEVE
Yeah?

TRISH
I get it.

STEVE
Get what?

TRISH
(soft) The boomy thing you do. When you're all boomy
like that, I...

STEVE
(soft) You...?

TRISH
(soft) I feel it.

STEVE
(softly) You feel it?

TRISH
(softly) I do.

STEVE
(softly) Where?

TRISH
(Softly, seriously) In my inners.

STEVE
(baffled) Your... inners?

TRISH

(loud) Yeah son! My inners! You know, my sensitive inside places where I feel things???! Damn! When camaraderie comes a'callin you might wanna pick up the phone bitch!

STEVE

Excuse me! Please don't call me your bitch. Or your son.

TRISH

Fine! It's just- I was being all vulnerable and shit and you just- you didn't- Argghhhhhhhh!

STEVE

Shh shh shh. It's ok. I can explain what happened. When you said you felt me in your "inners" I thought you said "innards." With a D on the end. But then I thought, "No, she couldn't possibly have said that because innards are the salty part of the animal you find in the little bag inside the turkey on Thanksgiving!" Wait no. I think those are gizzards.

TRISH

Naw, dude you're talking about giblets! Giblets are the salty part of the animal all up in the turkey's business on Thanksgiving!!!

STEVE

THEN WHAT THE FUCK ARE GIZZARDS?!!??

TRISH

HOW THE FUCK DO I KNOW!!!!

Silence. Steve starts packing up his things.

STEVE

Ok, this isn't working. I'm sorry. I'm not really feeling like myself today, so I'm gonna - I'm just gonna- I'll see you in class next week.

He heads to the door. Trish pulls out her phone.

TRISH

No-no-no wait! I'll wiki that shit. Oooh look, see? Gizzard. "A gizzard is a secondary stomach that birds, earthworms and various reptiles use to grind their food before they digest it."

Steve tries to turn the knob. Nothing. He jiggles the handle. Nothing.

STEVE

What the hell?

TRISH

Check this out! "Stewed gizzards are eaten as a snack in Portugal, while gizzard gravy is a classic accompaniment to the traditional Thanksgiving turkey meal in many parts of the United States!

STEVE

The door is locked.

TRISH

So are we cool then? Because it seems like what we're dealing with here is one of those classic situations where a giblet may be a gizzard but a gizzard doesn't necessarily have to be a giblet. So we're kinda both right! Right?

STEVE

Did you hear me? The door is locked.

TRISH

Oh don't worry, Saunders gave me the after-hours key.

She pulls a small key out of her pocket.

STEVE

Oh, good.

Steve holds his hand out. Trish doesn't move.

STEVE

May I have it please?

TRISH

No.

STEVE

No?

TRISH

I wanna hang out some more.

STEVE

Well I don't. Give it to me.

TRISH

No.

STEVE

Trish?

TRISH
Steve?

STEVE
Trish?

TRISH
Steve?

STEVE
Gimme the key!

TRISH
No!

Steve lunges for the key. In a panic Trish swallows it. They stare at each other, stunned.

STEVE
Did you just-?

Trish gags.

STEVE
Oh my god!

She gags.

STEVE
Can you cough it up?

She gags.

STEVE
Cough it up!!!

Trish suddenly gets very calm and still.

TRISH
And... it's descending.

Steve watches Trish as she experiences the key's descent. She squirms, adjusts, and shudders a few times allowing its passage.

TRISH
Oooh. Ahhh. Creepy.

STEVE
I'm calling security.

TRISH

No! Can you just- Can you draw with me for five more minutes?

Beat.

Please? Just five more minutes.

Beat.

STEVE

And then we'll call security?

TRISH

Yes.

STEVE

And a doctor?

TRISH

Sure.

STEVE

Because I'm not confident that's coming out easily on the other end.

TRISH

Yeah me neither. (She coughs). So you'll stay?

Beat.

STEVE

Five minutes.

Beat. She smiles.

TRISH

Come here then.

STEVE

Where.

TRISH

Here.

STEVE

Why.

TRISH

Because you didn't answer my question.

STEVE

Which question.

*She crooks her finger asking him to come closer.
He does.*

TRISH

Wow, you look so different close-up.

STEVE

So do you. (Quick beat) So... what was your question?

TRISH

(Whispering) What was the first thing you thought when you saw me?

STEVE

Honestly?

TRISH

Yeah.

STEVE

I thought "she's so small I bet I could fold her in half and put her in the back pocket of my cargo pants and no one would be the wiser."

TRISH

REALLY???

STEVE

But I would never do that of course!

TRISH

Even if I asked you nicely?

Beat.

STEVE

Do you like me or something?

Beat.

TRISH

Take off your sock.

STEVE

What? Why.

TRISH

Because I wanna draw something real. And call me crazy, but by the look of that shoe, you're packing some pretty massive metatarsals in there.

STEVE
Size 13. Nikes aren't great for wide feet though, so I wear 14s to allow for extra-

TOGETHER
Breathing room.

STEVE
Yeah.

Beat.

TRISH
So? Take it off.

STEVE
I will. But do you think maybe you could-?

TOGETHER
Take yours/mine off too?

STEVE
Yeah.

TRISH
Sure thing Steve.

They frantically undress one of their own feet.

STEVE
Now what.

TRISH
Fuck this guy.

Trish knocks Splinter to the ground.

TRISH
Put it on the table.

STEVE
Only if you-

TOGETHER
Put yours/mine on the table too.(?)

STEVE
Yeah.

TRISH
Try to stop me.

Maintaining serious eye contact, they slowly sit down and each put a naked foot on the table.

TRISH

Now draw.

They draw. Frantically. Excitedly. After a few moments of sketching, Steve stops. He watches Trish as she works. His eyes drift down to her foot. He seems to have an increasing desire to get closer to her foot. So he does. Slowly, he gets closer and closer to it until...

TRISH

You can rub it if you want.

Beat.

STEVE

Are you sure?

TRISH

Never been surer.

STEVE

Um. Ok. So. I'm just gonna-

He squeezes her foot. Trish lets out a bloodcurdling scream. Steve releases her foot and slams himself back in his chair.

STEVE

Holy shit!!! I'm so sorry!!

TRISH

Don't be! That's the sound I make when I like something!

STEVE

Right, right-

Beat.

TRISH

I can see how that might be confusing. Scared ya, huh.

STEVE

A little.

They have a little laugh together.

TRISH

(softly) Let's see if I can make it up to you....

She takes Steve's foot in her hands.

TRISH

You just sit back and relax.

She starts to massage Steve's foot. Steve closes his eyes. (Note for actor: Steve's eyes stay closed from now until the last page after Trish's line: "You got it.") Steve begins to cry. Very softly. Trish notices but keeps massaging.

TRISH

Should I stop?

STEVE

I'm... I'm not sure.

Beat. Trish watches him and continues to massage as he cries. Another beat.

TRISH

You miss her huh?

STEVE

Yeah...

TRISH

Yeah....

Trish stops massaging. She gently puts his sock back on, lifts his foot off the table and places it back into his shoe. She pulls her chair close to Steve and sits beside him. Beat.

TRISH

What do you miss the most about her?

STEVE

Everything.

TRISH

Sure, but... what's at the top of the list?

Beat.

STEVE

Her uh- her hands were really small? So when she - when she tried to weave her fingers between mine- they felt all stubby and-

Trish weaves her small fingers with his large ones and squeezes a few times.

TRISH
Like this?

STEVE
Yeah. Like that.

Beat.

TRISH
What else?

Beat. They continue holding hands.

STEVE
Uh. Before she fell asleep at night, she would- she would always put her head in that spot between my shoulder and my-

He gestures to that spot between his shoulder and his heart. She places her head there.

TRISH
Like this?

STEVE
Yeah. Like that.

Beat.

TRISH
What else do you miss?

Beat.

TRISH
Steve?

Beat.

Steve wraps his free arm around her. He places his nose in her hair and breathes in deeply. He cries. Trish wraps her free arm around him.

TRISH
It's ok Steve... It's ok...

A long beat. They hold each other in silence.

STEVE
Thank you.

TRISH

You got it.

They hold each other a moment longer. Steve finally opens his eyes and looks at her. He pulls away from the embrace.

STEVE

Um.

TRISH

You good?

STEVE

Yeah, yeah I'm good.

TRISH

Good. (Pulling out her phone) So I'm gonna - pull off to the side here and see if I can get the security guys on the phone, ok?

Steve stares off in the opposite direction, lost.

TRISH

Steve?

STEVE

Yeah, ok.

TRISH

Here, uh.... Splinter here will keep you company.

She puts the figure back up on the table.
I shouldn't have talked shit about him before. He's good people.

Beat. Steve is unresponsive.
Plus I... I think it's probably good to start simple.

Trish puts Steve's sketchpad back on his lap. She picks up his pencil and wraps his fingers around it. She gives the sketchpad a gentle pat and walks offstage. Steve watches her walk off. He looks down at the sketchpad. He slowly opens it to a clean page. He looks up at Splinter. With a deep exhale, he begins to draw.

End of play.