

Fingerprint

A Drama in Two Acts

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A Senior Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for graduation
in the Honors Program
Liberty University
Spring 2015

Acceptance of Senior Honors Thesis

This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

This thesis is a creative original work taking the form on a two-act drama entitled *Fingerpaint*. It follows the story of a twenty-two year old artist named Sandy and her older brother, John, who want to paint a city mural as a memorial for their uncle. The primary themes revolve around the idea of finding beauty in tension. This theme is developed as Sandy, an idealist, is forced to deal with difficult situations that will ultimately change the way she approaches life and art.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

SANDY A twenty-two year old artist.

JOHN Sandy's older brother.

WILL A man in his late forties.

MARSHA Sandy and John's mother.

SETTING

A small city on the east coast.

TIME

Present-day.

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

AT RISE

A brick wall. It is the side of an abandoned four story building in a small city in the North East. Twilight. A streetlight illuminates the wall and the sidewalk.

(John enters, walking backwards. Sandy follows with eyes closed and one hand outstretched.)

JOHN

Okay forward... forward... stop... forward... stop... forward—

SANDY

—Okay, why do we keep stopping?

JOHN

STOP.

SANDY

WHAT? *(She stops short.)*

JOHN

You're about to step in something.

SANDY

What is it?

JOHN

It's mushy.

SANDY

Fantastic—

JOHN

—Possibly human.

Agh!

SANDY

Just kidding. Forward.

JOHN

Agh, you're the worst.

SANDY

I believe you mean... the best.

JOHN

Are we almost there? Because people are going to think that I'm pretending to be blind, and that is offensive.

SANDY

I'm sure any blind person who sees you will be offended—

JOHN

— I know that's very “mom” of me to say, but—

SANDY

—Sandy.

JOHN

What?

SANDY?

Recognize my joke!

JOHN

...what?

SANDY

Never mind. The moment has passed.

JOHN

No, what? I want to know! I want to laugh too!

SANDY

JOHN

It won't be funny now.

SANDY

Try me.

JOHN

I'm sure the next blind person who sees you will be offended.

SANDY

Oh! That was good. Good work.

JOHN

Thanks! Okay. Turn around and open your eyes.

(SANDY turns around and looks at the giant brick wall.)

SANDY

Yeah! *(She stares at the wall)* It's a wall.

JOHN

It's the wall.

SANDY

The wall?

JOHN

359 Clifton Street. This is the building that Uncle Ray bought for the mural.

SANDY

What? How did you find it? Mom said he left it to some guy!

JOHN

He did. When I got back I got all of Uncle Ray's stuff out of storage and started looking through old notebooks. *(He pulls an old piece of paper out of his pocket.)* I found a picture of this place along with a note.

(SANDY grabs the picture and looks at it, comparing it to the building.)

SANDY

359 Clifton Street. Brother! This is great! What a canvas! Good job, Uncle Ray!

JOHN

He really picked a winner. It's an abandoned textile factory from like 80 years ago. It belonged to the guy who owns The Feed & Hardware right over there before Uncle Ray bought it. I have no idea who owns it now.

SANDY

Well, we better find out.

JOHN

I will. I wanted to show you first before I told anyone else, even Mom. Surprised?

SANDY

I have never felt so elated. It's exactly what Uncle Ray would have wanted. I mean, it actually is what he wanted! Look at it! It's so... appropriate. Correct. We have to use it. I couldn't even consider anything else now! I mean, we might need to sand it down a little, and it definitely needs a good power-washing, but—

JOHN

—But the brick is still in pretty good condition! We can get all the prep equipment we need from the Rent-All. And look, look, you can see it all the way from the highway! People coming off of Route 13 pass right by here on their way to the Shell station, and, get this, there's supposed to be an art gallery opening up on that second story there, which has a perfect view of this wall.

SANDY

Where'd you hear that from?

JOHN

I stopped over at McGlynns pub. The owner knows a guy who knows a guy. He said he's not sure who owns the building, but he knows a lot of people and can ask around for us!

SANDY

Excellent. Because we're going to need permission from the owner, and, gosh, we'll probably have to contact the city about getting a permit, yeah? So everything is above board?

JOHN

Permit shmermit! Let's paint it right now! Eff the police.

SANDY

We can bust out the spray paint from your graffiti days. I'm sure mom wouldn't mind bailing you out again.

JOHN

Yeah...we'll get a permit.

SANDY

Thank you. This is so surreal! I've been thinking of ideas for this thing non-stop since high school. Now it's so close! Picture it with me! The boardwalk and some coastline over here, the Speedway, Christiana Mall, Harrington state fair... we can put the new library here, the Agricultural museum—

JOHN

— I was thinking we would put in more abstract depictions of things, so it's not just a giant map.

SANDY

Well yeah, I don't want to go all Rand-McNally.

JOHN

And I want to show one or two of the big spectacles, but I really want to highlight some of the more mundane aspects of the city. The nit and grit. I feel like the heart of a city is on the street corners, you know? Like I'd love to put a little portrait of the homeless guy on the corner of Governors and Lockerman right here, the old guy with the red hat? Or the logo for the drug rehab center—

SANDY

—Well, I don't know about putting hobos on a giant mural you can see from the highway... that's not exactly hopeful. And it might not represent the city very well. But I like the idea of putting in more intimate aspects of the city... like specific things you could only know or recognize if you lived here. It'll feel kind of like those articles you read online about "If you were born in the 90's" and it has all those pictures of Bop-its and Tamagotchi pets and Blockbuster video stores.

JOHN

Tamagotchi! I woke up every two hours to feed Frankie. Frankie! I loved that thing.

SANDY

See, that's exactly how I want this to feel—

JOHN

—Then he died. I buried his plastic carcass under the mulberry bush. You know I did a painting of that mulberry bush with a gravestone under it and won an art competition? It was very depressing.

SANDY

That's great, John. But see? How your eyes lit up when I mentioned Frankie? That's exactly how I want this to feel, minus the death part. I want people to look at the mural, and instantly feel connected to the city. Like you're proud and privileged to be a part of it. But not in an exclusive way... I also want it to feel super inviting so other people feel like they can be a part of it too...that they want to be a part of it. So... universal and attractive. But also specific, with details, like you were saying.

JOHN

Yeah. City-wide inside jokes. Like that homeless guy!

SANDY

Stooooop.

(SANDY shakes her head “no” and laughs. They stare at the wall.)

JOHN

Seriously though, this will be great. I haven't worked on anything really... positive in a while. Thanks for suggesting it.

SANDY

At your service, sir! I will lift you from the muck and mire of existentialist abstractions and into the realm of... beauty! And greatness! This will be our masterpiece... the Mona Lisa of giant wall murals!

JOHN

The Sistine chapel of vertical brick walls!

SANDY

Van Gogh's Starry Night, ultra-super-jumbo size.

JOHN

Salvador Dali's The Persistence of—

SANDY

—Weird! No!

(They laugh)

SANDY

I'm so glad you're doing this with me. I want it to be perfect, you know? It wouldn't feel right without you.

JOHN

Seester! *(He hugs her.)*

SANDY

And we can throw a huge party at the reveal and invite the whole family! I bet Joan and Steven would cater it!

JOHN

Aw yeah!

SANDY

I'm talking great grandparents, distant third cousins twice removed... anyone who has ever known Uncle Ray should be here.

JOHN

Yeah. This is a more fitting memorial than the one in Smyrna. They'll all come.

SANDY

Yeah. And our New Hampshire cousins can sleep on all the extra couches in mom and dad's basement! I never put them on Craigslist, so I'll just wait.

JOHN

Didn't Mom ask you to do that for her last Christmas break?

SANDY

I forgot! And it's a good thing I did because of all the people that will be sleeping on them.

JOHN

Someone needs to start putting sticky notes on your forehead.

(John phone rings)

SANDY

Then I won't be able to see them.

(John puts his hand on Sandy's face and answers the phone. Sandy tries to push his hand away, but he keeps putting his hand back on her face. This short exchange occurs during John's phone conversation.)

JOHN

Yo what's up, this is John! Yo! Yes I'm in town! I've been here like two or three weeks! Working on a project with Sandy. *(Sandy retreats to the wall. John turns away to focus on the conversation)*. Sorry man, I can't tonight. I've got to get Sandy set up at my place, and mom's coming over to bring us a lasagna. But hey I wanted to ask you... would you be interested in helping me out with some fundraising? *(SANDY mouths, "who is it?" He responds, "It's Donald!" She gives him a thumbs up.)* We need money for supplies, rentals, permits... I know you have experience with this kind of thing... yeah... *(He exits)*

(SANDY lingers, staring at the wall. She notices that one brick has fallen out. She walks over, picks it up, and puts it back in its place. It doesn't fit all the way in. She steps back and looks at the wall. Dissatisfied, she returns to the wall, removes the brick, and tosses it aside, maybe a little more forcefully than she intended, so it makes a loud "thunk." She begins to leave, following after JOHN. Reconsidering, she turns around and stares at the lone brick. She returns to the brick, picks it up, puts it in her backpack, and exits the stage.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO

AT RISE

John's downtown loft apartment. It has brick walls. Cardboard boxes, canvases, and a few pieces of furniture litter the room.

(JOHN and SANDY enter with SANDY'S things.)

JOHN

You really packed your whole life into this bag, huh?

SANDY

Yeah. I actually sold a bunch of stuff to some freshman girls, and I just threw the rest away. I'm kind of over college dorm décor, and I wanted to start fresh. *(JOHN turns a lamp on. SANDY attempts to close the door behind her)* Also it was cheaper to only bring one suitcase on the train.

JOHN

You've got to kind of slam that door to get it to close.

(She slams the door, then looks around.)

SANDY

Wow. Cool place. And you've completely destroyed it.

JOHN

I haven't really finished moving in yet.

SANDY

But you've found time to paint?

JOHN

(JOHN shrugs.) Priorities.

SANDY

Are these new? *(She studies the canvases)*

JOHN

Some of them are. Some of them are from a while ago.

SANDY

They're... kinda dark.

JOHN

(Jokingly) Well, I only have this one lamp. You don't like them?

SANDY

I mean, they're good, compositionally.

JOHN

But?

SANDY

I don't know.

JOHN

Adjectives.

SANDY

Disorienting. Broken. Disturbed. I don't really want to look at it for very long.

JOHN

Well, don't worry, you don't have to look at it for very long. I just sold that one for \$700.

SANDY

Wow, really?

JOHN

Yeah. It spoke to somebody. Thirsty?

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

I've got water. And wine. And water.

SANDY

I'll take water.

JOHN

Mom messaged me. She just parked and is on her way up. Help me clean up. Your stuff can go down that hallway, first door on the right.

SANDY

Got it.

(SANDY takes her bags off. JOHN moves the cardboard boxes into a neat line, and turns his canvases to face the wall. SANDY comes back on and helps him tidy up. Actors can ad-lib as SANDY asks JOHN where things go, etc. There is a knock at the door. JOHN answers. MARSHA enters with a lasagna.)

JOHN

Hey!

MARSHA

Son! How was your day? Give me a kiss. Where's my little girl? Oh! John, take this to the kitchen and preheat the oven to 350. *(JOHN takes the lasagna offstage to the kitchen. MARSHA hugs SANDY.)* How was your train ride?

SANDY

It was good! No trouble. I slept most of the way here, so it went by quick.

MARSHA

You were able to pack everything into one suitcase?

SANDY

Well, not quite everything, but I needed to get rid of some old clothes and stuff anyway, so I took some stuff to Goodwill. It was a really good excuse to pare down on some of my earthly possessions.

MARSHA

Very wise. You should never be too attached to things. They come and go!

(JOHN enters)

JOHN

That's exactly what I said to you when I got here.

MARSHA

There's a difference between having a healthy view of material things and living out of your car. Yes. Your brother was living out of his car until I insisted he get an apartment.

JOHN

I was saving a lot of money. Renting a storage unit is cheaper than renting an apartment.

MARSHA

It wasn't safe! If you wanted to save money you could have moved in with me. I'm all alone until your father gets back from deployment. It's just me and the dog.

JOHN

If I was going to move in anywhere, it would be so I would have a place to paint.

MARSHA

You can paint at the house.

JOHN

Can I?

MARSHA

Yes. If you could just paint... nice things.

JOHN

Bingo.

MARSHA

You're so talented, Johnny.

JOHN

I know, Mom.

SANDY

Could I have that glass of water?

JOHN

Sure. You want water, Mom?

MARSHA

No, thank you, dear. (*JOHN exits.*) It's just a phase.

SANDY

A six year phase?

MARSHA

Well, I have your paintings all around my house. You can come get them if you want, to spruce up this drabby old place a bit. But I would love to hang on to some of them! I've been showing them off to all my friends!

SANDY

Thanks so much for transporting them for me. There's no way I could have taken them on the train. I would have had to try to sell them all. And we both know that wouldn't have happened.

MARSHA

Oh honey, you'll sell them. You just have to wait for someone who really appreciates beauty. There are fewer and fewer people who know how to appreciate good art these days. All they want is this garbage they see on MTV or HBO or whatever it is. But I bet a lot of people will be interested in your work after they see the mural!

SANDY

That would be nice.

MARSHA

I'm so proud of you for undertaking this. Your Uncle Ray would be so proud.

SANDY

Oh, by the way, about the mural... John and I have some really exciting news.

JOHN

(*From offstage*) Wait! Don't tell her without me!

SANDY

Hurry up!

JOHN

(JOHN runs onstage, trying not to spill the water.) Okay, okay Go ahead.

SANDY

Ready?

JOHN

Yeah.

SANDY

John found Uncle Ray's building. The one he bought to paint the mural on!

MARSHA

Really?

SANDY

Yeah! He found a piece of paper somewhere with an address.

JOHN

Remember the day I asked you about it a few weeks ago? I went through Uncle Ray's box of old notebooks to see if I could find anything, and I found this! *(He pulls out the photograph and hands it to MARSHA.)* Sandy and I just went and looked at it, and I can say pretty confidently that it's the best location in the city.

MARSHA

Clifton Street? Well, that's not really on the best side of town, is it?

JOHN

There's a lot of low-income housing around, but I think that was part of the point. To improve one of the not-so-great parts of the city.

MARSHA

Wouldn't it be better to put it uptown? Where more people will see it?

JOHN

Actually, this building can be seen really easily from the interstate, so a lot more people will see it. Uptown would be a lot more closed off. Plus uptown is full of snobs.

SANDY

Yeah, this building really is perfect! Now we just have to figure out who owns it and get their permission, and we can paint the mural in the exact place that Uncle Ray wanted! Isn't that awesome?

JOHN

Are you sure you don't remember anything about who he might have left it to?

MARSHA

Not that I can recall. I tried to find out when we were going through all the legal proceedings, but the lawyer told us that Ray laid out very specific instructions in his will about the property. The deed was to be transferred to an anonymous individual.

JOHN

That's so weird.

MARSHA

We have no idea who it went to or why it was so important that it be kept a secret, but out of respect for my brother, I didn't pry into it.

SANDY

Well it probably wasn't anyone in our family, or we would have heard about it, right?

MARSHA

Absolutely.

JOHN

That's so weird. I mean, he can leave his stuff to whoever, but it's weird that he didn't want anyone to know.

SANDY

Yeah.

MARSHA

He had a good reason. That's what I always assumed.

SANDY

Uncle Ray had a good reason for most things.

JOHN

He should have just left it to us. That would have made this a heck of a lot easier.

MARSHA

Like I said, I'm sure he had a good reason. In fact—

JOHN

—Maybe he was in the mafia. Or some kind satanic art cult. Or he had a scandalous affair with a senator's wife—

MARSHA

John! Do not talk that way about your uncle.

JOHN

I was just joking.

MARSHA

It's not funny. Don't joke about your Uncle's reputation. They always start out as jokes, and then they turn into serious rumors.

JOHN

Serious rumors between the three of us?

MARSHA

Don't backsass me, young man—

JOHN

—Mom, relax, I was just joking—

SANDY

—Can I have some more water?

JOHN

What are you, a racehorse? (*SANDY gives JOHN a look. He picks up his own glass, still full, and hands it to her.*)

MARSHA

I'm sure your uncle had a good, wholesome reason for not wanting us to know. Maybe he had to settle a debt and he didn't want to embarrass the family. Or maybe the building is

structurally unsound, and he just didn't want anyone to get hurt. If you want my opinion, I think you should let this go.

JOHN

Mom—

MARSHA

—I trust my brother. If he gave the building away and didn't say where it went, I think we should respect his final wishes.

SANDY

But we have it in his own handwriting that he really wanted to do it there. I'm sure if he knew that we wanted to paint the mural for him, he would have left the building to us.

JOHN

Besides, it's been six years. If it was structurally unsound it would have been condemned by now. And I wouldn't be embarrassed of Uncle Ray because of some debt he had to pay off. Also, it's likely that the building has changed hands once or twice since Uncle Ray owned it. Let me do some research, there's got to be some kind of public record for this stuff somewhere.

SANDY

Yeah, we should at least look into it, mom. It can't hurt. And I really want to do the mural exactly the way that Uncle Ray wanted it.

MARSHA

Well if you're really set on doing it, I have a few friends in real estate. I can ask them to look into for you. I don't want you to think that I'm just being a crabby old sour puss! If you want to paint the mural there, I'll help you in any way I can. I have a lot of free time these days, and I've got internet at the house now.

SANDY

Thanks mom. You're the best.

JOHN

Yeah, thanks. You know I hate computers! If you can do the online research and talk to your friends, I'll go downtown and start asking around. Sometimes those old timers at the newsstand end up knowing more than the public records anyway.

SANDY

And I can start fundraising! I can run an online campaign, and I can set up a table downtown for donations!

JOHN

Awesome. We'll find the owner, we'll get permission, we'll raise the funds... but we're forgetting a very important step.

SANDY

What?

JOHN

Lasagna! *(He motions dramatically toward the kitchen. SANDY and MARSHA laugh, and they all exit.)*

SCENE THREE

AT RISE

The brick wall. Daytime. There is a table set up in front of the wall for collecting funds.

(SANDY sits at the table. JOHN enters with a brown paper sack of food and sets it on the table)

JOHN

(In a bad French accent) Your lunch, madame.

SANDY

Merci! I am starving. *(She opens the bag.)*

JOHN

It's only 12:30.

SANDY

I've been out here since seven and forgot to eat breakfast. My stomach is trying to eat me. Ooh what is this?

JOHN

You came out here at 7am?

SANDY

I wanted to catch people as they were going into work. Mmm.

JOHN

It's a Korean stir-fry recipe.

SANDY

You made this?

JOHN

Yeah.

SANDY

Ooh! Fancy-schmancy! It smells delicious. Were you able to find anything out?

JOHN

Not yet. All the guys at the Newsstand said they know who sold it to Uncle Ray, but they don't know who has it now. They thought the deed was still in our family somewhere. How about you? Any donations?

SANDY

A few dollars here and there. Nothing really substantial yet. I'm still waiting for approval through that online fundraiser thing, so all we have is in this box.

JOHN

How much?

SANDY

(She looks in the money box.) 17 dollars, two quarters, one, two, three, four, five nickels, and two pennies. No dimes, oddly.

JOHN

How many people did you talk to?

SANDY

Quite a few. I felt like I was talking with people all morning, same as yesterday. It's weird, everyone seems really enthusiastic about the idea, but no one's donating anything.

JOHN

Should we try a different location?

SANDY

Maybe. I thought the people who walk by the wall every day would be the most likely to donate. Doing this really makes you wonder how churches and non-profits stay afloat.

JOHN

Church members tithe every month. And a lot of non-profits get government funding.

SANDY

Wouldn't it be great if there was an art tithe? What if everyone gave ten percent of their income to art? The world would be so beautiful!

JOHN

The world would also be broke. After bills, taxes, and a ten percent art tithe, I'd have approximately 17 dollars, two quarters, and no dimes to my name.

SANDY

Then... you could live on the corner with that homeless guy that you love! Only the corner would have sculptures and murals and jazz musicians on it.

JOHN

And everyone would wander the streets singing and dancing and be best friends and there would be no more war.

SANDY

Exactly. An art tithe! What a great idea!

JOHN

If I was the homeless guy on the corner, would you add me into the mural?

SANDY

Ahh...no.

JOHN

Oh come on. Sandy, something about this painting needs to be... real.

SANDY

Yeah, I agree. And, I mean, it's a really interesting idea. I just don't think the city council would approve it, you know?

JOHN

I think they would if we explain our reasoning.

SANDY

Explain our reasoning for wanting to put a bunch of homeless people on a giant billboard advertising our city?

JOHN

Woah, it's not an advertisement. I'm not painting a billboard. I'm creating a piece of art.

SANDY

I know it's not an advertisement. But we do have to consider the message we're sending with the painting. The city has drug rings and violent crime, but that's not what we want to highlight. We want this to be something positive. An ideal that we can work towards.

JOHN

I'm not wanting to depict a rape scene or someone doing a line of coke. I'm just saying that photoshopping this town into some kind of plastic, airbrushed real estate ad isn't truthful. Or even attractive. Projecting a utopia and holding it up as a standard is only going to remind everyone of how messed up everything actually is. It's like seeing a Christmas card with a picture of that perfect suburban family and being reminded of how dysfunctional and screwed up your own family is. It's disturbing. And non-human.

SANDY

I've never looked at a Christmas card and thought, "this is disturbing and non-human."

JOHN

I have.

SANDY

I look at Christmas cards and feel warm and sentimental. I want to go sing Christmas carols and eat figgy pudding.

(WILL, a man in his late forties, enters.)

JOHN

You want to paint a giant Christmas card now?

SANDY

No!

WILL

Excuse me ma'am, this is private property—

SANDY

—Hello sir, how are you?

WILL

Well I'm doing alright, how about yourself?

SANDY

Doing just fine! Would you be interested in contributing to a piece of community artwork?

WILL

Community artwork?

JOHN

Yes, sir. My sister and I are professional artists and we feel that there is a distinct lack of artistic presence in the downtown area. We want to paint a mural on the side of this building that encourages artistic development and community involvement. (*He hands him a flyer.*) You can contribute by helping us purchase paint, scaffolding, equipment to prepare the brick, sprayers and brushes... every little bit helps. We also have this donating tier (*SANDY holds up a sheet.*) If you donate \$50 or more, you will receive a limited edition print of the mural to hang in your home. If you donate \$100, you'll receive the painting on canvas, \$200 you get custom high-quality framing. There are different rewards for each donating tier. If you donate a thousand dollars or more, we will work a portrait of you somewhere into the mural.

WILL

You're painting a mural on this building?

SANDY

Yes sir. And we're trying to get as many people to donate as we can. We need about \$5000.

WILL

Mmhmm. You get permission for this?

(*SANDY looks at JOHN.*)

JOHN

We're working on it. We've contacted the city about getting permits. We're waiting to hear back.

SANDY

Until then we're trying to get a head start on raising funds—

WILL

—how about the property owner?

JOHN

We're in the process of getting in contact with him.

SANDY

We're very confident that the owner will just as excited about the project as we are.

WILL

(WILL smiles at SANDY, and nearly laughs.) I can see that.

JOHN

Would you like to donate, sir?

WILL

Would I like to donate? Well, let's see here. You are soliciting in front of private property without consent of the property owner. You have no permits, no equipment, and from the looks of you very little professional experience. *(Aside, to SANDY)* You let him walk out of the house looking like that?

SANDY

Yes, he dresses himself.

WILL

That's clear. Son, you ought to let a lady do your shopping. A lady with good taste. *(He gestures to SANDY.)*

SANDY

Thank you!

WILL

Why don't you let the pretty girl give the spiel, son? You'll get more money that way.

SANDY

Oh, he's not all that bad looking. *(WILL makes a face. SANDY laughs.)* We can let him talk to the old ladies.

WILL

The ones who can't see. *(They laugh.)*

JOHN

Can I put you down for anything, sir?

WILL

Now, hold on just a minute. This building? I own it. And I don't know if I'm entirely comfortable with the idea of giving people I don't know permission to paint on it.

SANDY

Oh, I'm so sorry. We didn't even introduce ourselves. That was incredibly rude of us. My name is Sandy. Sandy McCoy. This is my brother John.

WILL

McCoy huh?

SANDY

Yes, sir. I deeply apologize for soliciting in front of your property without getting your permission first. We've been looking everywhere for you, and I really should have waited, but I just got so excited about the project, I thought it wouldn't hurt to get a head start on raising the funds. I see now that that was a mistake.

WILL

Well, that's alright.

SANDY

I know you must think pretty poorly of us. But I would be so appreciative if you would consider letting us use your property for the mural.

WILL

I'll need to think on it.

SANDY

You can take as much time as you need. And I would love to answer any questions you might have to help you reach a decision.

WILL

I do have a few questions. I'm not sure what something like this would do to my property value, so I'll need to make some calls. What time is it?

JOHN

About ten til.

WILL

Shoot I've got to get back to my office. I'm on my lunch break. *(He reaches into his pocket, searching for a pen.)* If you want, you can come by my office later and we can talk about it. Have you got any paper? *(SANDY hands him a flyer.)* Thank you. *(He scribbles on it.)* Here's the address of my office. How does 5:15 sound?

JOHN

I have another meeting at that time, but—

SANDY

—I can do that!

WILL

Great. Like I said, I'm not sure what this would do to my property value, so I'll need to make some calls. And I'd like to hear more about your plans before I agree to anything.

SANDY

Yes, do whatever you need!

WILL

I will. You have a good afternoon. I'll see you after a while. You keep him in line, now.

SANDY

I will! Thank you!

(WILL exits. SANDY squints at the contact information he left.)

JOHN

That was awkward—

SANDY

—William Hershman. How lucky that we ran into him!

JOHN

I'm pretty sure he was about to kick us off his property.

SANDY

Do you think he's the one Uncle Ray left the building to?

JOHN

I don't think so. If he was a good friend of Uncle Ray's, he would have recognized us. We knew all his friends.

SANDY

Maybe he met us when we were younger and didn't recognize us.

JOHN

I doubt it. Uncle Ray had pictures of us all over his house. And you look exactly the same as you did in middle school.

SANDY

Hey.

JOHN

Also he talked about us all the time. If he knew Uncle Ray, he definitely would have known who we were.

SANDY

Yeah, that's true.

JOHN

Anyway, good work.

SANDY

What?

JOHN

Reeling him in.

SANDY

What do you mean?

JOHN

I'm about ninety percent sure he was about to tell us to get the hell off his property until you started monologuing. Now you're meeting him at his office.

SANDY

Well, he seemed really interested!

JOHN

In you.

SANDY

What?

(John shrugs.)

No! He was just trying to be nice!

(John smiles, but says nothing.)

What? What? Don't be weird. That was a completely normal conversation. I explained what we're trying to do, and he was interested in the project!

JOHN

Okay.

SANDY

What? What was weird about that?

JOHN

Just got a vibe.

SANDY

A vibe?

JOHN

Guys give a vibe. He was giving it.

SANDY

He's an older man! He was making normal old man jokes, they all do that.

JOHN

Look, it's not bad. It's probably good if he likes you a little bit if it means he'll let us use the wall.

SANDY

Whatever. You're weird. Are you coming to the meeting?

JOHN

Nope. I'm meeting with a client about a portrait. I've already rescheduled once, so I can't miss it.

SANDY

Okay, I'll go by myself.

JOHN

You sure?

SANDY

Yeah, it's fine, you weirdo.

JOHN

No, I mean I should probably be there to discuss the details.

SANDY

I'll be fine! Just write down whatever specific things you were going to say. I'll make sure he gets all the information.

JOHN

You sure?

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

Okay. Make sure you ask him who he bought the building from. Maybe he still has contact information for this mystery person.

SANDY

Alright. I'll give a full report when I get home.

END OF SCENE

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE

Will's office. Evening.

(WILL sits at his desk. He hears a knock at the door, and gets up to answer it. SANDY enters.)

WILL

Sandy! Come on in! I thought maybe I slipped your mind.

SANDY

I know. I'm so, so sorry I'm late. I had a little trouble finding a place to park.

WILL

I usually park over in the flea market lot.

SANDY

Oh, that's smart. I should have thought of that!

WILL

You learn these things after a while.

SANDY

Also the plaque on your door has a different name on it, so I wasn't sure if this was the right room.

WILL

Sorry about that. I'm borrowing a coworker's office while he's on vacation. My ceiling was leaking a bit, so I moved to higher ground to stay dry.

SANDY

Oh, I see!

WILL

Should be fixed in a few days.

SANDY

Well, I hope so! Or you could get one of those touristy umbrella hats.

WILL

Yes. I have a wonderful bone structure for umbrellas.

SANDY

What exactly do you do here, Mr. Hershman?

WILL

You can just call me Will. This is an investment firm, so I spend my days handling other people's money. I help them turn that money into more money, which turns into more money. And when it's slow, I play solitaire.

SANDY

That sounds like a lot of math. I don't think I'd be very good at it.

WILL

Well, you are a right-brained individual, I would think, as an artist.

SANDY

Is it right-brain? I can never remember which side is which. I remember seeing this picture one time where one side of the brain was in black and white and had equations all over it, and the other half of the brain was multicolored and had all these beautiful flowing shapes and textures, but I can never remember which side is which.

WILL

That's very right-brain of you.

SANDY

Do you think you would consider yourself more right-brain or left-brain?

WILL

I suppose if I had to choose, it would be left-brain. Unfortunately.

SANDY

Why do you say that?

WILL

I've never created anything. At least, not anything artistic. Right-brained people are creative, so that rules me out.

SANDY

Have you ever tried?

WILL

Well, I've had plenty of ideas. But I've never actually made a thing. So maybe I am right-brained... I just have no talent.

SANDY

Oh come on, I'm sure you're talented with something.

WILL

I did play the guitar for a while in high school.

SANDY

Do you still play?

WILL

Not anymore.

SANDY

Why not?

WILL

Life got in the way. So, now I watch Youtube videos. I once heard a man refer to himself as a closet-creative. I think that describes me.

SANDY

You should think about picking it up again! You might surprise yourself.

WILL

I'm a bit old to suddenly become a virtuoso musician. I'm not even sure what happened to that old Martin. It might have gone into storage somewhere. Maybe I'll look around for it.

SANDY

You should! It's never too late to learn something new. This one time I was at a folk music festival out in the woods with my uncle, and there were all these vendors selling handmade dream catchers and tie-dye, and there was incense everywhere... and I

stumbled upon this little tent with a man who was probably in his mid-fifties, he looked like he could be a construction worker or something, and he was surrounded by dozens of beautiful landscape paintings! I asked him where he had been trained and he said that he had just started painting the year before. He was watching TV and one of those specials came on that teach you how to paint really simple, generic things like flowers. So he went out and bought a canvas and some paint and just started, and at fifty years old he discovered this brand new brilliant talent that he never knew he had just because he had never tried. So I bought one of his paintings and hung it in my bathroom to remind myself that it's never too late to try something new, and you never know what secret talent is hiding inside you just waiting for you to discover it.

WILL

(He considers this.) Huh.

SANDY

You know what you should try? Finger painting. I know it sounds crazy, but whenever I hit a wall creatively, I get out pieces of cardboard and paint and start going at it with my bare hands, using whatever colors seem to best express how I feel at the time. It works great for painters, but I've also had my musician friends do it and it helps them write better songs. You should try it! It's very freeing.

WILL

Maybe I will.

SANDY

No one should have to be a closet creative. If you have it in you to create something, there's nothing stopping you but yourself.

WILL

I think I'd agree with you on that.

SANDY

Good. I'm confused about a lot of things, but that's one thing I know for sure. Creation should be a normal part of everyday life, for everyone. I think that's another big reason why I want to do this mural. Oh goodness, I'm glad I finally circled back around to that! We got so off track... I almost forgot why I came in here!

WILL

Me, too.

SANDY

I'm so sorry!

WILL

That's alright. I get a little off track myself. But there's nobody waiting for me, so I don't have a particular reason to get home. I think about that sometimes, if I find myself wanting to leave work early, so I can get out and beat the traffic. I remember, I'm not particularly going to anything. So I take my time. Maybe let a few people merge in front of me who seem to be in a hurry. I imagine they're going somewhere important. Or sometimes I'll just stay at work on the computer for an extra hour or two reading about things. It's nice when the building is real quiet.

SANDY

You spend a lot of time alone?

WILL

A fair amount. I've always been that way, though. I have trouble sleeping. So I'll get up at night and go walking downtown. It would be nice if there were some paintings on the buildings to look at.

SANDY

I completely agree!

WILL

Why don't you tell me a little more about this mural?

SANDY

Right. Well, my brother and I have been dreaming about this project for forever. Well, not forever, but for the past several years. Like we were saying earlier, we want to paint the mural to encourage artistic development and community involvement. *(She pulls out the papers that JOHN gave her and reads aloud.)* "We feel that there is a distinct lack of artistic presence in the downtown area. We want to paint a mural... etc. etc." I think we read you this already. My brother gave me all this information to go over with you, but it will probably be easier if you just read it. I feel silly reading it out loud. I mean, it's all true. Artistic development and community involvement are very, very important to me. But I also want to paint this mural as a memorial for my uncle. I don't usually get into that part of it when I'm talking to strangers because I don't want them to support us out

of some weird sense of sympathy. But I feel comfortable sharing it with you, especially if the painting is going on your building.

WILL

Sure.

SANDY

My uncle was a brilliant artist. He was the one who first taught my brother and I how to paint. When we were little he used to cover his entire dining room in computer paper and let us finger paint all over the walls and floor... that's where I got my love of finger painting. He used to take us to art museums all the time, and really instilled in me a love for beauty. He got cancer when I was in high school and battled it for two years before he passed away. In his will he left a lot of his money for me and my brother to go to art school, and that's where I've been for the past few years. My uncle had always talked about wanting to paint a mural here in the city where he grew up. He said it would be his "magnum opus." And that's where your building comes in. My uncle really wanted to use it to paint his mural, but the people who owned it wouldn't agree. So, he bought it from them. It was around that same time that he got diagnosed. His health declined, and he wasn't physically able to complete the project. After his death, I resolved that one day I would paint it for him.

WILL

That's very touching. I'm sure your uncle would be real proud.

SANDY

I think he would be. And my hope is that we'll be able to use the building that he picked out for the project. Now, I don't want you to think that I'm guilting you into this. I know that's probably what it looks like, me coming into your office with a sob story about an uncle. Actually, maybe I shouldn't have even told you about that because if you're going to let us use the wall, I really do want it to be because you're invested in this community and you want to support the arts.

WILL

I—

SANDY

—And if you find that you can't for whatever reason, I completely understand. I'm sure we can find another location. So feel free to say or do whatever you need, no pressure, really.

WILL

Well. I really appreciate you sharing that with me. And I don't feel manipulated. I've got a pretty good eye for that sort of thing, and you seem very honest to me. I haven't been able to get ahold of my real estate guy yet, but... I really believe in what you're trying to do, Sandy. Art is very valuable, and what you're doing for your uncle... I'd be honored if you would use my building.

SANDY

Oh my goodness, thank you so much!

WILL

I really admire your commitment to your family. If there were more people like you in the world, it would be a better place.

SANDY

Will, thank you! From the bottom of my heart, thank you. I can't wait to tell my brother! You have no idea how much this means to us!

WILL

It's a worthy cause. Also...

(WILL reaches into his desk and pulls out his checkbook. He writes something quickly, and hands it to SANDY. She looks at it and covers her mouth with her hand.)

SANDY

Will. This... I don't know if I can accept this.

WILL

Please. Please oblige me.

SANDY

This is so much money.

WILL

I've been saving up for a rainy day.

SANDY

Will... five thousand dollars... *(She shakes her head and tries to hand it back)* I can't.

WILL

It's for the mural.

SANDY

Really...

WILL

Please. I've always wanted to be able to do something like this, but I don't know how. You do. So please... please take it.

SANDY

But you don't even know me.

WILL

I feel like I do.

SANDY

I mean really, I could be anyone. I could be a con artist and run off somewhere and you'd never see your art—

WILL

—you won't. You're a good girl, Sandy.

SANDY

(SANDY stares at the check.) Are you sure?

WILL

(WILL stares at SANDY.) I'm certain.

SANDY

There has to be something I can do for you in return.

WILL

Well, how about we meet for coffee once a week so you can update me on how everything's going?

SANDY

I would love that!

WILL

It's a deal.

(He stands up and reaches out to shake her hand, but she rushes in with a giant bear hug.)

SANDY

Thank you so much! *(They hug for a moment.)* You have no idea how much this means to us! *(She releases and turns to go.)* I can't wait to tell my brother! Oh my goodness! Will, you're a saint! Blessings upon you and your office from the muses! I'm going to go tell him right now! Have a wonderful day!

(She exits. Will smiles. Suddenly, she re-enters.)

SANDY

Oh, I almost forgot! I meant to ask you... the reason my brother and I couldn't find the building for a long time was because my uncle left it to some stranger. My mom said it was legally confidential or something, and she never found out who the stranger was. My brother and I have always been very curious about it... So, if you don't mind me asking, who did you purchase the building from?

WILL

I bought it at an auction.

SANDY

Do you know who from?

WILL

The bank. It was a foreclosure.

SANDY

I see. Well, it doesn't matter now. I'm so glad that you bought it, otherwise we would never have met! It's so funny how things work out!

WILL

Yes. Yes it is.

(SANDY'S phone rings.)

SANDY

Oh! It's my mom, I have to take this. *(She answers.)* Hey Mom, can you hold on one second? *(She covers the receiver.)* Will, thank you so much, again. You have no idea how much this means to us! I'll talk to you really soon! Bye! *(Back into the phone)* Mom! I just finished up a meeting with Mr. Will Hershman... William Hershman. He owns the building... oh did John call you already? That little bugger, he told me I could tell you! *(She exits.)*

END OF SCENE

SCENE FIVE

AT RISE

The loft apartment.

(SANDY and JOHN enter, carrying a couch onstage as they talk.)

JOHN

...and he just handed you a check for five thousand dollars? Just like that?

SANDY

Just like that! Out of nowhere! I was completely shocked!

JOHN

Can I see it?

SANDY

Yeah!

(They set the couch down. Sandy pulls the check out of her purse and hands it to him. He studies it.)

JOHN

Well, it looks real.

SANDY

Of course it's real! See, I told you he was a good man! I just had a good feeling about him. I have a great sense for people.

JOHN

Apparently you do. Man. This is like... a once in a lifetime event. I've never seen a huge public project like this get fully funded by a private individual.

(John sits on the couch. Sandy begins organizing art supplies on the floor.)

SANDY

I know! And I don't even think he's that rich! But he gave it away like it was nothing. I

feel like I can learn so much from someone like that. He was so trusting! What kind of a person gives out five thousand dollars to a stranger?

JOHN

I don't know. An awesome one. One that just saved us a ton of time going door to door in gated communities begging for change.

SANDY

See, that's the kind of faith in people that I aspire to have. I think I'm going to have to paint something tonight. I am feeling so inspired by Mr. Hershman! People who are willing to make personal sacrifices for art are so rare. I hope to be like that when I'm old. So inspiring.

*(She gets up to exit the room. A knock on the door. She goes to answer it.
MARSHA enters.)*

MARSHA

Oh my goodness, thank God you're alright! *(She envelops SANDY in her arms.)*

SANDY

I'm fine mom. What's the matter?

MARSHA

I was so worried.

JOHN

Worried about what?

MARSHA

Are you okay? Nothing happened?

SANDY

Mom, I'm fine. What are you talking about?

MARSHA

I thought I was going to have a heart attack. After I got off the phone with you, I got on the computer to look up William Hershman on this people search website that my friend Pat told me about. William Hershman is a registered a sex offender!

SANDY

What?

JOHN

No way.

MARSHA

He's listed in the online registry as a class A felon.

JOHN

What did he do? Did he... attack someone?

MARSHA

That's what class A means. You weren't answering your phone, so I freaked out and drove over here as fast as I could to make sure you made it home. I almost ran over a stop sign.

JOHN

It's okay, Mom, just breathe in and out.

MARSHA

Please keep your phone on you. You are both so horrible about answering and it drives me crazy.

JOHN

(To Sandy) Are you okay?

SARAH

Yeah. I'm fine.

MARSHA

You're supposed to keep your sister safe, Jonathan. Now honey, you're sure nothing happened?

SANDY

Yes, Mom.

MARSHA

Did he say anything or do anything...?

SANDY

No. It was fine.

MARSHA

Good. Oh honey. I'm so sorry this happened. You were so close to getting to do your project.

JOHN

What do you mean?

MARSHA

Well she can't go near his property now. It's not safe.

JOHN

Not necessarily.

MARSHA

John, he's a convicted felon! It's not safe for anyone to meet with him alone. You need to cut off communication with him completely.

JOHN

I think that's a little extreme.

MARSHA

This is not a joke, John. He's a very dangerous person.

JOHN

How do we even know if it's the same guy? Hershman is a pretty common name, and William is even more common. We could be freaking out about nothing.

SANDY

That's true! Maybe it's a different guy! I've only had two conversations with him but he didn't seem like the type of person that would do something like that.

MARSHA

No one ever seems like the person they actually are. Here. *(She pulls a piece of paper out of her pocket)*. I printed it off the website just to make sure. Does that look like him?

SANDY

Yeah. That's him.

JOHN

Dang.

MARSHA

Well, that settles that. Now, I have to get back home. I rushed out of the house and left a chicken pot pie in the oven. It's probably burned the house down by now. Both of you stay safe. I love you! *(She hugs SANDY and kisses the top of her head.)* Keep your phones on! I'll call you later.

JOHN

Bye, Mom.

MARSHA

Bye! *(She exits. SANDY and JOHN stand in silence for a moment.)*

JOHN

You okay?

SANDY

Well. I just had a long, private conversation in an empty building with a rapist.

JOHN

You're fine. Nothing happened. You said he was normal, right?

SANDY

I think so. I don't know! I'm like, reinterpreting our entire conversation now. We talked about art, joked around, I told him about Uncle Ray, he said we could use the building, he gave me the check, he... told me I was a good girl...

JOHN

What?

SANDY

It felt really normal in the moment! Agh... my whole self feels dirty. I think I'm going to throw up.

JOHN

Should I get you a trash can?

(SANDY sits on the floor and leans back against the couch.)

Talk to me.

SANDY

Why does everything have to be ruined?

JOHN

Ruined?

SANDY

Why am I so trusting? I'm just so damn trusting of everyone. Mom is always worried about me because I'm "so trusting" and "people are evil," and I'm always trying to convince her that people are good, and then people have to go and ruin everything.

JOHN

Sandy, it's okay. Nothing actually happened. You're okay.

SANDY

You told me you got a weird feeling about him!

JOHN

Yeah, but not that kind of weird feeling. It's okay. You don't have to meet with him anymore. I'll take care of it.

SANDY

I really wanted to use that wall. It was Uncle Ray's wall.

JOHN

We can still use the wall.

SANDY

No we can't.

JOHN

Sure we can. He already gave us permission.

SANDY

We can't use the wall now.

JOHN

Why not?

SANDY

Because!

JOHN

...Yeah?

SANDY

I can't artistically collaborate with that kind of person!

JOHN

You're not collaborating with him, you're accepting a donation—

SANDY

—That's the same thing—

JOHN

—so that you can make a piece of art that the entire city will benefit from—

SANDY

—Are you not bothered at all that he raped someone?

JOHN

Of course I am. What he did was terrible, and I'm not trying to diminish that. But I'm not going to let that keep me from creating art.

SANDY

It's not keeping you from creating art. We're still going to paint the mural, We'll just... paint it somewhere else. That's what we were going to do before you found the building.

JOHN

We don't have a "somewhere else." This is our only option. This is THE option. Uncle Ray hand picked this location. That was the whole point!

SANDY

I know! And I really want to use it, but... I wouldn't feel safe. And mom would flip a biscuit. Please, John.

JOHN

(He sighs.) Alright. We can look for a new wall if you really feel strongly about it.

SANDY

Thank you.

JOHN

Which really sucks, you know? After all that. Man.

SANDY

I know. It does suck.

JOHN

That's life I guess... it's also going to be super awkward using his money when we don't want to use the building anymore.

SANDY

We're not using his money.

JOHN

Sandy.

SANDY

We not using his money! That's what we're talking about! I don't want this project to have anything to do with him! If he touches it, I can't be a part of it.

JOHN

Oh, come on.

SANDY

My art is an expression of who I am... it's an extension of me. If someone does something that is in complete opposition to everything I stand for... violating a woman... for him to have a hand in my art would make the whole thing feel dirty.

JOHN

I think you're just a little shaken up because you met with him alone. If you take a day or two to think about it I think you'll realize that you're being a little over-dramatic, and you'll realize that—

SANDY

—I'm not being dramatic. John, I just accepted a large sum of money from a registered sex offender. He got me to agree to meet with him once a week. What if he just gave me that money because he wanted to get close to me and... ugh, I need to clean my hands. Do you have my hand sanitizer?

(JOHN pulls a bottle of hand sanitizer out of his pocket and hands it to SANDY. She rubs it all over her hands and arms.)

And aside from that... you of all people should understand artistic integrity. Never compromise your art. Especially not for money.

JOHN

Well you have to make the art first, or there's not going to be anything to compromise. Look, I'm really sorry that I let you meet with him alone. That shouldn't have happened and I take responsibility for that. It won't happen again, trust me. But if we don't cash this check, this mural isn't going to happen.

SANDY

Yes, it will.

JOHN

No, it really won't.

SANDY

We can find other donors.

JOHN

No one else is donating, Sandy! I know you're trying to be optimistic, but there's a fine line between optimistic and naïve, and the economy is pretty bad right now. Anyone who has money is already donating to hurricane relief or a cure for cancer. A wall mural is literally the last thing on everyone's priority list when it comes to dishing out money, because there are real needs in the world.

SANDY

Art is a real need!

JOHN

I agree with you! But other people don't see it that way. And we can help them see it that way by painting this mural. You're going to give up on it because of some misguided idealism that doesn't allow you to take a donation?

SANDY

I'm not giving up on it, I'm going to find other donors.

JOHN

Okay. You can look for other donors. Are you going to run a background check on all of those donors? Are you going to have them fill out a little questionnaire that asks, "Have you ever been convicted of a felony? People who have made mistakes aren't allowed to do art."

SANDY

I never said that.

JOHN

Well then what are you saying? If you can't accept money from this guy, who can you accept it from?

SANDY

Good people!

JOHN

There are none. They might seem good, but it's just because they aren't telling you something.

SANDY

Look I'm not as good at arguing as you are, okay? You're smarter than me, we both get that. And you can say all this stuff and be all logical and try to make me feel stupid, but that's not going to change how I feel. And this feels all wrong. I don't want to use the wall, and I don't want to use the money. That's how I feel. (*She holds her hand out.*) So give me the check.

JOHN
Why?

SANDY
Just give it to me.

JOHN
No.

SANDY
Give it to me!

(SANDY tries to get the check from JOHN. They struggle. John ends up with the check in his pocket.)

SANDY
I can't believe you. I can't believe you want to use this money. Uncle Ray would never do something like this.

JOHN
You didn't know him as well as I did.

SANDY
I knew him just fine, thank you! And he wouldn't knowingly accept artistic sponsorship from a convicted rapist. We're not even sure the extent of what he did! John, he might have done stuff to kids!

JOHN
We don't know that.

SANDY
Yeah, it could have been something worse! And I don't know if you've thought about this, but anyone who donates a thousand dollars or more is supposed to get a portrait of them worked into the mural. You're okay with that?

JOHN
If that's what we have to do.

SANDY

Why on earth would you want to paint a portrait of a rapist onto a mural that is supposed to represent hope and community and positive change? What if the person he attacked walks by and sees it? What about their family? How is that going to make them feel?

JOHN

We'll just paint an impression, something small that he knows is supposed to represent him... nothing recognizable.

SANDY

What is wrong with you?

JOHN

Nothing! I want to paint a memorial to a man who had a huge impact on my life!

SANDY

Yeah, a giant portrait of a rapist. What a great way to remember him.

JOHN

We'll just paint an impression! No one will know!

SANDY

We'll know!

JOHN

You're acting like I'm doing this heinous thing, but all I'm trying to do is make some art that can impact people—

SANDY

—So am I.

JOHN

You're arguing to *not* do that—

SANDY

—No I'm not—

JOHN

—And you don't have a good enough reason.

SANDY

I have an excellent reason! I want make something pure and beautiful in a safe place where it's not going to be ruined by a horrible person!

JOHN

Well you're not going to, and I'll tell you why. Because this isn't about the mural anymore. This is about you.

SANDY

What are you talking about—

JOHN

—When we were in high school and we were learning how to work with watercolors and we would show our paintings to Uncle Ray, he used to put my paintings up on the mantel. Where did he put yours?

SANDY

What does this have—

JOHN

—Where did he put yours?

SANDY

The refrigerator.

JOHN

Why do you think he did that?

SANDY

I don't know.

JOHN

I asked him once. I told him, "I think it hurts her feelings." He said he wasn't trying to make a point or anything. He said it just felt like they belonged there. So that's where he put them.

SANDY

Okay.

JOHN

How old are you?

SANDY

Please stop. You always start taking this patronizing tone with me, like you're proxy Uncle Ray, and I hate that.

JOHN

That's not what I'm trying to do—

SANDY

—Well that's what you're doing!

JOHN

Okay, I'm sorry. I'm sorry—

SANDY

—and stop trying to be all wise and metaphorical, just say what you're trying to say.

JOHN

Your art is juvenile.

SANDY

Wow.

JOHN

It's juvenile because you only ever paint completely idealized versions of things.

SANDY

That's not true.

JOHN

Yes it is. You see a crooked wooden floor, you paint it, but you straighten out the boards. You see a landscape with a construction site, you paint it, and suddenly trees appear. You have like this mental photoshop that glazes over anything imperfect and you can never just show things as they are!

SANDY

I paint things as they're supposed to be.

JOHN

Fake?

SANDY

I don't even know what we're talking about anymore! Give me the check.

JOHN

No. We're talking about you and your unhealthy inability to see reality and deal with it—

SANDY

—I see reality! Okay? I see it, and it sucks! You want me to paint something ugly? Fine, we'll find all the rapists and the drug lords and the prostitution rings and we'll cover the whole building with them, and then we'll be really artistic and mature because we're "depicting reality." Maybe I just don't want to paint that! Everyone already knows how shitty everything is. They don't need me to show it to them. Maybe what people need is a little bit of hope. Something that's not... shitty!

JOHN

I'm not saying you have to paint something shitty—

SANDY

—Yes, you are. Dark, depressing shit, that's all you want to paint.

JOHN

Hey, at least what I paint is real. The reality of shit is the thing that separates a piece of art from a hallmark card.

SANDY

Hallmark cards make people feel better. When you're sick, I get you a Hallmark card. I don't paint you dry heaving into a toilet and then hang it over your bed.

JOHN

Okay, work for Hallmark. You'll never paint anything great. You can live on the refrigerator.

SANDY

I don't want to talk about this anymore. Give me the damn check.

(JOHN stands his ground)

John. You have really hurt me. And I'm trying to be patient. Please give me the check.

JOHN

I didn't mean to hurt you—

SANDY

—Please... give me... the check.

JOHN

Fine. *(He hands it to her and begins to exit. Stopping at the door, he turns around.)* You can send the check back to Mr. Hershman and explain to him exactly why you've chosen to decline his donation. Have fun with that.

(JOHN exits, slamming the door. SANDY looks at the check, then tears it into pieces. She begins to exit, notices the lone brick she took from the mural wall, picks it up, and throws it in the trash can on her way out.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE SIX

AT RISE

The loft apartment. Daytime.

(SANDY enters with several large pieces of torn-up cardboard and a set of paints. She leans some pieces of cardboard up against the couch and spreads others on the floor in a circle around her. She begins to fingerpaint. JOHN enters)

JOHN

Busting out the fingerpaint, huh?

SANDY

Mhmm. *(She continues painting.)*

JOHN

You still mad at me?

SANDY

I was never mad at you.

JOHN

Oh. Cool. *(They sit in silence for a moment as he watches her paint.)*

SANDY

How's your portrait going?

JOHN

Pretty good. The guy decided he wants his cat to be in it with him. So that's a first.

SANDY

Like in his lap?

JOHN

On his shoulder. It's a hairless, too. My biggest challenge will be resisting the urge to just paint that character from Harry Potter.

SANDY

Dobby?

JOHN

Yeah, that's it. What? I don't even get a laugh?

SANDY

Sorry.

JOHN

Talk to me. You don't like the new location?

SANDY

No, it's fine.

JOHN

I mean, it's not as central, and it's going to be a bit harder to do, logistically. We'll need a lot more scaffolding. But it'll work. And we got three hundred dollars from the Red Hat Society. We're not anywhere near being funded but... it's a start. And that's good, right?

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

You look like a deflated balloon.

SANDY

I feel like one.

JOHN

Well? What's the problem?

SANDY

I've just lost my... gumption.

JOHN

Your gumption, huh?

SANDY

Yeah.

(SANDY continues painting. JOHN watches her.)

JOHN

Are you feeling bad about the letter?

SANDY

I don't know.

JOHN

Have you sent it yet?

SANDY

No.

JOHN

Have you written it yet?

SANDY

No.

JOHN

Sandy...

SANDY

I'll get to it. I just can't figure out exactly what to say. It's really stressing me out.

JOHN

Just say it like it is. *(SANDY gives him a look.)* I mean, be tactful about it. Or lie.

SANDY

Okay. I'll figure it out.

JOHN

(John chuckles.) You're so funny.

Why?

SANDY

JOHN

You barely even view this guy as a human, and you're still afraid of hurting his feelings.

SANDY

Ugh, you're right, it doesn't make any sense. I should just do it.

JOHN

You're not going to do it.

SANDY

Yes, I will.

JOHN

(Teasing her) You'll make yourself believe you're going to do it and then you'll avoid it until you forget about it.

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

It's okay. You don't have to. It's just as well... you're not likely to run into him again, so it won't really matter. Just forget about it.

SANDY

Really?

JOHN

Yeah.

SANDY

You sure?

JOHN

Yes

SANDY

Thanks.

JOHN

You're welcome. *(In a southern drawl)* I'm just trying to get your gumption back.

SANDY

It's slow coming.

JOHN

Well... keep painting for a little while. You'll feel better. You'd *better* feel better. It's a strange day in the universe when I'm the one being sunny and optimistic, and you're painting your feelings away in a dark corner. If it lasts too long, the space time continuum will collapse. So perk up, okay? *(He grabs his car keys and moves towards the door.)* Donald is going to pick me up and take me to Harris Tire so I can pay them hundreds of dollars and get my car back.

SANDY

What did they fix?

JOHN

Everything I could afford.

SANDY

I can't believe you're still driving that station wagon.

JOHN

The Tank! It won't ever die! I'll be back in a little.

(JOHN exits. SANDY continues painting. She stands up and walks over to a radio to turn some music on. Her hands are covered in paint, so she uses her elbows. Successful, she returns to her cardboard, bobbing her head to the music, her good mood returning. She holds up one of the pieces of cardboard revealing her work. It is something abstract, but still beautiful.)

SANDY

Put that on the refrigerator!

(She holds the cardboard triumphantly. But gradually, as she looks at it, her triumph turns to dissatisfaction and frustration. She folds it and shoves it in the trash, returning to her other pieces of cardboard with determination. Suddenly, there is a knock on the door.)

Come in!

(SANDY focuses on her painting, her back to the door. The door opens and WILL enters. He sees SANDY fingerpainting and smiles. He walks a few steps into the apartment before speaking loudly to be heard over the music.)

WILL

Hello, Sandy.

(SANDY turns around and jumps at the sight of WILL, spilling her paint.)

Oh, I'm sorry I didn't mean to sneak up on you.

SANDY

No... um... yeah, you're fine—

WILL

—I know you weren't expecting me—

SANDY

—I just wasn't expecting you to be right there—

WILL

—But you said to come in, so I just came on in—

SANDY

—Yeah, um...

(SANDY crosses to turn the music off, holding her paint-covered hands and arms in the air so as not to touch anything. She, again, uses her elbows to hit the buttons. WILL watches from behind.)

WILL

You're pretty good with those.

SANDY

What?

WILL

Your elbows.

SANDY

Oh right. My hands are covered in paint.

WILL

I can see that. But I guess elbows work just as good as fingers when they're skinny like yours. Mine would be a bit too big for that, I think.

(SANDY stands there, tensely holding her hands in the air, paint dripping down her arms, unsure of what to do. She slowly adjusts herself so that there is a piece of furniture between her and WILL.)

SANDY

What are you doing here?

WILL

Well, I just got off work and thought I'd swing by to talk to you.

SANDY

How did you find my apartment?

WILL

Your address was written on the flyer you left on my desk.

SANDY

I don't remember writing my address down.

WILL

It was the one listed to send donations to.

Oh.

SANDY

Is everything alright?

WILL

Yes, everything's fine!

SANDY

I haven't heard anything from you in a while, so I was just wondering—

WILL

—Yeah, everything's fine. What did you want to talk about?

SANDY

Well... I actually came by because I heard something that left me a little confused.

WILL

Oh?

SANDY

Yes, ma'am.

WILL

What about?

SANDY

A few things. Like I said, I didn't hear from you for a while. So I called up my bank and they tell me that a check for five thousand dollars was never cashed. I thought maybe there was a problem with it but I forgot to take down your number so I couldn't call you up and ask. Then last night I was over at McGlynn's pub and was talking to Joe, the owner over there, do you know him?

WILL

My brother does.

SANDY

Well I was telling him about this mural you're painting, and how tickled I was that you

and your brother are using my building for it, and he tells me he's been talking to a guy at Goldman & Barnes, the law firm up on Lafayette Boulevard, and he says you two are painting your mural on the side of his building... and I just wondered about that. So I thought I'd come by here and ask you about it.

SANDY

Oh. Well... I understand your confusion. I had meant to write you a letter about that, it's just been so crazy I hadn't gotten to it yet. But I meant to write you and tell you that my brother found another location that's a little more suitable for the painting that we want to do. And we decided to go with that option.

WILL

Oh. Well I've been down to the wall at Goldman & Barnes and it looks like the brick isn't in quite as good of condition. And some of the other buildings sort of block it off so it's harder to get a real good look at.

SANDY

Well, we just feel that it's a bit more suitable for what we need.

WILL

I thought you said your uncle picked this building.

SANDY

He did, but... I think he would agree with our decision.

WILL

Okay. Well if that's the way you really feel, I understand. I will confide in you that I'm a bit disappointed. But if that's the way you really feel, and if that's what you think your uncle would want, you just do what you need to do.

SANDY

Thank you. I appreciate your understanding.

WILL

You're welcome. Now about that check, sometimes I accidentally write down the wrong date, and I wondered if I might have done that and maybe that's why it didn't clear. I can call and have the bank void that one and I'll write you another one right now. Have you got a pen?

SANDY

You really don't have to do that.

WILL

Have you just not cashed it yet? I would appreciate it if you would soon. I like to keep my books up to date.

SANDY

Actually, as it turns out, we won't be needing your check.

WILL

Oh?

SANDY

Yes.

WILL

Have you raised all the funds you need?

SANDY

We're getting there.

WILL

Well how much more do you need?

SANDY

We're pretty much there already. Really, we don't want to have too much.

WILL

Sandy... You remember back in my office when I said you were a good girl?

SANDY

Yes.

WILL

And I told you you seemed honest to me, and that I didn't feel manipulated?

(They stare at each other.)

You don't seem honest to me right now.

SANDY

Could you leave please?

WILL

Pardon?

SANDY

I would like you to please leave my apartment. Now.

WILL

Listen, I'm—

SANDY

Please leave.

WILL

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to accuse you of dishonesty. I'm just very confused, and Sandy, I'm a little hurt by this whole situation. I think I deserve an explanation.

SANDY

Mr. Hershman, I asked you very nicely to leave—

WILL

—I asked you to call me Will.

SANDY

Mr. Hershman, please leave now or I'll—

WILL

Was it something I said? Did I do something wrong? I really don't know what it was, but I'm sorry. (*He begins to move toward SANDY as she backs away.*) I very much enjoyed our conversation and it's been a long time since I've been able to connect with someone who appreciates art, and I had really hoped that I could be a part of making something with you and your...

(As he moves toward SANDY, she walks backward and trips on her paints and cardboard, falling on her back. He rushes to the floor to help her and grabs her arms. She struggles to get away, leaving smears of paint on WILL's clothes. She gets to her feet and grabs a sculpting tool to use as a weapon.)

SANDY

You get out of here right now or I'm calling the police! Get out!

WILL

Sandy, what? What did I do wrong?

SANDY

You know exactly what you did wrong. Don't you dare come near me—

WILL

—I was just trying to help you!

SANDY

Is that what you told her?

(WILL stops, taken aback.)

WILL

What?

SANDY

Did you write her a check, too?

WILL

Who?

SANDY

The girl...

(Gradually, a look of understanding spreads across WILL's face)

WILL

Who did you talk to?

SANDY

Get out.

WILL

Who talked to you about me? Your mother?

SANDY

She found you listed in a registry online, anyone can look you up!

(WILL grows more and more visibly agitated.)

WILL

Why didn't you talk to me? Why didn't you even ask me about it, Sandy?

SANDY

I DON'T KNOW YOU.

WILL

I know that, but I thought you...

SANDY

GET THE HELL OUT. Go back to prison for the rest of your disgusting life.

WILL

I...

(WILL takes a step towards SANDY as if to say something. SANDY grabs the lone brick she took from the mural wall and holds it, threatening to throw it at him.)

You're just like your mother, aren't you? And here I thought you'd be more like Ray.

SANDY

What?

(WILL watches her for a moment, then slowly walks toward the door.)

Hey. What did you say?

(As he walks away, rage boils up in him, and he angrily flips a canvas and easel over onto the floor, causing a jar of paintbrushes to spill across the stage. He storms out, slamming the door behind him. SANDY runs to the door and deadbolts it. She collapses with her back to the door and puts her head in her hands, getting paint on her face. After a moment, she realizes, and begins to search for a way to wipe her hands off. She gets a piece of cardboard and smears the remaining paint from her hands and arms onto it. She then moves to the floor to gather up the paintbrushes. Suddenly, she hears a noise and turns. The doorknob jiggles. There is a knock.)

JOHN

Sandy! Sandy I don't have my key!

(SANDY rushes to the door, unlocks it, and collapses into JOHN'S arms.)

END OF ACT

ACT TWO
SCENE ONE

AT RISE

The loft apartment, several minutes later.

(JOHN and SANDY are seated on the couch. She is visibly upset. He hands her a washcloth to wipe the paint off her arms.)

JOHN

Did he hurt you?

SANDY

No.

JOHN

Did he touch you at all?

SANDY

No. I mean, yes, but—

JOHN

He touched you?

SANDY

No.

JOHN

What happened?

SANDY

I don't know.

JOHN

You don't know? Sandy, I can't help you if you don't tell me what you're upset about.

SANDY

I'm fine. I just... I think I made a mistake.

JOHN

It wasn't your fault that he showed up.

SANDY

He knows mom.

JOHN

What?

SANDY

He said he knows mom. And Uncle Ray.

JOHN

That doesn't make sense. Mom would have told us if she knew him.

SANDY

Maybe.

JOHN

Why would she lie about that?

SANDY

I don't know. But he was telling the truth.

JOHN

Are you sure? You sure he wasn't just saying that?

SANDY

Positive.

JOHN

Okay. Assuming that is true, which it probably isn't, given that Will Hershman is a psychopath who walks into people's apartments and wreaks havoc on their art supplies... It still doesn't make sense that neither of them would tell us until now. So I think that's a load of bull. Unless... *(He stands to consider this.)* Unless, it was mom.

SANDY

I'm fine.

JOHN

No you're not.

SANDY

I just need to be alone. I have to get out of here.

JOHN

I'll come with you.

SANDY

No. Stay here. I'll be fine. I'll be back in a little while.

JOHN

I might be completely off base, it was just a thought. Don't get upset.

SANDY

I'll be back later. *(She starts to exit.)*

JOHN

Wait, at least take your phone.

(He crosses to the other side of the room, grabs her phone, hits a few buttons, and hands it to her.)

SANDY

Okay, bye.

(She exits, closing the door. John sits down on the couch, waits a few moments, then jumps back up and exits, following after her.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO

AT RISE

The front porch of Marsha's House.

(MARSHA sits in a chair, painting. SANDY enters.)

MARSHA

Hey, Darlin'!

SANDY

Hey.

MARSHA

What are you doing here?

SANDY

Just felt like coming by.

MARSHA

You should have called first, I could have put some cookies in the oven!

SANDY

Sorry.

MARSHA

You don't need to apologize to me, you're the one not getting any cookies. John told me you found a new spot for the mural. How's that coming?

SANDY

Okay. What are you working on?

MARSHA

Paint by number.

SANDY

I didn't know you were into those.

MARSHA

Been doing them for years. Since I was a little girl.

SANDY

How did I not know that?

MARSHA

I don't exactly flaunt them around all you trained artists.

SANDY

Can I see? (*MARSHA shows her the painting and the box.*) Looks great, Mom. Just like the picture.

MARSHA

Thank you.

(They sit in silence for a moment as MARSHA paints.)

SANDY

Mom?

MARSHA

Yeah?

SANDY

Have... how's Dad?

MARSHA

I talked to him last night, he's doing fine. He'll be back next month. They say they won't deploy him as much anymore, after this tour.

SANDY

They've said that before.

MARSHA

They sure have. Good thing I've learned to fend for myself.

SANDY

Yeah. It always felt normal growing up, but when I got older I started to think about how hard it must have been for you to raise us by yourself a lot of the time.

MARSHA

Ray was a big help. I was always thankful he decided to be so involved with you and John. I felt much more safe with him around.

(SANDY watches her mom paint.)

SANDY

Can I ask you something?

MARSHA

Sure.

SANDY

Just talking about feeling safe... Have you ever been in an unsafe situation? Like have you ever been... attacked?

(MARSHA stops painting.)

MARSHA

Attacked? By a mugger?

SANDY

Not a mugger. Just... by a person.

MARSHA

I've been verbally attacked. I've undergone attacks on my character. Is that what you mean?

SANDY

How do you know Will Hershman?

MARSHA

What?

SANDY
Do you know William Hershman?

MARSHA
No. (*MARSHA continues painting.*)

SANDY
You've never seen him before?

MARSHA
Just in the paper.

SANDY
Did he ever attack you?

MARSHA
Why are you asking me this?

SANDY
I want to know.

MARSHA
Have you been talking to someone?

SANDY
I talked to him.

MARSHA
To him?

SANDY
Today.

MARSHA
Why would you go near him?

SANDY
He said he knew you.

MARSHA

He's lying! Don't you ever let him come near you again!

SANDY

He said he knew Uncle Ray, too. Is that true?

MARSHA

Sandy, look at me. Promise me you will never go near that man ever again. I don't know what he said to you, but I don't know him. Your Uncle didn't know him either, not to my knowledge. He must be crazy. For your own safety, promise me you will call the police immediately if he tries to contact you again. Okay sweetie?

SANDY

Okay, Mom.

MARSHA

There are lots of crazy people in the world, honey. A lot of very bad, terrible people. You need to be careful. Now I don't want to talk about it anymore. Let's not bring it up again. Okay?

SANDY

Okay.

MARSHA

How about some cookies? I just bought some of that pre-made dough so I can throw them in and they'll be done in a couple of minutes! I'll even bring you out a spoon if you want to eat some of it raw. *(She gets up and moves toward the door.)* You want to take over this paint by number for a few minutes? It's very relaxing!

SANDY

Alright.

(MARSHA hands SANDY the paintbrush. SANDY takes her mother's place in the chair. MARSHA moves toward the door, then turns around and looks over SANDY's shoulder at the painting.)

MARSHA

Oh, no dear, that's number 8. The ink got rubbed off, so it looks like a 3, but it's supposed to be the dark green here. See?

(She walks up behind SANDY, reaches over her shoulder, takes the brush from her hand, dips it in the correct paint, and puts a few strokes on the canvas. She then tries to hand the brush back to SANDY. SANDY looks at the brush, and the painting, then gets up and walks toward the door.)

SANDY

Actually, Mom, I should probably get going. I forgot I was supposed to help John with something.

MARSHA

Are you sure you don't want to stay a few minutes? You can take some cookies back with you!

SANDY

No, I have to get going.

MARSHA

I love you.

SANDY

I love you too. Bye. *(She exits.)*

END OF SCENE

SCENE THREE

AT RISE

The brick wall. Twilight.

(SANDY enters. She stops and stares at the wall. She walks up and puts her hand on it, as if saying goodbye. JOHN enters downstage and watches her.)

JOHN

I'm sorry ma'am, this is private property.

(SANDY turns around, startled.)

SANDY

Don't ever do that again. Ugh.

JOHN

I'm sorry. Were you having a moment with the wall? I'll turn around.

SANDY

What are you doing here?

JOHN

I came to make sure you were okay.

SANDY

How did you know I was here?

JOHN

I don't know. Just had a feeling. I must have had that twin psychic connection thing going on... I also turned the "share my location" feature on on your phone.

SANDY

How very "NSA" of you.

JOHN

You looked like you were about to hurl yourself off the bay bridge. If you won't let me look out for you in traditional ways, I have to find creative alternatives. I also brought

you this. (*He pulls the lone brick out of his bag and hands it to her.*) As it is your weapon of choice, I thought you should have it with you while you wander the streets, for self defense purposes.

SANDY

(*She laughs.*) Thanks.

JOHN

You went to Mom's?

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

How was that? Productive?

SANDY

She denied everything.

JOHN

Good. What a relief. I was worried there for a few minutes. But it seemed much more likely that Will Hershman is off his rocker.

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

You didn't believe her?

SANDY

I really wanted to. Something just felt... off.

JOHN

Well, can you ask her—

SANDY

—She told me not to bring it up again. So we'll never actually know. Which is infuriating.

JOHN

She's allowed to have a past. We don't have to know every detail if she doesn't want us to.

SANDY

You're right.

JOHN

So what's next?

SANDY

I think... I need to be done with this. I was really excited about it at the beginning but it's all been so messy... I don't have any kind of artistic urge to do this anymore.

JOHN

No gumption?

SANDY

None. I think I just need to move on with life. Is that okay?

JOHN

No gumption, no go.

SANDY

Thanks.

JOHN

He never painted the mural either. He didn't finish a lot of things. Maybe it's a more fitting memorial to have all the ideas and never execute them. Like a true artist.

SANDY

Maybe the building is cursed. Or it's on top of an old Indian burial ground or something.

JOHN

The spirits are displeased. They will not allow the catharsis of artistic creation until a sacrifice is made! I offer myself. You must dash my head on something.

SANDY

Quickly! We must replace the sacred stone for the ceremony!

(SANDY and JOHN run to the wall with the lone brick. She kneels down and places it in the empty spot, completing the wall. They step back and look at it.)

JOHN

Well done. The spirits have been appeased.

(SANDY looks at the wall, dissatisfied. The brick still does not fit well. She kneels down again to fiddle with it.)

What are you doing?

SANDY

It won't fit right. *(She hits it a few times. Then she stands and starts kicking it repeatedly, in frustration.)*

JOHN

Woah. Hold up.

SANDY

I need it to fit. *(She kicks it once more)*

JOHN

It's probably stuck on something.

(He stoops down and pulls the brick out, then reaches into the empty space to feel around.)

There's something back here.

(He pulls out a small, thin metal box.)

SANDY

What is it?

(He opens it, and pulls out a folded piece of paper.)

JOHN

“To John and Sandy.” It’s from Uncle Ray. “I’m writing this in hopes that after I’m gone, you will one day paint my masterpiece for me. This is where it was always meant to be, and I have left it in the hands of a man whom you probably know as William Hershman. There are some things you should know about him...”

(SANDY silently reads over his shoulder. Blackout.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE FOUR

AT RISE

Will's office. Night.

(WILL sits at his desk on the computer. JOHN and SANDY approach the door.)

JOHN

You think he's here?

SANDY

He stays late a lot of nights. He likes the quiet building. This is his office. Or, at least, the one he's borrowing.

(They stand at the door.)

JOHN

Ready?

SANDY

Do you mind if I go in alone?

JOHN

Why?

SANDY

If I'm going to apologize I need to do it alone. Just give me a few minutes and I'll call you in, okay?

JOHN

I don't know if I feel comfortable with that.

SANDY

He's family.

JOHN

Weird. Okay. But I want to talk to him too.

SANDY

Five minutes.

JOHN

Got it. (*JOHN exits.*)

(*SANDY knocks on the door.*)

WILL

Come in.

(*The door slowly opens. SANDY enters.*)

SANDY

Uncle Will?

(*WILL stares at her, unsure of what to do.*)

Do you mind if I come in?

WILL

No.

SANDY

I think we have a few things we need to get straightened out.

WILL

Have a seat. (*She sits.*) I never turn down a good conversation.

SANDY

That's incredibly gracious of you.

WILL

Would you like some water?

SANDY

No, thank you.

(*They sit in silence for a moment.*)

I brought you this. (*She sets the lone brick on the desk.*) I stole it from the building. I don't know why, I just took it. I've had it in my apartment for weeks. And then I almost bashed your head in with it. I thought I'd bring it to you as a peace offering. A sort of surrendering of arms.

WILL

Thank you.

SANDY

John and I found this letter. It's from Uncle Ray. It talks about you a lot. Why didn't you tell us any of this?

WILL

I wasn't sure if your mother had told you about me.

SANDY

She didn't even tell us you existed.

WILL

That sounds like her. When I saw the two of you in front of the building and I realized who you were, I thought maybe we could get to know each other a bit. Then, even if your mother had told you some stories... maybe you would want to hear the other side.

SANDY

I probably wouldn't have, if I'm honest.

WILL

You are a lot like your mother, aren't you?

SANDY

I am, in some ways. Why didn't Uncle Ray tell us you were his brother?

WILL

Marsha told Ray that if he ever introduced us, she would cut him off from the two of you. He didn't want to risk that. But you know, he did bring you to the prison one time so I could meet you.

SANDY

Really?

WILL

I don't even know if you would remember it. You were pretty little. He didn't introduce me as your uncle. He just called me his friend Billy.

SANDY

I do remember him talking about his childhood friend, Billy sometimes.

WILL

I didn't see you again after that until I found you sitting in front of the building a few weeks ago. Didn't put two and two together until you told me your last name.

SANDY

How did you end up with the last name, "Hershman?"

WILL

I made that one up a long time ago to use around town. I think I got it out of an obituary.

SANDY

That's horrible.

WILL

I didn't think it was that bad.

SANDY

No, I mean... it's horrible that you had to do that. I'm so sorry. I feel terrible about all the things I said. I know there's no way I can make up for the pain I probably caused you.

WILL

I forgive you.

SANDY

You really don't have to. I don't deserve it.

WILL

You do. You're a good girl, Sandy. And it's pretty understandable. Some random stranger with a record giving you a bunch of money. That's a little abnormal.

SANDY

Yeah, I was pretty freaked out.

WILL

I probably should have thought of that, but I just got so excited at the idea of being able to do something for my brother. He was the only one in the family that kept in contact with me. He visited me often. He even lined up a job for me when I got out. This firm was owned by a good friend of his, and he vouched for me, so they looked past my record. I almost got sacked when the firm changed hands, but I had made them a lot of money, so they kept me on. Don't have many friends here though. Word gets around.

SANDY

I can't imagine living like that, with a record. It would probably make dating pretty hard.

WILL

Never bothered trying.

(SANDY looks at him a moment, about to cry. She then notices some pieces of cardboard in the corner.)

SANDY

Is that... did you do those? *(She walks over and picks them up. They are covered in fingerprint.)*

WILL

Yes, ma'am.

SANDY

They're beautiful.

WILL

It helps me get to sleep.

SANDY

Yeah?

WILL

I decided to give it a try after our conversation. Thanks for that.

SANDY

You're quite welcome!

WILL

And you know, it does kind of stimulate your creativity in a way. I just started doing it in the morning before work and in the evening before going to bed. Somehow I just felt more free and relaxed in the day. And then I could sleep.

SANDY

I'm so glad!

WILL

I started keeping them here in the office. They remind me of Ray. He always used to do that kind of stuff. Every time my coworkers comment on them, I tell them my dog painted them.

(SANDY laughs.)

I went out and bought a new Martin guitar, too.

SANDY

Really?

WILL

Yeah. I was surprised at how much I could remember from high school.

SANDY

That's so great!

WILL

I actually have a few recordings here on my computer.

SANDY

Really? Of you playing?

WILL

Yeah. I got a microphone at the pawn shop on Lockerman and got some software for the computer. They aren't studio quality, but I had a good time laying some tracks down.

SANDY

Can I hear them?

WILL

Sure. *(He goes to his computer and clicks a few times. The song starts playing. It begins with a guitar intro.)* Now again, it's not studio quality. And I'm a bit rusty. *(The guitar intro moves into the first verse, and you can hear WILL's voice singing.)*

SANDY

You didn't tell me you sang, too! You're good!

(WILL smiles. They listen together for a moment.)

I know this song! I know it! It was on some movie I used to watch when I was a kid. I think mom recorded it from the TV onto a VHS, so there were old commercials all through it. But I used to rewind and watch this one scene over and over where the two main characters got up and danced to this song, and I loved it.

(SANDY sways back and forth smiling for a moment, then looks at will and offers her hand.)

Care for a dance, Uncle Will?

(WILL takes her hand, and they start to dance.)

WILL

It's been a while.

SANDY

You're doing great!

(As WILL warms up, he begins to do a few moves he knows. The door silently opens a bit. It is JOHN. He watches them from the doorway for a moment as they laugh and dance)

JOHN

Are we having a party?

(SANDY and WILL stop dancing.)

SANDY

Oh, I'm so sorry! I was supposed to come get you.

JOHN

Yeah, you were.

(JOHN closes the door. WILL turns the music off.)

SANDY

Uncle Will, you've met John.

WILL

The hobo nephew!

JOHN

Right. *(They shake hands.)* Nice to meet you.

WILL

Sorry it's been so long. I know this is a bit awkward.

JOHN

It wasn't your fault.

WILL

Not entirely.

JOHN

I took the liberty of calling Goldman & Barnes just now. Left them a message saying we won't need their building after all.

SANDY

Good. I hated that building. It was horrible.

JOHN

And it was uptown. Where all the snobs are. Stick it to the snobs. *(Suddenly, there is a knock at the door.)* Should I get it?

WILL

It might be the night guard. I'm not supposed to have visitors up here after hours. Would you mind just stepping behind there while I see who it is?

SANDY

Sure.

(JOHN and SANDY step behind the door. They are completely hidden when it is opened.)

WILL

Marsha?

MARSHA

Hello.

WILL

The last time I saw you, you were in pigtails.

MARSHA

I want to know what you're doing talking to my kids.

WILL

They found me. They wanted my help with the mural.

MARSHA

We don't want your help. I want you to go away. Don't ever speak to them again, or I'll get a restraining order.

WILL

They're my family.

MARSHA

They're my kids. They are not your family.

WILL

What if they want to get to know me?

MARSHA

It will only be because they don't know what you've done. And I'll tell them. I've kept it from them all these years because I wanted them to feel proud of the family they came from. That's something I never had. But I'll tell them for their own safety if you force my hand.

WILL

I'm not going to do anything to them.

MARSHA

You already did. You did something that can never be undone.

WILL

Haven't I been punished enough?

MARSHA

It will never be enough.

WILL

Why are you so vindictive? I did nothing to you!

MARSHA

How dare you? You cannot possibly understand or quantify the degree of pain you caused. Injury never stops at one person. You hurt dozens.

WILL

It wasn't my fault.

MARSHA

That's not what the court decided.

WILL

On your testimony.

MARSHA

On my eyewitness account. And my eyes were working a darn sight better than yours that day. I bet you can't even remember what happened. Can you? You were stoned out of your mind. You don't know what you did.

WILL

It was consensual.

MARSHA

You didn't even know what that word meant.

WILL

Because I was 18 years old. I did a lot of stupid things, but I never meant to hurt anyone.

MARSHA

Well you did. And you live with the consequences. You don't get to be around my kids.

WILL

They aren't kids anymore, Marsha. They can make their own decisions.

(He looks at the door. SANDY and JOHN step out from behind it.)

MARSHA

Well. I see I wasn't invited to the party. How long has this been going on?

SANDY

Just today.

MARSHA

What has he been telling you?

SANDY

Nothing. We found this. *(She produces the note and hands it to MARSHA. She reads it.)*
It's from Uncle Ray. He left it for us. It explains everything.

WILL

They came of their own accord.

MARSHA

This doesn't explain anything.

SANDY

It wasn't what it looked like, Mom.

MARSHA

Were you there?

SANDY

No, but Uncle Ray—

MARSHA

He wasn't there either. I was. I heard her scream. Ray couldn't face the fact that his big brother would do something like that so he believed every lie that this man fed him. But, I saw. I couldn't erase it from my memory if I tried. He's a liar, and he feels absolutely no remorse for what he did.

SANDY

Is that true?

WILL

We were in high school. We were messing around. It was nothing serious. Marsha walked in the door and the girl got scared and started screaming and crying because she didn't want her parents to find out—

MARSHA

—You're disgusting. She was 16 years old. You want to know what else this letter doesn't say? She got pregnant. She was too small to handle a baby, and it killed her. She was my best friend.

WILL

The only reason she became friends with you was because she was interested in me. We both know that. She came on to me. I was a teenager. What did you expect me to do?

MARSHA

That's a lie. You had your eyes on her from the first time I brought her to the house. You got her high, and you took advantage of her, and she died as a result. And you don't feel a single ounce of regret.

WILL

Regret? You think I don't feel regret? I sat in an empty cell for twenty years knowing that I was responsible for that girl's death. I carry it around with me wherever I go. And when I think about all the things I wanted to do with my life that I missed out on, I remember that she didn't get to do anything. And I can't even feel sorry for myself. And I can't fix

it either, no matter how much money I send to her parents or how much I wish I could do that day over again. I can't even be mad at you, Marsha. I took her life. You took mine. You were only doing what you felt was right. But please. Please don't take this. I'm still alive. I want to be able to help, I want to do something good. I want to create something. Your kids are giving me a way to do that. If you could just find it in your heart to let this go.

MARSHA

You manipulative bastard.

SANDY

Mom!

MARSHA

I've heard all this before. Don't believe a word of it.

SANDY

Mom, he's trying to apologize.

MARSHA

I know exactly what he's trying to do. He's trying to get close to you.

SANDY

Uncle Ray trusted him!

MARSHA

How do you even know that this note is from your Uncle Ray? How do you know he didn't write it?

SANDY

(To WILL) Did you write this?

WILL

I didn't know anything about it.

MARSHA

Where did you find it?

SANDY

Hidden in the wall.

MARSHA

Very convenient that it just showed up in the building he's owned for the past 6 years.

SANDY

Did you write this?

WILL

There's nothing I can say, is there? There's not a single thing I can say that anyone will give a shit about. The courts didn't. I don't know why I should expect anyone to listen now. Ray is the only one who believed me. You have his words written right in your hands and you still won't listen.

MARSHA

And I never will. I know what I saw. And I know you're trying to get close to my baby girl and I won't have it. Come on. We're leaving. If you contact us again, I will send you back to prison for the rest of your life. Let's go.

(SANDY and JOHN don't move.)

Kids. We're leaving.

SANDY

Mom... can't we give him a chance?

MARSHA

You are still so young. Both of you. You find one little note. You hear one little convincing speech. And you believe that over your own mother.

SANDY

I believe you. I just... he wants to move on.

MARSHA

He's lying!

SANDY

How do you know?

JOHN

Can I see that note?

MARSHA

He's trying to get back at me for sending him to prison.

SANDY

He just said he doesn't blame you!

MARSHA

He's manipulating you!

JOHN

I just want to compare the handwriting.

SANDY

He's your own brother!

MARSHA

Not anymore.

SANDY

Well he's my uncle!

MARSHA

I will not allow him to get close to you!

SANDY

He's not going to do anything!

JOHN

Just calm down and let me see the note.

MARSHA

He's a rapist and a murderer!

SANDY

What if you're wrong?

WILL

It's okay, Sandy.

MARSHA

Stay away from her!

(WILL reaches up and puts his hand on SANDY's shoulder to calm her down. MARSHA sees this gesture and immediately lunges at him, the impact sending them both to the floor. In the struggle, MARSHA's hands find WILL's throat and she begins to choke him.)

JOHN

Stop! Mom!

(As MARSHA chokes WILL, SANDY runs to the desk, grabs the brick, and throws it through the glass window with a loud crash. The building's alarm system begins to go off. MARSHA and WILL break apart, startled.)

SANDY

Everyone stop! Just please stop! *(She is hyperventilating.)* I just... I just wanted to paint... something beautiful. *(She runs out the door.)*

JOHN

Sandy! Sandy wait! *(JOHN runs after her.)*

(MARSHA gets up and begins to exit. WILL is still on the ground.)

WILL

Marsha.

(She turns and looks down at him, the alarm still blaring.)

I'm sorry.

(She stares at him for a moment. Then she slowly and deliberately turns and walks out, closing the door behind her.)

END OF SCENE

SCENE FIVE

AT RISE

The brick wall. Twilight. Streetlights illuminate the wall and the sidewalk. On the wall there is a crude painting of two people dancing. It is impressionistic in nature, and a bit smaller than life-size.

(SANDY enters, walking backwards, motioning JOHN to follow her.)

SANDY

Hey, careful you don't step in anything.

JOHN

What?

SANDY

Never mind.

JOHN

Oh yeah. Nice.

(They stop in front of the wall and stare at the painting.)

This is you?

SANDY

Yeah.

JOHN

I mean, your work. It's clearly you.

SANDY

Yeah. That streetlight blew out, so it's kind of hard to see.

(John whips out a small flashlight and steps forward to examine it closer.)

JOHN

What medium did you use?

SANDY

Exterior acrylic.

JOHN

Interesting application...

SANDY

I fingerpainted it.

JOHN

Say what?

SANDY

I fingerpainted. I wore gloves.

JOHN

How long did this take?

SANDY

All night. I stayed out here until dawn. The sun rose behind the buildings on the other side of the street and the light kind of crept down the wall. When it hit my hand, I stopped and went home. I slept all day.

JOHN

Well, you can tell it was painted in the dark. Why'd you do this?

SANDY

I don't know. I keep looking at it and forgetting that I painted it. It feels more like it painted itself. I didn't actually know what I was going to do when I came out here. I felt like I had something ugly in me to paint. I brought all my greys and blacks. Then I put my hands on the wall, and this came out.

JOHN

It's beautiful. This would have gone on the mantel. (*John smiles.*) I'm proud of you. What do you think Mom will do when she sees it?

SANDY

I don't know. Burn the building down.

JOHN

Do you think he really did it?

SANDY

What?

JOHN

Uncle Will. Do you think he's guilty? I was up pretty late last night comparing the note to a bunch of Uncle Ray's journals. It's really hard to tell. His handwriting started getting shakier when he got sick, so... I don't think we can say for sure if he wrote it.

SANDY

I don't know. To be honest, I don't think we're ever going to know what happened. I doubt that either of them remember it correctly. But I don't think he's dangerous. I think Mom is more dangerous than he is.

JOHN

I thought she was going to kill him.

SANDY

She might have. And I'm a lot like her, you know. If I was in mom's shoes, I probably would have done the same thing. It's easier to just cut something out or paint over it than deal with it. And then I would have missed this. *(She gestures to the painting.)* It's really messy. It's... painful. *(She holds up her hand, which is sore and a little raw.)* You have to be willing to get your hands dirty. But the result can be beautiful. Normally I would run away. Go find something safe and perfect to paint. But I think... if I avoid the mess, I'll miss out on a lot of beauty. I think that's what Uncle Ray would say. *(She places her hand on the wall.)* I'm going to swing by Will's office the day after tomorrow. It's his birthday. I'm making him a cake. Want to come?

JOHN

What about Mom? Does she know?

SANDY

I tried to tell her. She wouldn't let me. She said she didn't want to talk about it. That as long as she knew I was okay, that would be the end of it. It was like she knew what I was going to do, but couldn't acknowledge it out loud.

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