Fingerpaint

A Drama in Two Acts

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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.
FINGERPAINT

SANDY
Agh!

JOHN
Just kidding. Forward.

SANDY
Agh, you’re the worst.

JOHN
I believe you mean… the best.

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

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

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

JOHN
— Sandy.

SANDY?
What?

JOHN
Recognize my joke!

SANDY
… what?

JOHN
Never mind. The moment has passed.

SANDY
No, what? I want to know! I want to laugh too!
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
Stoooop.

(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?
Sure. You want water, Mom?

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

A six year phase?

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!

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.

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!

That would be nice.

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

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

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

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
Mmmmm. 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 buggar, 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!
What?

No way.

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

What did he do? Did he… attack someone?

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.

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

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

(To Sandy) Are you okay?

Yeah. I’m fine.

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

Yes, Mom.

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.
Should I get you a trash can?

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

Talk to me.

Why does everything have to be ruined?

Ruined?

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.

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

You told me you got a weird feeling about him!

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.

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

We can still use the wall.

No we can’t.

Sure we can. He already gave us permission.
We can’t use the wall now.

Why not?

Because!

...Yeah?

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

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

—That’s the same thing—

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

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

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.

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.

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 dish ing 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.
FINGERPAINT

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 to 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.
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.
SANDY

Why?

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.

Is everything alright?

Yes, everything’s fine!

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

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

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

Oh?

Yes, ma’am.

What about?

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?

My brother does.

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
What?

JOHN
If it was mom that he… if that’s how he knows her.

SANDY
Shit. *(Her breath increases pace. She begins to hyperventilate.)*

JOHN
Hey, it’s okay.

SANDY
That can’t be true.

JOHN
It might not be, it was just a thought.

SANDY
That’s not fair.

JOHN
Hey, calm down.

SANDY
Why…. Why does…

JOHN
Sandy.

*(She gets up and moves toward the door, grabbing the keys to the tank.)*

Where are you going?

SANDY
Out.

JOHN
I don’t think you should drive right now.
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.
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.

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.)

Can I ask you something?

Sure.

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

(MARSHA stops painting.)

Attacked? By a mugger?

Not a mugger. Just… by a person.

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

How do you know Will Hershman?

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.
FINGERPAINT

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 fingerpaint.)

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.
You’re quite welcome!

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.

I’m so glad!

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.

Really?

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

That’s so great!

I actually have a few recordings here on my computer.

Really? Of you playing?

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.

(SANDY 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.
FINGERPAINT

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.
Wow.

So? You in?

Yeah, I’ll come with you.

Thanks.

(They move to exit.)

Maybe I should fingerpaint the portrait of that guy with his cat.

I’m sure he would be thrilled.

You wouldn’t be able to recognize his face. It would look better. His family would thank me.

You’re a jerk!

I’m an artist.

(They laugh and exit. A few seconds later, WILL enters from the opposite side. He looks at the painting. He walks up to the wall and places the lone brick firmly in its place. The paint from his earlier encounter with SANDY causes the brick to fit perfectly into the painting. He smiles and exits.)

END OF PLAY
References


