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Forgiveness is the fragrance a violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.

Mark Twain

With thanks

Atlie Gilbert

Emilio Williams

Chicago Dramatists

Josette Di Carlo

Christopher Prentice

Dakota Pariset

The Ubiquitous Players

And always Valerie Fachman

Tagline: Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

Log Line: When a series of global crises disrupt the lives of two struggling artists, an aging frat boy with a past challenges who they think they are and who they want to be.

Cast: DENISE: female, 50. An artist living on the Midwest art-fair circuit.
RENNY: male, 32. An agoraphobic artist creating in a vacuum.
GILL: male, 37. A former artist scouting for the next big thing.

Triggers: **Adult language, situations and themes. Nudity suggested. A violence/intimacy coordinator might be a good idea.**

Synopsis: Denise attended a painting seminar and met Gill. Twenty years later, they reconnect when Gill judges an art fair. Inviting him to stay with her, she rushes home to make ready before his arrival. With Gill's arrival, Renny enters and is told that his painting has taken third prize. Gill and Denise bolster his spirits by encouraging him to enter a more prestigious contest in Austin.

After Gill and Denise have slept together, resentments between Denise and Renny simmer. Gill announces that both artists have been accepted into the Austin competition, but in separate divisions, increasing tensions. When conflicts seem to be resolved and another celebration ensues, it's discovered that Gill is in fact avoiding accountability for having been at the Capital on January 6th.

In the final scene, Denise is preparing a bon voyage dinner for Gill, when she discovers that Renny is leaving with Gill.

Set, Props and Costumes: The dialogue is naturalistic. That doesn't mean the set has to be. A unit set of a very sparsely furnished one-bedroom apartment. Casual, contemporary dress for one woman and two men. Props include a number of painting canvases and art supplies. Three cell phones that must appear operational.

Playwright's note: Ideally, different artists will be engaged to provide the work for Denise and Renny. However, in the absence of available artwork, the paintings discussed could be represented by simple canvases that are painted shades of beige and gray, with one of them in blue, as those colors are discussed.

Renny's final painting can be a photo and stylized using Photoshop.

The dialogue is intended to overlap in the heated sections.

Nudity may only be employed in service of the telling of the story based upon the needs and comfort level of the actor. The playwright will always support the actors' choices on this point.

SCENE 1

A cheap one-bedroom apartment in Des Moines. There is a prominent lock on the bedroom door. A bathroom is seen through an open door upstage. The main space is divided by a cluttered kitchen island, distinctly segmented into separate areas, one messy, one very ordered. Each section has its own stool.

The remainder of the living space has canvases of various sizes stacked against the walls. Some are completed paintings, some are prepared for work and others are raw.

There are some shelves with books and art supplies carelessly tossed onto them. A futon, rolled up against a wall is the only other furniture in the living space.

Any visible windows are closed and covered.

ENTER DENISE, a woman, 50, carrying several large canvas totes and a heavy backpack. She wears a Covid mask.

DENISE disgorges herself of her bags and goes to a cabinet under the sink for an aerosol can of disinfectant and a partially filled garbage bag. She then begins to unload the canvas bags, all of which are filled with six packs of cheap beer. And a single roll of toilet paper.

DENISE removes all of her clothes, down to her underwear. She sprays the discarded clothes with disinfectant and places them into the garbage bag.

There is a buzz on the intercom.

DENISE

I got it!

DENISE speaks into the intercom.

Five-o-three. The elevator is slow.

DENISE presses the intercom buzzer and then goes back to work, disinfecting the beer and the garbage bags with the clothes. She puts two of the six packs into the empty freezer, and the remaining beer into the nearly empty refrigerator.

Racing into the bathroom, DENISE does what she can to freshen up, possibly including a quick swipe of lipstick, then replacing the mask.

Her primping is interrupted by the sound of a cheap, mechanical doorbell.

DENISE

Crap. Coming! Coming!

Still in her underwear, DENISE rushes to the door and throws it open.

GILL, 37, rugged in a bohemian sort of way, stands on the other side. He carries a duffle bag.

Take off your clothes.

GILL disrobes to his underwear.

DENISE gives him the trash bag with her worn clothes.

Use this.

GILL complies.

DENISE takes the garbage back and places it under the sink.

Come here, you.

DENISE give GILL a big bear hug.

GILL

Yeah. Um... Should I put on some clothes?

DENISE

Sure. Sure. Of course.

GILL

Bathroom?

DENISE

Um... yeah. And then...

DENISE points out bathroom and gives GILL a mask.

All clear!

RENNY enters from the bedroom, a boyish man, 32. Fragile looking. He wears a Covid mask.

RENNY

How'd we do?

DENISE

Don't get mad. I've brought a friend home. Now... now... I tested him in the truck. See? Negative. He's --

GILL enters from the bathroom, still in his underwear.

And here he is! Renny, this is Gill. Gill? Renny.

RENNY

Does your Gill-doll come with clothes?

GILL rummages out some clothes from his duffle.

GILL

Guillermo Toussant-Black. How are ya? Friends call me Gill.

DENISE

He has his own sleeping gear in his truck --

GILL

Just drove in from DC.

DENISE

He'll stay out here with me.

GILL

Been sleeping in my truck for about a week or so, and --

DENISE

And we'll wear our masks whenever you come out.

GILL

A hundred percent.

DENISE

You know, Valerie says we should think about taking the next steps. Valerie is our therapist.

GILL

If this is a problem...

DENISE

No. It's fine. Renny? It's fine.

RENNY
Whatever.

DENISE
He's just staying a few days.

GILL
Got a new job in Minneapolis

DENISE
He's a painter too.

GILL
More of a teacher at the moment. I had a gallery in New York.

DENISE
Really?

GILL
Yeah.

DENISE
I didn't know that. He judged --

GILL
(to *RENNY*) Who knew there was so much talent in little ol' Des Moines, bruh?

DENISE
He didn't give me anything... you... you... scamp, you! But... but... good news! You took third!

GILL
Congratulations, buddy. How about a pizza to celebrate? I'm buying.

DENISE
He was just one of three votes, baby. You know Des Moines isn't like those MAGATs up in Le Mars.

(to *GILL*) Some of these festival managers can be real MAGATs.

(to *RENNY*) Gill's not like them, baby.

RENNY
You gave me third place, and now you want to stay in my house?

DENISE

Hey! It's my house too. Just for a couple days.

RENNY

Not at all weird. Where is it?

*DENISE rummages through a pocket in the backpack. She gives
RENNY the cash she retrieves.*

Third place was fifty bucks. Where is it?

DENISE

We needed toilet paper and... some other things. I owe you ten, OK? Gill's an old friend from our D.C days. You might not remember –

RENNY

Who won?

GILL

You know Symphony Pruder?

RENNY and DENISE

Flamingoes.

GILL

You seen it?

RENNY

Pictures.

GILL

Pizza?

DENISE

Oh, you don't need to do that.

GILL

Mama always told me a guest brings the hostess a gift. What's the best pizza in town?

RENNY

Roger's.

DENISE

Roger's is so good, but it's way too expensive.

GILL

Roger's it is!

RENNY

Let me know when it gets here.

RENNY exits. He closes the door to his room. He locks it.

DENISE

Would you like a beer? I mean, they've only been in the freezer for a few minutes, but – I've earned one – the next ones will be just right. Wait. No. This is not how this is... Renny! Get out here!

RENNY re-enters.

Apologize to our guest.

GILL

There's really no –

DENISE

Apologize.

RENNY

Sorry.

DENISE

Not good enough.

RENNY

Mr. Toussaint...Blank, is it?

GILL

Black.

RENNY

Right. Mr. Black, my soul shall be tortured until the end of time for the brutality with which I withheld our hospitality, and I pray you can find a sliver of forgiveness in your heart –

GILL

It's fine.

RENNY

No, no. Not done. I'm a wicked, wicked boy and need to be shown God's mercy through your beneficence. Please! I beg your forgiveness with the passion of a thousand virgins about to be thrown into a --

DENISE

Know what? We're done with these, young man. You've had me walking around my own house with these for... Gill, take off your mask.

GILL

It's OK.

DENISE

Take it off! We're not wearing masks in this house anymore.

GILL removes his mask.

Now you.

RENNY doesn't move.

DENISE takes off her mask.

Covid's over! Take off your goddam mask.

DENISE rips off RENNY'S mask.

RENNY produces another mask and puts it on.

Tell the man what kind of pizza you want.

RENNY

Are you ever going to get dressed?

RENNY exits. He locks his door.

DENISE finds a light robe and throws it on.

GILL

I can sleep in my truck.

DENISE

Nope. My house. My guest. When I come to Minneapolis, you can feed me. I've got an ap... here...

GILL

Um. Who is that?

DENISE

...and...done. Dominoe's. Thirty minutes or less. I had a coupon. And I'm starving.

He lives here?

GILL

Remember? I couldn't finish the seminar?

DENISE

None of us did, but --

GILL

Yeah, but I left early because the school thought it was better if the kids were with their mothers when Bin Laden dropped another plane on us.

DENISE

Right.

GILL

Well... That's my kid.

DENISE

Really? Are you sure it's OK for me to -

GILL

A hundred percent! Drink. Drink. Drink. We need to drink these other beers before they freeze, and I'm already one up on you. So. ... How weird is it to run into you in Des Moines, Iowa of all places? Crazy, right?

DENISE

Pretty weird.

GILL

Remember Annapolis?

DENISE

'Course.

GILL

That was a wild --

DENISE

Yeah.

GILL

Is that why --

DENISE

GILL

They said they didn't think I was "naval material."

DENISE

Was it that party?

GILL

Just life.

DENISE

Life. Yeah. You going to be judging the fairs around here?

GILL

Well, I'll mostly just be around Minneapolis, if I can get on that circuit. I wanna do some stuff in Chicago.

DENISE

We're trying to break into Chicago. We feel like we might get a fairer shake there.

GILL

Great city. Tough market. Very incestuous. I've done some shows out on the West Coast, but mostly just the smaller markets. Seattle. Vegas has a good show. Eugene.

DENISE

No L.A.?

GILL

Long story. Does he... there's no other bedroom –

DENISE

It's fine. It's fine. Everybody just flies right over little ol' Des Moines, but we've got more than soy beans, you know.

GILL

Yeah. OK. I know I sound like a stuck-up son of a bitch, but y'all got some pretty sophisticated stuff out here. Did you get a look at Symphony's piece?

DENISE

Yeah. She always takes some kind of prize with those damn yellow flamingoes. I heard she might get a Marriott contract. What serious artist would ever license their soul to corporate America, am I right? Not that she has much of a soul to sell. I mean...

GILL

Which piece was yours again?

DENISE

Three. I just number my pieces. Just Number Three. I really should stop entering competitions. I never get anywhere. But the stuff I do for the booth sells. It sells really well, actually.

GILL

It's all about making that sale.

DENISE

I don't know if you saw my booth? I was sandwiched between a couple of real MAGATs. One crochets piggies and moo-cows that are breaking new ground in ugly, and the other bakes beads in a little electric oven while she sips her husband's moonshine from a lead flask. Some of these people are so deluded about what's art, am I right? ... Anyway. I do these little three-by-three portraits on demand. Turn them into kitchen magnets for twenty bucks.

GILL

Caricatures?

DENISE

Well... a little more serious than a caricature.

GILL

Nothing wrong with caricatures if they keep the lights on. You know, I should --

GILL starts to grab his things.

DENISE

Please?

DENISE opens a beer for GILL.

As I was saying, my stuff sells pretty well. And it covers the expense of exhibiting our serious stuff. Mostly Renny's. He's... he's serious. That piece that took third today?

GILL

Did it sell?

DENISE

Yap. I mean, I don't tell Renny until the check clears. Technically it's just pre-sold yet. You know these she-MAGATs. Had to take some pictures to get her hubby's approval. But she'll be back. So, tell that to Symphoney Pruder. She takes all the prizes but she can't ever sell those damn yellow flamingoes.

GILL

She did today.

She got the Marriott contract?
DENISE

Best Western.
GILL

How... how... how do you know that?
DENISE

I made a few calls about it.
GILL

You? You buy art for Best Western? Well, smell you, Nancy Drew. I had no idea.
DENISE

I still have one or two connections in New York. If I see something I think somebody'd like, I send them a picture. That's all.
GILL

Seriously? Renny!
DENISE

Don't ask how much. Can't say.
GILL

Renny!
DENISE

She's very commercial.
GILL

They pay you for that? Best Western?
DENISE

Gas money.
GILL

How much were they willing --
DENISE

I really can't say.
GILL

Renny!
DENISE

GILL

The painting literally matches the bedspreads in their new renovations. It was just luck that --

DENISE

Renny! Middle-aged America is going to be fornicating under prints of Symphoney's flamingoes?

GILL

The ads just write themselves.

DENISE

Let's not talk about Symphoney. I want to hear more about you.

GILL

How about you show me some of your stuff?

DENISE

Oh. Um...

GILL

That one. That's amazing.

DENISE

Oh. No. That's Renny's. Almost all of these are...

DENISE finds a small one.

DENISE

It's an old one, but...

GILL

I remember this. You did this in the 9/11 seminar, right?

DENISE

No.

GILL

Yeah. Milburn compared it to that other girl's painting, but he said you were the one to watch. What was her name? That other girl. Brown hair? Skin condition...

DENISE

Linda Carl.

GILL

Linda Carl. She was... yeah, I remember her. She was trying to be all political and shit with her stuff. She was really something.

DENISE

Yeah. She's something.

GILL

After you left, she made this big speech about how America was getting what we deserved. I mean, nobody knew what the hell was going on, but she was sure it was because of something Bush had done.

DENISE

Yeah, that's Linda.

GILL

And she refused to do the self-portrait assignment because she was using her art to raise awareness about the horrors of the meat industry.

DENISE

It is pretty bad.

GILL

So, just to fuck with her, I told her I could only hang out for like an hour after they canceled the seminar because I was meeting my buddy, Joey Fatone, for Kobe beef at Rocco's. Really pissed her off. And then everything got shut down for real. Remember? So. No beef for Gilly and Joey. But I still, that hour with Linda was a good time.

DENISE

Uh-huh. What I remember is Milburn gushing all over your piece.

GILL

So embarrassing.

DENISE

Man. He kept going on and on about the 'drama' of your stroke.

GILL

Stop.

DENISE

And when he held your painting up, over his head, to show what 'real' art should 'feel' like –

GILL

Such an asshole.

DENISE

He was so in love with you.

GILL

He was very supportive of everyone in the class.

DENISE

Not the way he was with you. We were all talking about it. You were so flirty.

GILL

I was seventeen!

DENISE

Milburn said you had more raw, animal talent than anyone else in the class.

GILL

Denise. Stop. Seriously. What are you doing?

DENISE

... I heard you sold that painting.

GILL

Who told you that?

DENISE

Linda Carl. We keep in touch and she, you know, keeps an eye on you. She'd love to hear from you.

GILL

Really? Yeah. Hard pass.

DENISE

So...? How much did you get for it?

GILL

So long ago.

DENISE

Modesty isn't your look, Billy. How much?

GILL

I honestly don't remember.

DENISE

You gotta remember your first sale.

GILL

Can we talk about –

DENISE

Come on! Give me a real reason to get drunk tonight. You know who Linda said bought it?

GILL

Can we –

DENISE

Linda says the National Gallery has it. That true?

GILL

Maybe.

DENISE

Shut the front door. A painting in the gallery in DC. Very impressive, Billy.

RENNY

(off)

It's in London!

DENISE

London? Wait. How do you know that?!

RENNY

(off)

It's called the Internet, Mother.

DENISE

You have a painting hanging in the National Gallery in London?

GILL

Milburn pulled some strings and got them to take a look.

DENISE

What did you have to do to get him to do that for you?

GILL

It was a 9/11 sympathy thing, He just wanted to do something to make up for the canceled seminar. That's all.

DENISE

That's all? He wouldn't even give me a refund.

GILL

And it's only in their archives, not the gallery. They're waiting for me to make good on all that potential Milburn said I had.

DENISE

That dude was so in love.

GILL

Lot of good it did me. I send them every doodle, every scrap of paper, they get first look. Nothing. Not even owning a gallery in Midtown impresses those fuckers.

DENISE

All right. I can take it. What's your verdict on this one?

GILL

That's not fair.

DENISE

Why not?

GILL

It's twenty years old. Obviously you've matured.

DENISE

Just what every woman wants to hear.

GILL

As an artist. Matured as an artist. Girl, you're better than that. Are you seriously telling me what I saw today is the only real work you've done since 2001?

DENISE

They're all in a storage locker.

GILL

I liked that green one I saw at the back of the booth.

DENISE

I thought you didn't see the booth.

GILL

The crocheted pigs jogged my –

DENISE

Oh, that's Renny's. Everything hung up in the booth is his. My stuff's in the racks on the side.

GILL

So. That kid's photo? On the table? That's Renny?

DENISE

Listen, I never actually say that's a current picture, just that he's my kid and he's the artist. Not my fault if people make assumptions.

GILL

Whatever makes the sale, baby.

RENNY enters. He's changed his shirt and he's not wearing a mask.

DENISE

There he is! This is my baby! Look at that handsome face.

GILL

You must be breaking hearts all over Des Moines.

DENISE

Come join us.

GILL

Have a beer.

RENNY

Why didn't I win?

DENISE

Don't hold back, Gill. He needs to take some serious criticism from someone other than his mother. He doesn't listen to me.

GILL

Didn't lose. Ya took third.

DENISE

Guess who bought Symphoney's painting.

GILL

Third place is a great spot to be in. It says you're an up-and-comer. People keep their eyes on third place winners. 2022 is your year, buddy.

DENISE

Tell him who bought her painting.

RENNY

Third place is just another way of saying second place for losers.

DENISE

Gill, tell him what you told me. Tell him. Baby, you have to hear this. Go on. Tell him. Tell him. Tell him.

GILL

Symphony's piece happened at just at the right time. That's all.

RENNY

Flamingoes are having a moment in the art world?

GILL

We're not talking about the art world here. We're talking about licensing agreements. You know, dentist's offices in Cleveland. IKEA prints. Shit like that.

DENISE

Matan took second.

RENNY

Because of course he did.

DENISE

Tell him who bought Symphoney's polished turd.

RENNY

I heard who bought it, Mother. Your voice cuts cement.

GILL

I don't usually... I mean, corporate art's not really my thing, but, you know, The 'vid's made everything a little weird and man's gotta do what a man's gotta do.

RENNY

A little bird chirped into my ear that Covid is over.

GILL

Look buddy, if you want total honesty, you're probably never going to make that kind of sale.

RENNY

What you're saying is my third-rate painting is –

GILL

What I'm saying is, you're better than that.

DENISE

What?

GILL

Look at your Mom's painting and... compare it to this one.

DENISE

Hey! You can't compare...It's twenty years old!

GILL

Your stuff – at least what I've seen – has a roughness to it. This one is cheerful.

DENISE

Cheerful? No one has ever --

GILL

It's like you've connected your heart and balls directly to the paintbrush. Tell me the man who painted this isn't a fucking genius. In my humble opinion, you're wasting your time at these street fairs.

DENISE

We gotta eat.

GILL

Well, that same little birdie that chirped in your ear, told me your third-place, second-loser piece of shit has a buyer.

DENISE

Gilly! That was a secret.

RENNY

I'll believe that when I see the cash.

GILL

Your stuff sells, doesn't it?

DENISE

Of course it does.

GILL

You've got real talent.

DENISE

Damn straight he's got talent.

GILL

That doesn't mean your work is going to sell.

DENISE

I just told you --

GILL

OK. If you want to make a sale? A real sale? What is this?

RENNY

Une ne pipe pas.

GILL

Merci, Monsieur Magritte. Mais qu'est-ce que c'est? It's OK if you don't know. Maybe even better if you don't.

DENISE

That is not OK! If you don't know what you're painting – Gill, are you serious right now? Art is a statement... it's... it's... political. It's spiritual. I don't know... Valerie says it can be a catharsis. If he doesn't know what he's painting, all he's doing is masturbating.

RENNY

Mom!

GILL

Amateur's mistake.

DENISE

Jesus Christ, Gill. Renny's got vision. Who needs a beer?

GILL

Yeah. Catharsis on canvas doesn't get you forgiveness, 'cuz it doesn't sell. People don't care. And they sure as shit don't care about your politics. People see what you tell them they see.

DENISE

That's not art.

GILL

No?

DENISE

That's sales.

GILL

Yup. And here's the real-real, OK? Think you can handle it?

DENISE

Hit me.

GILL

It don't mean shit if people are only looking at a picture. 'Art,' if you want to get all fancy and shit, is in the conversation that happens in front of the canvas, not on the canvas.

DENISE

Oh, my god.

GILL

And a real artist controls that conversation.

DENISE

This isn't helping, Billy. We need someone to tell him what's wrong with his painting.

GILL

OK. What's wrong with this painting? I got nothing to say about it. That's what's wrong with it.

RENNY

Ouch.

GILL

It's just blue paint on a canvas.

RENNY

OK. Thanks.

DENISE

Come on, Billy. Everybody's who've ever seen his work, anyone who knows anything says he's got real vision.

GILL

That right? You see shit the rest of don't see?

RENNY

Uh...

GILL

Let me ask you this. How much were you paying those people who told you you've got a vision? They were teachers, right?

RENNY

We can't afford art school.

GILL

Do not waste your time and money in art school. You don't have to know the what you're painting, or even the why. But you gotta know who you're painting for. Who are you

GILL
cont'd

painting for, buddy? And what do you want them to say when they are standing in front of your painting? Let me help you out. It's you, me, your Mom and that painting. Who'd you paint that for?

RENNY

Myself, I guess.

GILL

No.

DENISE

Then who's he painting for?

GILL

Come on, now. Don't we all know the answer to that question?

RENNY

OK.

GILL

And that's why you can't sell the painting.

DENISE

Hey! What's wrong with that? I got great taste in art. All I do, all day long is have conversations in front of his canvases.

GILL

But you aren't buying any of them, are you?

DENISE

So, I'm the problem?

GILL

No! In the history of the world, no one has ever cared about what a mama says about her boy's painting. Might as well hang on the fridge over there with your magnets. If you want to control the conversation and create real art, all you gotta do is listen. If you're doing all the talking, you're not doing any selling. You don't need to tell them what the painting means, or describe the agony of your little boy's soul. You just listen. They will tell you what the painting is about. Because it's always about the same thing. It's always about them. Just listen for a few minutes, and they'll tell you everything you need to know. You make 'em feel smarter than any other son of a bitch who's stood in front of that painting, because they get it. Whatever they say, they get it. Wanna know why *The Mona Lisa* is a great painting?

RENNY

Why?

GILL

Because one asshole asked another asshole, “You ever make a woman smile like that?” Come on boy, you know what I’m talking about here. I bet made a few woman smile like that?

RENNY exits to his room, slamming the door and locking it.

DENISE

Are you really this guy?

GILL

I know. I don’t like to brag, but you’d be surprised just how far this boyish charm gets me. I’m still the guy you knew in DC and Annapolis. Down where it counts, nothing’s changed.

DENISE

Glad to hear it.

GILL

So, what’s his deal?

DENISE

It started with Covid.

GILL

Did he get it?

DENISE

No. But he’s always been a little fragile. He split up with his first real girlfriend just as Covid hit, so... Debbi-Taylor. D.E.B.B.I, no E, hyphen, Taylor. I guess the hyphen makes her fancy or something. Debbi-Taylor Hansen. Her family are these MAGAts who own this reclamation center outside of Ankeny.

GILL

Young love.

DENISE

This was bad. I’ll never forgive her for what she did to him. If I hadn’t stepped in... It was real bad. Anyway, he needed a place to stay and then he just sort of disintegrated. I’ve finally got him seeing Valerie, but I gotta to sell a lot of magnets for that.

DENISE cracks open another beer. GILL helps himself to one.

GILL

I wish I could help darlin’, but money is --

DENISE

Billy, I didn't offer you a place to stay to shake you down.

GILL

Yeah. Uh...Why did you offer me a place to stay?

DENISE

I thought... It's not like it's a big thing. There's space on the floor. There's a shower... You don't have to stay if-

GILL

I didn't say I didn't want to stay.

DENISE

OK. Just don't go so hard on the art thing with him while you're here. We'll get there. OK?

GILL

OK.

DENISE

And... about your language...

RENNY reenters. He is wearing his mask.

RENNY

Sorry.

GILL

No. I'm sorry. Denise was just explaining.

RENNY

Thanks, Mother.

GILL

And if you didn't notice, I like to hear myself talk. It's the gallery owner in me. Always making a sale. Sorry if I pushed too hard.

RENNY

It's OK.

DENISE

Renny? Baby? Baby? We should be celebrating. Your painting took third place! Remember what Valerie says?

RENNY

“Somebody, somewhere, is jealous of my life right now.”

DENISE

That’s right. Gratitude. Do you know how many painters would kill for third place? Huh? I can think of at least one.

GILL

Hell, boy! Make that two.

DENISE

And who knows where we’ll be a year from now?

GILL

Hey! You know where you should go? There’s an amazing show in Austin.

DENISE

Isn’t that Trump country?

GILL

I don’t – I don’t – I don’t think so. I don’t know. It doesn’t matter. They show some serious art down there. Not corporate boardroom shit. Galleries in the city actually fight over the shit that comes out of Austin. I mean, I don’t judge it, but –

DENISE

We applied. Twice.

RENNY

They don’t even respond.

GILL

But, I know Jesus, Hope, and Socrates! They ARE the Austin Arts Festival. Very cool people. Very liberal, very smart. Socrates would love all of this shit. Could you get down there? It’s in three weeks.

DENISE

I don’t know.

GILL
(to *RENNY*)

What have you got going on?

RENNY

Uh...

I don't know. This Covid --

DENISE

She's right.

RENNY

Great! Let me text 'em... What's your best stuff?

GILL

It's all in the van.

DENISE

Right here. Right now.

GILL

Mom?

RENNY

Don't ask her. Don't think. Just do.

GILL

That --

RENNY

Grab it. Come on, grab it! Hold it in front of you.

GILL

GILL uses his phone to snap a shot.

Fantastic. Next. Which one? Come on, boy! Just grab one!

RENNY can't move.

DENISE rummages through the paintings and finds two.

RENNY rejects both of her choices and selects another painting.

We need to see your face.

GILL

RENNY lowers his mask.

GILL snaps the picture, then takes the painting and mask from RENNY.

One more.

DENISE

Two's enough.

GILL

That's Mom's.

RENNY

DENISE strikes a pose with the painting.

GILL snaps the shot.

OK... and... done! Socrates has a few samples of your work and a kick-ass recommendation from me. If Socrates loves it, Jesus and Hope will --

GILL

This is incredible. How long --

DENISE

Hell, I don't know. We might not hear anything at all. But that's not really the good news here, is it?

GILL

What's the good news?

DENISE

You just took your first step outside your comfort zone. How's it feel?

GILL

The same, I guess.

RENNY

Same as what?

GILL

Before?

RENNY

Do they take you seriously?

DENISE

I mean, I had --

GILL

A gallery in New York.

RENNY

GILL

That's gotta count for something, right?

DENISE

Woo-hoo!

RENNY

Would the van even make it down there and back?

GILL

I wouldn't worry about that now.

DENISE

They'll take us both, won't they?

GILL

I don't know why the hell not.

DENISE

All right, then. This is officially a celebration! And that calls for...

DENISE goes to the kitchen and pulls out the largest possible bottle of Herradura Silver Tequila. It's mostly empty.

RENNY

Mom...

DENISE

When was the last time we had such a special day, huh? You placing. A guest. Austin. This is a big day!

GILL

You got the stench of success on you, boy!

RENNY

Really?

GILL

I guaran-damn-tee it.

DENISE

Come on, baby. Just one?

RENNY

Fine.

DENISE pulls out two mismatched coffee mugs.

Mom. No.

RENNY produces a tray with three crystal tumblers. He gives one to GILL and one to DENISE.

GILL

What about you?

DENISE

He doesn't drink.

GILL

Ever?

RENNY

I've got some chocolate milk in the refrigerator.

DENISE

Honey, you can use one of grandpa's tumblers tonight.

RENNY

Really?

DENISE

Yeah.

RENNY fills the third tumbler with chocolate milk. DENISE has poured some tequila for her and GILL.

To Guillermo Toussant-Black!

RENNY

To Austin.

GILL

And all the shit Austin will bring. Salud!

There is a notification from a cell phone.

DENISE

Oh my god! Oh my god! This is it. Check your phone. Check your phone! Where's his --

GILL

Not mine.

DENISE checks her phone.

DENISE

Pizza's here. Renny, run down and get the pizza for us.

RENNY doesn't move.

Baby, I can't go downstairs like this. Just go down and get the pizza.

RENNY starts to put on a mask, but GILL takes it from him.

GILL

Dude...

RENNY exits to his room and locks the door.

GILL

Text him the unit number.

DENISE

What?

GILL

Unit number. So the delivery guy can --

DENISE

They don't come up anymore. Covid's ruined everything. Leave it open. We need some air in here.

DENISE exits.

GILL quietly closes the front door.

GILL sorts through the paintings. Then, as lights fade he begins looking through drawers and cupboards in the kitchen.

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 1A

Lights up.

GILL and DENISE are asleep on the futon. They are barely covered by a sheet. The apartment is dark. A fan is focused on them.

ENTER RENNY. He trips over a corner of the futon, which doesn't disturb DENISE, but wakes GILL.

Sorry. RENNY

No worries. GILL

I'm just going... RENNY

Yeah. Sure. GILL

Go back to sleep. RENNY

I don't sleep much. GILL

Yeah. RENNY

Sorry if we got a little loud. GILL

OK. I'm just going... RENNY

Do you have any bottled water? GILL

Sink's over there. Glasses on the right. Excuse - RENNY

Is... is that water filtered? GILL

RENNY

By the Des Moines Water Works. I've really filter some water myself.

GILL

Sure. Sure. Sure. Sure.

RENNY rushes to the bathroom.

GILL slips off the futon and slips on a pair of briefs. He goes to the kitchen and empties one of the crystal tumblers. Foregoing the tap, he opens the refrigerator and finds RENNY'S chocolate milk.

RENNY re-enters.

RENNY

Well... good-night.

GILL

If you don't mind some real feedback...

RENNY

Maybe in the morning. Night.

GILL

She's weighing you down.

RENNY

I really don't want to wake her up.

GILL

You need to get to New York.

RENNY

Thanks. I'm just --

GILL

Maybe you should branch out. Figures. Not portraits, necessarily, but --

RENNY

OK.

GILL

What's the most interesting thing in this room right now?

RENNY

The most interesting thing to me right now is my bed. ... Maybe the glass in your hand.

GILL

What's interesting about it?

RENNY

I don't know.

GILL

Is it the shape? Maybe how I'm holding it?

RENNY

It's the tension. In your hand. The tension in your hand. Holding the glass like that.

GILL

Tension's good. Right? What about...?

GILL crosses over to the futon and pulls back the sheet, exposing DENISE. She may be nude.

RENNY

Good night.

RENNY exits to his room. He locks the door.

GILL is drinking chocolate milk from the carton as the lights fade.

SCENE 2

As lights come back, the door to RENNY'S room is open.

DENISE and RENNY are at their places at the kitchen island.

DENISE is not wearing much more than an oversized t-shirt.

DENISE nurses a cup of coffee.

RENNY eats a bowl of cereal.

RENNY goes to the refrigerator, retrieves a beer and gives it to DENISE.

DENISE

He just sent it last night.

You know how these things work.

Renny...

Please.

They'll get back to us.

Please.

What's that?

DENISE indicates she wants to take a look.

RENNY gives her the notebook and DENISE flips through some pages and then closes the book.

RENNY

Not even this one?

DENISE goes to the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. She takes something.

Was there a priest here last night?

DENISE

A what?

RENNY
A Father Billy O'Billy? Blessing a feral cat, maybe?

DENISE
Oh god.

RENNY
There it is. Jesus, Mom. Can you imagine what this conversation would be like if I'd had Debbi-Taylor here all night, making noises like that?

DENISE
I – I – I...

RENNY
Seriously. Who's Billy?

DENISE
Gill. He changed his name.

RENNY
Why?

DENISE
Reasons. OK? Can we just get along this morning? For a few hours? Please?

RENNY
Where is --

DENISE
Out for a run.

RENNY
Where's his stuff?

DENISE looks around.

GILL'S duffle bag is missing.

RENNY
Perfect.

*DENISE searches the apartment and finds GILL's duffle in the closet.
He's unpacked and hung up his clothes.*

Looks like he's staying for a while.

DENISE is looking into the empty refrigerator.

RENNY is picking up some of the empty cans.

RENNY

Shouldn't he get up to Minneapolis and find an apartment?

DENISE

I don't know.

RENNY

Yeah. Maybe my new daddy's daddy has built us a villa on a lake where we can party with his good buddies from the 'gallery in Midtown,' George Clooney and Beyonce.

DENISE

Maybe.

RENNY

And Gigi Hadid. Christ. Are you sure Jesus and Hope and, god, Socrates in Austin even exist?

DENISE

He knows a lot of people.

RENNY

Oh, yeah. I know. Bruce Willis bought a painting from his gallery. "In Midtown." And he had "Lunch with Matt and Ben at the Vegas Car Show."

DENISE

Could have happened.

RENNY

He hangs out with the kids from One Direction? Really? That guy? What's Harry Styles's best bud doing performing exorcisms on our floor and taking a teaching job in Minneapolis?

DENISE

Covid's messed with his finances.

RENNY

Aww. Will Gilly have to sell the bussin' Escalade Daddy bought him? That makes Renny frowny face.

DENISE

He doesn't need his father's money.

RENNY

The whole thing's online, Mother. His father stopped bankrolling that gallery because –

DENISE

You've been spending a lot of time with Mr. Google.

RENNY

Well, what else is a boy to do when his mother parties like it's 1999?

DENISE

Three experts signed off on the provenance. He had no way of knowing it was –

RENNY

One of them says Gill faked his signature.

DENISE

Because that guy's being investigated for insurance fraud. So...

RENNY

So, it's all just a little sus, that's all.

DENISE

If you were out there, you'd know that no one is buying art right now.

RENNY

Bullshit. Father O'Billy's running away from something.

DENISE

The art world's way too small to run away from anything.

RENNY

Why else does someone change his name unless –

DENISE

It's called branding, Renny.

RENNY

Then why -

DENISE

I don't know!

RENNY

Well, I don't care what he says, he's not here ghosting Taylor Swift.

RENNY is examining GILL's clothes in the closet. He pulls out a shirt.

Don't mention the gallery.

DENISE

He's got something to confess. And it isn't his taste in clothes.

RENNY

Put that back.

DENISE

Please take a shower.

RENNY

DENISE takes the shirt from RENNY and hangs it up.

RENNY picks up more empties.

You roll up the futon?

DENISE

I wouldn't touch those sheets to stop rats from dining on my scrotum.

RENNY

DENISE rips the sheets off the futon, balls them up and takes them to the kitchen where she stuffs them into one of the laundry/garbage bags.

Don't think I'm washing those.

Good god, no! That would mean you'd have to go out into the hall and what if someone breathed on you? I'll wash them when I get home tonight.

DENISE

Whatever.

RENNY

Good.

DENISE

They reek.

RENNY

Would you just go to your room? Do something constructive. And quiet.

DENISE

RENNY continues to tidy up the apartment.

DENISE settles at the island, trying to drink some coffee and cradling her head. She begins to seriously study RENNY's sketch book.

RENNY sets up the easel, gets a fresh canvas and begins sketching with a stick of black charcoal.

What are you doing? DENISE

Something constructive. RENNY

Since when do you do portraits? DENISE

What's this?

Renny?

RENNY shrugs.

That's a portrait.

Are all of your new drawings portraits?

RENNY concentrates on his canvas.

Did you do all of these last night?

How long have you been drawing nudes?

This is Gill! Did you do this...

Did you do this while he was sleeping?

When was he sleeping? RENNY

Debbi-Taylor? DENISE

Constructive and quiet. Constructive and quiet... RENNY

Was she here? DENISE

DENISE
cont'd

Has your little girlfriend been coming over here while I've been out working?

Renny?

She's nineteen!

Let me see what you're -

RENNY

Valerie says --

DENISE

Valerie would agree with -

While DENISE is trying to get a look at RENNY'S canvas, They are interrupted by the buzzer.

DENISE presses the buzzer and retreats back to her seat, flipping through the sketch book.

GILL enters with a couple of bags.

GILL

You know, for being in a farming state you'd think Hy-Vee would have cheaper produce.

GILL begins to remove his clothes and looks for the spray disinfectant.

RENNY

I think we can dispense with that.

DENISE

What about -

RENNY

I'd risk the black plague not to have to see any more of Gillermo's underwear, thank you very much.

GILL

Is everything -

DENISE

-- Everything's just fine. Turns out little Renny over there - the one whose anxiety has kept him locked in a bedroom -

RENNY
-- That's not fair.

DENISE
-- The one who has required Chernobyl levels of sanitation - Renny's been having girls visit him while I've been out working to support us.

RENNY
My paintings are supporting us.

DENISE
My paintings are supporting us!

RENNY
Your cartoons?

DENISE
Your paintings would be collecting dust if I didn't get out there and hustle to sell 'em to those beige and gray MAGAT bitches who – He's been bringing whores in here –

RENNY
Mom!

GILL
Woah! Hold up! Let's all just take a sec. You got a girl, little buddy? We're all adults here.

RENNY
You're the only other person who has been in here since this all started. I swear.

GILL
Come on, bruh. We're both guys. 'fess up.

RENNY
I don't have anything to confess. Do you?

DENISE
Look! Look at these. Who is this?

GILL flips through the sketch book.

GILL
You really don't know who this is?

Well... that's you. DENISE

Yep. GILL

Doesn't that bother you? DENISE

I look good. So good. Fuck. I really do look ... GILL

And he won't let me look at what he's doing over there. DENISE

Valerie says we shouldn't look at each other's real work until it's finished. RENNY

May I? GILL

GILL examines what's on the canvas.

RENNY finds a particular sketch and shows it to GILL.

GILL laughs.

RENNY also laughs.

He doesn't do portraits. DENISE

It's all just rough. RENNY

Understood. GILL

I do portraits. DENISE

"On demand." RENNY

There's a lot of potential here. GILL

DENISE makes a non-verbal comment.

Thanks. RENNY

Why will you show him and not me? DENISE

Take it up with Valerie. I'm trying to reconceptualize the figure study... Approaching it from the point of view of a landscape... RENNY

Like that's never been done before. DENISE

No, I see it. GILL

DENISE tries to take a look at the drawing on the easel.

GILL intercepts DENISE.

Respect.

I just want to – DENISE

You have to respect – GILL

This is my house! DENISE

(To RENNY) Take it to your room. Go! GILL

RENNY exits with the canvas. Upon returning, he locks his door.

OK. What's really going on here?

Nothing. Nothing. DENISE

GILL

This reminds of a time when a certain actress – who shall remain nameless – came into the gallery just after her very famous husband – known to be a devotee of a certain religion – surprised her with divorce papers, and the much younger woman – I’m not mentioning –

RENNY

What’s your point?

GILL

You’re both behaving like a couple of little bitches. And there really is no need, because I have some very...

GILL produces three bottles of champagne, a bottle of tequila and a bottle of whiskey.

...very good news. But maybe we should have some of this first before we have some of that. Go on. Eat.

GILL gives DENISE some bread.

DENISE begins to devour the bread.

Are you going to be a good boy and girl now? I heard from Socrates. You’re in.

RENNY

What?

GILL

You’re in! It’s too late to get a booth, but you’re in the competition. Now, you don’t have to actually go –

DENISE

- Of course we’re going –

GILL

- to Austin, but if you did, it could greatly increase your chances of placing. They like to award people they know. It’s not a requirement –

DENISE

– We’re going.

GILL

-- but Jesus really liked what he saw and he really wants to meet you.

RENNY

Which piece?

GILL

And that's the huge news!

RENNY

Oh my god!

GILL

Both! They never take two pieces. Especially not from a first-timer.

RENNY

Oh my god! Oh my god!! Oh my god!!

GILL

Do you know how huge this is?

DENISE

Three.

Three!

Three!!!

GILL

This is it, buddy. You're on your way. Even if you don't place... but the chances of you placing are very, very good. Believe me –

DENISE

Three. You meant to say they're taking all three pieces.

GILL

Well...

DENISE

They're taking my piece too. ...

GILL

... Yes! They're taking your piece too!

DENISE

Really?

GILL

Yes, really. Now get in here! Let's hug it out!

DENISE

Oh my god! We're going to Austin!!

ALL

chanting

We're going to Austin! We're going to Austin! We're going to Austin!

There's just...

GILL

What?

RENNY

Austin is a pro/am show. You know, it's still a really big deal. Huge!

GILL

But?

DENISE

I'm in, right?

RENNY

Yeah, but...

GILL

I'm in the amateur show.

RENNY

... ..

GILL

... I am.

DENISE

To qualify for the pro show, you have to have made a sale in the past year.

GILL

I sell shit every single day.

DENISE

I know. I know.

GILL

DENISE

That's ... I can't believe... all I do is sell art.

GILL

Listen, I know you're an absolute pro. I know it. Hell, they know it. It's obvious from your work, but...

DENISE

How do you think I pay for all of this?

GILL

...it has to be a major sale of your own work. Or at least had a solo show in a recognized gallery that'll vouch – technically I don't have a gallery anymore, or I would... but ... I've already pulled all the strings I can...

DENISE

... What did you say to them about me?

GILL

Darlin', you know how these things work. Your time is coming.

DENISE

Fine.

GILL

It's a foot in the door.

RENNY

Mom –

DENISE

I said fine. We can't afford to both go anyway --

GILL

-- Denise, come on...

RENNY

-- Mom!

DENISE

While Gill's here, we'll practice getting you out of the apartment. Build up your strength and stamina. And... and you can wear two masks on the plane. It'll be fine. Better than fine. Baby, you need to do this. You can do this without me.

RENNY

I know.

DENISE

So... you're going? Without me. You're really going?

RENNY

Yes.

DENISE

Yes.

GILL

Doors are just going to fly open for you, buddy. Wait and see. Shit's gonna happen. And Denise, just because you're not there, doesn't mean you don't have a shot.

I'm pulling my piece. DENISE

Denise. Darlin'... GILL

I don't want to show my piece. DENISE

Typical. RENNY

If I'm there, I'm only going to distract – DENISE

-- That's not true. GILL

I'm not going to be some granny displaying her ugly crocheted pigs! DENISE

No one is going to think that. GILL

Everyone is going to think that. DENISE

Come on. Have a little champagne and you'll get into -- GILL

I don't want to get into the party mood! DENISE

Since when? RENNY

Baby... DENISE

Just once, something good happens for me and – RENNY

-- Baby, you don't have to be nervous. DENISE

RENNY

I'm not fucking nervous, Mother!

DENISE

We can't afford for both of us to go. Not for an amateur show --

RENNY

-- We will figure the money out. We always do.

GILL

-- I'd help you out if I could, but --

DENISE

Maybe your father could lend us a few bucks. Huh? Maybe give him a call?

GILL

I wish I could call him, but...

DENISE

But what? Isn't he taking your calls?

GILL

I'm waiting for him to call me back. He's super busy right now, and... he might. You never know. He might, you know... but I can't really, you know... I can't really count on that right --

RENNY

You have to be there.

GILL

He's right.

DENISE

No. Nope. This is your moment.

GILL

This is our moment, Denise. Our moment.

DENISE

I think my moment's passed. My time is not coming. I think it's time I... time to make peace with that little fact. If I ever had a moment, it's come and gone. You don't need me down there. You'll be fine.

GILL

I'm not just trying to make you feel good here. Darlin', Renny's going to need you in Austin. More than ever. Listen to me. Listen. Austin is a party town.

DENISE

So?

GILL

To show these people you're serious, you've got to be able to hang with them.

DENISE

You don't need me for that.

GILL

Do you seriously think he'll be able to keep up? There isn't a bar in all of Texas that served chocolate milk.

RENNY

Mom, there's only one in Des Moines.

GILL

See? Your boy here doesn't have a clue what it means to party with the big dawgs. Hell, son, what's the wildest party you've ever been to?

RENNY

I don't know.

DENISE

Grays Lake. Debbi-Taylor's picnic.

GILL

Debbi-Taylor's picnic! Drip, man! Were there balloons?

RENNY

Maybe.

GILL

Denise? Come on. I know you got some stories...

DENISE

Yeah... I'd have to say the all-time best one for me was a frat party me and DeeDee crashed over at Drake. Greek week. Sigma Chi, I think. Those Drake boys know how to party.

GILL

Now you're talkin'! When was that?

DENISE

Three... four years ago, maybe? Man. That was a night. What about you? I bet you've been to some intense parties.

GILL

There was this one - Mark Ronson was DJ-ing and I got Timbaland into the VIP section. At the Trump in DC? Good times. Good times.

DENISE

Why do you do that?

GILL

What?

RENNY

You are a nuclear namedropper.

GILL

I'm just telling you about my friends. They come into my gallery -

RENNY and DENISE

-- in Midtown.

GILL

Well... that's where it is!

RENNY

It's where it was.

DENISE

How long did you have it?

GILL

Almost ten years.

DENISE

Do you miss it?

GILL

Every hour of every day.

DENISE

You can open another one.

GILL

Not like...

DENISE

... Was it really that good of a fake?

GILL

The greens are a little darker... something's off. But the money's so... everyone wants it to be real. They want it to be real, so bad.

DENISE

People forget. They move on. Right?

GILL

You guys, there's so much fake stuff out there. It's just part of the game. The hard part is admitting it's a fake. Once you admit it's fake...

DENISE

...Screw it. On to the next thing. People forgive. They forget.

GILL

There are some things certain people don't forget. And they definitely do not forgive. If it had been a fake Warhol? That, these people could forgive and forget. But not a fake Basquiat. No! Nobody forgets about a good ol' white boy trying to sell a fake Basquiat. Not in Midtown. No, siree Bob. They shut that shit down right quick. They cut off your credit cards and threaten to take away your car. They definitely stop inviting you to...

DENISE

People can forgive a lot.

GILL

You really think so? Renny?

RENNY

I think this party sucks.

DENISE

Right. Where were we? Best party. One time we went to Adventure Land and this one rode the roller coaster. Twice. Good times.

RENNY

Shut up!

DENISE

And then he threw up on the street.

RENNY

It was food poisoning.

DENISE

I want to hear about the last blow out you went to. Who else was there?

It was food poisoning.

RENNY

It was burnin'. Leave it at that.

GILL

Don't tease us. Give us the deets!

DENISE

The "deets?"

RENNY

OK. So, I was hanging out with... some friends.

GILL

Because it's so tacky to name drop?

RENNY

You know you want to...

DENISE

... OK, I was hanging with Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford. OK? Happy?

GILL

So happy.

RENNY

A couple of buddies I met online introduced me.

GILL

On line?

DENISE

Don't judge! It was... some chat room. I don't remember.

GILL

Oh my god. You're a Star Wars geek! You met them in a Star Wars chat room. And you met up to swap action figures.

RENNY

No! And we weren't swapping anything. I was selling –

GILL

I knew it!

RENNY

GILL

It wasn't... These guys are cool. OK? I wouldn't sell my collection to just anybody. OK? It was this Tuesday night, and we met up at this dive bar, had a few shots, and then we went over to this dude's house for him to examine the collection. He was having this party and --

DENISE

That doesn't sound safe.

GILL

It was fine. Big, fancy house. Four stories, packed with all kinds of people. Great booze, but mellow vibe. Harrison Ford's super cool. Carrie Fisher's... out there, OK? It was that kinda crowd. Anyway, when midnight came --

DENISE

-- you kissed one of these cool dudes!

GILL

No! One of these guys said that the next day they were all getting together for something "wild." They wanted to know if I was in.

DENISE

And of course you were...

GILL

'Course I was. They told me to dress warm, so I'm thinking tailgate party.

DENISE

... So you went...

GILL

So I went. I'm looking for Carrie and Harry. He said I can call him Harry. Anyway, they said they could hook me up with Mark and we'd all hang. It was all supposed to be real chill. But there were just so many people wandering around.

DENISE

Man, I've been in Des Moines too long.

RENNY

Seriously?

GILL

But there was this flow and we were all moving in the same general direction, so I just went with it. You know? At this point, I don't know where we're going, exactly. I thought we were somewhere near the stadium. Tailgate, right? But... I don't know. There were a couple of bottles being passed around and the weed was good, so you know...

DENISE

You went with it.

GILL

I went with it. Then like out of nowhere, I'm standing in front of this big white building.

DENISE

This is a Tuesday?

GILL

No. Now it's Wednesday, but I was so high I didn't know what day it was at the time, and there are, like, a thousand big white buildings -- you know DC. It was, like, the sickest concert you've ever been to, bruh. You know how you can get sucked into energy like that?

DENISE

Iowa State Fair.

GILL

Well, before you know it, things start getting wicked intense. I'm not going to lie, I've seen a few bar fights in my time, even thrown a punch or two, nah-mean? But this was fire. And this whole time I'm being pushed forward, up some steps. And I'm so fucking high, so vibing. Everybody is pushing and shouting, and I don't know how it happened, but next thing you know, I'm like, inside the belly of the beast. I am fucking inside this big white fucking building and there were hundreds of people, and no Carrie. No Harry. I'm just standing there wondering why the hell I'm looking at all these fucking statues and marble floors and shit, and all I want to do is find the concession stand and get a couple beers in me.

RENNY

There are no games on Tuesdays.

GILL

Yeah, but this is Wednesday. I met the guys on Tuesday. But you're right. There are no games on Tuesdays. Or Wednesdays as it turns out.

DENISE

If there was a game, it would have been on... Thursday. No? Football is Thursday night. Right?

GILL

See? It's easy to get confused. Monday? Thursday? Stadium, not stadium? Who the hell knows? The day's not really the point. Man, that shit stank! You feel me, son? Suddenly I hear one of my buddies calling out this girl's name. Real Shining/Kubrick shit.

DENISE

Carrie?

GILL

Of all the shit you would never expect...

DENISE

Oh my god.

GILL

Sick, right?

DENISE

It wasn't Carrie. They were calling out Nancy. You were in the Capital on January 6th.

GILL

It lived up to the hype, man. Rabid. Fucking rabid.

DENISE

Bullshit.

GILL

Naw, man. I was actually in the room where it happened. I mean, I was absolutely wrecked. In the end, I just stood in this big round fucking room and smoked a little with this random dude I'd never seen before and... and... never did get my beer. It was Gomorrah, man. Fucking Gomorrah.

DENISE

Then what?

GILL

A security guard told us we had to leave.

DENISE

And?

GILL

We left.

DENISE

That's it?

GILL

Maybe you had to be there.

DENISE

We watched it online.

GILL

Oh! Did you see me? Some people said they saw me.

DENISE

No. We didn't see you.

RENNY

How high were you?

GILL

Dude!

GILL and RENNY fist bump.

DENISE

You were partying with thugs.

GILL

Thug life, am I right?

DENISE

You were in the Capital on January 6th.

GILL

Come on, Denise. Who gives a fuck? Who wants some champagne?

DENISE

No.

GILL

Not cool, Denise. Not cool

DENISE

You got that right. And what's with the fist bump? You've never been high in your life.

RENNY

That you know of. Right?

DENISE

Please. You won't even sip that champagne.

RENNY

You want me to sip some champagne? I'll do it. I'll do it right now. Give me that bottle, motherfucker. I'll down the whole thing.

GILL

Yeah, you will!

DENISE

You will not. Gill, what the hell? Do you really expect us to believe that story?

GILL

I... I... Come on, Denise.

DENISE

Jesus. What did you think when you saw people smearing their feces on the walls?

GILL

I thought it was an awesome party, dawg!

RENNY

Nice.

DENISE

In the Capital?

GILL

I didn't know I was in the Capital.

DENISE

Really?

GILL

You know DC. There's all that statue, patriotic shit everywhere. And, don't forget; I was very, very high.

DENISE

Yeah. So high.

GILL

Can we just drop this?

DENISE

Gill, you're not a stupid person.

GILL

Thank you.

DENISE

Do you think I am?

GILL

Jesus, Denise. My grandmother isn't this bad of a buzzkill.

DENISE

I have partied harder and longer than anyone you've ever known. I've partied with pros, and let me tell you – dawg – there's no way you thought that was a party.

GILL

Oh! OK, Boomer! Am I right? Boomer.

DENISE

My point is, even if you're that high, if your legs still work, you know where you are.

GILL

What can I say? I'm a savant.

DENISE

You are an idiot. You were part of the insurrection.

GILL

That's your problem, right there, Denise. Everything is black or white with you. I live my life in the gray, darlin'. Life in the gray.

DENISE

There's no gray in trying to overthrow the government of the United States of America.

GILL

It was just a party with some super passionate people, that got a little out of hand. That's all.

DENISE

No. That was a bunch of spoiled brats, throwing a tantrum because for once, they didn't get their way.

GILL

I don't know why all those people were there. I thought I was going to party with Princess... um... Carrie Fisher. Everybody knows I'm not a political person.

DENISE

This is not the time... We all have to be political if we're going to stop these ugly fascist thugs who are –

GILL

-- Wow! Am I supposed to check the political affiliations of everyone who invites me to a party? If I am, where's your manifesto, huh? I'd like to know.

GILL

Aren't you the one who lectured me about all art being political? Because whatever your political beliefs are, they sure as shit aren't in your little 'portraits on demand.'

DENISE

This is about our responsibility to this nation and protecting it from thugs who hate the idea of democracy! –

DENISE

This isn't about my work as an –

GILL

“All art is political.” Who said that? Before Betsy Ross over there. Who said all art is political?

RENNY

Dolly Parton.

GILL

Right! Great gal, by the way. If you two were real artists --

RENNY

Leave me out of this.

GILL

Portraits on fucking demand, right?

DENISE

Don't you dare!

GILL

He sees it, don't you buddy?

DENISE

Sees what?

GILL

He knows what I'm talking about, don't you bruh?

DENISE

Talking about what?

GILL

Denise, come on. We've been having such a good time. We're all going to Austin. Don't ruin it.

DENISE

Is that a threat?

GILL

No.

DENISE

Sounds like a threat.

GILL

Maybe it's an opportunity to examine why you've been hiding in a canvas booth between those two innovators of ugly for the past twenty years. ... I should go. Won't be the first time I – I've been dumped by better people than you, believe me. Portraits on demand, my ass.

GILL is stuffing his things into his duffle bag.

DENISE

Gill.

GILL

Yeah.

DENISE

My change?

GILL fishes out some bills and coins from his pocket. He tosses it with the receipt on the kitchen island.

GILL

Your receipt.

DENISE

... .. Gill. ...

GILL

It was just a party.

DENISE

How could you not realize?

GILL

It was just a party, Denise. I just went to a party. I met Princess... Leia! She wasn't in the bikini, but I'm pretty sure it was... God! Why doesn't anyone believe -- It was just a party. Just a party. Just a... I didn't know. I didn't know.

DENISE

OK. OK.

GILL

It just, you know. It got wild. I had no --

DENISE

Did you vote for him?

RENNY

Mom.

DENISE

It's a simple question.

GILL

I didn't vote. For anyone. OK? Honest to God. I need a shot. You need a shot. Let's just --

DENISE

Billy. You gotta know, he's a bad dude. They're all bad, bad people.

GILL

-- Hey! Whatever happened to that one guy who, --

RENNY

-- Mom.

GILL

-- that one Black dude, you know the one, who --

RENNY

-- Mom!

DENISE

What?

RENNY

Who's the mayor?

Mom?

GILL

Yeah. That Black dude who...

DENISE

What's your point?

RENNY

I think my point's pretty clear.

DENISE

If I didn't get a chance to vote... I was sick --

RENNY
You were hungover. On a Tuesday.

DENISE
I did an absentee ...

RENNY
OK. ... Who's the mayor?

DENISE
I mailed in –

RENNY
-- Who is the mayor? ...

GILL pours three healthy shots and slides one over to DENISE. He puts one in front of RENNY.

GILL
Man. I gotta say. I'm not sure I'm into partying Iowa style.

DENISE and GILL drink in silence.

GILL pours them both another.

DENISE downs her shot immediately and then drinks RENNY'S.

DENISE
Well. This has been fun. But I've got to get moving.

GILL
Where?

DENISE
I've got to get the locker and pack up for –

GILL
-- Let me and Renny... Dude, get dressed. Let's let your Mom have a day off.

DENISE
I gotta pack for St. Louis.

GILL
You deserve a day off, darlin'.

DENISE

You don't know how to pack the van right.

GILL

We can figure it out, right buddy?

DENISE

I'm fine.

RENNY puts the bottle of tequila into one of her totes.

DENISE begins to pull on a pair of jeans and shoes.

Besides, I've got some errands, and I should check on DeeDee. She owes me some money for... for that thing. You know. And --

GILL

-- I've got all this stuff.

DENISE

Yeah.

GILL

I thought I might cook for us. I don't make much, but I do some pretty mean enchiladas. You know, to get us in an Austin state of mind...

DENISE

Sounds great, but I gotta go.

GILL

So? Enchiladas? When you've got the van packed?

DENISE

Yep.

GILL

Is there anything that needs... can I do anything while you're ...

DENISE

Somebody needs to do that laundry.

GILL

I can do that.

DENISE

Great.

GILL collects the cash he'd tossed on the counter.

GILL

Denise? I hate to ask, but... Could you spot me fifty? Just 'til I get settled in Minneapolis? Yeah. If you can.

DENISE

Sure. Um... I have to go to a cash --

GILL

-- It doesn't have to be right now. Just... just before I need to put some gas --

DENISE exits.

GILL

Is she really that pissed?

RENNY

She'll get over it.

GILL

You sure?

RENNY

She'll get over a lot to get to Austin.

GILL

I thought she'd take it better than that.

RENNY

Really? Why?

GILL

Don't know. You guys aren't like all the other people I know in Manhattan.

RENNY

Because we're hicks and don't know no better?

GILL

No. It's not... Everybody I know acts like that one day was the end of the world. I didn't think you would. Do you?

RENNY

I have bigger things to worry about.

GILL

Exactly. That's all I'm saying. Come on, buddy. Don't make me drink alone.

GILL pours some shots of whiskey.

Now, whiskey. That's a man's drink.

RENNY

Why does she call you Billy?

GILL

She's the only one who calls me that now. The only one speaking to me anyway.

RENNY

Doesn't really fit.

GILL

Guillermo gets... Guillermo just gets more attention these days than William. More respect in certain circles, if you know what I mean.

RENNY

Ever heard of cultural appropriation?

GILL

Hey, my grandmother was one sixteenth Spanish. OK? "Barth-e-loña," buddy. "Barth-e-loña!" You ever been? Man, you are definitely your mother's son. We should totally go sometime.

RENNY

Serious?

GILL

Sure. You need to get out of Des Moines. Come on, drink up.

RENNY

You have another, if you want. Does anyone ever call you Bill?

GILL

Never.

RENNY

Will?

GILL

What's your point?

RENNY
I'm trying to decide what I should call you.

GILL
Why?

RENNY
Carrie Fisher's died in 2016.

GILL
No shit.

RENNY
No shit.

GILL
So... What do you want to call me?

RENNY
Don't know yet.

GILL
Come on. Have a drink with me. ... If you want people to take you seriously in this business, you've got to give 'em something to prove you're serious. Come on. One shot. Talent ain't enough.

RENNY
You think I'm talented?

GILL
Buddy...

GILL takes the key to RENNY'S room and retrieves the canvas he was working on.

GILL
One angry spiral, and you got her cold.

RENNY
It's just a line.

GILL
It's a work of art.

RENNY

Fuck you.

GILL

No bullshit, man. Don't do a damn thing to it. You could do two more. A triptych. One of you.

RENNY

What's the third one?

GILL

Me.

GILL finds a blank canvas. He sets it on the easel. He grabs a paint brush and puts it in RENNY'S hand.

RENNY

Let's pretend for a second that one black squiggle is a work of art. It's only because I know her.

GILL

You don't know me?

RENNY

No.

GILL

Do you want to?

RENNY

Fuck.

The two men stare at each other in silence for a full minute. Maybe longer. GILL drains his glass and pours another drink. RENNY confronts the easel and draws a red slash across the canvas, then he swings the canvas around to show GILL.

GILL finds another canvas and places it on the easel.

GILL

Now yours. What color?

RENNY

Gray.

GILL finds a tube of gray oil paint.

RENNY
cont'd

Darker.

GILL

If you're gonna live in the gray, you gotta earn it.

RENNY can't approach the canvas.

GILL downs the drink he'd poured for RENNY and then refills the glass.

GILL feeds the whiskey to RENNY.

RENNY resists at first and then drinks eagerly.

FADE to BLACK

SCENE 3

Lights up.

GILL's bags are packed neatly and ready to go. The easel has been put away, and the painting is not in evidence. The futon has been rolled up and is stowed in its usual place. The apartment is relatively neat, but a pair of jeans and a shirt on the floor.

DENISE enters, much as in the first scene, carrying heavy totes and she's masked. This time the totes appear to contain groceries.

She does not perform the sanitation ritual.

DENISE

I'm home!

RENNY enters from his room, closing the door behind him.

RENNY

How'd it go?

DENISE

Where's Gill?

RENNY

Out.

DENISE

Good. Do not tell him I said this. But. I took his sales advice. And we killed. I sold Blue Skies, Strings, and Highlights.

RENNY

Even Highlights?

DENISE

I even raised the price on Highlights. It was like someone cast a spell on these people. I just repeated back what they said to me, and it worked just like he said. You need to get back to work, boy. We've got Omaha when we get back from Austin. Oh my god, Austin is going to be amazing.

RENNY

Yeah.

DENISE

So... here's your share, plus what I owe you. And I stopped at Becker's and got one of those good, fresh chickens. My treat. I've been going on and on about this garl-... crap. I forgot the garlic.

RENNY

Darn.

DENISE

Anyway, do not tell Gill that he was right.

DENISE is picking up the jeans and t-shirt and folding them, putting them on his duffle bag.

How'd you guys get along while I was gone?

RENNY

Fine.

DENISE

Did Jennifer Lawrence stop by for Sambuca and frog legs?

RENNY

No. No J.Lo.

DENISE

Is he out for a run?

RENNY

Yeah.

DENISE

Do you think garlic powder would be all right?

RENNY

Whatever.

DENISE

It's Gill's last night. I kinda wanted to do something special, and I want to show him we can do more than open a can.

RENNY

Then I guess you've got to go to Hy-Vee.

DENISE

Maybe if Gill is running by Hy-Vee he could --

DENISE dials GILL's phone. A moment later it buzzes on the kitchen counter.

He forgot his phone.

RENNY

Yeah. He said it's too heavy in his shorts. Pulls them down.

DENISE

Makes sense. Do you know when he left?

RENNY

I've been asleep.

DENISE

No more naps for you, mister. We need more inventory.

RENNY

On it.

DENISE

Get anything done while I was gone?

RENNY

Sort of.

DENISE

Will it be ready for Omaha.

RENNY

You know, I think you've got time, if you want to go to Hy-Vee and get the garlic.

DENISE

Yeah?

RENNY

It is his last night.

DENISE

Um... yeah, you're right. And maybe I'll just swing by his route and pick him up. Do you know where he --

RENNY

He's been talking about running up and down Forest. He likes the hills.

DENISE

OK. I'll swing by Forest.

DENISE exits.

GILL enters from the bedroom. He is nude.

RENNY tosses the jeans to GILL.

GILL

That was --

DENISE reenters.

DENISE

I forgot my --

GILL

... .. Shit. ...

DENISE

Hey! I thought you were...

DENISE picks up the shirt from GILL's luggage and gives it to him.

GILL

Thanks.

DENISE

What... were you posing for... Are you doing a... What?

RENNY

Mom -

DENISE

I'm making that garlic chicken

RENNY

Mom -

DENISE

What's been going on here?

DENISE

Stay out of this. I don't care if this is the first or the tenth time. It's not happening again. Do you hear me?

GILL

We were just partying and it got a little out of hand.

DENISE

Are you getting my kid high too?

RENNY

Aw, come on...

No!

GILL

RENNY

What if he was?

DENISE

I told you to stay out of this.

GILL

Just calm down.

DENISE

Do not tell me to calm down. You come into my house and --

GILL

You invited, no -- you begged me --

DENISE

Get out.

GILL

You begged me to stay here, Denise. I was fine in my truck. Hell, I'd be in Minneapolis -

DENISE throws his phone at him.

RENNY

Mom.

DENISE

I will deal with you in a minute. First I've got to get this trash -

GILL

Who are you calling -

RENNY

Gill!

GILL

You want to talk about trash? Take a look around this pathetic little hole and then talk to me about trash. Lady, you're the walking definition of it.

DENISE

Get out!

GILL

Oh, I'm already gone.

DENISE

And yet I can still smell the Old Spice.

GILL

I need it to cover up the patchouli and tequila.

DENISE

You think you're a real man.

GILL

Oh, darlin', I know I am.

DENISE

What a man. You "accidentally" sell a fake painting. You go to a party and end up in the wrong place at the wrong time, and you have no idea how that could happen. And the minute my back is turned your zipper comes down and you go after my kid.

RENNY

That's not what happened.

DENISE

Stay out of this. You don't know who you are, Billy, so let me tell you. You're just a hollow party boy. That's who you are. Life is just a great big party to you, and everybody else has to pick up the tab.

GILL

So what? I know you've forgotten this, but that's what it means to be young.

DENISE

You're not as young as you think you are.

GILL

And he's not as young as you think he is. Keeping him a boy don't make you young Denise. And locking him away with a paint brush doesn't make you an artist.

DENISE

Why are you still here?

GILL

Don't worry your pretty little head, darlin'. I'm gone. But let me tell you this. One week with you and I get it now.

DENISE

You get what?

GILL

They don't hate democracy, Denise. They hate you. And you take every chance you get to make 'em hate you.

DENISE

Nobody hates me. I'm a cheerful delight.

GILL

They hate you because all you do is sit on your ass, drinkin' tequila and doodling your little kitchen magnets while the rest of us make the world go around –

DENISE

-- Says the man without a job --

GILL

-- And feelin' so fucking superior because nobody understands the heart-breaking wonder of Denise. You know, once upon a time a prissy little art teacher in Washington DC told you that you were something special, and ever since you've been waiting for the world to beat a path to your door and give you a gold star. Well, they're beatin' that path, darlin'. They're a-comin'.

DENISE

Let 'em.

GILL

Oh, they are. They are a-coming, but there are no more gold stars. And what you don't get is that the only thing standing between you and them is this good-time boy with the trust fund and enough connections to give you a shot at getting out of this hell hole. Austin was your best shot. And you're blowing it right now. You are fucking blowing it.

DENISE

If they're beating a path to my door, and you're what's standing between me and them, what do you think happens to you when they get here? Without Taylor Swift and Adele and Miss America swooning all over you? Without Daddy's money! Once they've beat that path to my door, where does that leave you?

GILL

At the head of the pack, darlin'. Head of the fucking pack.

GILL exits.

DENISE

So?

RENNY

If you want to call him back here and apologize...

DENISE

Why would I --

RENNY

Beg his forgiveness...

DENISE

Did he molest you?

RENNY

I don't think you can molest a thirty-two year old man, Mother.

DENISE

It's always the guys you think would never --

RENNY

-- I moved on him.

DENISE

I don't believe you.

RENNY

OK.

DENISE

What? You're gay now?

RENNY

What does that even mean?

Well, you just had sex with a man, so...

DENISE

So?

RENNY

That's usually a pretty good indicator a man is gay, Renny.

DENISE

One dick does not a gay man make, Mother.

RENNY

Why would you do this?

DENISE

Why would you?

RENNY

Oh, this is so not about me.

DENISE

It's always about you.

RENNY

You can't even begin to compare my relationship –

DENISE

Why would you bring home some random guy with me on the other side of a very, very thin door?

RENNY

He's not some random guy.

DENISE

Might as well be.

RENNY

If you had your own place –

DENISE

-- Not this. Again? Really?

RENNY

-- Listen, mister --

DENISE

RENNY
-- Bring it!

DENISE
-- You have a roof over your head --

RENNY
-- Really? That all you got? --

DENISE
-- because I'm the one out there busting my ass -

RENNY
-- Oh, St. Denise, the holy martyr of Des Moines. You are so predictable.

DENISE
-- You've been in here, pretending to hide from the world --

RENNY
-- You wouldn't have anything to bust your ass with if I wasn't here cranking this shit out --

DENISE
-- and all the time you've been fucking around --

RENNY
-- Did you just say fuck to me?

DENISE
You said she so devastated you that --

RENNY
-- I can't believe you just said fuck to me --

DENISE
-- you couldn't trust yourself to live alone.

RENNY
-- She didn't devastate me..

DENISE
-- You said you were afraid of what you might do.

RENNY
-- You did. You devastated me!

DENISE

Renny, I know for a fact --

RENNY

-- Do you really think I'd ever bring her here after what you --

DENISE

I smell her!

RENNY goes to his room and brings out an empty perfume bottle.

RENNY

That's what you smell. And you don't have to worry, because it's all gone. All of it. There's no way in hell I'd ever bring her into this apartment.

DENISE

I don't buy it.

RENNY

I don't care.

RENNY exits to his room.

DENISE

Renny?

RENNY returns with a finished portrait. It's DENISE. Perhaps she's nude, perhaps she wears an enigmatic smile. It's very different in tone from anything we've seen of RENNY'S work. It's beautiful.

DENISE

What's that?

RENNY

Is it better than what I sent them?

DENISE

Who?

RENNY

Austin. Gill thinks I should take it with me.

DENISE

Who gives a fu—flip what Gill thinks.

I'm asking what you think.

RENNY

That depends on --

DENISE

-- Yes or no! Is it good?

RENNY

It's...

DENISE

What?

RENNY

I'm the portrait painter.

DENISE

Perfect. Just...

RENNY

RENNY makes a phone call.

You all right? ... Yeah, let me just finish up here. ... It's fine. ... I think so. ... I don't know, OK? I'll get there when I get there. Chill, all right? ... Yeah.

RENNY ends the call. RENNY exits to his room and comes back with two garbage bags.

You didn't invent portraits, you know.

DENISE

This is why --

RENNY

Whatever happened to that dandelion painting?

DENISE

I don't know what you're --

RENNY

That one... I think it's me. White fuzz floating around.

DENISE

Sounds like a sentimental greeting card.

Were we at a park?
RENNY

I don't remember.
DENISE

Yeah. We were at --
RENNY

I don't remember.
DENISE

It was a happy --
RENNY

He took it with him.
DENISE

Why would you let him take --
RENNY

DENISE
He was leaving. He was leaving and it was a happy painting, and I thought that maybe he'd look at it someday and realize everything he missed out on. I thought that maybe he'd find a woman who could make him grow up and settle down and he'd have to explain where he got that painting. And she would look at him, and whatever she had thought she'd seen in him would whither just a bit. In my fantasy, she'd fall in love with the painting and hang it in a family room and it would hang there for the rest of his goddamned life as a reminder of what he'd done to...

RENNY
Anyway. That's what art... That's my gold standard.

DENISE
You should aim higher.

RENNY
I really wish I could. He's waiting.

DENISE
Who?

Now you're running away with --

RENNY
I'm not --

Is this love?
DENISE

Get a grip.
RENNY

Jesus.
DENISE

RENNY
He says he can get me a job as an illustrator at a firm where -

DENISE
-- You blew him for a job?

RENNY
First you say fuck to me, and now you're asking me if I blew --

DENISE
Did you?

RENNY
Savor the image, Mother!

DENISE
-- Oh my god! Not even a job! Just the possibility of a job. He 'says' he can get you a job?

RENNY
He'll get me a -

DENISE
-- Gill says a lot of things.

RENNY is searching through cabinets. Searching through closets, etc.

DENISE
This is so typical. This is why we agreed not to discuss each other's work.

RENNY
What work?

DENISE
Your --

RENNY

You have nothing to discuss. I can't remember the last --

DENISE

I can't say anything about your work because all you do is pout --

RENNY

-- Oh, OK. I'm the pouter.

DENISE

-- What do you call this?

RENNY

Yeah. It's all me. I'm the problem. I'm always the problem. You haven't completed anything since... Why would you bring him here?!

DENISE

To see how you would handle some direct, honest criticism.

RENNY

You think a guy who changed his name to Guillermo Toussaint-Black knows anything about being honest?

DENISE

Yeah. Well. Hindsight... ... Apparently he's honest enough to get you to run away with him.

RENNY

I'm not running away with him. I'm running away from you!

DENISE

Renny, sit down. Let me talk to you. Baby -

RENNY

I am not a baby!!!

DENISE

You shouldn't take this painting to Austin because people will tell you all the things you want to hear, but there will also be people who will tear you apart. They'll be cruel. You don't know. You just... OK. The painting is good.

RENNY

You know it's not.

DENISE

Baby... . . . That whole dusty-boot, good-ole boy act? You know it's fake, don't you? He grew up in Cambridge. His family winters in Boca. Did he tell you that? All we – you and me – all we are to people like that is just a little splash of color. They're beige and gray people. So they collect people like us. And just like a guest bedroom, they repaint whenever they get tired of the color. Ten years from now, you'll just be story he tells over steaks and single malt to make himself sound interesting.

RENNY

What if he's just a story I tell while knocking back a few brews with my own homies?

DENISE

Have you ever had any homies?

RENNY

Gill will get me some.

DENISE

There are a million things about him you don't know.

RENNY

I know he's an addict, and flattery is his drug of choice. I know he's desperate to be told he's a good boy. I know he'll do anything to hear that. Even let me blow him. I know that if he thinks someone is dependent upon him, he thinks he has control over them. I know he'll do anything to keep that feeling of control. So, yeah. You're little boy blew him. Ah. Here it is.

RENNY has found a hidden bottle of tequila.

DENISE

What are you doing? Hey!

RENNY is standing over the sink, opening the bottle.

RENNY

Here's a question. Give me an answer I can believe and maybe you'll save your tequila. Why would you name a baby Renault? Why not just Bob?

DENISE

Give me --

RENNY

-- It was his name. Right? Bob? He was one of those beige and gray people.

DENISE

None of that --

RENNY

His name was Bob. You're Denise. Where do the two of you come up with a pretentious name like Renault?

DENISE

It would have never worked out between you and Debbi-Taylor. She's beige and gray. You're Renault. Baby, that's good booze, don't --

RENNY

-- I am not just a color.

DENISE

Baby, please... She was just trying to get money out of us.

RENNY

There was no money! She knew that. And there was no us. There was Debbi-Taylor and me over here, and there was you. Way over there. And that was your problem. You were way over there.

DENISE

The problem is I would have been the free babysitter. I'd have been the ATM. I'd have been --

RENNY

Well, you don't have to worry about that now, do you? Now, she's Debbi-Taylor Chen.

DENISE

Brian Chen? That kid from --

RENNY

Can you believe it?

DENISE

If you had to blow someone, why couldn't it have been Brian Chen?

RENNY

No matter how hard you try to change it, I'm not a color. I'm just a Bob.

RENNY gives DENISE the tequila.

DENISE

Bob's father bought him kits to build old-timey-looking cars. Kits he never finished. That's where the name comes from. I wanted to call you Olivier. We had a big fight about it, so I compromised. I thought it would make him happy. I admit. I should have known better. His dad always had to hire someone to come and finish those kits. He never finished one of them.

DENISE
cont'd

But his dad would always buy him another one. Baby, Bobs get girls pregnant in high-school. Bobs have their entire lives handed to them and they're not even grateful. I took her to that clinic because you are not a Bob.

RENNY

I wish I could build cars.

DENISE

Giving up on your talent would be such a waste.

RENNY receives a text.

RENNY

Mom, I'm going to blink and I'll be forty-five, living in this apartment and getting excited because one of these paintings, some fifteen-year-old piece of crap I just cranked out that you couldn't sell at a street fair in Dubuque, manages to get into a competition in, I don't know, Miami. And I'll be praying I can just place in the top three. And even though it doesn't win, that moment - just that hope - will be the high point of my forties. And that's if I'm lucky.

DENISE

You've gotta have faith, baby.

RENNY

What's the difference between faith and delusion? I know he's a shit talker. I know that. It doesn't matter. He'll help me learn to be a Bob.

DENISE

It's a sin to turn your back on a talent like yours.

RENNY

People sin all the time.

DENISE

This one isn't forgivable.

RENNY

Because of course it is.

DENISE

Baby, Austin's going to change everything.

RENNY

Twenty years ago you told me, "Des Moines is going to change everything."

DENISE

At least stay long enough to – Tell him to come back and I'll make the garlic –

RENNY hugs DENISE. RENNY'S phone rings all through the hug. It's a very long hug.

DENISE

See you in Austin.

RENNY exits.

DENISE

Wait! Do you need any money?

DENISE searches for her purse, and then when she's found it, through the purse for some cash. She has only a few bills. She races to the door and out into the hall.

Renny, come back. I've got some money for you. Please, just --

DENISE comes back into the apartment.

I have some more money. I hid it. It's somewhere in – Renny! I have some cash! Where... Here!

DENISE has found a small amount of cash and waits for RENNY to come back.

She waits.

She closes the door to the apartment. She uses one of the cut-glass tumblers and pours herself a drink.

She examines RENNY's painting.

She takes the painting off the easel and faces it toward the wall.

She pours the drink down the drain.

She finds a blank canvas and sets up the easel.

She goes to her purse and finds a compact.

She applies some lipstick.

She tries to begin a sketch on the canvas. Nothing comes.

She retrieves her compact and stares at her face.

Compact in hand, she fails at another attempt at the easel.

She returns to RENNY'S painting and turns it, on the floor, towards her.

She sits on the floor, examining the painting.

Emotion.

Lights fade.

END OF PLAY