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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.

GILL
He lives here?

DENISE
Remember? I couldn't finish the seminar?

GILL
None of us did, but --

DENISE
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.

GILL
Right.

DENISE
Well... That's my kid.

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

DENISE
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?

GILL
Pretty weird.

DENISE
Remember Annapolis?

GILL
'Course.

DENISE
That was a wild --

GILL
Yeah.

DENISE
Is that why --

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.