

06/07/20

## Playing on Cannons

Liv Fassanella

© Liv Fassanella

Liv Fassanella  
71 Hillside Avenue  
Winsted, CT, 06098  
860-485-4218

06/07/20

## CHARACTERS

MALLORY- 17.

DYLAN- 17.

DR. OAKS- 50s.

## SETTING:

A civil war monument, mostly at night. Two replica cannons on either side of the stone obelisk. The monument should have hidden foot holes and handles so the actors can play on it, like children would. A square of gravel surrounding the monument. The rest is grass. Dr. Oaks's office is seen through the window in the monument.

## NOTE ON CASTING:

Please give all actors equal consideration. This includes actors of color, actors of all gender identities and actors of all mental and physical abilities.

06/07/20

### SCENE 1

*(The monument. Nighttime. MALLORY jogs onstage, heading toward one of the cannons. She takes a moment. She kneels next to the cannon and touches it three times, mouthing the numbers. Waits three seconds. Touches it three more times. She gets up. She runs offstage. Blackout.)*

### SCENE 2

*(Through the window of the monument, we see MALLORY and DR. OAKS sitting across from each other in chairs.)*

DR. OAKS

I want you to close your eyes, take some deep breaths. Feel your feet on the ground. Take a few moments.

*(Silence.)*

When you're ready, open your eyes and come back to the moment.

*(A bit more silence.)*

Are you ready to begin our session?

MALLORY

Yup. Go for it.

DR. OAKS

Okay, I'll "go for it."

*(She laughs. MALLORY doesn't.)*

So, how are you feeling today? Got any plans?

MALLORY

I'm alright. Neutral. I'm just gonna do homework for the rest of the day.

DR. OAKS

Do you have a lot to do?

MALLORY

Not too bad. Have to read *Catch-22* but that's pretty much it.

DR. OAKS

Wow, uh, light load.

06/07/20

MALLORY

I read fast, it's fine.

DR. OAKS

Do you like to read?

MALLORY

*(Slightly irritated.)*

Yeah, I work in a library so, ya know, kinda hard not to like reading,

DR. OAKS

That's so lovely. I'm glad you love it there.

MALLORY

I mean love is a strong word but it's better than most jobs.

DR. OAKS

Are you getting ready for the SATs?

MALLORY

Oh, no, I'm not taking them.

DR. OAKS

No? Aren't you looking at colleges?

MALLORY

Uh. no. I'm not.

DR. OAKS

Why is that?

MALLORY

Well, it's a lot of things. Money, mostly.

DR. OAKS

You know, financial aid programs are just getting better. I wouldn't let money hold you back from looking.

MALLORY

06/07/20

I know. I mean, we could probably afford a state school if my mom got a second job and I got a work study, but I don't think I want to go.

DR. OAKS

Why not? I remember a few weeks ago you told me you were in all honors courses.

MALLORY

I am.

DR. OAKS

So I'm sure lot's of schools would love to have you. You could even go to art school, You're a piano player, right?

MALLORY

Trust me, Dr Oaks, my school advisor has hammered all these things into my head a hundred times. I've thought about it a lot and I just don't think college is for me.

DR. OAKS

Are you afraid?

MALLORY

I mean I'm sure I'd be terrified to go, but that's not what's holding me back.

DR. OAKS

Is it because of your...uh, ritual?

MALLORY

No. no.

DR. OAKS

Are you sure? You can tell me.

MALLORY

Yes. Positive. I just don't want to go to college.

DR. OAKS

Okay then. So if you aren't going to college, what are your post grad plans? If you have any.

MALLORY

06/07/20

Well, I'll probably just keep working at the library for a few years, it's not bad money.

DR. OAKS

You don't want to see the world? Get out of your moms supervision for a little while?

MALLORY

Can we talk about something else?

*(We hear the loud sound of a car backfiring. MALLORY freezes. She starts to have a panic attack. DR. OAKS goes to her and puts her hands on her shoulders.)*

DR. OAKS

Mallory! Okay, breath. It was just a car, okay? Breath.

*(Blackout on window.)*

### SCENE 3

*(Light's up on the monument. Nighttime. MALLORY enters, headphones in her ears, carrying a backpack. She drops the backpack by the stone steps center stage. She kneels by the cannon, performs her tapping ritual, and returns to her backpack. She sits down and spreads out her homework, she's done this thousands of times. She opens her copy Catch-22 and takes notes as she reads. As all of this is happening, DYLAN enters without MALLORY noticing. He leans against the monument and smokes a joint, clearly trying to be discreet. After a few moments, MALLORY smells the smoke and turns around.)*

MALLORY

Hi.

DYLAN

*(Startled.)*

Sorry! Sorry! I didn't mean to scare you. You had headphones in and I didn't want to bug you, but I also didn't want to hide in the shadows like a creep so I just kinda ended up here.

MALLORY

You didn't scare me, It's cool, carry on lurking.

*(MALLORY continues to do homework. DYLAN continues smoking. MALLORY turns around again.)*

You look familiar.

06/07/20

DYLAN

I do?

MALLORY

Yeah. Huh.

DYLAN

You don't look the slightest bit familiar.

MALLORY

Weird. Sorry to interrupt.

DYLAN

No no, you're fine.

*(more silence.)*

I'm not getting you second hand high, am I? I can move.

MALLORY

A little bit. I wouldn't mind if you got me all the way high to be honest.

*(DYLAN shrugs and sits down next to MALLORY. He passes her the joint.)*

DYLAN

I'm Dylan, by the way.

MALLORY

Mallory. Nice to meet you.

DYLAN

Do you bring your homework up here a lot?

MALLORY

Everyday. I can't do it at home. As soon as my mom gets home from work she and my sister start screaming at each other

DYLAN

Shit, that sucks. Where's home?

*(MALLORY points downstage.)*

06/07/20

MALLORY

Right there, white house at the bottom of the hill.

DYLAN

Close.

MALLORY

Yeah, pretty convenient. I love it up here.

DYLAN

Same, I come up here a lot too, usually later in the night though.

MALLORY

To do this?

*(Passes the joint back to him.)*

DYLAN

Yeah, my parents would kill me if they found out. They think I study at the library every night.

MALLORY

Ha, nice. I work at the library, I've never seen you.

DYLAN

That's because I don't go.

MALLORY

You should, it's pretty nice. We have free coffee on Saturdays.

DYLAN

Library's freak me out. Too many old people.

MALLORY

That's fair. I swear I can smell them decomposing sometimes,

*(DYLAN laughs.)*

Where do you live?

DYLAN



06/07/20

Down on rock street. About a ten minute walk to get up here. Doesn't bother me now but as a kid it killed me. My parents would drag me up here every weekend to play with the Sunday school kids after church.

MALLORY

Faith bible church?

DYLAN

Yeah!

MALLORY

That's why I know you! I was in that sunday school group! You always wore red overalls and you would bring the dinosaurs!

DYLAN

Yup, that's me. I like to think my fashion choices have improved since then but I can't confirm.

MALLORY

Eh, I liked the overalls. I always wanted to stay longer and play dinosaurs but we always had to leave early to help clean up the church after mass. My dad was the pastor.

DYLAN

Wait, Mallory Morgan?

MALLORY

Yup, that's me.

DYLAN

Yeah I remember you now! Life is fuckin weird.

MALLORY

Same place, ten years later, breaking the law. Crazy.

DYLAN

I mean, technically. This is my mom's medical shit that I stole so, it's kinda legal?

MALLORY

Good enough for me.

06/07/20

*(Silence. They smoke.)*

DYLAN

I know it was a long time ago but sorry about your dad.

MALLORY

Oh, yeah. Long time ago.

DYLAN

That's the whole reason we stopped going to that church. It wasn't the same without him.

MALLORY

Yeah, same here.

*(MALLORY laughs, DYLAN takes a moment before he laughs with her.)*

I don't believe in god anymore so I didn't bother finding another church. Do you still go?

DYLAN

My parents go, I get too bored.

MALLORY

Do you believe?

DYLAN

I don't think so. I think I believe in some kind of afterlife.

MALLORY

What do you think happens?

DYLAN

Don't know. But probably something.

MALLORY

It's a comforting thought, but I just can't buy it.

DYLAN

Guess we'll see. What are you reading?

MALLORY

06/07/20

*Catch-22*. School. Gross.

DYLAN

That is gross.

MALLORY

I hate war stories.

DYLAN

Appropriate to read about war at a war monument though.

MALLORY

I always forget this is a war monument. I always thought it was a castle.

DYLAN

That's much more fun.

MALLORY

More fun, less sad.

DYLAN

Yeah. It's kinda weird when you think about it.

MALLORY

What do you mean?

DYLAN

That so many people come up here to play or smoke or whatever, and it's a place to remember people who died like a couple centuries ago. Just weird.

MALLORY

Yeah. It is weird. I guess. Or you're just high.

DYLAN

That is true. I am very high.

MALLORY

So, catch me up on the last ten years, what have you been up to?

06/07/20

DYLAN

Honestly, not much. I go to school, I come home. I avoid my parents.

MALLORY

What's wrong with them?

DYLAN

They're just really fuckin boring. My mom sells doilies online and my dad's a carpenter. When we sit down for dinner it's pure crickets.

MALLORY

I don't know dude, I think there's some fascinating conversation to be had around doilies and plywood.

DYLAN

It only gets interesting when my mom comes down for dinner and she's straight zooted and my dad get's real fuckin annoyed.

MALLORY

What does she take it for? I don't mean to pry-

DYLAN

Oh it's chill. She's going through chemo. Breast cancer. Remission though.

MALLORY

So....she has cancer and you take her-

DYLAN

Yeah I know it's bad. But she doesn't use all of it. And she has a shit ton of other meds, most of the time she's so zooted out of her mind that she forgets where she hid it.

MALLORY

She's in remission though?

DYLAN

Yeah. The worst is over. Her hair is even starting to grow back. She's like a hedgehog.

MALLORY

Must be a relief.

06/07/20

DYLAN

It was. She really had us worried for a minute. Now our house is mostly boring again.

MALLORY

Honestly, I'd give anything for a boring family. My mom works all day and my sister is definitely gonna end up in prison one day.

DYLAN

Klepto? Nympho, what?

MALLORY

She stole a teachers car last semester. She's on house arrest until fall.

DYLAN

That's pretty hardcore.

MALLORY

Yup. Trauma made her a car thief and it made me a PTSD ridden honors student.

DYLAN

How long has it been? Ten years right?

MALLORY

Yup. Ten years this summer.

DYLAN

I remember his funeral. That was the most people seven year old me ever saw. He was a good guy.

MALLORY

He really was.

*(Dylan's phone buzzes.)*

DYLAN

Crap, Mom wants me to come home. She listens to the police scanner, apparently they're looking for some guy in town who exposed himself to a group of people outside the bar.

MALLORY

06/07/20

Does she think he's gonna come into the library, find you in the teen room and expose himself to you?

DYLAN

That sounds like her mindset. I'll see you around, okay?

MALLORY

Yeah, sure. Wait a second.

*(She writes on a scrap of paper and hands it to DYLAN.)*

Text me. Remember, Saturdays, free coffee, creepy old dudes, fun times.

DYLAN

Sure, maybe I'll check it out.

*(DYLAN exits. MALLORY looks at her pile of work, gives up and puts it away. Before leaving, she taps the cannon.)*

#### SCENE 4

*(DR. OAKS office.)*

DR. OAKS

So, Mallory, how are things?

MALLORY

Honestly, not great. My anxiety is flaring up and my intrusive thoughts are out of control.

DR. OAKS

Do you want to talk through the intrusive thoughts?

MALLORY

I'll try.....anything I tell you is confidential, right? You won't tell my mom?

DR. OAKS

Yes, completely confidential. Everything stays in this room.

MALLORY

Okay. Well, I'll start with the fact that I smoked weed a few nights ago and I feel really guilty about it. Don't really know why, it's not horrible for you, and I don't do it often, it's not like a habit or anything, but for some reason I feel awful about it.. I haven't practiced religion in eleven years but I have an urge to go to confession for it. I guess this can be my confession?

06/07/20

DR. OAKS

If that soothes your anxiety, then of course. And you're right, as long as marijuana use isn't affecting you negatively then you shouldn't worry about it.

MALLORY

Okay, that's thing one. Thing two is...it's a ... getting close to my fathers birthday.

DR. OAKS

That makes sense Mallory. Important dates associated with your loved ones can wreak havoc on grief. It's no wonder you're feeling especially anxious.

MALLORY

Every year it's a bad day. I usually have to take the day from school because I have too many panic attacks. Then I feel guilty along with just generally feeling terrible.

DR. OAKS

This is all completely normal. I can give you some coping strategies to maybe make it better.

MALLORY

I'll try anything.

DR. OAKS

First thing, I'm writing you a doctor's note for school. Don't think of it as you're skipping school, think of it as you're observing a holiday.

MALLORY

Okay..... I

DR. OAKS

Second thing. If you feel comfortable, I want you to think of a positive memory from your father's birthday. A year where you took him somewhere fun, or gave him a gift he loved, or made him an amazing cake. Take those memories and throw him a party.

MALLORY

I don't think I feel comfortable with that.

DR. OAKS

06/07/20

It doesn't have to be a literal party, you don't have to invite anyone or buy anything. Do something fun with yourself. Go to a place he loved, or a place you used to go together. Can you think of a place?

MALLORY

Well... Uh, he used to take me to six flags a lot, but I can't go there anymore. Too many loud noises. The obvious place would be the monument. But that's not exactly...happy.

DR. OAKS

Maybe you could try to make it happy. Go up there with your family or some friends, bring a picnic, play some games, think of him and how much fun you two used to have at the monument. Don't think of it as a sad place. This also might help you start to let go of the ritual.

MALLORY

That's not an easy ask.

DR. OAKS

Would you be willing to try?

MALLORY

Maybe. Maybe having something planned to look forward to will make me less anxious about it.

DR. OAKS

It certainly could. And, when there is doubt, call me. If you try those things and nothing's working, give me a call. I don't care when.

MALLORY

Thank you, Mrs. Oaks. That's really reassuring.

## SCENE 5

*(The monument. Night. MALLORY enters, carrying a plastic tray of cupcakes, clearly bought at the grocery store. She puts them down and kneels by the cannon to do her ritual. While she is doing this DYLAN enters. MALLORY hears him and does the ritual quicker. She turns to face him)*

DYLAN

Hey!

MALLORY



06/07/20

Hi!

DYLAN

Uh, what are you doing to the cannon?

MALLORY

Nothing, I just, uh, wanted to touch it.

DYLAN

Uh, ...cool! I tried to bring some weed, but I think my mom caught on to me and she changed her hiding spot. Sorry.

MALLORY

No, don't worry about it!

*(Gesturing to cupcakes.)*

I actually brought the kryptonite this time.

DYLAN

Yo! Nice!

MALLORY

Yeah, my mom brought them home from some work thing, she didn't want them so I swiped them.

*(They sit.)*

DYLAN

I always thought grocery store cupcakes were better than the fancy ones.

MALLORY

Same, they're just a vehicle for frosting anyway, why complicate it?

DYLAN

One time I ate a whole can of chocolate frosting when my parents weren't home. It came back up looking exactly like it did going in.

*(They laugh. They eat cupcakes. Some silence.)*

Are you okay? You look kinda sick.

MALLORY

06/07/20

Yeah? What makes you say that?

DYLAN

No, don't take it personally, I was just making sure. You just look pale, that's all. But, like, I've only seen you twice so I don't know if that's what you look like most of the time, or if it's just the light or....I'll just shut up.

MALLORY

It's okay. I'm actually a vampire, so.

DYLAN

Oh, gotcha. Say no more.

MALLORY

The last time I saw you I had just eaten so I had more color.

DYLAN

Makes sense. Oh, I forgot.

*(He pulls two plastic dinosaurs out of his pocket. He hands one to Mallory)*

You reminded me of my dinos, so I tore my closet apart to see if I still had them. These are the survivors of my mom's Marie Kondo phase.

MALLORY

Oh my god! They're so much smaller than I remember.

DYLAN

I know, right? We got bigger..

MALLORY

I know. It's so crazy to think that we're in totally new bodies since last time we played with these. Like, none of our cells are the same cells. I think anyway.

DYLAN

You're right. It takes seven years for a body to completely regenerate.

*(MALLORY is silent. She stares at the dinosaur in her hand.)*

MALLORY

That's kinda sad..

06/07/20

DYLAN

What do you mean?

MALLORY

Just like, the person we used to be, is like, kinda gone? Like the things we touched in the past, we didn't touch them. Our old body touched them. This is my first time touching this dinosaur. The old me touched them, but I haven't.

DYLAN

Huh. That is kinda sad, I guess. But also cool, right? Cause we get to touch things for the first time all over again. Like the dinosaur.

MALLORY

Yeah. Like the dinosaur.

*(Silence. MALLORY looks at the dinosaur. She looks at her hands.)*

Remember we used to send them down the stair railings like they were going down a slide?

DYLAN

Yeah, and then we would try to slide down the railings and the adults would yell at us.

MALLORY

He would never admit this, but when my dad would take me up here alone he would always let me do it. He would stand at the bottom and catch me.

DYLAN

Nice.

MALLORY

Yeah, he never let us do it on sundays though, just so the other kids wouldn't catch on and hurt themselves. He used to take me up here every day, without fail.

DYLAN

Really?

MALLORY

Yup. Every day. It didn't matter if he had to work, or if it was busy at home, if he had things to do with the church. He would always make sure we came up here for at least a half hour. Any time of day. To play. To talk. Anything.

06/07/20

DYLAN

That's pretty impressive.

MALLORY

I didn't think it was that big of a deal back then, it was just part of my routine. But I really appreciate it now.

DYLAN

Is...is that why you come up here every day? If you don't mind my asking.

MALLORY

Well, kind of. Not really. Sort of. I don't really know.

DYLAN

Sorry.

MALLORY

Can you stop apologizing? You're fine.

DYLAN

Okay. Sorry.

MALLORY

Dude!

DYLAN

Oops.

*(Beat.)*

Isn't today his birthday? Your dad? I saw something about it on the town Facebook page.

MALLORY

You're on the Winsted facebook page? What are you, forty?

DYLAN

I'm only on it to watch people argue about which gas station has the best prices.

MALLORY

Well yes. Today is his birthday. He would have been fifty.

06/07/20

DYLAN

Must be hard for you.

MALLORY

It's not great. But cupcakes and dinosaurs help.

DYLAN

I remember he told me once that, no matter what creationists say, dinosaurs weren't on the ark. I didn't understand at the time. But then I saw some youtube videos of that ark encounter place in Kentucky, they like recreated the whole fuckin ark and shit, and there are dinosaurs in it! They actually thought that Noah brought dinosaurs on the ark and that they just didn't breed and that's why they're extinct. What the fuck, right?

MALLORY

Oh God, dad HATED the creationists.

DYLAN

Can you imagine? "Okay dinos, up you go, stand next to the unicorns."

*(DYLAN mimes walking onto the ark with his dinosaur. MALLORY joins.)*

MALLORY

"Don't eat the fairies! Oh shit, too late."

*(The dinosaurs growl, they attack each other. They eat rocks. Eventually MALLORY gets up and runs with her dinosaur, DYLAN chases her. They run laps around the monument. Their age falls away and they are children again. They collapse on the grass, out of breath and laughing.)*

DYLAN

I forgot how much fun we used to have.

MALLORY

me too.

DYLAN

Fuck, we're almost adults. Like we're gonna have to go to college or move out or get jobs.

06/07/20

MALLORY

Gross. Do you know what you want to do?

DYLAN

I'd like to go to college. But I don't know what I want to do.

MALLORY

You could be a paleontologist.

DYLAN

Ha, maybe. Right now I'm really into history. I don't know how that translates to a career though. And the last thing I want to do is teach highschool or something.

MALLORY

There's a lot you can do with a history degree. You can work in town and do research on this monument even! You'll figure it out.

DYLAN

How about you? What are your plans?

MALLORY

I kinda don't have any. I don't want to go to college and everytime I say that to an adult I can see the light draining from their eyes. Makes me feel like garbage.

DYLAN

That's fucked. You don't need to go to college to be successful.

MALLORY

I know right! It's just expensive and boring and you have to uproot your life. I don't want to leave my mom and sister, we need money and I just feel like I'm meant to be here, ya know?

DYLAN

Are you happy here?

MALLORY

No. I also don't feel like I was meant to be happy.

DYLAN

That's pretty emo.

06/07/20

MALLORY

I know. But the universe has dealt me such a shit hand and I'm only in the first quarter of life, and I can't see it getting any better. So I'm just gonna stay.

DYLAN

I'm too tired to argue with you about that so I'll let it go for now. But we are not done with this conversation.

MALLORY

Okay mom.

DYLAN

I'm gonna go home before I fall asleep. I'll see you soon?

MALLORY

Yes. Can't wait to get lectured.

*(DYLAN exits. After her leaves MALLORY does the cannon ritual.)*

*(Blackout.)*

## SCENE 6

*(DR. OAKS's office.)*

DR. OAKS

So, your father's birthday has come and gone. How did it go?

MALLORY

Better than I expected.

DR. OAKS

Wonderful! Did you use the techniques I told you about?

MALLORY

Kind of. I started out the day pretty bad, had a few panic attacks, barfed. Not fun. But then I tried to make myself busy. Went for a walk. Did my library shift. Felt okay. Thought about him. Remembered how much he hated creationists.

06/07/20

DR. OAKS

I'm glad. Did you visit the monument? Have friends come?

MALLORY

I went up there. It didn't feel as bad.

DR. OAKS

Did you still feel the need to carry out your ritual?

MALLORY

Of course I did, I don't see that changing.

DR. OAKS

You always avoid this question, but I think it will be productive for us to talk about. What do you think will happen if you don't do the ritual?

MALLORY

It's really embarrassing and really personal and I know it's okay to talk about things like this in therapy but I've never told anyone, I haven't even spoken it out loud to myself. And I just don't know how.

DR. OAKS

Well let's start slow. What was your relationship to the cannons before?

MALLORY

.....they were fun but also a little scary. I was afraid that they were real and that they would go off if you touched them the wrong way. My dad explained to me over and over again that they were replicas, that they were never used in battle. They weren't loaded. And I believed him, but there was always something in the back of my head that told me to be careful around them.

When I was at the monument with other kids they would climb on the cannons and pretend to shoot each other with them, they'd drop dead and roll down the hill. I would play on them as well, but it felt weird, like I was playing with a weapon, which I kinda was I guess. Oh god,

*(MALLORY starts to cry. DR. OAKS hands her a tissue box.)*

Okay. There was a period of time when he stopped taking me to the monument everyday. He told me he just had too much work to do. It started with skipping a day, then skipping a couple days. Then we eventually stopped going all together. He wouldn't even bring me to play with the sunday school kids. Whenever I asked, he said no. So I stopped asking. I hadn't been to the monument in six months by the time he, ya know.



06/07/20

DR. OAKS

You're doing great, Mallory. Keep going if you feel comfortable.

MALLORY

I'm crying anyway, so fuck it. The night it happened. I heard it. The loud bang. It was so close. The house shook. So loud. So awful. I knew it was one of the cannons. I started screaming and crying and I hid under my bed and I screamed for him. I needed him to protect me from the cannon ball I knew was heading for our house. And he never came. Then I heard my mother scream. And she came upstairs and grabbed my sister and I and took us outside. I kept asking for dad, I didn't know where he was. Soon the police were there, and they went into our garage. Mom wouldn't let me look. That's when they told us he was gone. They took him away and put the gun in a plastic bag. They wouldn't let us see him.

DR. OAKS

So you knew that the cannons didn't kill your father.

MALLORY

Logically. But I was so sure. I felt it in my bones. I knew they weren't to be trusted. I was little, you internalize things so quickly when you're little. I just couldn't accept that he used something to take his own life. I knew he couldn't have. He loved us too much. Some outside force must have done it. And it was my fault.

DR. OAKS

Your fault?

MALLORY

I stopped going to the monument and playing on the cannons. I figured it must have been something about if they lay dormant for too long, they go off. I stopped playing on them, so they took my father. That was the only way I could understand it. It's so fucking stupid, I know. And you'd think that ten years later I'd know better.

DR. OAKS

Nothing you're doing is stupid. You have PTSD, Mallory, the brain copes in mysterious ways and I completely understand your logic. We can work towards reframing your mindset to help you move on from the cannons. You did an amazing job opening up today, I know how hard it must be for you to relive that.

*(MALLORY cries. Blackout.)*

06/07/20

**SCENE 7**

*(The monument. Night. MALLORY and DYLAN sit on the cannons, throwing a ball back and forth to each other as they talk.)*

Favorite food?  
DYLAN

Mozzarella sticks. Favorite movie?  
MALLORY

Kill Bill part one.  
DYLAN

Good. Part two blows.  
MALLORY

Except the part with Elle Driver and the snake. The rest is trash.  
DYLAN

Correct. Okay.  
MALLORY

*(She thinks and throws the ball back to him.)*  
When was the last time you pooped your pants?

DYLAN  
If I'm being honest, it was about a year ago. I got that bug that was going around and I had to leave school early.

*(He holds it for a minute while he thinks of a question.)*

MALLORY  
Come on, rapid fire, gotta keep it going.

DYLAN  
Do you like me?

MALLORY  
Of course I like you, stupid.

06/07/20

DYLAN

No, I mean....

MALLORY

Oh.

DYLAN

Sorry oh my god I made it weird.

MALLORY

No, no. Don't worry about it. Come here.

*(She gestures for a hug. He goes to her.)*

I do like you. But....

DYLAN

But?

MALLORY

I don't know.

DYLAN

You don't know.

MALLORY

You're great. You're kind, funny, you don't treat me like the sad sack I am, you live in Winsted and don't walk around in pajama pants in a wife beater. I forget about the war in my mind when I'm with you. But....I just...I can't let myself love anyone. I can't.

DYLAN

Kind of a crap way to live, isn't it?

MALLORY

Yes. It is crap. It's SUCH crap. But it's like there's a security guard in my head that keeps out anything new and anything good. I let myself stay exactly where I am. Here. At this goddamn monument with these goddamn cannons that I just can't let go off.

DYLAN

What are you talking about? What about the cannons?

06/07/20

MALLORY

I'm a fucking slave to them. That's the real reason why I'm here everyday. If I don't come here and do my stupid little dance with them something terrible will happen, I know it.

DYLAN

Um.....I'm confused.

MALLORY

So am I. I've been confused for ten years and I don't know when I'll stop being confused.

DYLAN

Are you talking about that tapping thing you do to the cannons? Is that some kind of prayer?

MALLORY

Yes. If I don't do that every day the cannons will fire and my family will die or I will die or the town will get blown up or, I don't know, something else awful will happen.

DYLAN

Mallory....

MALLORY

I know! I know it's dumb but I am so deeply ill that I cannot be convinced that I'm wrong.

DYLAN

You're not dumb.

MALLORY

I'm not dumb. But my PTSD diagnosis sure is. It makes me feel...so fucking dumb. It controls everything. I'll be visiting these cannons until the day I die and there's nothing I can do about it.

*(beat.)*

DYLAN

I understand. But....you don't think you'll die soon.....do you?

MALLORY

.....I don't know. I'm not ruling it out.

DYLAN

06/07/20

Is that why you don't want to go to college? Why don't you want to think about the future?

MALLORY

I think so.

DYLAN

Well that's fucked up Mallory. I know that's harsh and I'm sorry but that's so fucked up. What, do you idolize your dad so much that you need to follow in every one of his footsteps? What he did was terrible. It was the ultimate betrayal to you and your family. You want to do that?

MALLORY

Dylan...

DYLAN

As if your family hasn't been through enough, you want to put them through that shit again? Then your sister will get ideas? God you're acting like that fucking book where those sisters plan like a fucking suicide performance and they-

MALLORY

Dylan stop.

DYLAN

Why? Why should I?

MALLORY

I..I don't know what to say.

DYLAN

I fucking love you dude! Do you know when I last had a friend like you? Never. You were the only one who didn't think my dinosaurs were weird, you didn't pull on my overalls. You accepted me. The last ten years I've been too fucking shy to make friends and had no one except my fucking Martha Stewart mother and dumbass dad and then by some fucking miracle I meet you again and I haven't felt this much like myself since the last time we met. Romantic or not, I can't lose you. Especially in a dumb way like that.

MALLORY

I'm in therapy.

DYLAN

06/07/20

Good.

*(Beat. DYLAN sits on the steps. Frustrated.)*

For some reason I'm mad at you but I feel like that shouldn't be my reaction.

MALLORY

No, you're valid. I'm mad at myself too.

*(She sits beside him.)*

I haven't had any real friends either. The whole guard thing. But you slipped past security somehow.

DYLAN

*(Pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of his pocket.)*

I wasn't gonna give you this, but you pissed me off so now you're gonna look at it.

MALLORY

Northwestern? I don't need a pamphlet for a community college I live five minutes away from.

DYLAN

Don't deflect. Look at it. It's close, it's cheap. You can still work at the library and get your gen ed over with and have a year or two to decide if you want to go somewhere else or not. It's what I'm gonna do.

MALLORY

Have you applied?

DYLAN

Yeah. Waiting to hear. But almost nobody gets rejected. So I'm not worried.

MALLORY

Proud of you.

DYLAN

Thanks.

MALLORY

I'll think about it.

DYLAN

Good.

06/07/20

*(Beat.)*

I'm not a therapist, or even a smart person really, but I can help you fight the war. If you need it.

MALLORY

....Thanks. It really has to end.

DYLAN

They all end eventually. If they never end, monuments can never be made in their honor.

### SCENE 8

*(DR. OAKS's office.)*

DR. OAKS

I think community college is a fantastic idea Mallory. I'm proud of you for taking action like this.

MALLORY

I'm not committing to it but I'm open to it.

DR. OAKS

And that alone is a huge step. I think your father would be very proud of you.

MALLORY

I'm also considering....not going to the monument today.

DR. OAKS

Really?

MALLORY

Well, I've been opening up to people in my life more and I feel like I have support. It's not gonna be easy but, ya know, one day at a time or whatever.

DR. OAKS

Exactly. One day at a time.

MALLORY

I actually have a question, kind of a departure from our usual.

DR. OAKS

06/07/20

Of course, anything.

MALLORY

How do I let myself get attached to people again? I'm just tired of...being so distant.

DR. OAKS

That's a tough one. Attachment comes with acceptance. You need to accept that while people will not be in your life forever, it's okay to enjoy them while they are. Grief is sadly inevitable. You can't live your life waiting to grieve.

MALLORY

I'm tired of grieving. I'm so fucking tired of it.

DR. OAKS

It's been a long time. You deserve a break.

MALLORY

But it feels wrong. It feels like if I'm not grieving him, I'm forgetting him.

DR. OAKS

You'll never forget him. You have to trust that. He loved you so much, he wouldn't want you to spend the rest of your life pining after him.

MALLORY

You're right. I really need to try.

### SCENE 9

*(The monument. Daylight. DYLAN paces. MALLORY enters, holding flowers. She ignores the cannon and runs into DYLAN's arms.)*

DYLAN

Whoa! Hey!

MALLORY

Thank you for coming. These are for you.

*(She hands him the flowers.)*

DYLAN

What's this for? No one's ever given me flowers.



06/07/20

MALLORY

It's a thank you. It's an understatement to say that my life has been kind of a shitshow. And you make it less of a shitshow. I also have a weird request.

DYLAN

Okay?

*(MALLORY pulls firecrackers out of her pocket.)*

MALLORY

Well, I haven't done the cannon thing for a couple days..

DYLAN

Really? Oh my god that's amazing!

MALLORY

Yeah, I'm pretty proud. But It's been fucking hard. I've been a mess. And I felt like I'd burdened you enough so I didn't text you. Sorry about that, by the way. Those are also sorry flowers.

DYLAN

You're not a burden. I did miss texting you though.

MALLORY

I think I just need to...like...set the cannons off?

DYLAN

With...firecrackers...

MALLORY

Yeah, with fire crackers. Loud noises like this have been a trigger for me, and I'm trying to overcome it. Can we set them off? It's a beautiful day and I'm in a pretty good mood and I'm happy to see you again and it...it feels like it's time?

DYLAN

This is a very interesting form of therapy. What should I do if you, uh, panic?

MALLORY

Nothing. Just be here.

06/07/20

DYLAN

Okay.

*(They kneel on the gravel and MALLORY pulls a lighter out of her pocket. SHE lights it and holds it to the firecracker. She hesitates.)*

You can do it.

*(She does. The firecrackers go off, making a very underwhelming explosion. DYLAN watches her with concern. She doesn't react. The firecrackers fizzle out.)*

You good?

MALLORY

Yeah....I'm...I'm fine!

DYLAN

You sure? Cause it's okay if you're not.

MALLORY

No, I am! Nothing happened! I set off the cannons and nothing happened!

DYLAN

Yeah! Nothing happened.

MALLORY

I'm not panicking. Oh my god, I'm not panicking. Granted this wasn't very loud but-

DYLAN

Stop, stop. Don't dismiss it! You took a really solid step in getting better.

MALLORY

I feel....really good.

DYLAN

You've been fighting this for awhile, huh?

MALLORY

So long.

*(They hug. MALLORY pulls away and gives him a quick kiss. They both look shocked.)*

DYLAN

That was...unexpected.

06/07/20

MALLORY

Was it though?

*(They sit on the grass, holding each other.)*

DYLAN

Your dad isn't buried anywhere, is he?

MALLORY

No. We couldn't afford it.

DYLAN

Maybe....this could be his grave. His memorial.

MALLORY

All this time I've seen it as the thing that killed him. But I have so many happy memories here. I need to own that.

*(DYLAN pulls a dinosaur out of his pocket.)*

DYLAN

I want you to have this.

MALLORY

But, you love your dinosaurs.

DYLAN

So do you. It's a cliché, but now we'll each have them so we'll always be connected. In a way.

*(MALLORY's dinosaur growls. They play dinosaurs. Wiped of fear.)*

END OF PLAY