

Work in Progress

by Alexander Attea

Characters:

JUDY	An illustrator. (W, early 30s)
HECTOR	The state park director. (M, 30s - 40s)
AMALIA	A state park operations employee. (W/NB, early to mid 20s)
CHARLIE	A state park employee. (W/NB, about 20)
ZACK	A state park employee. (M, mid to late 20s)
PODCAST	The voice of a podcast. (M, 30s-60s) <i>Also plays: MAN</i>

Time: The present.

Place: A secluded artist residency sponsored by a state park.

Notes on the text:

- This play must be cast with diversity. Judy, Hector, and Amalia should be played by actors of color.
- We should probably only hear the Podcast.
- There could be an act break in between scenes fourteen and fifteen.

Alexander Attea
6165 N Winthrop Ave, #202
Chicago, IL 60614
(716) 392-3418
alexander.atea@gmail.com

One

*JUDY, alone. Traveling.
She's sketching something. She usually is.
Headphones in. A podcast. One of those motivational ones. The kind that she tells her friends she listens to religiously, but in reality she falls behind on the episodes.
She's always falling behind.*

PODCAST

Your creative process is a routine. Part of your daily life. Maybe the most important part. You have to stick to it; make a habit of it. Set aside specific time every day to commit to your art. Make it your number one priority. Don't let anything else get in the way. All those other things you think are priorities – commitments, chores, errands, work – are really just excuses.

A call ringing on her phone interrupts the podcast. JUDY answers.

JUDY

Hey, Em.
No, yeah, I'm almost to the –
What's going on?
Yeah.
Yeah.
Okay. Um.
Okay, take a breath.
You need to put pressure on –
Yeah.
Okay, then get another towel.
Is Carla on the way?
The nurse. Carla. Have you called Carla?
Yeah, call Carla.
Because her white blood cell count is low and she can't –
Bleeding is bad.
She can't –yeah, bleeding could be really bad.
Yeah, well, I told you this, we went over this.
I know.
I'm sorry I can't –
I'm sorry.
Two weeks.
Yeah.
I've been doing the last eight months, you can do two weeks.
I told you this was happening, you knew I'd be –
I know.
I know you have – this is work for me too.
I mean. I can come home if anything – if anything happens.
Yeah, well, I don't know what you want me to say.
Okay.
Keep me posted.
I'll talk to you later.

*JUDY hangs up, considers throwing her phone far away from herself, decides against it.
The podcast continues.*

PODCAST

But when it comes to your art, you can put yourself first.
You have to put yourself first.

JUDY

I have to put myself first.

Transition.

Two

A small studio apartment, sparsely decorated. A window overlooking water. Some art on the walls. It all feels very new. There's a sculpture of a cliff on the counter. The door is unlocked and opened. JUDY is led in by AMALIA.

AMALIA

Alright, here we are.

JUDY

Thanks.

AMALIA

Make yourself at home. There are extra linens in the closet over there. Dishes in the cabinets. There's laundry in the bathroom. Um – grocery store is basically across the street. They bake their own pastries, the cranberry muffin is my favorite.

JUDY

I'll have to try it.

AMALIA

Have you done something like this before? A residency?

JUDY

Nope. First one.

AMALIA

Oh, cool. That's cool. You're going to love it. And – right! Last year, the artists started this tradition where they'd leave a note and a piece of art in the apartment for the next artist. Since you're the first of the season, I guess you get to kick things off! Year two – woo!

JUDY

That's fun. I'll do that.

AMALIA

Great! So I think that's just about everything. If you need anything, the park's emergency numbers are on that sheet on the counter. Or you can just stop by the visitor center.

JUDY

Got it.

AMALIA

Oh! Do you have any questions for me?

JUDY

Yeah, actually – are there activities or, like, things I should know about? Like will any of the park directors want to meet with me or anything?

AMALIA

Um – no, not that I know of. I can double check! But I think you mainly just get to use these two weeks however you want.

JUDY

Oh, okay.

AMALIA

I'll ask Hector though, and I'll let you know!

JUDY

Sure – it's really not a big deal.

AMALIA

Cool! Well, I'll let you get settled in. I'll see you around, okay?

JUDY

Yeah, thank you!

*AMALIA exits. JUDY takes a breath and looks around the space.
AMALIA suddenly pops back in.*

AMALIA

Sorry, almost forgot to give you the keys! Here they are.

AMALIA hands over the keys.

JUDY

Oh yeah, that's probably important! Hah.

AMALIA

Let's double check and make sure they're working.

JUDY

Okay.

AMALIA

Does it feel, like, cool to be here? Do you feel like an artist?

JUDY

Oh. Hah. I don't know.

JUDY goes to the door and tries the keys
They work!

AMALIA

Sorry, that's probably a stupid question.

JUDY

No, it isn't. Um – it's nice to be here. That feels good.

I don't know if I know what being an artist feels like, but if this is it, then yeah, I guess I feel like an artist.

AMALIA

That's so cool. I think I want to apply. Next year. Maybe.

JUDY

What do you do?

AMALIA

What?

JUDY

What sort of art do you do?

AMALIA

Oh, I, um, write. Poems. Mainly. And I take photos to go with the poems. Just on my phone. I'm actually hoping to save up this summer for a real camera. So – yeah.

JUDY

What do you want to do with it?

AMALIA

What do you mean?

JUDY

Your art, what do you want it to do?

AMALIA

Oh. I don't know.
Exist?

JUDY *chuckles*

Yeah. You might want to figure that out before you apply.
But it's a good thing to work toward.

AMALIA

Right.
AMALIA starts to leave.
What does your art do?

JUDY

My illustrations? Well, I don't know if I can sum it up really easily, but basically I try to recontextualize the viewer's understanding of place and history by using unconventional perspectives of familiar images, locations. It's kind of a way to make people see environments we maybe take for granted in a new and unexpected light.

AMALIA

Oh. That's cool.
Last year it was mostly just older people doing landscape paintings.

JUDY

I'll have to show you some of my work sometime.

AMALIA

Yeah, that sounds good.
I have to get back to work, though. I'll see you, Judy.

JUDY

Bye – and thank you!

AMALIA is gone.

JUDY sighs, paces around the room. Looks out the window. Picks up the sculpture of the cliff, puts it back down. She puts her headphones in. The podcast plays again.

PODCAST

There are going to be days when you don't want to. There are going to be days when all you want to do is lie in bed and forget about the world. There are going to be days where you feel like a failure. And guess what? If you give in to that feeling, if you let yourself lie in bed and do nothing, then that's what you'll be. A failure. Wasting this great opportunity of your first artist residency. Why even kid yourself?

JUDY hesitates, looks at her phone. She skips back 15 seconds.

– If you let yourself lie in bed and do nothing, if you follow that impulse, your art won't grow. If you follow the impulse to give up, opportunities will pass you by. Don't let them pass you by.

JUDY

Huh.

Transition.

Three

HECTOR, giving a speech. It's a tour.

CHARLIE is there, with ZACK.

JUDY is off to another side.

HECTOR

Alright, this is our last stop of the tour. It's one of my personal favorites. Behind me you can see this limestone outcropping. It's one of the park's most iconic formations. You may already know it –

HECTOR/ZACK

The Great Face.

ZACK to CHARLIE

I wrote this part of the tour.

CHARLIE

Really?

ZACK

Yeah. I used to give it, my first few summers.

HECTOR

Because of the Great Face, all who have spent time here have treated this as a special place. The Anishinaabe people, long before European settlement of the region, saw the face as that of Nimaamaa-aki, the "Earth Mother," and this land was seen as a land of regeneration, fertility, creativity, and healing.

ZACK to CHARLIE

Everyone say "hi, Mom."

CHARLIE

Shh, don't be disrespectful.

ZACK

Don't shush me.

HECTOR

Later, the American forces housed in the fort nearby called it the Face of God, and believed that because of it, God would support them in battle. During the War of 1812, the Americans even stationed men at the top of the cliff to act as the voice of God and intimidate the British soldiers trying to capture the fort. It is by far the most photographed location in the park, so if you haven't already, yes, please feel free to take pictures now.

ZACK to CHARLIE

I'd always say, "where else do you get to take a selfie with God?"

CHARLIE

Hah.

HECTOR *checking his watch*

Alright, that's our time. Thank you all for listening – I'll be here in case you have any questions. Good night!

JUDY, ZACK, and CHARLIE clap.

ZACK to CHARLIE

Do you have any questions?

CHARLIE

If I do, I'll just ask you.

ZACK

I don't want to answer your questions. Ask him.

CHARLIE *teasing*

I thought you wanted to be my *mentor*.

ZACK

You don't need a mentor, man, you need a friend.

JUDY walks up to HECTOR.

JUDY

Hi, I just wanted to say hi and that I really enjoyed the tour.

HECTOR

Thank you.

JUDY

Anyway, I wanted to introduce myself. I'm Judy. Judy Gary.

HECTOR

Hi.

JUDY

I'm the, um, artist in residence for the next couple weeks. I just got here earlier today. I'm really excited to get started.

HECTOR

Great. That's great. Enjoy.

JUDY

Yeah. I'm hoping to do some illustrations that tell some of the history here, and a bit of my family's connection to the park, so the tour was great.

HECTOR

Okay. Great. I'm glad.

JUDY

My parents got engaged here.

So – yeah, if there's anything I should know about the park, or the residency, or –

HECTOR doesn't respond.

– Yeah. Well, I won't take any more of your time. Nice to meet you, and thanks again.

HECTOR

Yep. Thanks.

HECTOR walks off.

JUDY, kind of confused, looks around.

CHARLIE

Wait, I'm sorry, did I hear you say you're the artist in residence?

JUDY

What? Oh, yeah. I am.

CHARLIE

That's so cool, it's nice to meet you.
I'm Charlie, this is Zack.

JUDY

Hi. I'm Judy.

ZACK

What sort of art do you do?

JUDY

I'm an illustrator.

ZACK

Like, kid's books?

JUDY

Hah. That's what everyone asks.
I have done one, but –

CHARLIE

There are other types of illustration, Zack.

ZACK

Oh. Got it. Sorry.
We work for the park, by the way.

CHARLIE

Right – I should've said –

ZACK

I work at the historic sites, you'll probably see me around town in a soldier's uniform.

CHARLIE

I'm just in the VC mostly –

ZACK

Visitor center –

CHARLIE

Anyway, you just got here, right?

JUDY

Yeah, today's my first day.

CHARLIE

Exciting.

ZACK

You saw the apartment?

JUDY

Yeah, I just came from there.

ZACK

Nice, right? I remember when they remodeled it. It used to be just, like, dust and old storage.

JUDY

Yeah, it's really nice.

CHARLIE

I want to see!

ZACK

Ask Amalia, in between artists. She'll take you up there.

CHARLIE

Cool.

ZACK

Are you here with anyone?

JUDY

Just me.

ZACK

Last year some of the artists brought their husbands or wives. It was kind of cute.

CHARLIE

But if you ever want, all of us employees live in the old dorm building on the far side of town. Most nights we just hang out on the porch, so come by if you want!

JUDY

Thanks – yeah, I'll think about it. Thank you.

ZACK

Did you like the tour?

JUDY

Yeah, it was good.

ZACK

Glad to hear it. I wrote most of it.

JUDY

Oh, cool. Good job.

ZACK

Thanks, yeah, it's no big deal.

JUDY *looking up*

Is there a way to get up there? To the top of the Great Face?

ZACK

The path's a little overgrown and we're kind of not supposed to use the stairs, but – yeah, I mean, we can take you if you want.

CHARLIE

What about Hector? He'd kill us if he saw us.

ZACK

Don't be lame, Charlie, it would be fine.

CHARLIE

But he's right over there.

ZACK

Okay, fine, fine.

To JUDY.

Another time, okay?

JUDY

Yeah, okay. That sounds good.

Transition.

Four

*JUDY, sketching. Outdoors.
She's listening to the podcast again.*

PODCAST

Welcome back to Work in Progress, the podcast about making art. I'm your host, Lazarus Young. Today's episode is sponsored by your fear of not being good enough, and your hope to offer some value, to leave a mark on the world – which is why you should buy Scratch Sketchbooks. Designed specifically with artists in mind –

AMALIA enters.

AMALIA

Hey, Judy.

JUDY takes her headphones out.

JUDY

Hey.

AMALIA

What are you sketching?

JUDY

The Great Face.

AMALIA

Are you – um – recontextualizing the viewer's perspective?

JUDY

I'm just doing a study. I'll recontextualize later.

AMALIA

Oh. Cool.

JUDY

I took Hector's history tour yesterday. I introduced myself to him.

AMALIA

Oh, you did?

JUDY

Should I not have?

AMALIA

He's just – not very social. Especially around the artists. For some reason.

JUDY

But he's the director, yeah? Doesn't he run all this?

AMALIA

Well, the board of directors does, I guess. I don't know, I'm just ops.

JUDY

I was confused, is all.

AMALIA

I think that's just Hector. It's hard to talk to people.

JUDY

Hah. Yeah.

AMALIA

Especially in the park. Everyone's here to go on their hikes and take their photos and spend too long at the beach and then go home. I guess that's the point of a park.

I had this couple yesterday who asked me where the closest trash can was. I told them, then I thought I'd be nice and ask where they were from. They looked at me like I'd grown a second head and just said, "Tennessee."

Then they handed me the trash and asked if I could throw it out for them.

JUDY

Did you?

AMALIA

Yeah.

– You're judging me.

JUDY

No I'm not.

AMALIA

You were judging me yesterday.

I know it's not like *real* art, like it's just on my camera roll and in my notes app, but –

JUDY

No, I – I was just trying to give you some advice.

AMALIA

Okay. Thanks.

JUDY

You should've told that couple to go stick their trash – well, you know.

AMALIA *looks at what JUDY is sketching.*

Hah. Yeah.

It looks good, by the way.

JUDY

Thanks.

AMALIA

So why'd you apply? You said it's your first one, right?

JUDY

Yeah, I'm new to all this. Um – I was excited by a new opportunity made specifically for underrepresented artists. wanted to use the opportunity to try some new things. Push myself. Focus on just the work for a few weeks. No distractions. You know?

AMALIA

Totally.

JUDY

My parents got engaged at the top of the Great Face, and I thought –
It seemed like a good opportunity to make something to honor them.

AMALIA

This would be a good spot to get engaged. The nature is – yeah.
I made a photo poem thing yesterday.

JUDY

Oh, cool.

AMALIA

Can I share it with you?

JUDY hesitates, closes her sketchbook.

JUDY

Sure.

AMALIA

Okay. Sorry. I just –
I don't know. I wanted to show someone.

JUDY

Let's see it.

AMALIA shows JUDY her phone.

AMALIA

So that's – yeah.

JUDY

Nice. Pretty.

AMALIA

I like the light.

JUDY

I like it.

AMALIA

And, um. The poem.
It's called "Monday, sunset."

AMALIA reads from her phone.

I walked toward the sunset
as if I was chasing it
but, to tell you the truth,
I would have been okay
if I missed it

party through a window
silent smiles
solace enough

and keep on
toward the pinkening horizon

forgiving the insects their wont

I, too,
will soon fly
and bite
and die

JUDY is moved.

AMALIA
Sorry, I –

JUDY
No, it's okay. It's good.

AMALIA
Thank you.

JUDY
I think I should –
I think I need to be alone. For a bit.

AMALIA
Oh. Okay.
I should get back to work anyway.

*AMALIA stands, almost says something, but doesn't. She leaves.
JUDY puts her headphones back on and turns the podcast on.*

PODCAST
Today we're talking about connections and comparisons. You've probably found yourself crossing paths with fellow artists. Having connections with your peers is vitally important to your creative process. Of course, falling into the trap of comparing yourself to others is dangerous – more on that later – but if you can, observe their work. Their process. How do they approach it? What resonates with you? What ideas can you reuse?
Think of another artist's work – it could be anything, a photograph of nature, a poem about insects – and write down what part of it inspires you. Go ahead.

JUDY
– Are you talking about me?

PODCAST
Why does it inspire you? What does it make you think of? What does it teach you about your own work?

JUDY thinks, opens her sketchbook, and copies down part of AMALIA's poem.

JUDY
“forgiving the insects their wont
I, too,
will soon fly
and bite
and die”

PODCAST
See how much better it is?

JUDY

– Yeah. I do.

Transition.

Five

The visitors center.

ZACK and CHARLIE. ZACK is wearing a soldier's uniform that looks like it's from the 1800s. CHARLIE is wearing a park uniform. A beat, there's silence before they talk. Just in each other's company. Then –

ZACK

I hate Tuesdays.

CHARLIE

Tuesdays hate you back.

ZACK

Shut up.
It's just so boring when it's dead like this.

CHARLIE

I like it. Gives me time to read.

ZACK

When's the last time you had someone in?

CHARLIE

Probably 20 minutes or so.

ZACK

I hate Tuesdays,
You want to hear something stupid? I still have to do my hourly program even if no one's there.
It's ridiculous. They just want me to talk to nobody?

CHARLIE

I guess.

ZACK

Weekends are way better. With actual people to talk to.

CHARLIE

You're talking to me.

ZACK

Well – yeah. You know what I mean.
– I hate Tuesdays.

CHARLIE

Even when you get to wear that cool uniform?

ZACK

You don't want to be this sweaty.

CHARLIE

I'd prefer anything to this dumb polo. I put this thing on and suddenly I'm invisible to people.
I don't want to be invisible.

ZACK

Well. Maybe next summer.

HECTOR enters, moving quickly and with purpose. Notices ZACK.

HECTOR

– Zack, you're not at the fort?

ZACK

I'm on break.

HECTOR

The fort has a break room.

Or you could walk through the park. There's so much beauty out there.

ZACK

I wanted to come check on the VC.

HECTOR

– Oh. Okay.

Well, I'll be in my office if you need me.

ZACK

Roger that.

HECTOR leaves. CHARLIE laughs a bit.

CHARLIE

Why don't you go for a walk, Zack?

ZACK

Like, I'm on break. I can do what I want. That's what a break is.

CHARLIE

Yeah, what does he expect?

ZACK

I don't know. He's like that. Stoic-like.

Every summer, at the beginning of the season, I think, "Did he get more awkward, or was he always like this and did I just forget?"

CHARLIE

We may never know.

ZACK

Exactly.

Pause. They look around.

What do you think of this artist? Cute, right?

CHARLIE

You think so?

ZACK

You don't?

CHARLIE

No, yeah, she is.

I feel like you usually go for a different type.

ZACK

I don't have a type.

CHARLIE

More sorority girl on summer break, at one of the bars downtown.
Bachelorette party with penis-shaped hats.

ZACK

That's just – who's around. During the season.

CHARLIE

Right.

ZACK

I'm attracted to – energy. She has good energy.

CHARLIE

What, are you going to try to ask her out or something? Wouldn't the park frown on that?

ZACK

Nobody would have to know. Besides, they love me here. I'm their best interpreter.

CHARLIE

So are you going to do it?

ZACK

I'll probably play it by ear, see what happens.

CHARLIE

Why not just – do it?

ZACK

If you think it's that easy, you do it.

CHARLIE

Maybe I will.

ZACK

Hah. Okay. I'd like to see you try.
Anyway – I should get back to the fort. Don't want Hector busting my ass if he finds me taking a long break.

CHARLIE

Okay. See you.

ZACK

Later, bud.

*ZACK leaves. CHARLIE reads.
After a moment, HECTOR enters.*

HECTOR

Where's Zack?

CHARLIE

His break was over, he went back to the fort.

HECTOR

Oh. Okay.
– I'm sorry, what's your name again?

CHARLIE

Charlie.

HECTOR

Charlie. Thank you. Try not to read behind the counter, okay? We want people to feel welcomed when they visit the VC, and you reading doesn't look very welcoming.

CHARLIE

Oh, okay. Sorry.

HECTOR

Thanks for understanding.

CHARLIE

I, um, also have a quick question. If you have a second.

HECTOR

Yes?

CHARLIE

If I come back to work here next summer, is there a chance I could be considered to be an interpreter? I'm really interested in it. I got my degree in history, and – yeah.

HECTOR

Oh. I didn't know that.

CHARLIE

I think I might have said it in my interview.

HECTOR

Okay. Well – we have all the interpreters we need for the season. But if it's something you're interested in, take some of your off time and have Zack show you the ropes. He's been around a few years, he knows what he's doing.

CHARLIE

Okay. Great. I will.

HECTOR

Come see me at the end of the season and I'll see what you've learned. If you do well, I'll put you down for next summer.

CHARLIE

Thanks, Hector. That would be great.

HECTOR

We're always looking for good people. I'll talk to you later, Casey. Keep up the good work.

HECTOR exits.

CHARLIE sits, gets a little bored, almost opens their book to read, then doesn't.

Transition.

Six

JUDY, alone In the residency apartment.

She's trying to draw. She's stuck.

She's getting frustrated.

She looks out the window.

She looks back at her sketchbook.

She makes a decision.

She gets up and leaves the apartment.

Transition.

Seven

*ZACK and CHARLIE are on the porch of the employee residence.
AMALIA enters.*

ZACK

Amalia!
Want a drink?

AMALIA

I need one.

ZACK

Beer's in the fridge.

AMALIA

– Okay.

AMALIA goes into the house.

ZACK

You're coming into town with me tonight.

CHARLIE

Maybe.

ZACK

The Pony doesn't card. Besides, Danny's working the bar tonight. You'll be good.

CHARLIE

Yeah, no, I know.

ZACK

Don't be lame, Charlie.
It's my mission this summer to make sure you aren't lame.

CHARLIE

I'm not lame.

AMALIA enters with a beer, sits.

AMALIA

What's going on?

ZACK

Tell Charlie they're coming out with us.

AMALIA

You're coming out.

ZACK

Can't say no to Amalia. She'll make you clean the toilets. She has that authority.

AMALIA *laughing*

I really do.
Where is everyone?

ZACK

Uh – Emma and Lainey have the late shift at the fort. I think Sam F. does too. Damian has family in town so he’s with them. Tyler’s inside, he said he needed to relax.

AMALIA

Typical.

ZACK

And Sam G. went for “a walk.” I don’t know.

AMALIA

So basically, you scared everyone off.

CHARLIE

Zack has that effect on people.

ZACK

Shut up.

AMALIA

Did I tell you guys about the couple who made me throw out their trash?

ZACK

Yeah, a couple nights ago. That sucks.

AMALIA

Yeah.

CHARLIE

– I had a job at an outdoor concert venue last summer, and after the shows I’d have to clean up the lawn, right? And there would be just hundreds, maybe thousands, of bottles and cans to pick up. All of the other employees were supposed to stay and help, but they’d just leave after the show and it would all be left to me. Some nights I’d end up there until like 2am, picking up cans.

ZACK

That’s shitty.

AMALIA

Why didn’t you say anything?

CHARLIE

Hah. I already felt like no one there liked me. I didn’t want to make it worse.

ZACK

You should’ve stopped doing it. Fuck ‘em.

CHARLIE

Yeah.

– But if I didn’t do it, who would?

ZACK

– That’s fucked, man.

JUDY enters.

AMALIA
Judy!

JUDY
Hey, everyone.

ZACK
You took us up on the invite!

JUDY
Yeah, I was, um – I figured I'd come say hi.

ZACK
You want a drink?

JUDY
Sure.

ZACK
Cool.

ZACK exits into the house.

CHARLIE
I was wondering if you'd come.

JUDY
I got a bit bored, just by myself in that apartment.

AMALIA
I don't blame you. Can't always be working.

CHARLIE
You're an illustrator, right?

JUDY
I am, yeah.
You remembered.

CHARLIE
It's cool.

AMALIA
Judy "recontextualizes perspectives" or something along those lines.

ZACK returns with a beer for JUDY.

JUDY
Yeah.
Thank you.

ZACK
No problem.
How's the park treating you so far?

JUDY

Pretty good. It's beautiful.

ZACK

I still need to take you up to the top of the Great Face. The view from up there is incredible.

JUDY

Right, yeah, I'd love to see it.

ZACK

Just give me the word.

AMALIA laughs.

What?

AMALIA

You're taking her to the spot where everyone goes to get high?

ZACK

She wanted to see it.

To JUDY.

But yeah, it is –

JUDY

No, yeah, I mean, I kind of figured.

CHARLIE

Are you going to draw up there?

JUDY

Probably. I hear it's got a good view.

JUDY gets a phone call – it vibrates and her screen lights up. She discreetly ignores it.

So – yeah.

ZACK

Hey, so we're all going to have a drink at the Twisted Pony tonight – you should come with!

AMALIA

You don't have to, if you don't want.

ZACK

Don't listen to her. She loves the Pony. We just convinced Charlie to come.

CHARLIE

I'm giving in to peer pressure.

ZACK

DJ Booty plays on Thursdays. There's dancing. It's fun.

JUDY

DJ Booty. That's – great.

AMALIA

It is actually pretty fun.

JUDY

I don't know, maybe I should go back and do a bit more work –

ZACK

Come on, you can't be here two whole weeks and not go out!
DJ Booty's calling. Will you pick up? Will you answer the Booty call?

JUDY

Hah. Okay. Yeah. Okay.

ZACK

That's what I'm talking about!

AMALIA

When should we head over?

ZACK

Why not now? Finish your drinks!
ZACK finishes his drink. AMALIA does the same.
Come on!

ZACK exits. The others look at each other.

AMALIA

Answering the call.

AMALIA exits.

JUDY

Peer pressure, huh?

CHARLIE

Am I giving in too easily? Have I lost your respect?

JUDY

Listen, I think we're in this together now.

CHARLIE

Oh yeah?

JUDY

Yep.
Cheers.

JUDY finishes her drink. They exit, following ZACK and AMALIA.
Transition.

Eight

Later that night.

ZACK is on a curb, holding his face.

ZACK *shouting toward offstage*

Dude, I'm here all the time! Get Danny, he'll tell you.

Get Danny – Danny knows me!

Come on, man, it was nothing! Come on!

AMALIA enters.

AMALIA

Zack! Zack. He's not letting you back in.

ZACK

But –

AMALIA

What the fuck is wrong with you?

ZACK

That guy was being an asshole.

AMALIA

He barely did anything. There are always assholes at the Pony.

You go to the Pony.

ZACK

He shoved me.

AMALIA

So you try to fight him back? Who are you trying to – were you trying to impress *Judy*?

You're not trying to sleep with her, are you?

ZACK

No, I – no.

That guy – he disrespected me. I was standing up for myself.

AMALIA

Okay, well, I'd like to keep coming here, so if you and your *respect* could try to –

ZACK

Yeah, yeah, I know. I get it.

AMALIA *not serious*

You know how much I live for Booty Night. It gets me through my week.

ZACK

Uh huh.

AMALIA *starting to laugh*

You know what?

ZACK

What?

AMALIA

You suck at fighting.

ZACK

You're drunk.

AMALIA

No, you.

ZACK

Where's Charlie and Judy?

AMALIA

Closing the tab.

Do you need to get some ice on that?

ZACK

I'll use the chicken nuggets in the freezer.

AMALIA

Those are my chicken nuggets.

ZACK *a bit sarcastic*

Can I borrow your frozen chicken nuggets to tend to my injured face?

– Please.

AMALIA

Yes.

And then we'll eat them. I'm hungry.

JUDY and CHARLIE enter.

JUDY

Are you okay? Is everything okay?

CHARLIE

That was *crazy*, Zack. I've never seen a real fight before.

ZACK

You're welcome.

JUDY

We should get you some ice or something.

ZACK

It's fine. I'm fine. Amalia has chicken nuggets.

JUDY

– Okay?

CHARLIE

I want chicken nuggets!

AMALIA

Me too!

ZACK *to JUDY*

Frozen. For the bruise.

JUDY

Ah.

CHARLIE

Wait. Hector's not going to find out about this, is he?

What if you get in trouble for fighting? What if I get in trouble for being with you?

ZACK

You've got nothing to worry about, dude –

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. You guys just have been so nice to me and I like hanging out with you and I don't want to be like freaking out and ruining your Booty night –

ZACK

Charlie. Chill.

Let's have a drink at the house. We've got some beers left in the fridge. Night's still young.

JUDY

I think I'm going to call it a night.

AMALIA

Yeah, we should probably get back so you can rest.

ZACK

Nooooo. I'm fine! Look at me. I'm fine! Ready to go.

Judy – want to see the top of the Great Face?

JUDY

Another night, Zack.

AMALIA

Come on, let's get moving.

AMALIA starts pulling ZACK off stage. Eventually he relents.

ZACK

You guys are lameeeee.

I'm coming, I'm coming.

AMALIA and ZACK are gone.

JUDY

You okay?

CHARLIE

Yeah, I'm – yeah. Sorry.

– You don't think it'll be a problem, do you?

JUDY

I think you're probably fine.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Okay.
Yeah. You're right.

JUDY

Is this a normal Booty Night? Is this what I should've expected?

CHARLIE

I don't know.
I think you have to expect the unexpected.

JUDY

Hahaha nooo not "expect the unexpected."

CHARLIE

What? What?

JUDY

Nothing, it's just funny. It's a funny thing to say.
You're funny after a few drinks. When you loosen up a bit.

CHARLIE *still playful*

When I loosen up? You think I'm not normally?

JUDY

I said what I said.

CHARLIE

I guess we could have another drink. If you wanted.

JUDY

Oh yeah? Well. What do you want?

CHARLIE

Just an idea. Throwing it out there.

JUDY

I – actually.
I think it's a bit late. And I want to get some work done tomorrow. So I'm going to turn in.

CHARLIE

You sure?

JUDY

Yeah. I think so. Yeah.
This was fun, Charlie.
Besides the whole Zack-getting-in-a-fight thing.

CHARLIE

Besides that.

JUDY

But – yeah. Have a good night.

CHARLIE

Hey – I'm working at the VC tomorrow. If you want to stop by.

JUDY

Yeah, that sounds – that sounds good.
I'll see you tomorrow.

CHARLIE

Night.

JUDY exits.

*CHARLIE watches, waits, almost goes to catch up with her, then stops herself. Sighs.
Transition.*

Nine

JUDY has just woken up. She is hung over. She looks at her phone, but whatever appears on the screen is too much. She puts it down.

She opens her sketchbook. She pages through it, a bit absent-minded. She picks up a pencil, twiddles it, puts it down.

She gets her headphones out, puts them in her ears. Turns on the podcast.

PODCAST

This is Work in Progress, the podcast about making art. I'm your host, Lazarus Young.

Do you ever feel isolated, alone, like you and your art are on your own personal island, unable to reach the world outside?

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JUDY

God.

PODCAST

Today we're talking about something a little bit different. I'd like us to get really specific about the work that we're doing in our creative lives. Those of us at residencies in the middle of a beautiful park, surrounded by nature, finally taking a precious two weeks to ourselves, trying to create meaningful illustrations that tell a narrative about place and legacy – does this sound familiar? Today we're talking about you, Judy.

JUDY takes out her headphones. Looks at her phone.

JUDY

Yeah. Okay. Yeah. No.

*JUDY puts the phone down. She gets up and leaves.
Transition.*

Ten

JUDY walks into the visitors center, wearing sunglasses. CHARLIE is there.

CHARLIE

Oh! Hey.

– What brings you in?

JUDY

Just saying hi – how are you feeling?

CHARLIE

Been better. You?

JUDY

Same.

CHARLIE

I had a feeling.

JUDY

I blame DJ Booty.

How's Zack's face?

CHARLIE

Better, I think.

What are you up to today?

JUDY

So far, this. Might go lay under a tree or something.

CHARLIE

Ugh, I wish I had the day off. That sounds nice.

JUDY

Quit. Join me.

CHARLIE

I bet I could lock up and no one would notice.

Except probably Hector.

I have the day off tomorrow, though.

JUDY

Do you know the podcast Work in Progress?

CHARLIE

I don't think so. Why?

JUDY

No, no reason. Just wondering.

Can I tell you something?

CHARLIE

Sure.

JUDY

I kind of don't know what I'm doing. Here. Like, I'm trying to draw this piece that connects my mom being engaged here with the history of the Great Face as the Earth Mother, like tying together my own history with the legacy of the place, but – I don't know. I'm not getting anywhere.

CHARLIE

Does it have to be – I don't know, something big like that?

JUDY

I think it probably should be. It's what I put on my application. So yeah, probably yeah.

CHARLIE

Okay. I don't – I guess I don't know how to really help you with that. I'm sorry.

JUDY

Do you make anything?
– Like, creatively.

CHARLIE

No, yeah, I know. Not really.
I make, like, baked goods.

JUDY

Yeah?

CHARLIE

Yeah. I like to bake.

JUDY

What do you like to bake?

CHARLIE

Cookies. Pie. Bagels.
I make a mean banana bread.

JUDY

That sounds good.

CHARLIE

It is.

JUDY

How much do you charge? For banana bread? If I wanted some.

CHARLIE

Oh – I don't really sell it –

JUDY

I'm offering to pay. I want to pay. I believe in paying people for what they do.

CHARLIE

The thing is, the oven in the employee house is old and not great. So I haven't really been baking anything.

JUDY

Oh. Okay.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, because that's really nice of you, and I would –

JUDY

The apartment I'm in has an oven. It looks pretty nice. New.

CHARLIE

Oh. That's nice.

JUDY

So, I mean, if you ever want to bake, you can use it. If you want.
I wouldn't want to miss out on that banana bread.

CHARLIE

No, I wouldn't want that either.
You don't think that would be, like, a problem, right? With the park?

JUDY

Why would it be? I'm inviting you. You're my guest.

CHARLIE

Okay. I just wasn't sure.
But yeah, that sounds like fun.

JUDY

It's a plan, then.

CHARLIE

Cool. Yeah.

JUDY

Well, I'm sorry for not being able to stay longer, but I'm going to go lay under a tree now.
And die, maybe?

CHARLIE

I don't blame you. Have fun!

JUDY

Bye, Charlie.

JUDY exits.
Transition.

Eleven

HECTOR is walking through the park. He looks up and around at the nature, takes a breath, lets it out. He checks his phone, types a quick response to something. He considers the phone, then turns it off. His face relaxes.

AMALIA enters, in her ops uniform.

AMALIA

Hey Hector. How's your morning?

HECTOR

– Good. Thank you.

AMALIA smiles, is about to continue on her way, but –

Hey, have you sent me the upcoming schedule yet?

AMALIA

Not yet. I'll have it done by tonight.

HECTOR

Thanks. Fridays are the deadline.

AMALIA

I know. Today's Friday, so I'm getting it done today.

HECTOR

Great. And you got the bathroom by the east entrance cleaned up?

AMALIA

Yep, it's taken care of.

HECTOR

Okay. Good.

You're doing a great job, by the way.

AMALIA

Oh. Yeah. No problem.

HECTOR

It's kind of incredible that we get to be here, don't you think? Out of all the places to be, we get to steward this little slice of paradise.

AMALIA

Can I ask you a quick question? About the artist residency?

HECTOR

Sure.

AMALIA

It's about the selection process – or, well. I guess my question is if people who've worked for the park can apply? Like that wouldn't be a conflict of interest, or a disqualification, or something?

HECTOR

Oh. Well, it's a newer program, so we haven't encountered that yet.

Are you thinking of applying?

AMALIA

I was just curious.

HECTOR

I didn't know you were an artist.

AMALIA

I don't know if – it's just for fun, right now, but I want to practice more.

HECTOR

What do you do?

AMALIA

Um – I take photos. And write poems. And I put them together, I guess. It sounds kind of stupid, and it's just like on my phone, but –

HECTOR

Can I see one?

AMALIA

Oh. I don't – well, thank you for asking. But I think I'd rather have you see it as part of my application. For next year. I want you to see the best version of it.

HECTOR

Hmm.

AMALIA

Is that okay?

HECTOR

That's fine. I understand.

I'd argue, though, that whatever you've made is already the best version of itself, as an expression of you at the time you made it.

AMALIA

Maybe. I'd still like to wait.

HECTOR

Of course.

AMALIA

Have a good day, Hector.

HECTOR

Every day's a good day. I'll see you later.

HECTOR exits.

AMALIA is about to leave, hesitates. She takes out her phone and takes a picture.

She looks at it, doesn't like it, takes another.

ZACK enters, in his soldier's uniform. He has a bruise on his cheek.

ZACK

What up, Booty Crew in the house.

AMALIA

Hey – wait, you're not at the fort yet?

ZACK

I switched shifts with Sam. I needed to sleep in.

AMALIA *panic?*

Sam's scheduled in the ticket booth this morning.

ZACK

Sam G. I switched with Sam –

AMALIA

Oh. Good. That's good.

ZACK

Yeah.

AMALIA

So hey, are you feeling okay?

ZACK

Yeah, I'm fine. Does it look bad?

AMALIA

Not too bad.

I mean, it doesn't look *great*, but –

ZACK

Yeah, well, what can you do.

AMALIA

Not get in a fight.

ZACK

Well. Yeah.

AMALIA

Are you, like, okay, Zack?

ZACK

What? Yeah. I'm great. Totally good.

I have to get to my shift.

AMALIA

Right. Porch tonight?

ZACK

Yep, I'll see you there.

AMALIA

Wait – hold on.

ZACK

What?

AMALIA

Can I take a picture of it?

ZACK

Um – why?

AMALIA

I don't know. It looks kind of cool. I like the colors.

ZACK

Okay. Yeah.

AMALIA

Thanks.

AMALIA takes a photo of ZACK's bruise.

Got it.

ZACK

Am I a good model?

AMALIA

The camera loves you, Zack.

ZACK

Hah. Cool.

ZACK exits.

AMALIA looks at the photo for a moment, then puts her phone away and exits in the other direction.

Transition.

Twelve

*JUDY, under a tree. Eyes closed.
She's listening to the podcast.*

PODCAST

Today we're talking about why you make art. What drives you to create. Inspiration can come from anywhere, but once you're in the process of creating, you should feel absolutely compelled to work. Your work must exhilarate you, it must pull you forward, as if of its own volition, until it is complete. Art that does not *demand* to be made should not exist.
I once knew a writer who –

JUDY *overlapping*

I know you're just going to start talking to me.

PODCAST

... I once knew a writer who –

JUDY

What do you have to say to me?

PODCAST

Can you just – listen?

JUDY

I'm trying to ask – fine. I'm listening. What else am I supposed to do?

PODCAST

You could be working. You're at your first artist residency and you're sitting hung over under a tree.

JUDY

– I don't know if I've ever felt like my art was demanding to be made.

PODCAST

Well, Judy, you should probably figure that out, don't you think?

JUDY

You sound like my mother.

PODCAST

Your art should demand to be made. It should prove that it deserves to be made.

JUDY

– How?

PODCAST

If you have to ask, is it really worth making?
I'll make it as clear as I can for you, Judy. This is your demand. I'm demanding it. Make good art. Prove that you're not wasting everyone's time here. Can you do that for me?

JUDY

Yes. Okay. Yes.

PODCAST

What are you waiting for?

JUDY opens her sketchbook, starts drawing.

Good.

HECTOR enters. JUDY sees him, takes her headphones out.

JUDY

Hector.

HECTOR

Hello – I'm sorry, remind me your –?

JUDY

Judy. I'm the artist in residence.

HECTOR

Right. Judy.
How is everything?

JUDY

Did we get off on the wrong foot?

HECTOR

What?

JUDY

Like, was it something I said or did? When we first met?

HECTOR

I don't know what you're talking about.

JUDY

Our first conversation. You barely said a word to me. You barely acknowledged me. I mean, I'd think that saying a nice hello to your own guest artist would be at least slightly a priority –

HECTOR

Okay.

JUDY

Don't you think?

HECTOR

I don't know what you expect me to say.

JUDY

Hello, maybe? Nice to have you here? Some advice, a conversation about art?
I guess anything to make me feel like I'm not being left entirely by myself out here.

HECTOR

Hmm.

JUDY

Still nothing, I guess. Sorry I asked.

HECTOR

I didn't mean to upset you, Judy.
But – whatever you're looking to get out of this, you're not going to find in someone else.

JUDY

Then what are artists supposed to get out of this residency?

HECTOR

I'm not the one who can answer that.
I'm truly sorry if I upset you.

HECTOR exits.

JUDY puts her headphones back in and starts the podcast.

PODCAST

What are you supposed to get out of this residency?

JUDY

That's the question.
I'd like to make something good.

PODCAST

Something that's demanding to be made.
Something that proves you deserve to be here.

JUDY

Yeah.

PODCAST

Do you deserve to be here?

JUDY

– Demanding to be made, right?

JUDY opens her sketchbook, starts drawing something.

PODCAST

Is this demanding to be made?

JUDY

– I don't know.

PODCAST

Scrap it. Try again.

JUDY turns the page, starts again.

JUDY

Okay.

PODCAST

What about this one?

JUDY

This is a good start, I think.

PODCAST

Liar. Again.

JUDY turns the page, starts again.

JUDY

Why are you talking to me? Of all people?

PODCAST

You're listening.
Start again.

JUDY does.
Transition.

Thirteen

AMALIA, ZACK, and CHARLIE are on the porch.

CHARLIE is holding some papers, flipping through them, slightly impatient.

AMALIA

So do you think I should've shown him? One of my photo-poem things?

ZACK

I mean, if he was offering, it could've gotten you a leg up for next year.

AMALIA

But what if he hated it?

ZACK

Well – I guess then you wouldn't have to go through the stress of applying.

AMALIA

Oh god, he's going to hate it, isn't he. I'll never get accepted.

ZACK

Can I see one?

AMALIA

– No. I think I'm going to hold off on showing people. For a bit.

ZACK

Oh. Okay.

CHARLIE

Do I really have to memorize all this, Zack?

ZACK

Yes.

CHARLIE

Can't I just shadow you for a few of your shifts and pick it up as I go?

ZACK

No – there are things in there you need to know, that might not come up in an average shift.

CHARLIE

Like what?

ZACK

I don't know, like, um, who was president at the time the fort was built.

CHARLIE

James Monroe, right?

ZACK

Yeah. But there's other stuff, too. Like acting things.

AMALIA

Acting things.

ZACK

Yeah.

To CHARLIE

Did I tell you that I almost auditioned for NYU?

CHARLIE

Really?

ZACK

Their MFA program. One of the best.

CHARLIE

That's cool.

AMALIA *mock sad, she's heard this before*

But he couldn't go.

ZACK

I had to go home, that morning. Family emergency.

AMALIA

Is this the part of the sob story where whatever bridesmaid you're talking to at the Pony decides to sleep with you, or – ?

ZACK

Shut up.

CHARLIE

So you could've been, like, a famous actor or something.

ZACK

Maybe. I don't know. Who knows if I'd have even gotten in.
But, yeah, now I'm here. Being the best interpreter this place has ever seen.

CHARLIE

Wow.

You know, it's cool hanging out with you guys.

Beat.

So – when can I start shadowing you?

ZACK

When you're memorized.

AMALIA

I'm so glad I'm not an interpreter. That looks like too much.

ZACK

You'd really rather clean toilets?

AMALIA

I have a better chance of being promoted from ops. I already do scheduling.

ZACK

You really want to move up, here?

AMALIA

I don't know, anywhere. Maybe I could start an artist in residence program at another park.

ZACK

Do you think Judy's coming by tonight?

CHARLIE

No, she texted and said she's going to stay in and work.

ZACK

She texted you?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

ZACK

Oh.
I still have to take her up to The Great Face.

AMALIA

You keep saying that – where's your follow-through, Zack?

ZACK

I'm going to. I was going to ask her after the Pony.

CHARLIE

You did.

ZACK

Okay. Yeah.
No, yeah, I remember.
Doesn't seem like you're getting a lot of memorization done.

CHARLIE

Shut up, I'm working on it.

AMALIA

What if you're right, what if this is it?

ZACK

What?

AMALIA

Like, what if I apply to this residency and I don't get it, and I stay in ops for a few years, and I never get promoted, and I don't get hired at another park, and I just end up – here?

Pause. They sit with this.

ZACK

I guess there are worse places to be.

AMALIA

Maybe I just won't apply. Then I don't have to worry about it.

CHARLIE

That's stupid. If you want something, go for it.

ZACK

You sound like a cheesy motivational poster.
I'm getting another drink.

ZACK exits.

AMALIA

You think I should do it.

CHARLIE

I think you're overthinking it. Even if you don't end up getting it, I don't know, it's still good practice to apply for things. It's all practice, right?

AMALIA

I don't want to be okay with being mediocre and always saying I'll get better later.

CHARLIE

Why don't you talk to Judy about it?

AMALIA

I have.

ZACK returns with a beer.

ZACK

I know you guys think I'm like, crazy for what happened at the Pony, but that guy really was being a dick. I think he was looking for a fight. Or something.

I feel like an idiot for letting myself get upset like that, though. That's not – I don't want you guys to think that's who I am.

ZACK drinks, laughs to himself, embarrassed.

Anyway, uh, yeah. Sorry, what were y'all talking about?

AMALIA

Just – I think you'd be a good actor, Zack.

ZACK

Maybe.

Yeah, maybe.

They sit in silence, looking out.

CHARLIE gets a text, looks at their phone, responds. ZACK notices.

Transition.

Fourteen

JUDY, in the apartment. There are quite a few drawings scattered around – she’s been working a lot. She’s listening to the podcast and drawing.

PODCAST

What am I going to say about this one?

JUDY

Contrived. Sentimentalized. Trying too hard.

PODCAST

So?

JUDY

Try again.

PODCAST

Good.

You’re making progress. Can’t you feel it?

JUDY

Yes. I think so.

PODCAST

You’re gaining an awareness of your own shortcomings.

You’re learning to avoid your mediocre impulses.

JUDY

You’re sounding like my mother again.

A knock at the door.

Hold on, sorry.

JUDY takes her headphones out and answers the door. CHARLIE is there, holding a grocery bag.

CHARLIE

Hi.

JUDY

Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hi.

Sorry if I’m – can I –?

JUDY

Sure, come in, of course.

CHARLIE comes in, puts the bag down on the counter, and sees the drawings.

CHARLIE

Wow.

JUDY

Sorry, it’s not usually like this –

CHARLIE

They look good.

JUDY

You like them?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

I hope I'm not interrupting. I saw your light on and thought I'd see if you wanted any banana bread.

JUDY

You're not interrupting. That sounds good.

CHARLIE

Cool.

And look at that oven.

JUDY

There she is.

What temperature do you need?

CHARLIE

350.

CHARLIE starts taking ingredients out of the bag. JUDY preheats the oven.

So how is everything here? Looks like you're drawing – a lot.

JUDY

Yeah. It's good, I think. It's good.

CHARLIE

Are you making any progress on that piece? About your mom?

JUDY

Well, here's the thing.

No.

CHARLIE

Hah. Okay. Um – is there anything else that's interesting to you?

JUDY

That's kind of a complicated question –

CHARLIE

Sorry, but is there a mixing bowl in here?

JUDY

Oh, yeah.

JUDY looks for the mixing bowl.

CHARLIE

What were you saying, though?

JUDY

What?

CHARLIE

About if you were finding anything interesting.

JUDY

Um. I lost my train of thought
JUDY has the mixing bowl.
 Here you go.

CHARLIE

Thanks.

JUDY

But maybe I'm just overthinking it.
 I should make work that matters. Work that's demanding to be made.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Or you could make something because you enjoy it.

CHARLIE has begun mixing ingredients.

JUDY

I'm enjoying this. I think.

CHARLIE

Can you crack an egg for me?

JUDY

Sure.
JUDY does.
 So, enough about me. Tell me about you. Your summer. The visitors center.

CHARLIE

Hah.

JUDY

What?

CHARLIE

Nothing. You're funny.

JUDY

I want to know.

CHARLIE

Okay. Um. Yeah. It's good.
 It's easy and it's kind of nothing and sometimes I think, am I wasting my time?
 But then I was talking to Hector and there's a chance I could be considered to be an interpreter next season, which isn't nothing.
 Sometimes I forget that things take time, and I get mad at myself for being behind. I feel like I'm behind a lot.

JUDY

Sometimes things sneak up on you and happen all at once.

CHARLIE

I'll have to take your word for it.

JUDY
What can I do now?

CHARLIE
I mean, we're just about there.

JUDY watches CHARLIE finish making the batter.

JUDY
Look at you, you're a pro.

CHARLIE
You think so?

JUDY
Yeah. You're good at this.

CHARLIE
– Thanks. I appreciate that.
CHARLIE is done mixing.
Want to do the honors and pour this into the pan?

JUDY
I don't know, that's a big responsibility.

CHARLIE
I think you can handle it.

JUDY
Me? Responsibility? Handling it? Hah. Yeah.

CHARLIE
All yours.

CHARLIE holds out the pan. JUDY pours the batter.

JUDY
I'm excited to try this.

CHARLIE
I hope you like it.

JUDY
I'm sure I will.

CHARLIE puts the pan in the oven.

CHARLIE
How long are you here for, again?

JUDY
I go home next week.

CHARLIE
Ah.

JUDY

Why?

CHARLIE

I just feel like the rest of the artists this summer won't be as cool as you.

JUDY

Uh huh. Sure. "Cool."

CHARLIE

Yeah. "Cool"

JUDY

It would be nice to stay longer. It's not like I'm itching to get back home or anything.

CHARLIE

Yeah?

JUDY

Yeah. My mom is pretty sick and I've been taking care of her, basically by myself –

CHARLIE

Oh. I'm sorry.

JUDY

But my sister is with her now, and it's –

JUDY shakes her head.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry. That's really – I'm sorry.

JUDY

Anyway. How long do we leave it in the oven?
We should set a timer.

CHARLIE

Oh. About an hour.

JUDY *setting a timer on her phone.*

Okay. There we go.

CHARLIE

Perfect.

JUDY

What are we going to talk about for a whole hour?

CHARLIE

That's a great question.

JUDY

See, maybe the other artists will be better conversationalists than I am.

CHARLIE

Somehow I doubt that.

JUDY
I guess you'll have to let me know.

CHARLIE
I wouldn't want to hurt your feelings.

JUDY
I've got thick skin. I could take it.

They're kind of close to each other.

CHARLIE
Yeah?

JUDY
Yeah.

JUDY's phone starts ringing.

CHARLIE
Did you accidentally set the timer for a minute instead of an hour?

JUDY
No, it's my sister –

CHARLIE
Do you need to get it?

JUDY
I'll call her back.

CHARLIE
Okay.

The phone stops ringing.

JUDY
Sorry about that.

CHARLIE
It's okay.

CHARLIE moves in to kiss JUDY. JUDY pushes CHARLIE back, slightly.

JUDY
So.

CHARLIE
Sorry. Yes.

JUDY
Don't be sorry.
It's just. You're twenty... two?

CHARLIE
23.

JUDY
I'm 31.

CHARLIE
Okay.

JUDY
Is that –?

CHARLIE
I'm an adult. I can know what I want.

*CHARLIE goes in for a kiss again.
JUDY's phone rings again.*

JUDY
Sorry –

CHARLIE
Ignore it.

JUDY
It's her again.
Um. I should – I should answer this.

CHARLIE
Okay.

JUDY
Sorry.
JUDY answers.
Hey, Em, what's up?
Hold on –
Hold on, what?
Take a breath.
Yeah.
Okay.
Um.
Oh my god.
How long?
Within the – okay. Um.
Is that like two to three days, or like six to seven?
Okay. Okay.
Yeah.
Oh my god.
Yeah.
Do you need me to –
Emily.
Take a breath.
It's –
Okay.
I'm –
Well it's supposed to be until next week but –
Well, I want to be there.
I should be there.
Because I could – I could come –

Yeah, I know.
I know.
I know.
Okay.
Um.
Okay.
Breathing.
Breathing.
Do you want to – talk? More?
Yeah.
Let me, um, know. If you do.
No, I – I don't know.
Thank you for, um.
Yeah.
Yeah.
I'll let you know.
I love you.
JUDY hangs up.
Fuck.

CHARLIE

Um. Is everything –?
Is everything okay?

*JUDY just looks at CHARLIE for a moment.
She looks wrecked.
She shouldn't do this next part.
She lunges forward and kisses CHARLIE.
Transition.*

Fifteen

*ZACK is on his phone in the break room. Wearing his soldier's uniform, of course.
HECTOR enters and sits with him. ZACK doesn't look up. HECTOR doesn't really care.
After a moment –*

HECTOR

I hate Tuesdays.

ZACK

– Yeah?

HECTOR

Well. Maybe just this one.

ZACK

Everything okay?

HECTOR

I think so.
I think it will be.

ZACK

Anything I can – help with?

HECTOR

That's kind of you.
No.

ZACK

Okay.

ZACK continues looking at his phone.

HECTOR

Does it still hurt?

ZACK

What?
HECTOR points to his own cheek, re: ZACK's bruise.
Oh. No.
It's gotten a little uglier, but I guess that means it's healing.

HECTOR

All healing takes some ugliness.

ZACK

– Yeah.

HECTOR

I've been thinking about you.
You've been here for five summers now? Six?

ZACK

Six.

HECTOR

You like it.

ZACK

Yeah. I mean, it's a good way to spend the summer. Make some money.

HECTOR

Do you ever think of doing more? Around the park?

ZACK

Oh. Um.

HECTOR

You've been here a while, you seem to enjoy it.
Maybe you could start taking on more responsibility. Something along the lines of management, staying here year round, or –

ZACK

Right. Yeah. I don't know.

HECTOR

You haven't thought about it?

ZACK

I mean, I don't know.
I still think about trying acting again. I never got to do that audition for NYU, for my master's. And I think I want to, you know. Try again.

HECTOR

Oh. Yes.

ZACK

Yeah. So –

HECTOR

When?

ZACK

What?

HECTOR

When are you thinking of going?

ZACK

Well, I'm not really sure yet –

HECTOR

You could probably apply this fall. For next year.

ZACK

Yeah. I don't know. Maybe.

HECTOR

What don't you know?

ZACK

I don't know. I'm too old. Maybe I missed my chance.

HECTOR

I don't think that's up to you. Why not try?

ZACK

Do you, like, want me gone, or something? I thought you all liked me here.

HECTOR

Of course.

ZACK

I'm your best interpreter.

HECTOR

I'm interested in what *you* want, Zack. Not what the park wants.

ZACK

Isn't that your job, though?

HECTOR

Maybe.
I'm still learning.

ZACK

Hah.

HECTOR

What?

ZACK

You're fucking weird, man.
HECTOR just looks at ZACK.
– I'm sorry.

HECTOR

It's okay.

ZACK

No, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

HECTOR

It's okay if you did.

ZACK

Are you okay?

HECTOR

You didn't hurt my feelings.

ZACK

No, with – I don't know.
You seem off, or something, and I want to make sure you're okay.
HECTOR digests this.
So – are you?

HECTOR

I'm –
I'm grateful to be here.

ZACK

Well. I guess if you ever want to talk. You know. We can.

HECTOR

Thank you.

ZACK

It's weird. I've worked here for years and I feel like I've never really gotten to know you.

HECTOR

Hmm.

ZACK

I don't mean that in a bad way, just – yeah.

HECTOR

I know.
It's hard to say if I've ever wanted to be known.
HECTOR looks at his watch.
How long was your break today?

ZACK

Oh, I should –

HECTOR

Sorry to keep you.

ZACK

No, it's fine.
ZACK stands, gets ready to go.
Hey, by the way, whatever's happening with you, it won't be happening forever.

HECTOR

I'm afraid you're wrong. But thank you.

ZACK nods, starts to exit. Stops.

ZACK

Oh, um, I think I've heard Amalia talk about being interested in moving up. Here. More responsibility and all. She's really interested in doing more with the artist residency.

HECTOR

Right.

ZACK

She'd be great at it.

HECTOR

Thank you, Zack.

ZACK exits.
Transition.

Sixteen

JUDY, in the residency apartment. She has her headphones in, listening to the podcast. She keeps pressing pause, and then play again.

PODCAST

Welcome to –
Work in Pro –
gress, the podcast about –
creativity. I'm –
your host, Laz –
arus Young. Today's ep –
isode is –
brought –
to you by –
Okay, can you stop?

JUDY

I don't want to do this part.

PODCAST

You're just wasting time, Judy.

JUDY

I don't want to – I don't know how to do this.

PODCAST

Why are you wasting so much time?

JUDY

I thought I could do this. I thought I could come here and do this. And then I could go back and do that. And everything would be – well, it wouldn't be okay. But it would be fine. It would be doable.

PODCAST

So what now?

JUDY

I should go home. She doesn't have long. I should – I should be there.

PODCAST

But?

JUDY

I knew this was going to happen. I fucking knew – I'd be here, and things would – I can't go back empty handed.

PODCAST

Of course not.

JUDY

I wanted to make that illustration, my parents on the Great Face, our own personal history – I was going to come back with it and show her, prove to her – I don't want to go back with nothing. One last disappointment. A failure.

PODCAST

So stay. Don't go back until you've made what you want to make.

JUDY

But what if –
No. I have to go back. I have to be there.

PODCAST

Fine. Go ahead and throw this all away.

JUDY

I have to.

PODCAST

Go prove to her and everyone that you're not a real artist. That you never will be. That you wasted everyone's time.

JUDY

I did, didn't I?

PODCAST

Yes. You're a failure.

JUDY

I'm nothing.
Why did I think I could be anything?

JUDY looks at her drawings.

PODCAST

You've known she was right all along, haven't you?
She gave up so much for you. She quit school. She gave up painting.
She got a job she hated and she raised you.
Are you listening?
She gave up everything she was. For you.
You.
And look at you. Everything she gave up, and you're here. Doing this.
How could your silly little pictures be worth it?
How could anything you ever do be worth it?

JUDY

Fuck!

*JUDY starts tearing up the drawings. She tears until none are left.
JUDY sinks to the ground. She is crying among her torn drawings.
Transition.*

Seventeen

AMALIA and CHARLIE, on the porch. They're both drinking.

AMALIA

What do you think happened?

CHARLIE

I don't know. All she said was her mom was sick. But she didn't want to talk about it.

AMALIA

What are you going to do?

CHARLIE

Do you think I need to do something?

AMALIA

I don't know. Do you want to?

CHARLIE

This is a lot of questions.

AMALIA

I guess I'm asking – do you think there's a there there? Or is this like a one-time thing?

CHARLIE

Well – I guess I don't really know.

AMALIA

You might want to figure that out.

CHARLIE

I like her.

I want to be there for her.

AMALIA takes a drink.

AMALIA

Charlie, this is going to sound harsh.

CHARLIE

Okay.

AMALIA

She's only here for what? Another week? And after that, you'll probably never see her again.

CHARLIE

– You think so?

AMALIA

That's the nature of being here. People come, stay for a bit, and go on their way. It's all transient. It all changes, all the time.

A thought strikes AMALIA, briefly.

CHARLIE

You sound so – calm about it.

AMALIA
Can I take your picture?

CHARLIE
Now?

AMALIA
Yes.

CHARLIE
I don't know if I really want to.

AMALIA
Please?

CHARLIE
– Okay.

AMALIA
Stay just like that.

AMALIA takes CHARLIE's picture.

CHARLIE
Are you going to write a poem thing to go with me?

AMALIA looks at the picture on her phone for a moment.

AMALIA
Half-turned page
cusp of something
half-finished sentence
an unwritten ending
watch the words
sharp as papercuts
slip through fingers
bloom into realities

CHARLIE
– Oh.

AMALIA
I don't know. Something like that.
I'll work on it.

CHARLIE
Can I see the picture?

AMALIA
No.

CHARLIE
Please?

AMALIA
– Okay.

AMALIA shows CHARLIE the picture. CHARLIE takes the phone, examines it.

AMALIA

Don't look at any of the others. I'm not ready to share those –

CHARLIE

I'm not. I'm sending it to myself.

AMALIA

Oh. Okay.

CHARLIE

Is that okay?

AMALIA

Yeah.

CHARLIE

It's a nice photo. I like it.

CHARLIE hands AMALIA's phone back.

AMALIA

Thank you.

CHARLIE

– I think I want to go see her. Check in.
Do you think that's okay?

AMALIA

If it's what you want.

CHARLIE

It is.
I'll see you later, okay?

CHARLIE starts to go.

AMALIA

Okay.
Just, um – you don't have to clean up for other people.

CHARLIE

Neither do you.

ZACK enters.

ZACK

Where are you off to?

CHARLIE

Taking a walk.

ZACK

Don't be gone too long. I have to mentor you to become the park's second-best interpreter.

CHARLIE
Tonight?

ZACK
Tonight, tomorrow, whenever.
No more memorization. Get ready for the real shit.

CHARLIE
Thanks, Zack. I can't wait.
See you guys.

CHARLIE exits.
ZACK sits with AMALIA.

AMALIA
The real shit, huh?

ZACK
The real shit.
– Charlie doesn't usually go for walks.

AMALIA
I think your mentorship is working. You're corrupting them.

ZACK
Yeah?

AMALIA
And I kind of love to see it.

ZACK
Hah.
Corrupting how?

AMALIA
They're going to see *Judy*.

ZACK
Oh. Yeah. Cool. Good for Charlie.
How's your night going?

AMALIA
Oh, you know. Same old.

AMALIA takes a drink.

ZACK
Same old?

AMALIA
You know. This.

ZACK
Sure.
They drink for a moment.
I think you're going places, Amalia. I think you've got big things ahead of you.

AMALIA

Did you come from the Pony? You're drunk.

ZACK

I only had one drink.

AMALIA

Okay.

ZACK

Seriously.

I just wanted to tell you that I think you're on the right track. Keep doing what you're doing.

AMALIA *joking*

Oh, yeah, that's reassuring coming from you.

ZACK

I'm giving you a compliment.

AMALIA

No, yeah, I'll keep doing what I'm doing.
Just like you.

ZACK

Hey, you say that like it's a bad thing, but I do well for myself. Here.
Plus, you know, I could've gotten into NYU –

AMALIA

Yeah, I know, Zack. I know.

ZACK

Alright, well, fuck me, I guess. Just trying to be nice.

AMALIA

Okay.

AMALIA stands up.

– I think I'm going to head in.

ZACK

Wait – hold on. Wait.
I'm sorry.

AMALIA

It's fine, I'm just tired.

ZACK

Okay. Um. Okay.

AMALIA

Yeah.

AMALIA starts to leave.

ZACK

Why'd you take that picture of my bruise? The other day?

AMALIA

I said. I like the colors.

ZACK

You weren't, like, capturing how much of a fuckup I am.

AMALIA

What? No.

– I think I realized I'm drawn to transience. Things that don't last. Things that change.

ZACK

And you saw that in me?

AMALIA

I saw it in your bruise.

ZACK

You don't think I'm transient?

AMALIA

Hah. I don't know if you change very much. You're just – Zack.

ZACK

Oh. Yeah.

AMALIA

But I'm going to turn in.

ZACK

Okay.

– Do you like me? Like, as a person?

AMALIA

Yeah, Zack. Yeah.

AMALIA exits into the house.

ZACK sits, drinks, sits.

Transition.

Eighteen

JUDY is in the residency apartment, still among the drawings she's torn up. There's a knock on the door. JUDY looks up but doesn't answer it. Another knock.

CHARLIE *off*

Judy, it's me. Charlie.

JUDY still doesn't answer. CHARLIE knocks again.

Judy, I can see the light on under the door. I know you're there.

PODCAST

You're wasting time.

CHARLIE *off*

I just want to talk. See how you're doing.

JUDY slowly stands. She takes one headphone out of her ear, leaving the other in. She approaches the door.

JUDY

Charlie, I can't talk right now.

CHARLIE *off*

Just open the door. I want to see you.

JUDY

Charlie –

CHARLIE *off*

Please?

JUDY sighs, opens the door a crack.

Hey, there she is.

JUDY

I appreciate you coming to check in, but I need some time.

PODCAST

Why are you wasting everyone's time?

CHARLIE

All I want is to say hi. I've been thinking of you.

Five minutes, no more.

Come on, you can't say no to this face.

CHARLIE isn't budging. JUDY relents.

JUDY

Five minutes.

PODCAST

You're wasting time.

JUDY lets CHARLIE in.

CHARLIE

Oh – what happened here?

CHARLIE starts going through the torn drawings.

JUDY

They're nothing.

CHARLIE

They were good.

JUDY

You don't need to flatter me.

CHARLIE

Is this – everything?

JUDY nods.

Wow.

JUDY

I can do better. I have to do better.

PODCAST

You shouldn't be here.

CHARLIE

Are you okay?

JUDY

I'm fine.

CHARLIE

No, look at me. What's going on?

JUDY

I'm – working on it.

You don't need to worry about me.

CHARLIE

I don't need to, but –

JUDY

So don't.

CHARLIE

– Do you have any of that banana bread left?

JUDY

What? Um, yeah.

Do you want – ?

CHARLIE

Yeah.

JUDY

Okay.

JUDY gets the banana bread.

CHARLIE

– You haven't tried it yet?

PODCAST

You're a waste. A disappointment.

JUDY

I haven't really gotten to it –

CHARLIE

I'll have to try not to be offended.
Here, get a knife, we're trying this right now.

JUDY

Charlie –

CHARLIE

You'll like it. I promise.

JUDY gets a knife, hands it to CHARLIE. CHARLIE cuts two slices.

Here we go.

CHARLIE hands a slice to JUDY, and takes one for herself. They each take a bite.

So. What do you think?

JUDY

It's – really good.

CHARLIE

I told you.

CHARLIE watches JUDY for a moment.

Do you – want to talk about what happened last night?

PODCAST

She wasted her life for you. And look at you.

JUDY

I'm just going through some personal stuff. I don't really want to talk about it.

CHARLIE

Why don't I keep you company? I can be a distraction. Take your mind off things.

PODCAST

You're nothing.

JUDY

I think I need to be alone right now.

CHARLIE

Come on, I think I could be a pretty good distraction –

CHARLIE moves in close to JUDY, kisses her. JUDY almost gives in.

JUDY pushes CHARLIE off.

JUDY

Charlie, I – I can't.

CHARLIE

But I thought you might want –

JUDY

I need you to go.
Now.

CHARLIE

Judy.

JUDY

Please.

CHARLIE just looks at JUDY for a beat.

CHARLIE

Right. Sorry for wasting your time. Or whatever.
I thought we were getting along.
JUDY doesn't say anything.
It doesn't matter.
Enjoy the banana bread.

CHARLIE exits.

PODCAST

Nothing you do could ever be worth it.

JUDY throws away the banana bread.
Transition.

Nineteen

HECTOR, sitting on a park bench. He has his eyes closed, as if he's listening to birdsong. Maybe he is.

JUDY enters, sits next to him. She has a headphone in one ear. She looks around at the nature.

HECTOR keeps his eyes closed. Neither of them say anything for a moment.

JUDY

It's not fair.

Days like this, for the universe to gift us such beauty.

How are we supposed to live in this? What are we supposed to do with it all?

HECTOR opens his eyes, looks over at her.

HECTOR

We appreciate it while we can.

JUDY

I had a feeling you'd say something like that.

PODCAST

You shouldn't be here.

This hits JUDY. She should take the headphone out. She really should. She doesn't.

HECTOR

Are you listening to something?

JUDY

What?

HECTOR points to his own ear, re: JUDY's headphones.

Oh – right. I just leave them in, sometimes.

HECTOR

Oh. Okay.

Why?

JUDY

Sometimes I listen to music, sometimes – I don't know.

HECTOR

Okay. I don't understand.

But okay.

PODCAST

You're wasting everyone's time.

JUDY

Do you sit out here often?

HECTOR

Yes.

JUDY

That's nice.

I can see why Amalia's always taking pictures of this place.

HECTOR
Yes. I look forward to seeing her work.

JUDY
You haven't yet?

HECTOR
Not yet. But she –

JUDY
Here, let me show you.

HECTOR
She doesn't want me to see.

JUDY
She gets embarrassed, I think.
Here.

HECTOR
But –

JUDY has a picture pulled up, hands her phone to HECTOR.

JUDY
What do you think?

HECTOR
It's – nice.

JUDY
Yeah.

HECTOR
Composition could use some work.
She would benefit from a real camera.

JUDY
She wants to apply to the residency.

HECTOR
I know.

HECTOR hands JUDY's phone back.

JUDY
So, yeah.
I think it'd be good for her.

HECTOR
How has your time here been?

PODCAST
Why are you wasting everyone's time?

JUDY

I'm trying not to waste it.

HECTOR

I think that's all you can hope for.

JUDY

But I have to, um –
Has anyone ever – not made anything? While they're here?

PODCAST

You shouldn't be here. You don't belong here.

HECTOR

Everyone makes something here.
Even if it isn't something you can see or hold.

JUDY

Hector, I have to –

PODCAST

You don't belong here, Judy.

JUDY is having trouble holding back tears. Should she even be trying to?

HECTOR sees this, takes JUDY's hands into his own. He leans forward to look into her eyes. It's surprisingly intimate.

JUDY almost lets herself be seen. She wants so badly to be seen.

It's too much. JUDY wrenches her hands away.

JUDY

I'm sorry, I have to – I'm sorry.

JUDY exits.

Transition.

Twenty

*ZACK and AMALIA lead JUDY to the top of the Great Face.
JUDY still has a headphone in one ear.*

ZACK

I'm glad you took us up on this.

AMALIA

You're going to love the view.

JUDY

Yeah, I'm sure.

ZACK

We're almost there.

AMALIA

They should really make an official path up here.

ZACK

I've been saying that for years.
They've arrived at the top.
Here we are.

JUDY

Wow.

AMALIA

Right?

JUDY

Yeah, it's – stunning.

PODCAST

Nobody wants you here.

ZACK

Did you know that from this height, you can see about 15 miles out?

JUDY

Farther than I would've thought.

AMALIA

I didn't know that. How do you know that?

ZACK

Hey, these six years haven't been for nothing.

PODCAST

You're wasting time.

They all look around, take it in.

AMALIA

Are you going to draw something?

JUDY

I don't know. Maybe.
 First I just want to enjoy it.
 15 miles out. Look at that.
 And the water.
 I've been struggling with – what to do with all of this beauty.

ZACK has produced beers from a backpack and has passed one to AMALIA. He offers another to JUDY.

ZACK

At a certain point, you stop paying attention.
 It fades into the background like everything else.

JUDY

I hope I wouldn't. You know, let it fade.
 I want to be someone who appreciates things before they're gone.

AMALIA

Do you feel like you haven't been appreciating this?

JUDY

This.

AMALIA

The residency.

JUDY

I've been trying. I think. I hope.

ZACK

Is this all we're going to talk about tonight?

AMALIA *a little annoyed*

It's what we're talking about at the moment – why, what do you want to talk about, Zack?

ZACK

I don't know. Something more fun?

PODCAST

Nobody wants you here.

AMALIA

Don't be like this.

ZACK

What?

JUDY *smiling*

It's okay, we can talk about something more fun.

PODCAST

Is this what you're doing? All this nothing?

ZACK

What's been going on with you and Charlie?

AMALIA

Zack.

ZACK

I'm curious.

JUDY

It's – it's not a big deal.
It's also private.

ZACK

Come on, though, like, what's up? Aren't you way older than them?

JUDY

Maybe I should head back. It's a little late.

AMALIA

No, stay.
Zack, shut the fuck up.

ZACK

I didn't realize it was this big of a deal.

AMALIA

Shut up.

ZACK

Okay, I'm shutting up. Sorry.
I'm sorry.
– Why Charlie, though?

JUDY

They were – kind. They listened to me.

CHARLIE is climbing up the path, unseen.

ZACK

After you leave, you're not going to – ?

JUDY

No. I don't – that wouldn't be a good idea.

CHARLIE is there.

CHARLIE

Hey guys.

ZACK

Charlie!

AMALIA

Hey Charlie.

CHARLIE *to JUDY*

Been a minute.

JUDY
Yeah, I – yeah.

PODCAST
You're wasting time.

ZACK
Want a beer?

CHARLIE
Okay.

*ZACK hands CHARLIE a beer. CHARLIE sits. They drink in silence for a moment.
ZACK starts to laugh to himself.*

ZACK to JUDY
Has Amalia taken a picture of you yet?

JUDY
Um – no, actually.

AMALIA
Yeah, I guess I haven't.

CHARLIE
Really? She's taken one of me.

ZACK
I'm surprised. Amalia likes to take pictures of things that change.
I think Judy would be a great candidate.

AMALIA
Are you trying to be an asshole tonight?

JUDY
I wouldn't mind having my picture taken by you. If you want.

ZACK
Some people are just too boring for Amalia.

AMALIA
That's not true –

ZACK
Isn't it?

PODCAST
Nobody has ever wanted you.

JUDY
You do good work, Amalia. I really admire your interest in people.

ZACK
She's just trying to make you feel better.

JUDY
No, I mean it. I showed Hector one of your pieces and he liked it.

AMALIA
You showed Hector one of my pictures?

JUDY
Yeah, I –

AMALIA
Which one?

PODCAST
Why are you here?

JUDY
I don't know, you sent it to me –

AMALIA
Let me see.

PODCAST
Why?

JUDY
Okay, hold on –

PODCAST
What do you think you're doing here?

JUDY
Here.

*JUDY finds the photo, hands her phone to AMALIA. The headphone wire drapes between them.
AMALIA looks at the phone.
Maybe we start to hear another voice, a woman's, echo the PODCAST voice.*

PODCAST
You'll never be an artist.

AMALIA
You showed him this?

JUDY
Yeah, he –

AMALIA
What else did you show him? A poem?

JUDY
No, nothing. Just that.

AMALIA
What did he say?

JUDY

He said he liked it.

AMALIA

What else?

JUDY

That's it.

AMALIA

You're lying. He always has feedback. He likes to give feedback. What else did he say?

JUDY

I don't want –

PODCAST

You'll never be an artist.

AMALIA

Say it.

JUDY

He said – the composition could use work.
But I don't – I don't think that.

AMALIA is still looking at the phone.

PODCAST

You'll never be an artist.

AMALIA

He hates it.
I knew he would hate it.
I should've never –
I'll never get this residency.
I shouldn't apply. It's stupid to think –

JUDY / PODCAST

You'll never be an artist with that attitude.

AMALIA

Is that what you think?

PODCAST

Yes, Judy.

JUDY / PODCAST

All you do is talk about it, you never act on it.
You're wasting time.

AMALIA

If being an artist is being like you, doing whatever you're doing, then maybe I don't want to be an artist.

PODCAST

That's right. You'll never be enough.

JUDY / PODCAST

You'll never be an artist. You'll never be enough.

AMALIA

– What?

JUDY / PODCAST

You know what you're doing? You're wasting everyone's time.
What makes you think anything you do could possibly be worth it?

AMALIA

Fuck!

AMALIA throws JUDY's phone off the cliff. The headphones go flying.

ZACK

Oh my god.

AMALIA stands at the cliff's edge, breathing heavily. She slowly realizes what she's done.

AMALIA

Oh fuck. That was – fuck.
I'm so sorry. I didn't think – I'm so sorry.
Fuck.
I'll go – I'll go get it. I'll find it. Maybe it's –
Fuck. I'm sorry, Judy. Fuck.
I'll be – I'll be right back.

AMALIA starts to exit.

Um – don't tell Hector about this? Please?
I can't – I don't want to be fired. I can't be fired. I'm so sorry.
Fuck.

AMALIA exits. ZACK looks at JUDY and CHARLIE. JUDY is staring off the cliff.

ZACK

I'm – going to make sure she's okay.

ZACK exits after AMALIA.

CHARLIE

Do you want to – go with them?

JUDY

No.

CHARLIE

I don't think she realized –

JUDY

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Do you think you're better than us or something?
I bet that once you leave, you'll never talk to any of us again.

JUDY

No, I –
 If it weren't for you, I don't know what I'd –
 I would've been alone here.
 – What did I do?

JUDY sits.
JUDY breaks down and weeps.
CHARLIE hesitates, then sits with her.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry, I didn't –
 Listen, if you ever need someone to talk to, after you get back home – I know you're going through a lot, so no pressure – but let me know. I'm happy to talk.

JUDY

I don't know what to do.

CHARLIE

Do you want me to leave you alone?
 Or do you want company?

JUDY

I don't think I should be –
 I think I have to go.
 Home.
 I have to go home.
 My mom only has a few days and I'm going to go home empty-handed and it's just going to prove I wasted her life.
 I'll never be an artist.
 I should've known. I should've –
 What do I –?
 What do I do?

CHARLIE

– I don't know. Um.
 Do you want –
 Do you want to talk? About it?

JUDY

I want to talk about – something else. Please.

CHARLIE

Okay. Um.
 I can show you what I've learned about reloading a musket. To be an interpreter.

JUDY

– Okay.

CHARLIE

Okay. Great.
CHARLIE mimes as they demonstrate.
 So first you set the musket butt between your feet to steady it.
 Then you take the gunpowder cartridge and you pour it down the barrel. Then a wad of paper and a lead ball is shoved down the barrel until they're resting on top of the powder.
 That's what the big long stick part is. It's called a ramrod.

Then you take a finer grade of gunpowder, the primer powder, and pour it into the flash pan. Then you close it. Of course.

Then you're ready to shoulder it, pull the hammer back, and then pull the trigger to fire.

And, yeah. Boom.

As CHARLIE demonstrates, JUDY starts laughing. And crying. She's laughing through tears. Her laughter is infectious – CHARLIE starts laughing, too. They're laughing together. It's like nothing else matters, ever so briefly.

So. Did you learn a lot?

JUDY

I learned so much.

Transition.

Twenty-one

ZACK, alone. Talking to himself.

ZACK

Hey, so I –

Um.

Hector.

There's something I need to tell you.

I want to –

I need to talk to you about something.

A group of us went to the top of –

Last night, a few of us went to the top of the Great Face.

And –

Last night, a few of us went to the top of the Great Face, and, um, Judy was there with us.

And, well.

Okay.

I was drinking. I was drunk.

And I dropped Judy's phone off the cliff.

I threw Judy's phone –

I dropped Judy's phone off the cliff. On purpose.

And originally we weren't going to say anything, but I remembered what you said about taking responsibility, so – yeah.

I'm taking responsibility.

Okay.

Yeah.

Hector, hi. I need to tell you something. Last night a few of us went to the top of the Great Face, with Judy, and I was drinking, and I dropped Judy's phone off the cliff. I wasn't thinking. We couldn't find it. And we weren't going to say anything, but I remembered what you said, about taking responsibility, and –

And yeah, I got this bruise because I got in a fight at the Twisted Pony.

I need to take responsibility.

Yeah.

Good.

Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay.

ZACK exits.

Transition.

Twenty-two

HECTOR's office. JUDY enters.

HECTOR

Judy. Please, sit.

JUDY *sits*

Thanks for taking the time.

HECTOR

Thank you. I'm glad you got in touch with me. Zack told me what happened with your phone, and I just want to let you know, I think that's unacceptable. I'm very sorry. The appropriate disciplinary measures have been taken.

JUDY

Oh – okay?

HECTOR

I'm disappointed, to be honest. I expected better of him.

JUDY

Zack?

HECTOR

Yes. But don't worry. I've let him go.

JUDY

– For telling you what happened?

HECTOR

For throwing your phone off The Great Face. Like I said, it's unacceptable. I'm sorry.

JUDY

But he – that's not what happened.
– I dropped it.

HECTOR

You don't have to protect anyone, Judy.

JUDY

I'm not –

HECTOR

He wanted to step up. Take responsibility.
Now, why did you ask to see me?

JUDY

Hector, wait –

HECTOR

It's done, Judy.
You asked to see me. Let's talk about why you asked to see me.

JUDY

Um. Yeah. Okay.
I think I have to – I need to leave the residency early. I need to go home.

HECTOR
 Hmm.

JUDY
 I hope that's okay. I'm sorry.

HECTOR
 Are you alright?

JUDY
 It's – my mom is really sick, and I need to be there.

HECTOR gets quiet. After a moment, he nods.

HECTOR
 I understand.

JUDY
 – So. I'm going to leave today.
HECTOR nods again. He's looking at his hands.
 Thanks for the, um, the opportunity.
 Sorry that I don't have much to show for it. I really wanted to have something to show for it, and I want you to know that I feel bad about that. So.

HECTOR looks up at JUDY, like she's a puzzle he wants to solve.

HECTOR
 Right.
 How do I put this.
 I, um, have never been an artist.
 But my sister, my sister was a brilliant sculptor. She did miniatures, and her level of detail – photoreal. It was uncanny. Like she could take the actual real thing and shrink it down to fit in her hand. She was so good with details. Never forgot a birthday once she knew it. Alphabetized her spice rack. That sort of thing. I never knew how she did it, I was never that way, that level of attention, that level of care. I've been trying.
 But you could see it in her sculptures. That care. The sculpture of the Great Face, in the residency apartment, is hers. You've seen her work. I'm sure you could tell, the detail –
 Anyway. I don't like to talk about it, but, um, she passed. A few years ago now. Almost exactly three, actually. Childbirth. The baby, too.
 And I didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't know how to – remember her. To not lose her. Them. But I would sit out there and look at The Great Face and – all I would see is her. Her hands all over it.
 She loved this place. We had that in common.
 So I talked to the board and we started this residency.
 And now you're here and I see that I've – I've fallen short.
 So go, be with your mom.

JUDY
 She and my dad got engaged here, so – yeah. This is a special place for me too.

HECTOR
 I hope you still got something out of the residency.

JUDY
 I think I did.

HECTOR

Everyone does. Even when they think they haven't.

JUDY

You think so?

HECTOR *re: JUDY*

Yes.

JUDY

Goodbye, Hector. Thank you.

HECTOR

Take care, Judy.

JUDY exits.
Transition.

Twenty-two

*JUDY is packing the last of her clothes at the residency apartment. She takes a moment to look at the sculpture of the Great Face.
There's a knock at the door.*

JUDY
Come in.

AMALIA enters, carrying a tote bag.

AMALIA
I hope it's not a bad time –

JUDY
Amalia.

AMALIA
I just came to pick up the keys, if you're ready.

JUDY
Amalia, I just wanted to say I'm so sorry for –

AMALIA
Yeah.

JUDY
I shouldn't have said those things to you –

AMALIA
Listen, um, I bought a new phone for you. I've been saving up this summer and I had enough money, so –

AMALIA pulls a new, boxed phone out of her bag and tries to hand it to JUDY.

JUDY
I can't let you do that.

AMALIA
Please.

JUDY
I can't take this.

AMALIA
I want you to. Please.

JUDY
You were saving up for a camera.

AMALIA
Judy, if you'd just take this I'd feel a lot better.

JUDY
You have to get yourself the camera.

AMALIA *pushing the phone into JUDY's hands*

No. I've made up my mind.

JUDY

– Are you still planning to apply to the residency next year?

AMALIA

I don't know.

No. Probably not.

JUDY

Because of me?

AMALIA

I think I need more time. You said it yourself, I'm not good enough.

JUDY

I shouldn't have said – I should have never said those things to you.

I sounded like my mother, and – that's not what I want to sound like. I'm sorry.

AMALIA

Okay.

– Do you think I need to work on composition?

JUDY

You don't have to fixate on –

AMALIA

I want to know. I want to get better.

JUDY

When I started drawing, my mom told me composition was about finding the right places to put our attention, our focus, our care. To keep things in balance.

JUDY takes out her sketchbook.

Like if I were to draw one of your photos, I might put this tree here, so it acts as a frame – see?

JUDY sketches for a bit. AMALIA watches. A moment of quiet. JUDY surveys her work.

– Can you promise me something?

AMALIA

Yeah?

JUDY

Get yourself that camera.

And keep me posted on your residency application.

AMALIA

Are you sure?

JUDY

Of course.

AMALIA

I really am sorry about your phone.

JUDY *slight laugh, a realization*

I don't know what to listen to anymore.

AMALIA *flipping through the sketchbook.*
What's this?

JUDY

Oh – I wrote down part of that poem you read me. I really liked it.
“I, too,
will soon fly
and bite
and die”

AMALIA

Do you mean it?

JUDY

I'll never forget it.

AMALIA *reading*

I will soon fly
and bite
and die

JUDY/AMALIA

I will soon fly
and bite
and die

We see CHARLIE, putting on a soldier's uniform as an interpreter.

JUDY/AMALIA/CHARLIE

I will soon **fly**
and **bite**
and **die**

We see ZACK, shouldering a backpack to leave the park.

JUDY/AMALIA/CHARLIE/ZACK

I will soon **FLY**
and **BITE**
and **DIE**

*We see HECTOR, looking at the Great Face. It is held by two enormous hands.
There are tears running down it.*

JUDY/AMALIA/CHARLIE/ZACK/HECTOR

I WILL SOON FLY
AND BITE
AND DIE

I WILL SOON FLY
AND BITE

AND DIE

*I WILL SOON FLY
AND BITE AND
DIE FLYING
DIE BITING
I WILL
FLY
FLY*

FLY!

A throng of birds erupts, dispersing into the sky.

JUDY is alone.

She goes to her sketchbook and writes.

She looks at what she's written. She tears the page out of the sketchbook and leaves it on the counter, next to the sculpture of the Great Face.

She takes her bag and leaves.

Transition.

Twenty-two

The residency apartment. A different day. All is quiet.

The door unlocks, opens, AMALIA leads a MAN in. He has a familiar voice.

AMALIA

Here we are!

Feel free to make yourself at home. Extra linens are in the closet over there, dishes are in the cabinets, and a washer and dryer are in the bathroom for laundry. The grocery store's across the street, I'm sure you saw it.

MAN

I did.

AMALIA

Their cranberry muffin is great. They bake all their pastries in house.

MAN

Yum.

AMALIA

The park's emergency numbers are on that sheet on the counter if anything comes up.

MAN

Good to know.

AMALIA

What else, what else.

Right – let me not forget to give you the keys.

AMALIA hands the MAN the keys.

MAN

Thank you.

AMALIA

So what is it you do?

MAN

Oh, I write. I also host a podcast, but I'm mostly here to write.

AMALIA

Cool. That's really cool.

The past artists started this tradition of leaving a note for the next artist of the summer, and a piece of art for the apartment. A little something to leave your mark.

MAN

Cute, I like that.

Re: JUDY's drawing and note.

Is this the last artist's?

AMALIA

Yep.

MAN *looking at the note*

I can't read this.

The handwriting.

AMALIA

Oh – let me see.

AMALIA takes the note, reads.

“To the next artist –

Welcome to the residency. Leave your expectations at the door. This place will teach you what it needs to teach you.”

MAN

Huh.

AMALIA

Can I take your picture? I’m a photographer.

MAN

Oh – sure.

AMALIA, with her new camera, takes his picture.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.