

SADIE HURTZ

By

Joshua Fardon

SADIE HURTZ

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for Patricia, Bella, and Sofia

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Sadie Hurtz received a staged reading at The Benchmark Theatre as part of the Fever Dream Festival in Denver, CO featuring the following cast:

Mandy	Katie Amadeo
Clark	Damon Guerrasio
Ruby	Abby Apple Boes
Dan/Gavin/Phil	Wade Livingston
Lake/Commercial Patient/Voice	Erica Lee
Roger/Wade/Commercial Narrator	Jason Garner
Ashley/Susan	Maggie Tisdale

Sadie Hurtz received a staged reading at The Naked Angels Theatre Company Chicago featuring the following cast:

Mandy	Atlie Gilbert
Clark	Michael Campobasso
Ruby	Patricia Mario
Dan/Gavin/Phil	Graham Heacock
Lake/Commercial Patient/Voice	Anne-Marie Little
Wade/Commercial Husband	Andy Rowell
Roger/Commercial Narrator	Radha Shukla
Ashley/Susan	Jessica Rivera

Sadie Hurtz received a staged reading at Chicago Dramatists featuring the following cast:

Mandy	Atlie Gilbert
Clark	Kevin Theis
Ruby	Adrianne Cury
Wade/Dan	Nick Jones
Gavin/Phil	Gary Huston
Lake/Commercial Patient/Voice	Erica Lee
Roger/Commercial Narrator	Darren Stephens
Ashley/Susan/Commercial Patient/Voice	Hannah Mary Simpson

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CAST – With doubling: 3 Women, 3 Men

MANDY GLADSTONE	30s, a writer
CLARK GLADSTONE	30s, manic, a salesman
RUBY GLADSTONE	60s, Mandy's mother, alcoholic
GAVIN	60s, salesman
LAKE	30s, Mandy's ex-girlfriend
PHIL	40s, carnival barker
ROGER	50s, runs a company
SUSAN	20s, a banker
WADE	40s, an entrepreneur
COMMERCIAL ACTORS	30s, 2 men, 1 woman
VOICE	Young, female

SUGGESTED CAST DOUBLING

Lake/Ashley/Susan/Voice/Commercial Patient

Wade/Gavin/Commercial Husband

Phil/Roger/Dan/Commercial Narrator

TIME: Divided between 1998 and 2017.

PLACE: Chicago and California.

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ACT 1

The sound of wind.

Lights up on two tall matching platforms with exposed steps on either side of the stage. At the top of each platform is a rectangular scrim, behind which a strong light is capable of casting well-defined shadows. Beside the Up Right Platform scrim: a large standalone home mailbox. To the left of the Up Left Platform scrim: a square gold-colored apartment mailbox. Downstage right: a small table which is used as a basement laboratory workstation. Downstage left: another small table with a laptop and a printer — this doubles as Mandy's desk and the printer in Sadie's trailer. Up Center, a simple metal chair in front of which stands MANDY GLADSTONE, 36 years old, in a tee-shirt, jeans and sneakers and carrying a large blue suitcase. She speaks directly to the audience as if she's talking to a person.

MANDY. *(to audience)* You look different. Than I imagined. I mean. I know, I've never seen you before. I've just... Well. *(She puts down the suitcase as the wind sound fades.)* So. Wow. It's um... Well, I'm not gonna say it's a pleasure to meet you or anything. It'd be a lie and I don't want us to start with a lie. And I'm not going to ask if you're surprised to see me. I'm guessing not so much. I'm just amazed the lights still work in here. *(She nervously brushes the front of her jeans.)* I brought you a present. *(She points to the suitcase.)* But before I give it to you, I have a question. I guess, my first question. I'll be careful not to ask any others, in case... Okay, so here goes. *(Pause.)* Why? *(Pause.)* If I don't get an answer, you don't get your present. I'm taking it with me. Just so you know. So you better find a way. I realize you can't talk, but fuck it, it's not my fault I keep asking for impossible things - it's genetic. I come from a long line of crazy people... *(Mandy's mother RUBY, 61, appears in silhouette on the Up Right Platform scrim. She holds a cup of coffee.)* ...like Mom, who used to, I don't know, for instance, when I was a little girl, she used to sneak into my room and move stuff around. *(Ruby shifts her weight, moving slightly.)* I'd wake up and one of my Barbies would be sitting

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on the other side of the bed or the pillow that was on the chair would be on the dresser. Later at the breakfast table, she'd just keep quiet and watch me like she was watching a movie, leaning forward, eyes fixed, a splash of Gibleys in her coffee. I'd say "I think Dream Glow Barbie flew over my bed last night." And Mom's eyes would drift up to meet Dad's... (*On the Up Right Platform, a light comes up on the silhouette of Mandy's father CLARK, 36, as he was 21 years ago.*) ... not that Dad would ever do shit like that. He wouldn't. I mean, you know him, right? (*catching herself*) That wasn't a question, it was statement of fact. (*Pause.*) Funny thing is, I sort of remember Barbie flying over my bed. (*Pause.*) But I read somewhere that imagination and memory occupy the same part of the brain and often get confused — that memory is like a sealant that can't tolerate voids, so we use stories as filling. Maybe that's why I'm a writer, because I can't tell what's real and what isn't real — and maybe that's why I write for theatre, because it's one of the few places where something can be both — like, you, maybe, I don't even know if you're real, but I'm not going to ask you because that would be a question. (*She looks at Ruby's silhouette.*) At least I'm aware of my loosening grip on reality. (*Ruby's silhouette fades.*) At least my hallucinations are free to come and go... (*Clark's scrim rises. He wears a faded brown jacket, a loose-fitting tie, and carries a briefcase.*) Mom's kind of crazy is more fixed, eternal, like the solar system, or cockroaches, it's always going to be there, there's nothing you can do to change it. Dad on the other hand...

CLARK. (*facing out*) It just came to me...

MANDY. (*to audience*) ... Dad's much more fluid.

CLARK. ...as if an angel whispered it in my ear.

MANDY. (*to audience*) He started sane. Or he seemed to.

CLARK. The spread of technology has been a process of giving up, of letting go. All these complex tasks made simple by an act of surrender. Yet, when we turn to the most essential thing there is — our health... What? Oh. Sorry. Can you hear me now?

MANDY. (*to audience*) I was forced to watch him unravel.

CLARK. How about now?

MANDY. (*to audience*) He was good at hiding things.

CLARK. Okay, Good. Yeah, I was saying, when it comes to our health, we're still buried in this primitive analog system of control. But this device is a step into the future.

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MANDY. *(to audience)* This was 21 years ago. I was 15. *(Clark descends the Platform stairs. Mandy claps. Lights up on WADE, 30s, in a short-sleeved shirt.)*

WADE. And what about you, Clark? Have you stepped into the future?

CLARK. That'd be a good slogan.

WADE. When will you be done with the prototype?

CLARK. I am done.

WADE. You're done?

CLARK. Pretty much. I've just got to—

WADE. Can I see it?

CLARK. I gotta run a couple of tests.

WADE. No, Clark, if it's done—

CLARK. People are gonna depend on this, I mean, don't we want it to be—

WADE. Bazer has guys who can test it.

CLARK. Yeah, but if there's a problem...

WADE. The Bazer agent told me.

CLARK. ...and Bazer has to fix it themselves...

WADE. This is a window of opportunity...

CLARK. ...they may also claim to have—

WADE. ...but it's closing.

CLARK. I just wanna make sure everything's right.

WADE. Who cares if it's right. It's finished.

CLARK. The primary component hasn't been vetted.

WADE. Your genius is the primary component.

CLARK. No one's seen it other than—

WADE. They can see it when they buy it.

CLARK. It's not ready.

WADE. "Ready" is a word for people who don't take risks. *(Wade offers Clark a pen and a contract.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* My father was not a good businessman.

WADE. Bazer needs an exclusive. Non-negotiable. You can't bring this to anyone else and you can't sell it yourself.

MANDY. *(to audience)* A mind swept up by a wind of ideas...

WADE. Trust that this is happening.

MANDY. *(to audience)* ...doesn't think about control...

WADE. Trust that the Universe is giving this to you.

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MANDY. *(to audience)* ...it gives itself to the wind. *(Clark signs the contract.)*

WADE. How soon can you get us the prototype?

MANDY. *(to audience)* He got it to them one week later. *(Mandy claps. Lights abruptly change.)* One year later. *(Clark turns 360 degrees and faces Wade. He cautiously crosses the stage.)*

WADE. Fuck! Clark! You scared me.

CLARK. Sorry.

WADE. No, it's okay.

CLARK. I'm really sorry.

WADE. It's okay. What's—

CLARK. Good. I'm doin' good.

WADE. *(he didn't ask)* Oh. Okay.

CLARK. How's it goin' with you?

WADE. Well, I got 96 unreturned phone calls, but other than that my wife is leaving me.

CLARK. Oh. I'm so sorry.

WADE. Meh. That's what mistresses are for. So. How's the whole... You still—

CLARK. Yeah. I'm still.

WADE. Oh, that's good. Good.

CLARK. I got another project I've been tinkering with...

WADE. Oh, great, I'd like to see that.

CLARK. Yeah.

WADE. You're a brilliant guy, Clark.

CLARK. Thanks.

WADE. Bazer's gonna want to see it, too. They been askin' about you.

CLARK. They have?

WADE. Yeah. They're all, like, this drug distribution device, it's awesome. I had a VP call me. He was like "who is this guy?"

CLARK. Have they drawn up my contract yet?

WADE. Well, these things take time.

CLARK. I thought the window was closing

WADE. Window?

CLARK. The window of opportunity.

WADE. It is closing. Slowly.

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CLARK. It's been a year.

WADE. A year's nothing, Clark. Look, I know you don't know this and I mean no disrespect because you're a brilliant, brilliant man and you've been working on your own but when there's lawyers and testers and product engineers involved, you cannot push. If you start to push and make demands you're gonna fuck it all up.

CLARK. I've been calling you.

WADE. Yeah, I turned my phone off because my wife—

CLARK. I sent emails.

WADE. I don't read my emails.

CLARK. What if Bazer sends you an email?

WADE. They won't do that because they know I hate technology.

CLARK. My daughter's turning 17 on Thursday. She applied to DePaul. She wants to be a writer.

WADE. Good school.

CLARK. She's excited.

WADE. You have a day job?

CLARK. That's how you found me.

WADE. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. For Roger, right?

CLARK. I'm an Infusion Systems Specialist.

WADE. Well, that should bring in enough.

CLARK. It doesn't.

WADE. Remind me what an Infusion Systems Specialist does?

MANDY. *(to audience)* He sold catheters. *(Wade exits as Clark crosses to the Up Right Platform and sits on the bottom stair. Mandy walks by him as she ascends the Platform stairs.)* Hardly glamorous. But five years before that conversation he'd sold more catheters to private clinics than any other company agent in the Midwest. That's when we bought the house. Then the business changed — the company he worked for was small and couldn't meet the expectations and demands of the conglomerates. Over the last two years, sales ground to a halt. After a rough day he wouldn't say hello — just head straight down to the basement, and retreat into his world of ideas. Sometimes he'd have been there for hours before we realized he was even home. *(Clark pulls a small plastic wheel-shaped device out of his coat pocket and tinkers with it. Mandy reaches the top of the stairs and looks down at him.)* Dad? *(Pause. Clark is lost in thought.)* Dad? *(Clark starts.)*

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CLARK. Oh. Ha. Sorry.

MANDY. I heard noises. I wasn't sure it was you.

CLARK. Who else would it be?

MANDY. What are you doing?

CLARK. Nothing.

MANDY. Are you leaving us?

CLARK. Who told you that? Your mother?

MANDY. I saw your suitcase.

CLARK. Oh. Just for a few days.

MANDY. Where you going?

CLARK. California.

MANDY. Why?

CLARK. To make money.

MANDY. Can I come with you?

CLARK. I wish.

MANDY. Don't wish. Just let me come with you.

CLARK. It's not going to be movie stars and palm trees.

MANDY. I don't care.

CLARK. What about school? Don't you have an essay?

MANDY. It'll be better if I write it in California.

CLARK. I can't take you, Mandy.

MANDY. Because you don't want to?

CLARK. We can't afford it.

MANDY. Bring me a souvenir?

CLARK. Of what?

MANDY. Something from Disneyland.

CLARK. I'm not going to be anywhere near Disneyland.

MANDY. Where are you gonna be?

CLARK. Riverside County. *(Mandy claps. Lights change.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* Fifteen minutes later. *(She claps. Lights change again.)* There's a place called Alton Dreams in Jupiter.

CLARK. Jupiter?

MANDY. It's a town in Riverside county.

CLARK. Alton Dreams?

MANDY. They have an awesome website.

CLARK. It's an amusement park?

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MANDY. It looks awesome.

CLARK. I'm going to be really busy, Mandy. *(Mandy looks disappointed. Clark takes her hand.)*

CLARK. Okay. I'll get you a tee-shirt.

MANDY. Promise?

CLARK. Promise. *(Clark kisses Mandy's cheek, then walks downstage center. A circle of light surrounds him as he walks in place.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* Now we come to the thing I was talking about before – about memory and imagination turning into this soup of what's true and what isn't. I remember these events as if they happened to me. But, obviously they didn't. They happened to my father. Yet, I'm convinced my version is accurate, partly because it feels accurate and partly because the effects of these strange occurrences are palpably, demonstrably real. Why else would I be here talking to you. *(quickly)* That wasn't a question – just a rhetorical statement. *(Clark walks in place, looking around.)* After a week without a single sale, Dad, down to his last twenty five dollars, discovered that Riverside County is huge and that the town of Jupiter and the park called Alton Dreams were as far from his motel as they could be, tucked into the dusty foothills where the Inland Empire loses its way into the Mojave desert.

CLARK. Fuck.

MANDY. *(to audience)* Happily, there was no entrance fee, just flash your license at the gate and go in. The park itself was kind of, well, kind of...

CLARK. What a shithole.

MANDY. *(to audience)* ...loosely structured, with no underlying theme, like an orphanage for lost rides from various state fairs, most of which looked dangerously uncared for: the rollercoaster track was missing slats at sporadic intervals and the fulcrum of the Tilt-a-Whirl moaned like an extra in a zombie flick. *(She claps. Lights up on the Up Left Platform. The scrim rises to reveal PHIL, 30s, wearing a filthy old-time straw hat and a faded striped vest. He descends the stairs.)*

PHIL. Looking for something?

CLARK. A gift shop?

PHIL. We don't have those.

CLARK. You don't have a gift shop?

PHIL. It's not what I meant anyway.

CLARK. All right, thanks. *(Mandy claps. Lights out on Phil. Clark walks in*

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place, then stops.) Whoa whoa whoa. Hang on. *(Mandy claps. Lights back up on Phil.)* What do you mean it's not "what you meant"?

PHIL. I didn't mean in the park. I meant in your life. Are you looking for something? Are you unsatisfied or afraid? Is there a question that vexes you because it doesn't appear to be answerable? *(Phil steps aside. The silhouette of a vintage trailer appears on the Up Left scrim.)* Sadie Hurtz has all the answers. Just step right up to this little trailer room right here, my friend. *(Clark steps towards Phil. Phil holds up a hand.)* But be careful, some of Sadie's answers are better left unsaid.

CLARK. How's it work?

PHIL. You come into Sadie's room, you sit in a chair and ask her three questions.

CLARK. So she's a psychic?

PHIL. To be a psychic, she would have to be human.

CLARK. How much is it?

PHIL. Thirty bucks.

CLARK. I only have twenty-five.

PHIL. For twenty-five, I'll give you two questions instead of three.

CLARK. You only get three questions?

PHIL. Two for twenty-five.

CLARK. She can see the future?

PHIL. As if it were the past.

CLARK. How's her accuracy?

PHIL. You won't know if you don't come in.

CLARK. Have you asked her anything?

PHIL. Sure.

CLARK. And?

PHIL. Changed my life for the better.

CLARK. But you're doing this. *(Realizes how insulting that was.)* Sorry. I'm sorry. Fuck. Okay... Look... *(Pulls out his wallet.)* How's ten dollars?

PHIL. Two for twenty-five.

CLARK. One question for fifteen.

PHIL. I'm not going lower.

CLARK. Then three questions for 25. That's my final offer.

PHIL. *(holds out his hand. Clark gives him two bills which Phil stuffs into his back pocket. He leads Clark to the metal chair stage center.)* Choose your

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words carefully. Limit the questions to yourself. Be respectful but speak loudly and clearly. Above all: Do not touch her. Do not go near her. Doing so will have devastating consequences. Take a seat, relax, and enjoy. *(Phil steps away. Clark sits on the chair. A tight circle of light surrounds him. He looks up into the audience as if facing something huge.)*

CLARK. You gotta be kidding. *(Stands.)* It's a doll. *(Pause. He sits again.)* Well, hiya. I'm Clark. And you're a giant wooden doll. Nice to meet you. *(Small pause.)* Sure are big. No offense. They must have built this trailer around you. *(Pause.)* What are the chains for? *(A whirring sound. A piece of paper pops out of the printer on the Stage Left table. Clark stands, goes to the table, picks up the printout, and reads.)* "My chains are my business. Please limit the questions to yourself." Oh. Okay. Sorry. Wait, that didn't count as a question, did it? *(The printer whirrs.)* No, no wait! Oh, come on! Hold on!! *(Tears off the printout and reads.)* "Yes." *(He looks up.)* What, so, I got one fucking question left? *(Realizing)* WAIT! That wasn't a question! That wasn't a question! I was just saying it rhetorically, like "one left." *(He looks at the printer and holds out his hands. It doesn't move. Holding the two printouts, he walks slowly back to the chair.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* Imagine having one question about your life, one thing you want to know for certain, and you have to think of it on the spot.

CLARK. *(Pause.)* Will I get the contract? *(The printer whirrs.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* Now imagine you know the answer to the question that's been haunting you is printed on a piece of paper. You might read it. But you might not.

CLARK. *(stands, walks slowly to the table, picks up the printout, and reads.)* "By the time you get back to Chicago, you'll be in love." *(He looks up.)* How do you know I'm from Chicago? *(Pause.)* No, seriously, how do you know that? *(Looks at the printout.)* "You'll be in love." That's not an answer. I asked about the contract. *(He stands there.)* Hold on. Wait. I ought to get another question. You didn't answer my question. *(No answer. He paces back and forth.)* Look I know you're just a doll and there's probably a microphone in here, but I just spent the last money I have, the money I was supposed to spend on a gift for my little girl and I'm tired of not getting firm answers and I'm asking please just in this one instance you can at least do me the honor of providing me with an answer to the question I asked and paid for. Please. Will I get the contract? *(Pause.)* Okay... *(Clark runs downstage, and if possible,*

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into the audience. He returns quickly, holding a GIANT WOODEN HAND.)
Want it back? Want your hand back? Will I get the contract? *(Pause.)* You ugly fucking wooden piece of shit!! *(Mandy claps. Lights change. Phil appears.)*

PHIL. Sir, what are you-

CLARK. Will I get the contract?

PHIL. Give me the hand.

CLARK. Answer me!

PHIL. Sir! *(Phil steps towards Clark. They stand off. Clark steps to his right, Phil to his left, Clark fakes a left, Phil lunges right, then stumbles into the dark offstage. Clark dashes downstage right. A light shines over him. He holds the hand over his head and runs in place.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* He ran. Past the barker, out the trailer and across the park. He ran and he ran and he ran.

CLARK. *(A sudden burst of exhilaration, as if he's won the lottery.)*

Yaaahhhhhh!!!

MANDY. *(to audience)* When he came home 24 hours later... *(Clark darts up the Up Right Platform stairs, kisses Mandy on the cheek, and thrusts the giant wooden hand into her arms.)* You got me a hand?

CLARK. Not just any hand. That's a hand from Alton Dreams.

MANDY. You didn't get me a tee-shirt?

CLARK. This is so much better...

MANDY. How is it—

CLARK. It's the right hand of Sadie Hurtz.

MANDY. *(to audience)* First time I'd ever heard her name and here I was, holding a body part. *(to Clark)* Who's Sadie Hurtz? *(Clark runs down the stairs, then up the stairs again and kisses the air.)* He kissed Mom on the lips. I'd never seen him do that. This required research. *(She runs down the Platform stairs and sits in front of the laptop.)* I found a forum. Sadie Hurtz was, in fact, an all-knowing, all-seeing ten-foot tall wooden doll chained to a giant chair in a vintage trailer on the outskirts of the park. Her answers were stunningly accurate. But you only get three questions. *(to Clark)* What'd you ask her?

CLARK. *(Descends the stairs and goes to his worktable.)* I think I just asked her how old I was and where I lived or something.

MANDY. Did she know?

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CLARK. She knew.

MANDY. *(to audience)* A guy on the forum had it all figured out. When a customer used his or her ID to enter the park, the management would take note of basic information. Home state, address and date of birth were readily available. And even back then many people already had some kind of presence online, so looking them up was easy. *(to Clark)* What was your third question?

CLARK. I don't remember.

MANDY. How can you not remember?

CLARK. I was busy stealing her hand. *(Clark picks up the blue suitcase, lays it on the table and opens it.)*

MANDY. What are you doing?

CLARK. Getting ready.

MANDY. For what?

CLARK. *(Mimes packing.)* I'm going back to California.

MANDY. But you just went.

CLARK. There's a convention. I got a promising lead.

MANDY. Aren't you scared of Sadie?

CLARK. Why would I be scared?

MANDY. You stole her hand.

CLARK. I won't go near the park.

MANDY. What if they come here?

CLARK. They're not coming here.

MANDY. They have your home address.

CLARK. They're not gonna do anything.

MANDY. They might arrest us.

CLARK. Nobody's gonna arrest anyone, sweetie... *(He snaps the blue suitcase shut and walks up the Platform stairs.)* ...no one cares. Bye, bye.

MANDY. *(to audience)* Suddenly, at the top of the stairs, as if in an afterthought, he looked at my mother and said:

CLARK. I love you.

MANDY. *(to audience)* I had never heard him say that before. Not once. To anyone.

CLARK. I love you.

MANDY. *(to audience)* He came back a week later...

CLARK. *(Pivots 180°.)* I love you!

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MANDY. *(to audience)* Off to California again.

CLARK. *(Pivots again.)* I love you!

MANDY. *(to audience)* And back.

CLARK. *(Pivots again.)* I love you!

MANDY. *(to audience)* And off. And back. *(She claps. Lights change. Clark runs down the Platform stairs, sets the suitcase back in place, then mimes speaking on a phone as he paces back and forth. Mandy ascends the Platform stairs.)* Over and over and over, without a single sale. Money dwindling, no sign of the contract going through.

CLARK. *(on phone)* Can't or won't?

MANDY. *(to audience)* He's been home for three whole days. I'm standing in the kitchen at the top of the basement stairs listening to a one-sided conversation.

look like. *(beat)* Please. Just picture it so I'm not the only one who's picturing it. *(Looks up and sees Mandy.)* I have to go. Bye. *(He hangs up.)*

MANDY. Who were you talking to? *(Clark shakes his head. He pulls the wheel out of his pocket and starts fiddling with it. Mandy watches.)*

CLARK. Come down here for a second? *(Mandy walks down the stairs. Clark shows her the wheel.)*

MANDY. What's it do?

CLARK. Make money, hopefully.

MANDY. We could use it, then.

CLARK. *(Puts down the wheel and takes Mandy's hand.)* Mandy, can I ask you something?

MANDY. Sure.

CLARK. If I were to change, would you still... *(Pause.)*

MANDY. Still what?

CLARK. Would you be better off if it wasn't like this?

MANDY. Mom's been drinking more since you went to California.

CLARK. Didn't think that was possible.

MANDY. I know you're struggling and trying to do what's best for us. So my answer is yes I'd love it if you were home more and if you came upstairs more often. I would really, really love it. *(Clark nods. Mandy claps. Lights change. She walks back up the Up Right Platform Stairs.)* *(to audience)* The trips to California stopped. But Dad didn't come up from the basement. He was there day and night. *(She watches as Clark sits on the bottom of the stairs, tinkering*

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with the small wheel.) Dad? (Pause.) I made us some sandwiches. (Pause.)
What are you working on?

CLARK. The impossible. *(Mandy claps. Lights change. Mandy stands at the top of the stairs. Clark talks on the phone.)*

MANDY. Cubs are winning.

CLARK. Shhh! *(Mandy claps. Lights up on Clark's boss ROGER, 40s, in silhouette behind the Up Left Platform scrim.)* In the mail, Roger? In the fucking mail? *(The scrim rises. Roger, in a suit, speaks directly out to the audience without facing Clark. Mandy watches from the top of the stairs.)*
You don't have the guts to fire me in person?

ROGER. When do I do anything in person?

CLARK. Fifteen years.

ROGER. We don't work out of an office, Clark. I can't just summon you to my house.

CLARK. Fifteen years and I never complained once.

ROGER. No, you've complained several times.

CLARK. I've closed more sales than anyone—

ROGER. Not recently.

CLARK. Anyone in the Midwest.

ROGER. Not recently.

CLARK. Because it's been—

ROGER. Because you keep going southwest.

CLARK. I stopped. I stopped.

ROGER. You stopped everything. I haven't even heard from you for months.

CLARK. Because it's dead in Chicago.

ROGER. How would you even know that?

CLARK. What if I told them about your little kickback trick?

ROGER. What kickback trick?

CLARK. You think I don't know?

ROGER. Yeah, I do think you don't know.

CLARK. Okay, so, send me out again.

ROGER. I don't need to.

CLARK. Then send me back out west.

ROGER. I can't.

CLARK. Why not?

ROGER. You know why not.

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CLARK. No...

ROGER. What happened at Alton Dreams?

CLARK. Fuck you. *(He hangs up. Lights out on Roger. Clark throws the phone on the table. Then he looks up at Mandy, remembering she's there.)* Don't tell your Mom. *(Mandy claps. Lights change. She stands at the top of the stairs. Clark paces while pleading into his phone.)* Please. Please. No. That is not what I meant. Because you put words in my mouth when all I said was... That's all I said. Could you just listen to me? For one second, just... *(He throws the phone on the table.)*

MANDY. Dad? *(Clark ignores her.)* We're opening presents. *(Pause.)* You should hurry. Mom's being hilarious. She's drinking from the Santa hat. *(Pause.)* Well, if you feel like coming up, come up. *(Mandy claps. Lights change. Clark paces again, phone to ear. Wade appears on the Up Left Platform.)*

WADE. What have you done, Clark?

CLARK. They're gonna keep it.

WADE. My contact at Bazer tells me you sent some kind of hellish email.

CLARK. I know what you guys are doing.

WADE. Me? You're including me in this?

CLARK. You stole my idea and you gave it to them.

WADE. I'm selling your idea. Selling's the opposite of stealing.

CLARK. How much did they give you?

WADE. I told you, this is a process. It takes time.

CLARK. It's been two years.

WADE. Know what, Clark? I'm out.

CLARK. How much did they give you?

WADE. You wanna take this up with Bazer...

CLARK. You lied to me.

WADE. ...hire some shitty lawyer...

CLARK. You lied! *(Clark hangs up the phone. Mandy claps. Lights out on Wade. Lights change on Clark who again paces while talking on the phone. Mandy watches him from the top of the Platform Stairs.)* You're the coward, you're the one who's afraid... *(He pulls the small wheel out of his pocket.)* I'm not like you. I don't need to destroy to create. *(He catches his breath and paces.)*

MANDY. Dad?

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CLARK. *(into phone)* No. This is it. It's over. Goodbye. GOODBYE!
(He hangs up and notices Mandy standing at the top of the stairs.) Why do you think it's okay to interrupt me when I'm having a private conversation?

MANDY. I don't.

CLARK. Every time I look up, there you are.

MANDY. I just heard voices. I wanted to—

CLARK. I'm the only voice down here, Mandy. There's no voice but me.

MANDY. I'm sorry.

CLARK. Don't be sorry. Just leave me alone. *(Mandy claps. Lights change.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* He stayed down there for five whole days. I could hear him sometimes yelling, sometimes, whispering. *(Clark walks up the Platform stairs.)* Until one eventful Saturday he emerged like Lazarus and walked straight out to the mailbox. *(Clark opens the mailbox to the right of the Platform scrim. He extracts a thick bundle of letters. He brushes by Mandy as he walks down the stairs, going through the mail. At the bottom step, he finds a single postcard among the letters. He reads the postcard, studies it, and flips it over. Mandy stays at the top of the stairs and watches.)* Dad?

CLARK. I'm busy.

MANDY. You coming?

CLARK. To what?

MANDY. Graduation?

CLARK. Thought it was next week.

MANDY. No.

CLARK. It's not?

MANDY. Dad.

CLARK. Oh, okay. Sorry, baby. I'll be right up. I just gotta um... I gotta....

MANDY. Mom's already dressed.

CLARK. Why don't you guys go ahead and I'll be there soon.

MANDY. How you gonna get there?

CLARK. I'll take a cab.

MANDY. Can't we just go together?

CLARK. Mandy?

MANDY. Seriously, just come upstairs.

CLARK. Remember Sadie Hurtz?

MANDY. Sadie Hurtz.

CLARK. Yes.

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MANDY. The hand?

CLARK. Where is that hand now?

MANDY. I don't know. I think maybe down there somewhere?

CLARK. When did you last see it?

MANDY. A year?

CLARK. Ever share that story with anyone?

MANDY. No.

CLARK. I mean, you might have talked to one of your—

MANDY. I never told anyone, Dad.

CLARK. What about your mother?

MANDY. I didn't tell her.

CLARK. Sure?

MANDY. You asked me not to. I didn't. *(Clark shows her the postcard.)*
What is that?

CLARK. It's a postcard. I got it in the mail.

MANDY. Who's it from?

CLARK. Sadie Hurtz. She wants her hand back. *(Pause.)*

MANDY. What?

CLARK. *(holds up the card and reads)* "Clark, I want my hand back. Sadie Hurtz"

MANDY. What's the card of?

CLARK. Her.

MANDY. Can I see? *(She walks down the stairs. Clark hands her the card.)*
(to audience) In my mind I'd pictured an adult-sized porcelain doll, but the figure in this image was younger, much bigger, and made entirely of wood, a giant little girl with huge pain-filled green eyes that stare straight at the camera. She almost looks alive. She's sitting in a rocking chair and chains are wrapped over her arms and torso, as if she's being held there. Printed at the top of the image it says in all caps "SADIE HURTZ HAS ALL THE ANSWERS." I flip the card over and look at the postmark. May 25. It's from Jupiter, California.

CLARK. I guess they kept my information on file.

MANDY. Why wouldn't they just ask you?

CLARK. I don't know.

MANDY. You want me to look for the hand?

CLARK. Don't worry about it. Just don't tell your mom about this, okay?

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MANDY. Can we go now? (*Mandy claps. Lights change. Clark paces back and forth, tinkering with the small wheel.*) (*to audience*) Three months went by. Dad still wasn't working. I decided to put off college for a year.

CLARK. Just one more piece...

MANDY. (*to audience*) I got a gig as a junior assistant at a small real estate office. It quickly became the only source of income in the house. Mom had been a nurse years ago, but she'd been fired for drinking on the job.

CLARK. This is it.

MANDY. (*to audience*) All of Dad's energy was focused on his new invention.

MANDY. (*to audience*) His eyes lit up when he spoke about it. But he wouldn't provide details.

CLARK. I know what to do this time. To protect myself. I can handle these guys. (*Mandy claps. Lights change. Clark runs up the Platform stairs and reaches into the mailbox. He pulls out a pile of letters.*)

MANDY. (*to audience*) Against good sense, we continued to wait for the contract from Bazer. It was a delusion, and we knew it was a delusion, but it was keeping Dad's dreams alive. (*Clark walks back down the Platform stairs, rifles through the mail, then suddenly stops.*) What? (*She walks down the stairs and stands in front of him.*) What? (*Clark pulls a new postcard out of the mail. He hands it to Mandy, who flips it over and reads out loud.*) "Clark, You take from me. I take from you. Sadie Hurtz." (*She looks at the postmark.*) "September 23. Henderson, Nevada."

CLARK. Maybe they have a park there.

MANDY. I'll look it up.

CLARK. You didn't say anything to your Mom?

MANDY. No. (*Clark takes the card back.*)

CLARK. Good. (*Mandy claps. Lights out on Clark. Mandy crosses left to her computer desk.*)

MANDY. (*to audience*) There was no park in Henderson. The only Alton Dreams that had ever existed was in Jupiter, California. I learned in my search that even that park no longer existed. The Tilt-a-Whirl had finally come loose. Three people died. The park couldn't recover. (*She crosses down center.*) Okay. So. Someone who worked at Alton Dreams must have moved to Nevada and wants to start Sadie Hurtz again. And maybe they need her hand. Of course. But there's no return address, nowhere to send it. Only the

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postmark. And the old park no longer exists. *(She claps. Lights up on Clark, working on the small wheel.)* Two weeks went by. He spent every hour in the basement, tinkering away at his latest invention, not getting anywhere. Every once in a while, rising like magma from the kitchen floor...

CLARK. *(He accidentally drops the wheel.)* Fuck! Fuck! FUCK!! FUCK!!!! *(Clark ascends the Platform stairs and extracts another pile of mail out of the mailbox. He finds another postcard. He holds the card in front of him, up to the light and reads out loud.)* “Clark, My chains are off now. Here I come. Sadie Hurtz” October 7, Savannah, Georgia.

MANDY. No return address? *(Clark shakes his head.)* So, whoever it is moved from Henderson to Savannah.

CLARK. They didn’t move.

MANDY. I looked up Alton Dreams online.

CLARK. I know who this is.

MANDY. Did you know it closed?

CLARK. It doesn’t matter.

MANDY. There was an accident. They went bankrupt.

CLARK. I fell off the moon.

MANDY. What?

CLARK. Mandy, I need some time alone.

MANDY. Did you just say you fell off the moon?

CLARK. I have to make a phone call. *(Mandy claps and steps into the shadows. Light goes up on Roger at the top of the Up Left Platform.)*

ROGER. Hello?

CLARK. I know what you guys are doing—

ROGER. Clark?

CLARK. I’m asking you please to stop it.

ROGER. Stop what?

CLARK. I looked everywhere.

ROGER. What are you talking about?

CLARK. My daughter thought it was down here in the basement, but—

ROGER. Clark—

CLARK. I’m fully aware I’m not allowed to respond, and I’m not, I’m just telling you it’s harassment and I know who’s responsible and I know that you know who’s responsible—

ROGER. Clark, you’re not making any sense.

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CLARK. It's not like I changed my mind.

ROGER. I think you need help.

CLARK. I'm hurt, too.

ROGER. Clark, honest to God, I'm saying this as a friend.

CLARK. You're not my friend.

ROGER. Get help.

CLARK. I don't have any money.

ROGER. I can't—

CLARK. I can't pay the electric bill.

ROGER. I know it might not be easy right now...

CLARK. They're gonna shut us off soon.

ROGER. ...but things will get better.

CLARK. Give me a chance.

ROGER. I'm going now, Clark.

CLARK. Number one in the Midwest. Number one. I know Chicago. I know it better than anyone.

ROGER. Goodbye.

CLARK. Just keep me and I promise, I won't go there, just keep me, I'll stay away from... *(Mandy claps. Lights out on Roger. Clark goes back to tinkering with the small wheel. Mandy claps again. Lights change.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* One time I stood at the top of the basement stairs and I heard something I'd never heard before. *(Clark weeps.)* Dad? *(Clark wipes his face.)* Dad? You okay?

CLARK. Did the mail come?

MANDY. Not yet. Can I turn on the light? *(Pause. Mandy claps. Brighter lights up on Clark, who covers his eyes with his hands.) (to audience)*

That face I saw wasn't my father. It was a trapped animal staring up at me. Like what you might see if you suddenly flooded a dark cage with light.

CLARK. Turn it off, please. *(Mandy claps. Lights out on Clark.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* Two days later. *(Mandy claps. Lights up on Clark in the same position.)* Dad?

CLARK. *(Pause.)* Leave me alone.

MANDY. *(Claps. Lights out on Clark.) (to audience)* Four days later. *(Mandy claps. Lights up on Clark.)*

CLARK. Turn it off. *(Mandy claps. Lights out on Clark.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* He hadn't left the basement for four weeks. When I

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came home from work I made sandwiches, put them on the stairs, peered down into the blackness and listened. The screams had stopped, but I could hear him breathing, alone there in the dark. *(Mandy starts to clap, then reconsiders.)*

CLARK. Time is it?

MANDY. Midnight.

CLARK. Did you check the mail?

MANDY. Yeah, I've been checking it, Dad.

CLARK. Did we get any?

MANDY. There's no postcards.

CLARK. Can I see, please? *(Mandy reaches behind the scrim and scoops up a large stack of letters and bills.)*

MANDY. I'm gonna turn on the light now. *(She claps. Lights up on Clark. Mandy walks down the stairs and gives him the mail. Clark sifts through it.)*

MANDY. I got another job.

CLARK. Doing what?

MANDY. Just part-time on weekends. I'm cleaning.

CLARK. So you're a janitor?

MANDY. When I'm not an Executive Assistant.

CLARK. So my daughter's a janitor.

MANDY. I paid the electric bill.

CLARK. So all that stumbling around upstairs is just your mother?

MANDY. What stumbling? *(Pause. Clark looks through the mail. No postcards. He stops and looks at Mandy.)*

MANDY. What?

CLARK. Where are they?

MANDY. What?

CLARK. Don't lie to me.

MANDY. Lie about what?

CLARK. You took them out.

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

CLARK. Go get them.

MANDY. What?

CLARK. All of them.

MANDY. Swear to God, Dad.

CLARK. NOW!! *(Pause. Mandy walks up the Platform stairs, reaches under*

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a step and pulls out a short stack of postcards. She brings them down and hands them to Clark.)

CLARK. This is it?

MANDY. There's only four.

CLARK. Did you read them?

MANDY. No.

CLARK. Why would you lie to me?

MANDY. I'm not. *(Clark lets go of her, and looks at the first card.)*

CLARK. *(Reading)* October 9, Portland, Maine. "Clark, Life is failure. Why try? Here I come. Sadie Hurtz" *(He looks at the next postcard.)* October 23, White River Junction, Vermont. "Clark, Whose mistake? Here I come. Sadie Hurtz" *(Next postcard.)* November 6, Knoxville Tennessee. "Clark, God's mistake. Here I come. Sadie Hurtz"

MANDY. What did the doll say to you?

CLARK. It doesn't matter.

MANDY. It does matter.

CLARK. "God's mistake."

MANDY. This is just someone messing with your head.

CLARK. She's coming.

MANDY. You can't let it destroy your life.

CLARK. She'll be here soon.

MANDY. She's a doll.

CLARK. I'm a failure.

MANDY. You're a great inventor. Bazer's gonna pay you and—

CLARK. It's over.

MANDY. It just takes time.

CLARK. There is no time.

MANDY. Everything's gonna be okay.

CLARK. *(rapidly)* We're three months behind on mortgage, I can't afford to send you to college, you're working two shitty jobs, your mother's upstairs passed out face down with an empty bottle next to her bed and your father's locked in the basement. So who's definition of okay is that? *(Looking the next card)* What is this? Why is this one blank?

MANDY. What one?

CLARK. This one has no postmark or writing on it. Where did this come from?

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CLARK. There's no address.

MANDY. I thought maybe it was stuck to one of the other ones.

CLARK. You just told me you didn't read them.

MANDY. I didn't.

CLARK. You're lying to me.

MANDY. No. *(Pause.)* Dad. No. I swear to God.

CLARK. There's no postmark.

MANDY. It's not me.

CLARK. Did you tell your mother?

MANDY. Tell her what?

CLARK. If I die, this house goes to her.

MANDY. What are you talking about?

CLARK. She needs it.

MANDY. How are you going to die?

CLARK. You have a future. She doesn't.

MANDY. We all have a future.

CLARK. She doesn't even look at me...

MANDY. Dad, please.

CLARK. *(Holds up the wheel.)* My greatest invention yet.

MANDY. What is?

CLARK. Get out.

MANDY. I didn't—

CLARK. Get out.

MANDY. Please—

CLARK. I SAID GET OUT! *(Mandy walks up the stairs.)* Mandy? *(She turns and looks at him.)* The light. *(Mandy claps. Music. This time a red light appears on Clark. Everything around him is bathed in red. He looks up.)* Is that you? *(The blurry SHADOW of a large doll covers the stage.)* Wait! No! Wait! I can do it. This is the one. Let me show you... *(Clark pulls the small wheel out of his jacket pocket. He pulls the wheel apart, revealing a needle.)* Like this... *(He plunges the needle into his arm, pulls it out, then ritualistically picks up the postcards and places them in a large circle on the floor. He walks inside the circle. He walks faster until he breaks into a run.)*

MANDY. *(to audience)* I've learned that there are two sides to inspiration. On the one hand, when it visits you it's beautiful, effortless. On the other, it has its own demands. You aren't allowed to question it. You have to give in. If

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you fight it, it comes back at you, hard. My Dad— (*Clark falls to the ground.*) Dad? What was that? Dad? (*Mandy goes down the Platform stairs and kneels over Clark's body. Pause. She places Clark's hands over his chest.*) (*to audience*) It's twenty years later. (*She crosses to the metal chair and sits. She claps. Lights change.*) My name is Mandy Gladstone. I'm a playwright. I've never been published or produced. I'm still working on my first play, but I can't seem to finish it. I'm single. I live alone. I'm 36 years old, the age my father was when he killed himself with a lethal dose of morphine, sodium thiopental and potassium chloride after receiving a series of anonymous postcards. And I have nightmares. (*Clark suddenly sits up. Mandy gasps. He stands and starts walking towards her.*) It's a dream. It's a dream. I wake up.... (*Clark walks past Mandy and exits.*) I try to stay awake, but it's a fight I always lose. I do have help though. CNN. A bunch of bright beautiful faces staring out from close to the center of everything, speaking with elegance and urgency. I don't care what they're saying — I turn down the sound. I just know if I get swallowed by the dark, they'll be there, like angels, looking across my bed...(*She ascends the Up Left Platform stairs.*) ...until about three months ago after a particularly shitty night at work... (*Mandy claps. Lights up on a COMMERCIAL NARRATOR stage center. He speaks but there's no sound. Mandy points up. The Commercial Narrator's voice rises.*)

COMMERCIAL NARRATOR. ...not always easy to remember your last pill. Some medication can cloud your judgment and cause lapses, leading to overdose, addiction, and other serious conditions... (*Lights up on a smiling COMMERCIAL PATIENT and her COMMERCIAL HUSBAND.*) But now there's Assess from Bazer Pharmaceuticals. the clinically proven solution to getting the right amount of medication without ever taking a pill.

COMMERCIAL PATIENT. (*Holds a brightly colored plastic bracelet device which she displays for the audience.*) I knew the pain was gone — but for how long? Would it be back? Taking another pill seemed like the right thing to do, but my husband started to worry — was I taking too many?

COMMERCIAL HUSBAND. Assess solved the problem through its patented flow technology.

COMMERCIAL PATIENT. Once the doctor put the band on for me, I wore it the rest of the week and forgot about it.

COMMERCIAL PATIENT AND HUSBAND. Thanks, Assess! (*Mandy claps. Lights out on the Commercial Actors.*)

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MANDY. *(to audience)* What are the chances? *(DAN, 50s, in glasses and holding a briefcase appears in silhouette on the Up Left Platform scrim.)*

DAN. I'd say pretty good.

MANDY. So you think I could win?

DAN. There's no way to win. They're a huge corporation, but they might settle to get rid of you.

MANDY. For how much?

DAN. You have a paper trail?

MANDY. He kept a lot of stuff.

DAN. Dig through it and see what you can find. If it looks like we have enough evidence, I'll waive my retainer and we can start the process. And you're saying he had a patent?

MANDY. Definitely.

DAN. But it's been twenty years, right?

MANDY. Twenty-one.

DAN. Patents expire. We'd have to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that he brought the product to Bazer before they came up with the idea themselves. *(Mandy claps. Lights out on Dan. Mandy walks down the Platform stairs as lights go up on Mandy's mother, RUBY, 61 standing atop the Up Right Platform.)*

MANDY. It's 11 AM.

RUBY. I didn't ask for the time, I asked for a White Claw.

MANDY. Is that your version of health food? How about an orange juice?

RUBY. You think I have orange juice?

MANDY. We could go buy some.

RUBY. Why is this complicated?

MANDY. The new Jewell just opened.

RUBY. Why is this turning into The Odyssey? I just want a fucking Mango White Claw.

MANDY. Get it yourself.

RUBY. I just walked down the stairs.

MANDY. That's not exactly an accomplishment, Mom.

RUBY. It is for me.

MANDY. Why don't you get some exercise?

RUBY. Why would I do that?

MANDY. So you can feel good about yourself.

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RUBY. Why?

MANDY. Where's the key to the basement? *(Pause.)* The door's bolted shut, Mom. I know there's a key.

RUBY. What do you want to go down there for?

MANDY. I need to look through Dad's stuff.

RUBY. Why.

MANDY. I saw a commercial for his invention. From Bazer.

RUBY. Yeesh.

MANDY. On CNN. It's exactly the same. All they did was change the name.

RUBY. To what?

MANDY. "*Assess.*"

RUBY. That's a terrible name.

MANDY. They stole it.

RUBY. Do they know how bad he was at assessing things?

MANDY. It's just like he said.

RUBY. Well, they'll pay us finally.

MANDY. They're not gonna pay us.

RUBY. They're selling his invention, they have to pay us.

MANDY. If someone robs your house, they don't pay you.

RUBY. You're paranoid.

MANDY. Oh, I think we need to be paranoid.

RUBY. Let's just wait a couple of weeks and see if they—

MANDY. I spoke to a lawyer.

RUBY. Oh, no.

MANDY. He says we might have a case.

RUBY. Lawyers always say that. They're like dogs, it's their way of barking.

MANDY. He says it could be hundreds of thousands of dollars.

RUBY. Yeah, of debt for talking to a lawyer.

MANDY. I need to go through Dad's papers. I want proof. I want a copy of his patent. I want his design. I want his correspondence. I want everything relating to—

RUBY. *(over Mandy's above lines)* That's ridiculous. You're being ridiculous. Everything's you. It's all about you. What about what I want? I want a White Claw. Get me a fuckin' White Claw.

MANDY. Suppose I'm able to prove it's his. You could have all the Mango White Claws you ever wanted...

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RUBY. I want one.

MANDY. Imagine drinking yourself to Mango oblivion in a Las Vegas penthouse.

MANDY. Don't get too happy, Mom. They're gonna evict you soon.

RUBY. No.

MANDY. I got another notice about the pipes.

RUBY. There's nothing wrong with the pipes.

MANDY. Okay.

RUBY. The pipes are fine.

MANDY. Then why do they creak so loud you can hear it all over the neighborhood?

RUBY. They're settling.

MANDY. Every time you take a shower it sounds like a UFO is landing.

RUBY. I'll shower less, then.

MANDY. Why do I smell gas when I walk past the front gate?

RUBY. Maybe you have a problem with your nose.

MANDY. The neighbors are complaining, mom.

RUBY. 'course they are. They're neighbors.

MANDY. I'm broke. I can't afford to keep up this ramshackle piece of shit house for you any more.

RUBY. Why are you trying to destroy me?

MANDY. How am I destroying you?

RUBY. Why are you trying to ruin everything I've ever built?

MANDY. Built? What have you built?

RUBY. I built you.

MANDY. Right. Excellent point. Look at me. I am a product of you. I am a monument to your creative energy.

RUBY. You're not so bad.

MANDY. I'm \$67,000 in debt, I'm miserable, I look like garbage, I have no friends, no girlfriends, no social life, no money, I live alone...

RUBY. So move back in here.

MANDY. I'm going down to the basement.

RUBY. Mandy, no.

MANDY. Give me the key.

RUBY. I can't do that.

MANDY. I'm gonna find it if you don't give it to me.

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RUBY. I'm trying to protect you.

MANDY. If I have to break down the door, I'm—

RUBY. *(overlapping)* I hear noises down there...

MANDY. ...going. And I will. I'll—

RUBY. *(overlapping)* ...late at night. I can hear them all the way upstairs from my room. And it's not creaking. It's not the pipes.

MANDY. Then it's rats.

RUBY. Rats with voices? *(Pause.)* And you wonder why I want a drink at 11:00 AM.

MANDY. The key. Or I stop paying the bills. *(Pause. Mandy walks behind the Up Right Platform, then returns with an open can of White Claw. Ruby reaches for the can. Mandy pulls it away and holds out her hand.)*

RUBY. Turn around.

MANDY. Why?

RUBY. Turn around.

MANDY. Why?

RUBY. Turn around. *(Mandy turns her back to Ruby. Ruby opens the locket of her necklace and pulls out a small key.)* You're looking.

MANDY. No. *(Ruby kisses the key, then throws it at Mandy. It lands at Mandy's feet. Mandy gives the can to Ruby and claps. Lights out on Ruby. Mandy picks the key off the floor, goes stage center, and turns it as if turning a lock. Lights up on the Stage Right table. Mandy waves her hand in front of her face and coughs.) (to audience)* It was like opening the door to King Tut's tomb. If King Tut was a failed catheter salesman who offed himself in the late 90s. *(She goes through the pile of papers, scattered notes, letters, cards, and books on the table.)* Books, pamphlets, blueprints, letters, printed emails, scribbling, ideas... *(She fishes out an official looking form on blue paper. CLARK's silhouette appears on the Up Left Platform scrim.)*

CLARK. "Device for Acute Measurement of Opioid Blood Level and Distribution Implementation."

MANDY. *(to audience)* He was never very good at branding. This isn't the patent. I can't find the patent... *(She pulls out another official blue form.)* Another one. A shaky sketch of a wheel.

CLARK. "Device for the Painless Implementation of Emotionally Induced Euthanasia."

MANDY. *(to audience)* It looked like the work of a child. *(A sound. Mandy*

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gasps.) Hello? *(She looks around.)* Anyone here? *(She puts the form back down on the table. She notices something else – a piece of paper. She holds it under the light.)* This was written in light pencil on the back of a carefully folded receipt:

CLARK. “I look into your face and I no longer fear the sunset. I rise into the sky at night and land upon the moon.”

MANDY. *(to audience)* It doesn’t say who it’s to. *(Lights out on Clark.)* I’m looking for the patent. But the patent’s not— *(A creaking noise. Mandy gasps.)* Hello? *(She walks around the periphery of the stage, eyes searching.)* Is someone here? *(No answer. Mandy returns to the table. A faint whisper. She looks around again.)* What is that? *(Mandy crosses to the Up Right Platform. She reaches behind it and pulls out the giant wooden hand. She holds it up and looks at it.)* Twenty-one years. *(Lights change as Mandy takes the hand with her, hurriedly scoops up papers and carries them to her desk Stage Left. She leans the giant wooden hand against the side of the desk, sits down and mimes typing.)* I write to the patent office, asking for a copy of the record. I call the lawyer and tell him I’ll have everything together by the end of the month, then I start organizing Dad’s notes and emails. It’s four fifteen. Oh, fuck, I’m late. *(She claps. Lights up as SUSAN, 40s, appears behind the Up Right platform scrim in silhouette. Mandy stands and crosses the stage.)* I work at The Franklin Building downtown. Muncy Bland Associates, 23rd Floor. I’m on the skeleton shift.

SUSAN. Can you do this again, please?

MANDY. *(to audience)* 5PM to 2AM. I come in as people are leaving.

SUSAN. We don’t like this one.

MANDY. *(Sits in the metal chair and mimes working on a computer.) (to audience)* I started as an Executive Assistant and now I’m what they call a Presentation Specialist.

SUSAN. It doesn’t pop.

MANDY. *(to audience)* Word processing with a splash of graphics.

SUSAN. We want it to pop.

MANDY. *(to audience)* I’ve moved up in the world of dead-end jobs.

SUSAN. Maybe a frame around the title with a blue background?

MANDY. *(to audience)* At two in the morning, I go home. *(Mandy claps. Lights out on Susan. Mandy crosses to her desk and sits. A pause. She takes a deep breath, then types.)* “Sadie Hurtz. By Mandy Gladstone.” *(She stops*

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typing and stares. A pause. Then she types again.) “Scene One.”
(Pause.) I don’t know if I can’t write because I’m exhausted or if I’m exhausted because I can’t write. So I do something that writers often do when they feel blocked: facebook. *(She types.)* “Working hard on my new play. Sadie Hurtz.” *(Pause.)* More specific. *(She types.)* “Working hard on my new play, Sadie Hurtz: a theatrical exploration of my father’s life, his secrets, his discoveries, and his lost legacy.” And... post. *(She checks her watch, stands, and straightens herself, then crosses the stage and lies down on the lowest stair of the Up Left Platform.)* I turn on CNN and wait for sleep to crawl into the room. The flicker of light from the television covers the bed... *(She leans back and closes her eyes. Music. Lights up on the Upstage Right scrim. It’s Clark in silhouette.)*

CLARK. I no longer fear the sunset...

MANDY. Dad?

CLARK. ...I rise into the sky at night...

MANDY. I must be sleeping.

CLARK. ...and land upon the moon.

MANDY. Who are you dancing with? *(The music continues then...Boom! The giant wooden hand leaning against the desk, suddenly falls on its side. Lights out on Clark. Music stops. Mandy bolts awake. Lights abruptly up full. Mandy crosses to the desk and looks at the hand. She looks around. Nothing. She picks the hand up and leans it back against the desk. She stands back and studies the hand. Then she checks her watch.) (to audience)* Oh, fuck! *(She claps. Lights up on the silhouette of Susan on the Up Left Platform scrim.)*

SUSAN. I wanted the background to be green.

MANDY. *(to audience)* I slept through the entire day.

SUSAN. Why is there a frame around the title?

MANDY. *(to audience)* I was over an hour late...

SUSAN. I thought I told you that.

MANDY. *(to audience)* Weird thing is... once I got there, I didn’t care. I just... *(to Susan)* I tried it.

SUSAN. Okay, well, it’s not here now, so—

MANDY. It doesn’t work.

SUSAN. I beg your pardon?

MANDY. *(to audience)* There’s an article I read online, about manifesting. It said your life is like water and fate is like a trench. Dig low, settle, that’s

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where the water flows. If you want to change direction, you have to fill in the trench. (to Susan) The whole slide. It's tacky. You're just cluttering everything up. You think clutter is art?

SUSAN. I don't care about art.

MANDY. (to Susan) I did it the way it should be done.

SUSAN. You don't get to say how things should be done.

MANDY. I do now. Because I quit.

SUSAN. What?

MANDY. I quit. (*Mandy claps. Lights out on Susan.*) (to audience) I quit my job. (*She crosses to the lowest stair of the Up Left Platform, and lies down.*) Holy shit. I quit my job. I gather up my stuff, go home and surprise, surprise, I actually fall right asleep. I don't even turn on CNN. And guess what... (*She sits up.*) No nightmares. I don't dream at all. When I wake up, I have nowhere to go, no prospects, no hindrances, no tedium. Just freedom. It's 2:00 in the afternoon. I slept all morning, and now I have nothing to do but write. (*She sits at the desk. She types.*) "Sadie Hurtz by Mandy Gladstone. Scene One." (*She stops. Pause.*) Another day goes by. (*Mandy claps. Lights change.*) Another day, another day, a week. I must be running out of money, but I can't bring myself to look at my bank account. I'm kind of holding out for this lawsuit. The Patent Office said they'd FedEx me the documentation. If I can just hustle along the whole process... (*She ascends the Up Left Platform stairs, opens the mailbox next to the scrim and pulls out a huge pile of envelopes.*) Yeah, I know. I haven't opened my mailbox since I quit. I'm just trying to keep this positive, I'm free now, I filled the trench and I'm standing on it. (*She sifts through letters as she makes her way down the stairs.*) You gotta look, you gotta make yourself go through all the terrible stuff to find the— (*She finds something in the stack of mail. She holds it up to the light. It's a postcard. A pause. Mandy keeps her eyes fixed on the postcard in her right hand as she places the rest of the mail on her desk with her left.*) Same handwriting. Big shaky capital letters. April 3, Jupiter, California. (*She walks stage center and reads the postcard out loud.*) "Mandy, I want my hand back. Sadie Hurtz." (*Blackout.*)

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