

*(A glimmer of light comes on, darkly illuminating the room.)*

VINCENT. Who — who's there?

JACK'S VOICE. *(Over the intercom.)* Your most valued client.

ANNIE. Jack?

JACK'S VOICE. And don't try to escape, Vincent. As I'm sure you've surmised, I am an expert marksman. If Jack missed you, on purpose, by an inch just before, Jack can certainly hit you, with even more of a purpose, on any body part I choose. *(A beat.)*

VINCENT. So Jack — Jack — you're alive — good for you.

ANNIE. Let us out, Jack.

JACK'S VOICE. NO ONE'S GOING ANYWHERE!

ANNIE. Jack, what happened to the lights?

JACK'S VOICE. They seem to be uncomfortably dark. Jack must be near the circuit breakers.

ANNIE. Come out, Jack, so we can talk —

JACK'S VOICE. Yes, we do need to talk. After all, the oddest thing happened to me before. I was meditating in my tank, when all of a sudden, all this water came gushing in — *(Annie rushes to the phone and picks it up.)*

ANNIE. It's dead. *(Vincent quickly removes his cell phone.)*

JACK'S VOICE. Oh Vincent, stop and think for a second! Who are you calling — the police. For what reason? So they could come over and investigate — what? Your attempted murder? By the way, lousy attempt. *(Vincent puts away his phone.)*

VINCENT. Jack, old friend, we need to talk —

JACK'S VOICE. Vincent, Jack is in control now.

VINCENT. You're always in control, you're my most valued client. Now let's all pull up a chair and ... —

JACK'S VOICE. Vincent, you tried to kill Jack!

VINCENT. I did not!

JACK'S VOICE. You locked Jack in his tank then pumped water into it! WHAT WOULD YOU CALL THAT? *(A beat.)*

VINCENT. Annie?

ANNIE. What do you want, Jack? What are you after? *(A beat. Jack doesn't answer.)* Jack? Are you there, Jack? *(Vincent pulls Annie aside and they speak in a hushed tone.)*

VINCENT. Where is he?

ANNIE. He could be anywhere in the house! Vincent, we've got to figure out a way to get you out of here. You tried to kill him!

VINCENT. "I tried to kill him?!" What about you?

ANNIE. He can't harm me, Vincent, I'm his talent!

VINCENT. Well I'm his dealer!

ANNIE. There are plenty of dealers out there, Vincent! And if he finds out that you know the truth about his paintings —

VINCENT. We don't tell him that! Swear to me that you won't ever —

JACK'S VOICE. I had some preparations to attend to, but I'm back. So have you two decided?

VINCENT. Decided what, Jack?

JACK'S VOICE. Which one of you I'm most likely to kill first?

VINCENT. Jesus, Jack! Look Jack, what is it you want? I'll do anything you want! I'll sell *Study in Red, No. 4* for two million! I'll find some idiot on Wall Street who ...

JACK'S VOICE. Shut up, Vincent! (*A beat.*) Thank you. Okay, Annie, I have one question — why?

ANNIE. Why did I try to kill you?

JACK'S VOICE. Yes, that would be the one.

ANNIE. Where do I start, Jack? Your endless screwing around, your control over me, your domination of me, the way you belittle my art, my passion. I suppose, Jack, it's everything. It's all our years together. I'm sick of you. And more importantly, I'm sick of me, when I'm in the presence of you. (*A beat.*)

JACK'S VOICE. Did you tell Vincent?

VINCENT. Tell me what?

ANNIE. What else? That I paint for him.

VINCENT. No! She did nothing of the kind! I have no idea what you're talking about!

ANNIE. Yes, Jack. Vincent knows everything.

VINCENT. Annie!

JACK'S VOICE. Okay. Okay. That makes my decision all the more easy.

VINCENT. What?! No Jack, it doesn't matter that I know! I would never tell anyone! I know so many secrets about so many people — you name it, I know it, and I never tell! (*To Annie.*) You are the worst person to commit a murder with! (*Suddenly, the lights flash out.*) Jack?

ANNIE. Jack, what the ... — ! (*In the dark, Annie lets out a terrified scream.*)

VINCENT. Jesus Christ! What the hell's going on?!

ANNIE. No! Please Jack, no!

VINCENT. Jack!!!

ANNIE. You need me, Jack! Don't you realize you need me!

VINCENT. Stop this, Jack!

ANNIE. I'm your talent! Oh, God — Oh, God, no —

VINCENT. What's happening?!

ANNIE. I can't take anymore ... no, Jack ... Jack ... *(Annie lets out one final, terrified scream. A silence. The lights come on dimly.)*

VINCENT. Annie? Annie, where are you? Jack?!

JACK'S VOICE. Yes, Vincent?

VINCENT. Jack — where's Annie?

JACK'S VOICE. She's not there?

VINCENT. Jack —

JACK'S VOICE. Well then. Something must've happened to her.

VINCENT. Jesus Jack, this has gone far enough. I heard her scream, Jack. What have you done?

JACK'S VOICE. You and I need to have a man-to-man, Vincent. So I rid us of the little woman.

VINCENT. Where are you, Jack? What the hell's going on?! Where the hell are ... — *(With one deft movement, Vincent opens the lid of the tank.)* Jack! *(“1812 Overture” comes blaring out, scaring the hell out of Vincent. Vincent rushes for the front door.)* Let me out, Jack! Let me ... — *(As Vincent reaches the front door, he pulls on it, and it opens easily. On the other side is Jack, who jumps Vincent and begins pummeling him.)* No, Jack! Please, Jack! No, Jack! *(A beat. Vincent, on the ground.)*

JACK. Now then, Vincent, I have figured out a way to forgive you. I want you to confess your crime.

VINCENT. My what?

JACK. Your crime, Vincent.

VINCENT. What is you want, Jack? Money?! I'll get you ... —

JACK. This is not about money! This is about art and respect for the artist!

VINCENT. What?

JACK. Because you, Vincent, are a hole!

VINCENT. A what?

JACK. A hole. Like a donut hole, a bullet hole, an asshole. Holes are that breed of people who are as substantial as empty air. They stick themselves in the middle of whatever world they like and they make themselves the center of it. You know — lawyers, agents, critics, art dealers — holes. People who don't create anything or build anything or teach anything. No, they mediate, they judge, they control. They have a talent to interfere. And you, Vincent, are the hole in the center of my life.