

ACT ONE

The stage is dark for a moment after the curtain rises. We can hear some staggered, heavy breathing in the silence. It sounds like the uncertain breaths you'd take if you were about to take a jump out of some high-flying airplane. A SPOTLIGHT rises on a man sitting down in a chair next to a desk. HIS name is WALTER WHITMAN - "WALLY" to us - in HIS 30's - and HE is dressed very neatly in the type of sleek suit you would expect to see gracing a young, urban professional. HE is staring down at the ground, breathing, thinking, trying to prepare HIMSELF for what's ahead. Then, suddenly, HE looks up and seems to notice that we're looking at HIM. HE thinks a moment - and then speaks:

WALLY

Hi there - and thank you for coming. I've been waiting a long time to share my story with someone. I'm not going to pretend it won't seem strange at first, because it will... but I hope, by the end of it, you'll understand me a lot better. Believe me, it's not easy being "different." I don't mean "different" in some gaudy way that makes other people cross the street when you approach them on the sidewalk. I'm not talking about dying my hair blue or wearing socks that don't match - or even yelling loudly like a madman in the middle of a playground. I mean really different - different on the inside - a difference so silent, so hidden that no one would even think it lived inside of you... buried, like a treasure. I don't know if you've ever experienced that or not. If you haven't, then you're very lucky. If you have, then you're just like me.

The LIGHTS rise slightly to reveal the sparse, simple set. A door opens and in comes a proper, dignified, corporate-looking man - PETER GAMBOL. He is 60-ish and looks not unlike some Roman statue that jumped off its pillar and plopped himself down in the boardrooms of America. GAMBOL is nothing less than CEO of Gambol Customer Solutions. HE enters with a tight smile. WALLY immediately shoots up from HIS chair like a soldier would respond to a drill

sergeant. GAMBOL looks at HIM and seems evidently surprised by something. WALLY hurriedly (too hurriedly?) extends HIS hand for a shake. GAMBOL seems pleased by the military-like attention and shakes the hand.

MR. GAMBOL

Sorry I kept you waiting, Mr. Whitman.

WALLY

(Pronouncing it "WHITE-muhn.")
It's no trouble, sir - and it's "Whiteman."

MR. GAMBOL

What is?

WALLY

My name.

MR. GAMBOL

I stand corrected, then.

WALLY

Actually, please call me "Wally."

MR. GAMBOL

I'll do that - and you, you may call me "Mr. Gambol."

MR. GAMBOL smiles again and gestures for WALLY to sit, which HE does. MR. GAMBOL then sits behind the desk. HE carries with HIM a manila folder filled with papers. HE opens the folder and looks over the papers.

MR. GAMBOL

I hope I haven't kept you too long.

WALLY

Oh, no, I was just admiring your pictures.

WALLY points to some unseen pictures on some unseen wall. MR. GAMBOL turns and looks at them for a moment.

MR. GAMBOL

Oh, yes - those. I got them from someplace - someplace in France - pretty damn expensive, too. I'm not into art, but my wife is - and, more importantly, so are our clients. It adds a touch of class to the place - but me, I could care less. Either way, "Monet" spells "money"... almost.

WALLY

My father used to collect art.

MR. GAMBOL

Oh? Did he have clients, too?

WALLY

No, he just... liked art.

MR. GAMBOL

I see.

MR. GAMBOL looks at the pictures again.

MR. GAMBOL

I suppose they're all right.

WALLY

Maybe you're just too used to looking at them. Sometimes, when our eyes get used to something, they become lazy and they just accept things for what they are.

MR. GAMBOL

Yes - you're right about that. Thirty years ago, when I founded Gambol Customer Solutions, I could only have dreamed to be sitting in an office like this.

WALLY

And yet here you are.

MR. GAMBOL

And here you are.

WALLY

Yes - and very glad for it, sir.

MR. GAMBOL

That makes two of us. I'm sixty-seven next month. My father died when he was sixty-eight. My mother died when she was sixty-five. My secretary, Vivian, has been with me for almost twenty years. She's almost as old as I am. You ask her and she'll deny it - but, damn it, she is. Half the time, I feel like I'm living in the Paleolithic Era, so I'd appreciate the opportunity to inject some young blood into the place.

WALLY

(Smiling suavely.)

I could spare a quart or two.

MR. GAMBOL

(Amused.)

Well, I may ask for more than that. I value the work of young men, such as yourself, the older I get. A company starts to stagnate when it doesn't have fresh faces revolving through the

MR. GAMBOL (CONT)

door. I mean fresh - young and vibrant. I didn't build up Gambol Customer Solutions by hiring cousins, nephews, and nieces. It helps, of course, that I don't have any - but, if I did, their resumes wouldn't be as impressive as yours.

WALLY

I appreciate that, thank you.

MR. GAMBOL

You deserve to. Vivian was very impressed when she spoke with you last week. She told me I just had to interview you for the Client Manager position. She's been nagging me to meet with you again - and I'm glad she did.

(Looking at a piece of paper.)

Yale undergrad. Harvard grad. Four years at Lehmann Brothers. Five years at Fidelity.

WALLY

Six... six years at Fidelity.

MR. GAMBOL

Six, yes - which is a century or two in this day and age. People change jobs as quickly as they change spouses. I should know. I've been married four times.

(Leaning forward.)

Do you know why?

WALLY

No, sir.

MR. GAMBOL

Because five would have been an odd number.

MR. GAMBOL stares at HIM, waiting for some reaction. WALLY smiles only slightly in response.

MR. GAMBOL

Good. You didn't laugh. The last three young men I interviewed laughed - too hard. I didn't hire any of them. I know when someone is just trying to please me.

(Sitting back - interrogation done?)

Do you have any questions about the position?

WALLY

Yes. When do I start?

MR. GAMBOL smiles broadly.

MR. GAMBOL

You have a better sense of humor than I do.

WALLY

I just know there's a lot I can give your company.

MR. GAMBOL

I have no doubt. Tell me, why did you leave your last job?

WALLY

With Fidelity? It was a... mutual decision. I was getting bored with the work. I didn't feel I was being true to my talents.

(A beat - meaningfully.)

I wanted a change.

MR. GAMBOL

A change? I see no employment history after then. That was six months ago.

WALLY

I took some time off before looking for work again.

MR. GAMBOL

Oh? Why is that exactly?

WALLY

I... I wanted to learn more about myself.

MR. GAMBOL

Learn about yourself?

WALLY

For work reasons - to reconfigure, to reconstitute, to...

MR. GAMBOL just stares.

WALLY

To reassess my choices.

MR. GAMBOL

Your choices?

WALLY

My career choices.

MR. GAMBOL

Yet you are looking for work in a similar position.

WALLY

I found my changes were more on the personal side.

MR. GAMBOL

(Not quite buying it.)

I see.

MR. GAMBOL peers at the papers again.
We can feel the nervousness gravitate

back to WALLY's face. HE looks anxiously as MR. GAMBOL reads in silence - until:

WALLY

I'm here to answer any questions you want, Mr. Gambol. I know that an employee is a big investment for a company. I want to make sure you're happy with what you're getting. I want to be full and free and frank with you.

MR. GAMBOL

I appreciate that, Wally.

WALLY

I want to be as direct with you as I now am with myself.

MR. GAMBOL

I appreciate that, too.

WALLY

I won't disappoint you.

MR. GAMBOL

Well, we shall soon see - won't we?

MR. GAMBOL smiles at HIM. WALLY understands the meaning and smiles, too.

MR. GAMBOL

I will have Vivian send you a proposal within the next two days.

WALLY

Thank you, Mr. Gambol.

MR. GAMBOL

No, Wally - thank you.

MR. GAMBOL rises and extends HIS hand again. WALLY takes the hint, rises, and shakes HIS hand. WALLY starts to exit and then abruptly stops. There is a nagging thought in HIS mind. HE thinks for a moment and turns:

WALLY

I have another question, Mr. Gambol...

MR. GAMBOL

Shoot.

WALLY

When you first saw me, you looked surprised.

MR. GAMBOL

I did?

WALLY

If you don't mind my asking, I was wondering why you...

MR. GAMBOL

Well, to be frank, Wally, I was surprised. At the end of your job application, you checked off "Caucasian" for your race. I wasn't expecting a black man - but even better. We have to meet certain diversity standards with the EEOC, you know. Good for you. Good for me. Good for the company. Vivian will make sure the paperwork is corrected.

MR. GAMBOL smiles and returns to looking at the papers. WALLY doesn't move. HE has seemed to freeze under weighty and pendulous thoughts. A long pause ensues. MR. GAMBOL eventually raises HIS head and notices that WALLY is still standing before HIM.

MR. GAMBOL

May I help you?

WALLY

Yes, about the application...

MR. GAMBOL

What about it?

WALLY

I don't want Vivian to change anything.

MR. GAMBOL

Why not?

WALLY

Because... the application is correct.

MR. GAMBOL

What do you mean?

WALLY

I am Caucasian.

MR. GAMBOL keeps staring.

MR. GAMBOL

What did you say?

WALLY

I said... I am Caucasian.

MR. GAMBOL

That's what I thought you said.

A standoff of sorts ensues. We can see MR. GAMBOL's mind is in motion. HE stares long and hard at WALLY - then:

MR. GAMBOL

(Letting HIS thoughts trail off.)
Perhaps...

WALLY

(Hopefully.)
Perhaps?

MR. GAMBOL

Perhaps your sense of humor isn't quite as good as I thought.

MR. GAMBOL grimaces and returns to the papers.

WALLY

(Stiffening up his resolve.)
I am Caucasian, Mr. Gambol.

MR. GAMBOL

(Pronouncing it "Whitman" now.)
No, Mr. Whitman - you're not.

WALLY

How do you know?

MR. GAMBOL

Because I am Caucasian.

WALLY

Yes, well... so am I.

MR. GAMBOL

No, well, you are not.

WALLY

I could have a white mother.

MR. GAMBOL

You don't look like you have a...

WALLY

(Snapping back.)
People don't look like a lot of things. It doesn't mean that they are what they appear to be.

MR. GAMBOL just stares... and stares... and stares... and, in HIS mind, reaches a verdict:

MR. GAMBOL

Have a nice day, Mr. Whitman.

Mr. GAMBOL returns again to HIS work in stony silence. WALLY stares at HIM for a moment as if thinking of something to say - but nothing comes. The LIGHTS slowly fall on the desk and MR. GAMBOL. A SPOTLIGHT remains on WALLY. HE takes a deep breath and turns to us:

WALLY

I searched the mailbox in my apartment complex every day for two weeks after that... until I realized I wasn't going to get a proposal from Vivian. I even checked with my neighbors to see if they received a letter for me - by accident. It turned out the only accident was my good fortune to get so close to a job in the first place. It was the first chance in many weeks. It also was the last. Almost every application had the same question, which, for me, I felt compelled to answer. I couldn't bring myself to check anything other than the truth. Then, when I came for my in-person interview, the truth became complicated.

With loud gusto, a door at the back of the stage opens. The LIGHTS rise slightly upon a colorful-looking, 30-year-old woman who looks like a carnival circus on legs. HER name is MANDY ALVAREZ. SHE wears gaudy make-up, gaudier earrings, and even gaudier clothes and SHE sports an infectious smile that somehow always seems to retain its composure through near-constant gum-chewing.

MANDY

(To WALLY.)
Hola, Loyola!

WALLY

Hello, Mandy.

MANDY

Any luck today?

WALLY

No, I'm afraid not. Still no word.

MANDY

Poor baby. Do you want to hear about my day?

WALLY

Well, honestly...

MANDY

Okay, good! I got a job at that Ecuadorian deli.

WALLY

What deli?

MANDY

The Casa Del Queso.

WALLY

I don't know the place.

MANDY

They're known for their cheeses.

WALLY

Their cheeses?

MANDY

You munster passed it a million times.

WALLY

I munster what?

MANDY

It's gotta brie the best place in town.

WALLY

Oh, I see.

MANDY

I camembert to think you've not gone there.

WALLY just stares at MANDY. MANDY smiles in pure delight and exits through another door. WALLY shakes HIS head and turns to us:

WALLY

More often than not, when I went to check my mailbox, I ran into Mandy. I'm not sure how it worked out that way. I came to check the mail at different times of the day, just to avoid her. It's not that I didn't like her. I would have just preferred to be alone. I could barely deal with myself, let alone other people - yet, somehow, Mandy always seemed to enter the apartment building just when I opened my mailbox.

With loud gusto, the back door opens yet again and the LIGHTS rise slightly. MANDY re-enters with an even bigger smile and ever-louder chewing.

MANDY
 Hola, Loyola!

WALLY
 Hello, Mandy.

MANDY
 Still no luck?

WALLY
 No, nothing. How are you?

MANDY
 Muy bueno! I got a new job.

WALLY
 You're not at the zoo anymore?

MANDY
 No. I left and took the elephants with me. We were both paid peanuts.

WALLY tries to ignore the joke.

WALLY
 Where are you working now?

MANDY
 I'm a waitress at Bar-Bados.

WALLY
 The night club down the street?

MANDY
 Sí.

WALLY
 Isn't that place a bit dangerous?

MANDY
 Sure is. There was a shooting last week.

WALLY
 What happened?

MANDY
 I missed.

WALLY just stares at MANDY again. MANDY smiles again in pure delight and exits through the other door. WALLY shakes HIS head and turns to us:

WALLY

I really didn't know that much about Mandy - except too much. It's odd, in retrospect, because I seemed to see her every single day, yet I didn't feel I knew her at all. I didn't know what music she liked. I didn't know what movies she watched. I didn't know what eyeshadow she wore. I didn't know if she had a brother or a sister or a stepfather, perhaps. I didn't know anything, except that she was... well...

With loud gusto, the back door opens yet again and the LIGHTS rise slightly. MANDY re-enters. SHE is brushing HERSELF off frantically from what appears to be torrential rain. A gaudy umbrella (torn apart by the rain) is dangling helplessly from HER other arm.

MANDY

Hola, Loyola!

WALLY

Hello, Mandy.

MANDY

That my name! Don't wear it out.

WALLY

Speaking of names, you do know my name is Wally, right?

MANDY

Wool-ee.

WALLY

Wall-ee.

MANDY

WALL-ee.

WALLY

That's right.

MANDY

Any luck today, WALL-ee?

WALLY

Don't worry about me. You look soaked.

MANDY

This is why I don't like rain. It makes me wetter than sun. I like sun better.

WALLY

I do, too.

MANDY

My hair is the most wet.

WALLY

I can see that.

MANDY

I can feel that.

WALLY

(Feeling obligated to ask.)

Is there... is there anything I could do to help?

MANDY grins broadly and chews HER gum ever louder. SHE seems delighted that WALLY stepped up to the plate.

MANDY

Sure! My blow-dryer blew out this morning.

MANDY reaches up to HER hair and promptly pulls it off. SHE extends it in WALLY's direction.

MANDY

Could you dry my hair?

WALLY just stares at the wig for a moment. MANDY has a huge, mischievous grin on HER face. MANDY is, quite simply, transgender.

WALLY

One cycle or two?

MANDY laughs.

MANDY

That's what they all ask.

MANDY winks and exits through the other door. WALLY thinks for a moment and then turns to us:

WALLY

I had known about Mandy being transgender for a few years. We both moved into the apartment complex around the same time. She was "Emmanuel" or "Manny" back then. I watched her change, bit by bit, sometimes just eyelash-by-eyelash. She was always very pleasant to me. I didn't know why, because I mainly stuck to myself - but she didn't much care. I guess I admired her for being so forthright, so open - in many things.

The LIGHTS start to dim until only a SPOTLIGHT remains on WALLY. HE thinks to HIMSELF deeply for a moment. There is clearly something HE wants to say. HE takes a deep breath and looks straight at us:

WALLY

I remember when I first knew I was white. I grew up in Harlem, but, when my dad got a new job at a big investment firm, we moved to the suburbs - Greenwich, Connecticut. In Harlem, I never really felt at home. Then came Greenwich and, suddenly, I felt like I belonged. I couldn't believe it, because no one around even looked like me. Between my parents, my sisters, and I, we about doubled the black population.

The LIGHTS start to rise faintly. We hear the VIBRANT SOUNDS of a CITY STREET rise in the distance. Car horns are honking. People are yelling. Loud music is playing. A subway roars occasionally underneath the noise.

WALLY

I realized how much I belonged in those lilywhite suburbs when I went to visit my friend Louis in Harlem one weekend. It was about a year after my parents and I moved and I felt like I hardly knew the place. I might as well have been walking on Mars - and, most of the time, I wished I was.

The LIGHTS have picked up a shuffling man in the shadows - DEXTER - a grizzled homeless man dragging a life full of cares behind HIM. HE is dressed like some African hippie with a colorful Jamaican knit cap and blond dreadlocks in HIS hair. There is something oddly majestic about HIS mountainous frame and HIS carefree manner. One quick look and we catch the most surprising part - HE's white.

WALLY

I was so confounded by the noise, the clutter, the smell that I took my eyes off the street and kept walking straight when Louis and his mom turned left. I soon found myself, alone, the sole preppy boy on the sidewalk, with only Ralph Lauren to keep me company. That's when I met Dexter.

We have been transported back to a memory in WALLY's mind. DEXTER raises HIS head, as if discovering WALLY, and smiles broadly. We soon find that HE

sports a stereotypically "black" accent.

DEXTER

Hey, kid - how is you?

WALLY suddenly freezes and turns.

DEXTER

What're you doing here by your lonesome?

WALLY just stares.

DEXTER

I guess God done forgot to teach you to speak. Wish you could've taught my ex-wife that trick.

WALLY

My mom said not to talk to strangers.

DEXTER

Does I look all that strange to you?

WALLY

Actually... yes.

DEXTER bursts with an enjoyably hoarse laugh. We can sense traces of smoking lurking behind the hilarity.

DEXTER

At least you is honest. I know plenty of people that ain't. Your momma done got you off to a good start. So - tell me - what are you doin' 'round here, then? This ain't a good place to be if you don't like strangers.

WALLY

I'm here with my friend and his mom.

DEXTER

It looks like they done disappeared.

WALLY

No, I just took a wrong turn. I need to find my way back.

(A beat, uncertain whether HE should ask.)

Do... do you live around here?

DEXTER

I do, yeah. I live here.

WALLY

Here?

DEXTER
Right here.

WALLY
Right where?

DEXTER is pointing to the ground. HE points at various other places.

DEXTER
Sometimes I live there... or there... or there. I done have me a mo-bile home.

WALLY
So you're... homeless?

DEXTER
That's what the government calls it. I calls it "transitory aboding."

WALLY
Well, it looks lonely.

DEXTER
That's 'cause it is.

WALLY thinks for a moment, then points to the cap.

WALLY
Are you from Jamaica?

DEXTER
Now how do you know 'bout Jamaica?

WALLY
My cousin likes Bob Marley. You look like him - except you're not black.

DEXTER
(Jokingly shocked.)
I ain't?

WALLY
(Taking it seriously.)
No - but you do look like Bob Marley.

DEXTER
I likes to think Bob Marley looks like me.

WALLY
Well, he does... so are you?

DEXTER
Bob Marley?

WALLY
From Jamaica?

DEXTER
I sure is.

WALLY
You can't be, you're white.

DEXTER
Who says there ain't white people in Jamaica?

WALLY
Encyclopedia Britannica. The population is 92.1% black.

DEXTER
That leaves another 8%, don't it?

WALLY
Yes, but they're mainly Asian or mixed. I know. I did a report on Jamaica last year for my geography class. You're too white to be from Jamaica.

DEXTER
(Pointing to HIS heart.)
That's 'cause this part of me is from Jamaica.

WALLY
That doesn't count.

DEXTER
It don't?

DEXTER bends forward, as if about to reveal a great secret.

DEXTER
"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

(A beat.)
You know who done said that?

WALLY
Bob Marley?

DEXTER

(Pointing to Heaven.)

The Lawd! All the stuff you see with your eyes don't mean next to nothin'. I knows that. I's been many a million things and they all done come and gone, like the wind. I's been a high school athlete. I's been a father. I's been a store manager. I's been a drunk driver. And now? Here I is. I don't got no family. I don't got no car. I don't got no track suit. I don't got no job and sure as hell I don't go no store.

(Pointing to HIS heart.)

...but I gots this and I's still here. This keeps me here and tells me who I is. The stuff in here is like a di-a-mond. It done last forever.

WALLY stares at DEXTER in mesmerized admiration for a moment. Then a piece of paper comes flying onto the set. Some passerby has evidently thrown away some trash. DEXTER sighs, picks up the trash, and puts it in the bag next to HIM.

DEXTER

People done always throw trash in my backyard.

DEXTER smiles wryly at WALLY. The tender moment between THEM has been broken. It's time to move on, but no one knows where or how. A pause hangs in the air - until:

DEXTER

You said your momma said not to talk to strangers. What did she say about givin' them money?

WALLY

She said don't do that either.

DEXTER

That's a downright shame.

WALLY looks at HIM for a moment and slowly reaches into HIS pocket. HE takes out some small, crumpled-up bills and extends them towards DEXTER.

WALLY

Here - this is my lunch money.

DEXTER thinks for a moment and excruciatingly rises from the ground. HE lets out the groan of a man who has led a hard life and smiles at WALLY.

DEXTER

I wish your momma had been my momma.

DEXTER salutes WALLY and hobbles out of the LIGHT into the darkness. WALLY looks after HIM for a moment and then turns back to us:

WALLY

Dexter was the first person I ever really connected with. I saw him a few other times when I visited Louis and his mom in Harlem. He's actually the only reason I ever really wanted to go, because I hated it there otherwise. I always seemed to see him on the same street corner. Then, one day, when I was eighteen and learned I had gotten into Yale for my undergrad, I took the train to Harlem to see Dexter and tell him the good news - but he wasn't there. I never saw him again. I don't know what happened to him, but I missed him - and I still do. It was Dexter who taught me that the heart is what matters. The heart is what dictates who you are.

Suddenly, the back door slams open. MANDY stumbles in holding a hand to HER head. SHE is dirty and bleeding and clearly has been roughed up. WALLY immediately turns in shock.

WALLY

Mandy!

MANDY

(Rather weakly - but still trying to maintain HER jocular spirit.)
Hola, Loyola.

WALLY

Oh, God. What happened to you?

MANDY

I fell.

WALLY

You fell.

MANDY

On someone's fist. Three times in total.

MANDY stumbles and WALLY catches HER.

WALLY

You need help.

MANDY

I need help.

WALLY

Here. Come into my place. I have a first aid kit.

WALLY takes MANDY and shakingly walks with HER through the other door. THEY then turn and walk back to center stage. The LIGHTS change slightly to represent a change in venue. We are in WALLY'S apartment. WALLY helps MANDY to sit down on a chair. MANDY winces in clear pain.

WALLY

Who did this to you?

MANDY

Some chicos down the street.

WALLY

You should tell the other ones about them. They'd probably beat them up for you.

MANDY

What other ones?

WALLY

The ones who whistle at you.

MANDY

Hmmmm... no, that won't work.

WALLY

Why not?

MANDY

Because they're the chicos who beat me up.

WALLY

I'm sorry.

MANDY

They didn't know who they were really whistling at. Today, they found out.

(A beat, gesturing vaguely.)

It's long story.

WALLY

Here, let me get you something.

WALLY jumps up and rushes offstage. MANDY takes a moment and looks around the room. WALLY re-enters with a first aid kit and a towel. WALLY gives the

towel to MANDY, who puts it under HER nose.

MANDY

You have nice place.

WALLY

Thank you.

MANDY

I like your curtains.

WALLY

Thank you.

MANDY

I like your furniture.

WALLY

Thank you.

MANDY

I like your eyes.

WALLY

Thank you... I think.

MANDY

Don't worry. I just mean to be nice. I don't obsess about sex like you men.

MANDY coughs violently.

WALLY

You should see a doctor.

MANDY

It will heal, like before.

WALLY

This has happened to you before?

MANDY

Two times. This is third time. I'm waiting for the charm.

WALLY

Would you like something to drink?

MANDY

No, thank you.

WALLY

Okay, well, if you change your mind, I have some tequila in the...

Yes, please.

MANDY

WALLY reaches behind the couch and pulls out a bottle of tequila. HE pours some into a glass and hands it to MANDY.

Here.

WALLY

MANDY takes the drink and promptly drinks the whole thing. SHE smacks HER lips and then hands the empty glass back to WALLY.

Yes. I try that.

MANDY

WALLY, a little flummoxed, pours more tequila into the glass. HE then puts the glass aside. MANDY starts to drink - slower now. WALLY stands there and watches HER. MANDY becomes conscious of HIS staring.

Would you like me to leave?

MANDY

Oh, no! Not at all. No. No. No. No.

MANDY looks at HIM unbelievably.

No.

WALLY

You are shy.

MANDY

Yes. I mean... sí.

WALLY

I like that - very cute.

MANDY

Thanks. May I ask you something?

WALLY

No.

MANDY

What? WALLY

No. MANDY

No, I can't ask you? WALLY

No, you can't date me. MANDY

I wasn't going to ask to date you. WALLY

Why not? I'm not beautiful? MANDY

Well, you're a... a pretty girl, but I can't. I have to figure myself out before I figure out someone else. WALLY

What do you have to figure out? MANDY

You'd be surprised. WALLY

No, I wouldn't. MANDY

MANDY smiles wryly. A wince of pain abruptly crosses over HER face. WALLY sees this and wants to say something, but stops. HE can't really think of anything to say.

I'd like to ask you something... WALLY

Please, ask question. MANDY

I have two, actually. WALLY

First? MANDY

Why do you call me "Loyola?" WALLY

MANDY

I can't help it. It's a habit I have. I look at men and I think what their name would be if they became women. Yours would be Loyola.

WALLY

Yes, but... why Loyola?

MANDY

You went to school there, no?

WALLY

No.

MANDY

(Interpreting the comment as agreement.)
So that's why!

WALLY

No, I mean - "no"... I didn't go to school there.

MANDY

You get mail from Loyola.

WALLY

Well, I... how do you know that?

MANDY

I accidentally look at your mail a few times - like ten. I also see you no have a girlfriend.

WALLY

I just get some promotional flyers from Loyola's grad school. I actually went to Yale and Harvard.

MANDY

Fine, but those aren't good girl names.

WALLY

I guess not.

MANDY

So don't judge - and second?

WALLY

How was it for you... changing?

MANDY

(Thinking it a joke.)
What? Why? Are you thinking to do it?

WALLY

I'm just curious.

MANDY

That's how I started.

WALLY

I'm sorry. If I'm offending you...

MANDY

No. No. I'm just not in good mind. You let me into your home. You can ask me whatever and I tell you. You ask about the change. For me, it wasn't a change. It felt like a release. It was like I was holding my breath all my life and I was finally able to let it out. I still hold my breath now sometimes, but I breathe more - and I like it.

(A beat.)

I don't know what else you want.

WALLY

Did... did someone help you?

MANDY

Well, I am talking to a doctor about surgery, but...

WALLY

No - I mean psychologically. I mean someone who helped you come to terms with who you are.

MANDY

There is a professor at Columbia, if that what you mean. I still go to therapy with her each week.

WALLY

Would you mind... if I went with you?

MANDY

(Suspiciously?)

Why?

WALLY

I'm... I'm thinking of changing things up in my life - finding myself - like a... a better career... a different path... maybe going back to school to... well...

WALLY trails off into silence as HE finds it hard to believe HIS own lie. MANDY considers HIM for a moment and smiles.

MANDY

See you on Tuesday, Loyola.

MANDY rises and smiles broadly.

MANDY

Ha, you got a date after all.

MANDY walks past WALLY. The LIGHTS shift. WALLY turns to us:

WALLY

The week after, Mandy took me to see her therapist at Columbia University, where there was and still is a "Special Office for Personal Discovery and Self-Realization" - and I quote. The doctor in charge of the program was Angele Kleinheister, a world-renowned psychiatrist. I wasn't allowed to attend the therapy session, but, afterwards, I did get a chance to speak with Dr. Kleinheister in her office.

The LIGHTS rise indeterminately. A determined-looking tank of a woman enters - ANGELE KLEINHEISTER. SHE is about 40 and wears a constipated look. SHE dresses in clothes that look like they were made by a Native American with very little sense of color and SHE wears huge glasses on HER face. HER skin appears oddly tanned (too many rounds in the tanning booth?) and HER voice betrays a nasally congestion, which appears to be intended.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Good morning.

WALLY

Good morning?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Good morning.

WALLY

It's five o'clock in the afternoon.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Not in Mongolia.

WALLY

I suppose not.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

In Mongolia it is 6am.

WALLY

I see.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

In Cape Verde, it is 8pm. In Pakistan, it is 2am. In Germany, it is 11pm.

That's fascinating.

WALLY

Time is relative.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Relative?

WALLY

You think it is evening. Other people do not think so. Why are you right? Why are they wrong? What gives you the right to dictate their reality?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

I never thought of it like that.

WALLY

Of course not. You were brought up in ignorance. I am here to free you. I am here to free anyone who needs my help.
(Suddenly pointing at HIM.)
Quick! What is the color of the sky?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Why, it's...

WALLY

It's green.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

It's green?

WALLY

To someone wearing green glasses, yes.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Green glasses?

WALLY

If you have glaucoma, it is always overcast.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Yes, I suppose so.

WALLY

If you are blind, it is always a moonless night.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

That makes sense, yes.

WALLY

Take nothing for granted.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

WALLY

Oh, no - I swear I won't.

MANDY

(To WALLY, brimming with admiration.)
Isn't she marvelous?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Everything we know is but a figment of our preconceptions.

WALLY

Now that's profound.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

It's so profound, Oprah re-tweeted it.

WALLY

Wow, she follows you?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Yes - all over the place.

WALLY

Yet you've made time to see me.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

It is my place to serve the needy.

WALLY

Am I needy?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

If you're not, then why are you here?

WALLY

Well, Mandy said many wonderful things about you and...

DR. KLEINHEISTER

No. I mean "why are you here?" Why are you on this Earth?

WALLY

That's a weighty question.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

You are here to be yourself.

WALLY

Oh, definitely.

MANDY

(As before.)
Isn't she the best?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

If you don't be yourself, you might as well kill yourself.

WALLY

Isn't that a bit... drastic?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Not at all. If you aren't really yourself and you kill yourself, then you're killing someone else. You're killing someone who is smothering, suffocating the real you. It is justifiable homicide. It is self-defense.

WALLY

Wow. That's a good point.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Of course it is. I have a PhD.

WANDY

Maybe we could chat more later... in private?

DR. KLEINHEISTER

(Pointing to a chair, as if talking to a dog.)
Sit.

WALLY

Oh, but I...

DR. KLEINHEISTER

Sit!

WALLY

Sure.

WALLY obediently sits.

DR. KLEINHEISTER

(To MANDY.)
Please excuse us, Mandy. I wish to speak with Wally alone.

WALLY

(Starting to rise.)
Well, actually...

DR. KLEINHEISTER

(Pointing to the chair again.)
Sit, stay!

WALLY obediently sits back down.

MANDY

(A little confused.)
Oh. Yes. I will see you then.