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# MONOLOGUE

## PANDORAS JAR

BY DANIELLE BRAME WHITING

*Pandora runs onto the stage and is relieved to find her audience. She catches her breath and then proceeds to petition her audience for help. She is dressed in a cute, insta-worthy outfit, mobile phone in hand, hair tied up in a cute ponytail. Her face is fully made up and nails polished. However, everything is slightly dishevelled.*

### PANDORA

I don't have long so I need to you to listen carefully, and don't judge, okay?

I mean, I would probably judge me if I were you, but you're not me so I'm asking you to keep an open mind. Like, way open. I mean, if you were a dam, you'd be flooding every village within a ten kilometre radius, that open.

Okay, so, ummm... I need to start, um, so...

*Deep Breath*

Okay, yeah, imagine this is a park bench.

*Drags some chairs together to create a park bench and then lies across them.*

So, I'm lying across them, admiring my latest manicure, and brainstorming my next YouTube video edit. I like to do this lying down because I get inspired by the clouds. You know? There's this infinite scope of possibility for the shapes that clouds make, and they tell you stories. You know, I sometimes think that the clouds are the god's way of communicating with us. Like if you just lie here and meditate, but with your eyes open and none of that stupid humming crap. If you ask the universe a question and then watch the clouds, they answer you. Like when I was five and my parents told me I was only allowed to keep one of my pets – you know, because I had too many – I lay down on my trampoline and asked the universe, “What do I do?” Next thing I know two clouds come hopping by that look exactly like my bunny rabbits, Sharon and Matthew, and then I knew. I kept Sharon and Matthew, gave my dog Agnes to my cousin, my cat Abner to a nice lady mum knew, and we sold our horses to some special factory up north. So yeah, it's, like, the way the universe can help, but you really need to take the time to listen



*She sits up.*

So, I'm lying there waiting for the clouds to help me with the YouTube edit, then this hulking great shadow falls over me, totally throwing off the balance of the sun I'm getting, you know. I don't want to have one arm that's darker than the other one, do I? Who does that? It's odd. I take in a deep breath to fuel a tirade about manners and stuff, but whoever has cast this shadow waves something under my nose and it totally knocks me out.

Not okay, right?

So yeah, anyway, I need to speed this up.

*Pandora stands and, with the chairs, creates two sides of a cell and stands in between them.*

When I come to, I'm standing up in this room and it's incredibly dark. The kind of dark where, no matter how long you are in there, your eyes never adjust enough to see anything. I called out, "hello" and my voice fell like an unimpressive thud upon my ears. There was no resonance, no reverb, no sign of the size or depth or shape of the space; no indication of what made up the walls around me. I tried to sing, like, I'm not the world's best singer, but I thought if there were any chance of an echo or anything it might help. I tried to remember everything Mrs Bont taught us in year seven music about singing and breathing and stuff. Squeezing my eyes tight I called up the memory...

*She squeezes her eyes tightly showing us.*

...and there she was, as clear as day. Standing almost inhumanly upright at the front of the classroom, her head high and smile wide. She gives each student an equal amount of eye contact as she talks, commanding both our attention and adoration. Her hands are clasped in front of her ample sweater-clad chest. What is she saying to us? The hands unclasp and then... oh no, it's the Taff-ah-teff-ee lesson! Over and over, she claps the rhythm that we must mimic. Taff-ah-teff-ee, Taff-ah-teff-ee, Tah Tah Tah. In that slightly nasal and high-pitched voice she repeats until she's confident we get it.

*Pandora opens her eyes.*

I think, 'well okay, Mrs Bont, let's finally find a use for that lesson,' and I start,

*Starts singing softly and slowly, Pandora increases volume and pace with each repetition.*



Taff-ah-teff-ee, Taff-ah-teff-ee, Tah Tah Tah

Taff-ah-teff-ee, Taff-ah-teff-ee, Tah Tah Tah

Nothing, like I said, as though the walls, wherever they were, were absorbing my sound. I decided to try and move. Just shuffling, you know, because I had no idea what I might run into. Like this,

*She begins playing out her shuffle to escape.*

As I shuffle, I can hear that the surface beneath my feet is rough and uneven. Like hard dirt, clay or a council set footpath. I manage to shuffle forward for what feels like two metres when I hit a wall. With my face.

*Pandora takes a moment to let that sink in.*

The wall felt as if it were made of the same material as the floor. It was mainly smooth but also curved, becoming wider as it descended toward my feet. Reaching out with both arms I began tracing the path of the wall to the left. It was an endless path of curves. I've no idea how long I was following it for when the voice appeared.

*She changes her voice when speaking for the newcomer.*

“Where do you think you’re going, Pandora?”

Obvs. I wasn’t going to tell it what I was really doing, right? I stood still and said, ‘I’m trying to find a toilet.’

“That’s a lie.” This time the slimy voice was right next to me, an invasive whisper that blew on the side of my face, and I screamed, ‘What do you want?’

From nowhere a wind began whipping me around the dark space. I felt like one of mum’s dirty rags when she begins pegging them at my brother’s head, uncontrollable and ineffective, finally giving up and landing with no purpose. The winds ceased and dropped me to the ground. I’d not realised how tightly I had been holding my eyelids together until I tried to pry them open.

“Look at me!” hissed the voice. “Open your eyes and look at what you have created.”

*Pandora looks at the audience and realises they are hanging on her next words. A glutton for attention, she decides to milk the moment.*

Like, have you ever felt like you are sitting in a moment where your next decision can change your entire life? Your heart begins to beat harder. Your breath catches in your throat. Your body requires more effort from every movement and every thought. It’s, like, fear, yeah? I was lying on



the floor, swimming in fear. I didn't want to look at it, you know? I mean, it kind of reminded me of that time Neil Ainsley professed his love for me in front of Kathy Marshalls sweet sixteen guest list, at the same time as I was trying to flirt with Marcy Dauntrey. There's Neil, not more than a foot beyond my back, and I'm locked in eye contact with Marcy. In truly bad poetic syntax, he announces his intentions and waits; And I wait. "Say something," Marcy suggests through gritted teeth, but I don't. I stand there praying that he'll just... go away, that the whole moment will evaporate and never exist. Neil does walk away, but so does Marcy and every other person who'd been within earshot of the poem and I, without looking back, simply walked straight ahead and out of the house. So, yeah, this felt like another Neil Ainsley moment, except there was no front door through which I could escape.

The voice would not shut up, so, I opened my eyes.

Someone had turned on a dull light and I could now see that I was locked in an empty circuitous room. Clay walls and no doors. The light, it turned out, was coming from a small opening in the chimney-like ceiling.

"Look at me, Pandora, look upon my face." The thing hissed again. Its breath was rancid, and, in a knee-jerk fashion, I pulled out my tin of mints.

"What is that?" It asked cautiously.

'Look,' I explained, 'I can't look at you until you take one of these because if your breath smells that rotten when I'm not looking at you...'

"That was really rude." He sounded, I guess, shocked and a bit hurt. I mean, I actually started to feel a bit bad... Until it dawned on me that, beside the fact I was just stating my truth, this - thing - had actually kidnapped me and locked me in this room, and I told it as much. Who the hell did it actually think it was taking umbrage when I was the victim? I mean, what the hell buddy? They're the criminal. They're the kidnapper. They're the weirdo who apparently thinks they can only get a girlfriend if they kidnap her and trap her.

"I don't want you to be my girlfriend!"

*Pandora gives the audience a look that makes it clear she is unimpressed with the kidnapper's declaration.*

So, there I am all trapped and stuff and I'm like, well what's the bloody point of it all? Why am I even here?



“Reach into the dark recesses of your mind, Pandora, and you will know me. We have met before, long ago, when this was my prison and you, my jailer.”

I tried to interject and tell them they had the wrong person. I mean, I would know if I’d kept someone prisoner before, right?

“Shut up!” the voice demanded. “I am asking you to remember. I am telling you that you held me captive for a time. When you set me free, sent me off into this world with no protection, you turned your back on me. Do you know what happened to me then?”

I decided not to answer so I could focus on not breathing in while it spoke.

“At first people loved me. They couldn’t get enough of my greed. They revelled in the fortunes that my deception could procure for them. They basked in the victories won through violence. They loved me... until they didn’t. Until they suffered the consequences. Then suddenly I’m the worst thing in the world. I’m being hunted and hated, the only company available to me are narcissistic psychopaths who, by the way, are not fun to have around. You abandoned me when I needed you and you hid. So, I say again, look at me and see what you have done.”

‘Listen buddy,’ I replied, ‘I made it pretty clear that if you aren’t willing to pop one of those mints in your mouth then I am not willing to turn around. Seriously, I feel like throwing up every time you open your mouth. It’s absolutely rank.’

Okay, so, like, I don’t completely understand what happened next. After a few minutes of arguing the point, it agreed to swallow the mint. Then there was a silence and then a time-bending scream. When the screaming stopped the ground began to move. The walls of the room were crumbling around me. I, like, sprang to my feet and began running. Ducking and climbing over the refuse and I didn’t stop until, well, now, running into you. I have no idea if the owner of the voice is following me. I have no idea where I am. Obviously I’m in distress or something. So, yeah, ummm... Can I, like, hotspot off your phone because I have got to stream this before I forget anything?

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