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# MONOLOGUE

TAPED

By Danielle Brame Whiting

## MARIETTA

*Shuffles in her seat. She is sitting in the office of the head psychologist at the hospital where they are keeping her mother. She is reluctant to talk but needs something from him and is determined to get it no matter how uncomfortable she feels.*

I shouldn't be here. I... I can't let people see me. I promised her.

*Beat.*

I promised my mother.

*Beat.*

Am I allowed to see her now? She'll be quite angry that I've stayed away for so long and she'll know that I've broken her rules. She'll know I let you see me.

*Beat.*

When I was young, my mother, she made it very clear to me. Don't let people see you. Don't make direct eye contact. Eye contact is bad. When you allow someone to look you directly in the eye, you allow them into your soul. You offer up a secret piece of yourself to them, and they will take that piece of you and they will twist it, manipulate it, mangle it, until it becomes completely unrecognisable.

When they've finished with it, they will give it back to you, whether you want it or no. In the blink of one eye they will give it to you like a dart through the iris and it will weave its way into the recesses of your mind, scarring your memory, tearing at your thoughts. The mind turning in on itself. When it is finished there, it creeps slowly down into the depths of your heart. You know, that area where the self resides, and it embeds itself in the hearts lining.

*Beat.*

So I do not look people in the eyes. I won't look them in the eyes and I am wary of my hands.

"Your hands will get you into trouble", mother said. "Your fingers will give you away. They will: take you to places you are not meant to go; Make you say things you are not meant to say; Change your appearance so that when others see you, they do not know you. The nails, hiding the grit and

grime of your daily life are masters of mesmerisation. The tap tap tappity tapping calling you in, like the piper, and making you forget everything I have taught you.”

She always leaned in a little too closely as she whispered this last bit.

Her hands would begin by resting on my shoulders and slide slowly down the outside of my arms. As she reached the bottom of my sleeves, because I was always required to wear long sleeved tops, she would tug at the threads until they covered the tips of my stubby digits. Her breath misting up my cheeks and chin. The strong scent of lemon and bleach invading my senses. I spend my days looking for ways to do what is needed without allowing my hands to betray me.

I have to be careful.

*Beat.*

My mother is able to read people in a way I never could. She would try to teach me, but I seemed to miss the clues and hints. “You think too highly of everyone. You must learn to read between the lines.” She explained to me that I was like some juicy sun-kissed red apple and anyone passing by could simply reach up and tear away from her.

*Beat.*

She always worried about me. And as technology grew around our little world, the wires and buttons, small green blinking lights, so did her worry. She would never trade anything but the shallowest niceties over the phone. Wrote everything by hand and only ever used cash when we went shopping. The more cameras that appeared in our stores, on the trains and buses, and in the hand of, what felt like, every other man, woman and child we passed... the more her anxiety grew.

Other people’s hands were now betraying us.

The technology she had been avoiding at such great cost had made its way into her head. Was messing with her every thought. It’s almost as if the technology had looked her in the eye. It has penetrated her soul and she is paralysed.

I’m glad you are looking after her and I know I don’t need to be here. She’ll be angry that I’ve seen you. I wouldn’t have come, but it was the only way I could see her.

Please, can I see her?

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