

The Painting
By
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PLAY BREAKDOWN

CHARACTERS

ALI	ALI is a 17-year-old girl with autism who is passionate being an artist.
MOM	She is the mother of ALI, and she does not want ALI to be an artist.
JENNY	ALI'S best friend
MRS. KROGER	The art teacher at ALI's program.

SETTING

Kitchen, ALI'S Room

TIME

2010

ACT 1

SCENE 1

LIGHTS UP on ALI and

MOM in a kitchen eating breakfast before Ali goes to the school. We see ALI eating her cereal while her mother comes by the kitchen and is holding her cup of coffee.

ALI

ALI turns around when she hears her mother's footsteps.

Oh, good morning mom.

MOM

Good Morning sweetie, have you slept well last night?

ALI

Uh, yeah. So far I slept well I guess, and you?

MOM

That's good to hear... Oh this reminds me! So sweetie are you excited for school today? I heard that there's going to be a really cool program about robotics and computer science too. I think you should try to join that program.

ALI

Turns her head and raises her eyebrows at MOM.

Oh. Well, thanks for at least letting me know mom, but I'm not interested to go to that program, honestly with you.

MOM

MOM was surprised when she heard ALI's response

Well why not honey? You're very smart and I think it will fit you to go to that program, I mean are there any programs or any dream career you had in mind then?

ALI

ALI froze and started to think what she could say to MOM.

...Well... there is something that I want to try it out, I just don't know yet.

MOM

Ah.. Well, I really hope it isn't what I think it is..

ALI

ALI sigh and stares at MOM.

No mom, it is not what you think... I just.. Don't know what I really want to be, that's all.

MOM

MOM places the coffee on the kitchen table then walks towards the window, staring outside.

Well I really hope so, I don't want you to become like your father... that ignorant man... he left us all alone all because he wanted to follow his "dreams" instead of keeping us safe...

There was silence in the kitchen, ALI felt a bit uncomfortable yet understood why her mother felt this way. She stood up from the chair and went to pat her mother's shoulder and comfort her.

ALI

Mom, don't worry I promise I won't be like him.. And I'll always be with you no matter what.

MOM

You promise me, right?

ALI

I promise... though mom I'm just still... confused. Why don't you want me to do the same talent as he did? I mean I don't think talents or hobbies affect your personality, right? I mean... I think I know that because isn't it logical?

MOM

MOM went to worried mother mode to strict-mother mode.

Ali you don't understand, I'm just worried that you will make the same mistake that your father did.. I prohibit you from doing the same thing your father did, understood me?

ALI

I won't, I won't.. I promise I won't do that..

MOM

Good...

There was awkward silence that lasted 5 seconds... Suddenly MOM stared at the clock and turn her head around to ALI.

MOM

Anyways, Is almost time for you to go to school, are you almost finished eating your cereal?

ALI

ALI looks at her bowl of cereal.

Kinda.

MOM

Alright, try to finish it and wash your teeth before you go outside honey, I also have to leave so I can go to work.

ALI

Okay mom, I will.

MOM

...Also, honey.. I'm sorry for being rough at you.. I just care about you.. I just don't want you to make bad decisions in the future.. You're the only daughter I have.

ALI doesn't respond anything but she gives a tiny smile and nods a bit to her mother.

ALI sits down on the same chair trying to eat her bowl or cereal while her mother leaves the kitchen. Now the LIGHTS are focused on ALI, all alone in the kitchen. While she's eating she's talking to herself inside her mind.

ALI

You Know.. It just all doesn't make any sense. It really fucking doesn't. Do you just ever think about why people always tell you that you can be whatever you are, yet tells you that you can't be this specific thing that you want to be? Well, welcome to my shitty life... You know it's funny cause at first I thought that maybe the real reason why my mom doesn't want me to be what i want is because I had Autism, but surprisingly that isn't the reason why she doesn't want me to be what I really want to be. It all happened because of my dad. I don't remember how he looks, he left when I was a baby, but I'm pretty sure he wasn't ready to be a dad... fucking coward. It's a shame, I bet he would have been more happy if he realized his own daughter also has the same talent and dreams like him as well. However, what matters the most is that I wish my mom had more trust in me, I wish I was more independent, I wish none of this ever happened at this point in my life. Well, I should also know that life is never easy, no matter how good your life goes, there will always be something shitty that will stop your way. I guess that's another way to grow up, I guess.

MOM

MOM yells at ALI behind the stage.

Ali is almost time to go! Are you ready to go wash your teeth?

ALI

Turns her head around fast while hearing MOM's voice.

I'm coming!

ALI stands up and takes her bowl to the dishes and takes her backpack with her, and she walks away out of the kitchen. The LIGHTS fades away to switch another SCENE.

SCENE 2

LIGHTS UP on ALI and JENNY, they are in the lunch together. They are in the center at the stage at the lunch table, sitting together.

JENNY

Huh, So you're telling me your mother really wants you to join a boring program that you're not even interested in, then?

ALI

I guess yeah, I mean I told her I'm not interested in going there, and then she brought up talking about my Dad.. like fucking always.

JENNY

Well.. that's a bit strange. Do you think that it has to do because you're...

JENNY starts to shrug pointing what she means.

ALI

ALI gets confused for a moment and raises her eyebrow a bit, and then she finally realizes what she meant.

Oh! No, no! Trust me I'm just glad my mom is not like those annoying anti-vaccine moms that we see outside all day... She told me that she just doesn't want to make the same mistake like my dad did. She believes that anyone no matter what disability you have, you can be whatever you want.

JENNY

Oooh, *phew* well that's a relief, I would have lost my brain cells if she was!

JENNY and ALI both started giggling a bit. Suddenly ALI finally remembered that she wanted to tell JENNY.

ALI

Speaking of Programs and Karens, So... I lied to my mom that I don't exactly know what I want to do.. Because there's something that I want to tell you. However before I say it, You're my only best friend and I want you to promise me to never, ever, EVER.. tell this to anyone or my mom, It's a secret.

JENNY

Oh! No need worry about that, You can always tell me any secrets you want, I promise I'll never betray you, girl.

ALI

ALI raises her eyebrow and stares at her seriously, and spits her own hand and reaches at her so she could shake her hand as a deal.

Promise?

JENNY

JENNY smiles and spits her hand and shakes ALI's hand.

Promise.

ALI

Okay.. So the truth Is I want to be a famous artist, I want to make beautiful paintings with lots of colors everywhere in my canvas... Well, except Yellow. I hate Yellow, is a horrible color is just... a dumb color.. I don't know. Anyways I found an art Program weeks ago and I want to join in secretly, without letting anyone know that I went to that program. I really want to go there Jenny, I feel like my dreams will finally come true If I do!

JENNY

Oh wow! That's amazing! If I were you I would definitely go there!... but how are you going to make sure your mom won't know your secret?

ALI

I'm so glad you asked that question! You see the program starts at 4:00 P.M, it starts after the school is finished. That means I could lie to my mom that I'm going to an afterschool of the program she asked me to go to, and she will never know that I'm lying to her.

JENNY

Huh, that actually does sound like a good idea, but Ali.. are you sure you want to do this? I mean what if things don't go the way you want it?

ALI

Then I'll find a way, I'm not gonna let my hopes and dream out of my way all because my mom doesn't want me to be like my dad. Unfortunately I don't think she will ever change her mind when she knows I want to be an artist, but when I grow up I could do whatever I want.

JENNY

Well I guess you do have a point, but man I'm so happy that you finally found what you always wanted!

ALI

Me too!

Suddenly the school bell rings and Both ALI and JENNY gets up to get ready to go to class.

ALI

ALI sighs.

I still wished my mom could at least see that this is the passion I want to come true, honestly. If she accepted the way I am, maybe things wouldn't be harder for me.

JENNY

JENNY comforts ALI by placing her arms around her shoulders.

Nah it's alright maybe one day your mother will change her mind... hopefully!

ALI

Yeah I also hope that too.

JENNY

Alrighty welp, I guess it is time to go now, I'll see you later then!

ALI

See ya!

JENNY exits the stage, and the ALI is still in the cafeteria, she stands there for a while and starts thinking about what she will do now. ALI finally decided what she needed to do, she took her phone out to call her mother.

ALI

Hey mom, is me Ali.... I know, I know... I shouldn't be calling you during school, but mom i need to tell you something... so i've been thinking about the program you told me this morning and well, I decided that maybe it would be a good idea to join in!.... Yeah!.... Oh, no that's okay I'll go by myself... I'll call you when I get home after I finish completing the application to join in the program... Yeah... okay mom... by the way I have to leave now, love you!

ALI disconnects the call from MOM and puts her phone away.

ALI

ALI does a tiny victory dance.

Yes! All according to plan!

SCENE 3

ALI leaves the stage and the LIGHTS goes out. Suddenly the next stage shows A woman who is at the desk writing some papers, and behind her there's paintings and a board with a color palette poster, a picture of famous artists, and a color wheel. ALI KNOCKS the door.

MS. KROGER

Still writing the papers.

Come in, please.

ALI

Hello?

MS. KROGER

Oh hello there, how can I help you?

ALI

Hi, so my name is Ali, Ali Jones. I'm a Senior student from Jackey H. Highschool, and I heard that there's going to be an art program starting next week. I was wondering if there's still enough space for one more person to join in?

MS. KROGER

Oh, Sure! I have to admit you're very lucky today, I do have some few applications so you can fill it out, which program do you want to join, there's five different programs.

ALI

I was thinking of participating in the Drawing and Painting class.

MS. KROGER

Oh! That's perfect, If you didn't know I'm the one who's in charge of that class!

ALI

Oh wow! That's awesome to hear!

MS. KROGER

Yes, indeed, oh you can have a seat by the way.

ALI

Thank you so much!

ALI sits down at the chair while MS. KROGER moves the papers away.

MS. KROGER

So, Ali, what makes you want to participate in the Drawing and Painting program? It would be interesting if you could tell more about you.

ALI

Oh well, I really do love to make paintings, and it is something that relaxes me, sometimes I feel like painting is the only thing that makes me feel safe, and I want to show the whole world what I am capable of doing! I also am diagnosed with asperger syndrome and-

MS. KROGER

Woah woah woah...

She chuckles.

Ms. Jones, did I hear that right?

ALI

Tilts her head.

Oh?

MS. KROGER

The ... mental disorder thing you said? Did you say that?

ALI

ALI was confused yet tried to not break her smile.

Yeah.. I said.. I have asperger syndrome.. autism.

There was an awkward silence, and MS. KROGER looks up and down at ALI. Then MS. KROGER finally speaks.

MS. KROGER

Um... Ms. Jones, I'm very surprised that you're special. I mean you don't look autistic to me, to be honest with you.

ALI

ALI was surprised that she heard a middle age woman like her ever say something like this to her.. However she really doesn't know if it was a compliment or not.

Oh... umm... thank you? I- I mean what's the problem about that?

MS. KROGER

You see.. We do not accept people like you, you people are just so... slow to work with and it just makes everybody feel uncomfortable. Besides you people cannot do anything at all, you're all disabled... and no offense, but you're just going to cause a problem.

ALI

Please, Ms. Kroger, understand this is my dream.. Look, I have my portfolio with me. I could show you how my work looks!

ALI quickly takes out her portfolio from her bookback and hands it in to MS. KROGER, she carefully takes the portfolio and looks a bit uncomfortable and disgusted. Until every page she turns the more surprised MS. KROGER looked.

MS. KROGER

She looks pretty shocked, she starts to stutter a bit.

My.. I... hmmm.. Not bad, for a mentally disabled person like you. I have to admit that really surprises me.

ALI

smiles a bit

So... does that mean I could join the program?

MS. KROGER

Well.. since you have proved me you can be an artist.. How about we make a deal? I'll let you be part of the program, and you have to prove to me that you are worthy to be in this program. If you win the Art competition you will win a \$10,000 scholarship for your future college. Today is.. November 8, and the competition will be on January 25, so you only have like 3 months until the competition comes.

ALI

ALI's mouth opens wide the moment MS. KROGER mention about the scholarships.

Oh wow! That's..That's incredible!

MS. KROGER

MS. KROGER passes a piece of paper to ALI.

Alright then, well here's the application, just make sure your parents or guardian also sign it too,

ALI

Her smile slowly fades away and stutters a bit, but tries to keep her smile.

Oh.. oh, uh... Yeah I'll definitely make sure it does.

MS. KROGER

Good, Is there any questions or concerns you want to ask? I mean since you are autistic I heard people like you get so confused very easily.

ALI

...No, no. Everything is fine. Well thank you so much I appreciate that alot.

MS. KROGER

Okay then, then I guess I'll see you tomorrow then.

ALI

ALI stands up from her chair and shakes MS. KROGER's hand.

Sure and thank you so much for everything.

ALI steps out of the room and now the lights are focusing on her, she starts dancing around but then stops for a moment when she realizes she still kinda has a problem.

ALI

ALI stares at the paper)

Oof.. almost forgot about that. Hm...wait a minute.. *chuckles* pfft what a big idiot I am, why should I be nervous about that? I could just sign it by myself. At least I kinda know what my mom's signature looks like. I just really hope this works.. Ugh I just hope I don't have to deal with anything shitty to Ms. Kroger..

SCENE 4

The LIGHTS fades away while we see ALI coming out of the stage. Time flies away. It has been 3 months now. Today is the day! In the STAGE. You see ALI and JENNY together at school, in the hallways.

JENNY

Wow, Ali I can't believe it has been three months since you joined the program! More surprised that your mother hasn't figured it out yet!

JENNY and ALI laughs

ALI

Yeah, I mean I still hope my mom doesn't figure it out, especially at the competition... man this is the best day of my life Jenny! I could already feel the excitement, and I really hope I do win at the competition as well!

JENNY

Yeah! Also how was your experience staying at the program by the way?

ALI

sighs

Well... at first it was really fucking horrible since Ms. Kroger will always mention to everybody like " And remember guys, Ali is a special need kid" or "be careful with Ali, she's autistic"... ugh, it was like a pain in the butt. However people started to treat me better when they saw my artwork, I even made more friends too! Heck, even Ms. Kroger started to become nicer to me!

JENNY

Wow! That's amazing! Huh, so things can change then in a good way! Man I'm really glad to hear this, I'm pretty relieved to know things are going great for you!

ALI

Yeah!

The bell of the school rings, and ALI gasps.

ALI

Oh SHIT! It's time man! Ugh finally I can leave school so I can go to the competition! You'll definitely come right?

JENNY

Yeah don't worry man I'll see you over there, but hopefully this goes well!

ALI

Cool! Well i gotta go now to catch the bus, see ya!

JENNY waves goodbye to ALI while ALI runs out or the stage. When Jenny turns around she sees ALI's mother, and she gasps and tries to go the other way trying to not get caught. However it was too late.

MOM

Oh well hello there Jenny!

JENNY

chuckles nervously

Oh! Uh.. Hi Ali's mom..

MOM

How are you doing today?

JENNY

Tries to smile and not break a sweat.

So far great, I was just uh.. heading out just now. What brings you here today?

MOM

Oh well I was just about to see Ali today. She forgot to bring her after school lunch.

JENNY

JENNY feels like she's about to shit herself and gulps knowing this was not going to end well if she doesn't do something quick.

Oh... Uh-

chuckles more nervously

Ah well you see a funny story, uh.. Have you heard that she was going on a field trip today?

MOM stares at Jenny surprised and confused.

MOM

Oh! Well then no I actually didn't know that. I think Ali might have forgotten to tell me.

JENNY

Yeah, but uh... no need to worry mam, she'll be back in a couple of hours and-

MOM

Wait a minute, now that I think about it, I don't remember Ali ever giving me a field trip form.. Or did she?

JENNY

This is the moment when JENNY knew, she fucked up.

Oh well I uh... I mean I remember she said it was optional, so yeah there's nothing to worry mam'-

MOM is already not having a good feeling about this and starts to see JENNY very suspicious. She pulls her phone out and calls the school. JENNY tries to walk away slowly, but MOM grabs her bookbag.

MOM

Nope!... you're not leaving anywhere, something tells me that something wrong is happening here.

JENNY

JENNY Whispers

Shoot!

MOM places her phone next to her ear, still grabbing JENNY's backpack and waits for the call.

MOM

Hello there I am Ali Jones' Mother, I'm here to call you because I heard that the robotic team has a field trip today, is that right?..... Oh!... really?.... Ah... so you're saying that Ali is not part of the program, right?... I see... alright i understand.. Well thank you that is all I needed to know... yes, you too have a nice day.

MOM slowly puts her phone away, and stares at JENNY. She sighs.

Jenny, Please tell me where she is..

JENNY

... Fine.. she's in a different program...

MOM

What program?

JENNY

... an art program..

MOM

WHAT?!

JENNY

I swear you don't have to worry about mam', she's doing fine.

MOM

..where is the program?

JENNY

Excuse me?

MOM

Where is the program?!

JENNY

Oh. Right. Um. Come with me.

SCENE 5

LIGHTS UP on MS. KROGER who is at the Competition doing the announcement is in the middle of the STAGE and ALI standing next to the edge of the STAGE.

MS. KROGER

Thank You everybody for coming on this very special day! The judges had now decided who is going to be the winners of the art competition. Before announcing who are the three winners, I just want to say that all or your artworks are amazing! It shows that all or you have so much talent and we're all proud of you! Now, The 3rd winner of today is Alexis Ramirez, who won a free shirt and a poster!

The audience applauds

The 2nd winner of today is Tommy Sullivan, who won a sketchbook and a set of coloring pencils!

The audience applauds again

And now it is time to announce the winner who won a \$10,000 scholarship..... Ali Jones!

The audience claps and cheers louder. ALI comes running towards MS. KROGER, and MS. KROGER gives ALI the microphone.

ALI

Oh Wow! God I really don't know what to say, I'm just so shocked to know that I won! I just want to say thank you so much! I never thought that I could do this without Ms. Krogers and everybody's help. All my entire life I had people telling me that I cannot do this because of who I am. The truth is.. I have autism, maybe no one in this competition knows what it is, but autism is just.. something that people like me think differently, some of us are either verbal while others are non-verbal. Some like to socialize with people while others have a hard time to communicate with people and it is harder for them to make friends. The thing is.. We're all different, but that doesn't mean we're stupid or that we should be treated differently. It hurts us, it makes us feel upset, angry, frustrated, nervous, and it really impacts us a lot. I think what I learned today is that... it doesn't matter what people think of you, just keep trying your best so you can show the whole world that you can still do it. It doesn't matter if you're the "special needs kid", show them that you're more than just a "special need kid"... The truth is.. We're all special, perfection doesn't exist but that doesn't make it bad, it just shows that we're all unique... My name is Ali Jones, I am autistic, and I'm proud to be autistic! Thank you!

The whole audience clapped and cheered and ALI stepped out of the stage and hugged MS. KROGER. Once she stepped out she saw her friend and her mother entering the STAGE. ALI was shocked.

ALI

Mom!... what are you doing he-

ALI stopped and realized why her mother was here... she stared at JENNY.

Jenny... you... you promised me! What the hell man?!

JENNY

I- I can explain I swear!

MOM

Well what the hell happened to *my* promise too, Ali Jones? I can't believe you lied to me for 3 months! That's it you're coming with me, both of you, and you will never step in this program ever again, understood?

ALI

No wait mom! You can't do tha-

ALI's mother takes her hand and before they were about to exit, MS. KROGER comes along and stops her mother.

MS. KROGER

Woah, woah, woah! What on earth is going on here?

MOM

Step aside lady, this is none of your business..

MS. KROGER

Now, now, hold up a minute, please? Ma'm please, I'm not going to allow this type of behavior if you don't cooperate here. Now please can you please tell me who you are and why are you taking away *my* student?

MOM

MOM Stops herself and tilts her head

Student?... Oh.. I see...

ALI

Ms. Kroger, sorry about this.. Um this is my mother...

MS. KROGER

Aah, I see. Mrs. Jones! Your daughter had talked a lot about you, I should have known it was you since you do look just like her daughter... Mam' I know that it is hard to be a single mother, trust me I know. My mother was also a single mother, and I understand that you just want your kids for the best. However Ali had shown me something that I never thought was possible for her to do it. Ali showed me that she isn't just a girl who thinks differently but she's also very talented and very smart too. Thanks to her I had learned that it doesn't matter if you're mentally or physically disabled, anyone can be whoever they want! I know that you don't want her to be an artist because of your husband.. But that doesn't mean she's going to be like her father. Trust me, Ali is a very wise girl, I don't think she will ever decide to make bad decisions like how her father did. Everyone is different and just because someone is interested to be what they want,

doesn't mean they will choose the wrong path. That's Ali decision on how she wants to live, she needs to be more independent Mrs. Jones. If you don't then i promise you.. It won't go well for you and her.

MOM starts to slowly calm down and looks at ALI, realizing that MS.KROGER might be right what she's telling her, she slowly let's go of ALI's hand.

MOM

...Well, I guess you might be right..

MS. KROGER

Trust me, she's going to be okay, and besides did you know that your daughter had won \$10,000 for her scholarships?

MOM

MOM suddenly became surprised and confused at the same time

What??

ALI

Yeah! Today it was the art competition and I won a scholarship as a prize! That is what I was trying to tell you! Mom I know that you might not like the idea of me being an artist, but just imagine how famous I will become, I promise you I will never do the same thing like how my dad did. I want people to see me as an inspiration! I don't want people to go through the same struggle I was going through. All I want you to do is you to support me.. Please mom.

ALI's mom is quiet for a moment and thinks through this, she sees her daughter's eyes and then turns around to see JENNY and MS. KROGER. Finally she speaks.

MOM

I guess all those years I was just worried that you would become like your father, I forgot about making my own daughter feel supported by her own mother... I'm so sorry dear, I never knew that this was hurting you for so long. Will you ever forgive me?

ALI

Ali smiles at her mother

Of Course I do mom, I love you and I will always forgive you.

ALI and MOM hug each other, smiling and crying together. While JENNY and Ms.KROGER smile and stares at them.

ALI

ALI whipping her tears and smiles at MOM

Hey mom.. Do you.. Want to see my artwork that I've been working on?

MOM

MOM smiles back at her

Sure, I would love to honey!

ALI, MOM, JENNY, and MS.KROGER goes to the competition, so they could see ALI's large painting she made. The Painting is placed in the CENTER of the STAGE, And MOM is amazed when she looks at the painting.

MOM

My god... so gorgeous! I can't believe all those years I never knew what an amazing artist you are!

JENNY

Oh trust me mam' she's an amazing artist!

Everybody laughs.

MS.KROGER

Say Mrs. Jones, do you want me to show you other work that Ali's partners had done?

MOM

Why yes, I would love to.

Both MS. KROGER and MOM leaves at the STAGE. JENNY and ALI are the only ones in the STAGE.

JENNY

Look.. Ali.. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to betray you this way, trust me I was trying my best to not let your mo-

ALI

Yo, yo! It's okay Jenny, sorry that i was mad at you earlier, Knowing you i know that you didn't mean it too. However, to be honest with you... I'm actually you took my mom here!

JENNY

Oh.. really?

ALI

Hell yeah man! I don't think none of this would have happened if it wasn't for you. I feel more relieved now I don't have to hide this secret anymore, And now my mom finally supports me! All I want to say is thank you Jenny, and don't worry I already forgive you.

JENNY

Oh! Ha, **pew** gotta admit I thought you would have kicked my ass for a moment, not gonna lie! **chuckles**

ALI

I mean I was about to-

JENNY and ALI laughs.

JENNY

So... we're still friends... right?

ALI

ALI smiles at JENNY

Fuck yeah!

ALI spits on her own hand, JENNY smiles big and does the same to hers, and they finally shake their hands covered with their own spit. They both laughed cheerfully.

After that they cleaned their hands by rubbing their own clothes.

ALI

By the way, do you wanna meet my new friends? I think you're gonna like them!

JENNY

Sure man!

ALI and JENNY leaves the stage, and while their voices fade away, The LIGHTS are still on, focusing on the painting that is placed in the middle of the STAGE, and slowly the LIGHTS fades away.

THE END