

AUNT RAINI

By Tom Smith

10-page script sample

AUNT RAINI
ACT TWO
Scene Two

Weeks later.

There is a knock on the door.

JOEL [off]

K?

(A moment later, the door opens, his key still in the lock.)

Katie?

(Cautiously enters, leaving the door slightly ajar. Takes a quick look around and, seeing that no one is home, takes down his framed photograph from the wall, placing it by the door. Exits down the hallway.)

(Katherine enters, confused by the unlocked door. She sees Joel's photo on the floor.)

KATHERINE

(Nervously.)

Joel?

(Joel re-enters the living room.)

Jesus, I thought someone had— What are you—

JOEL

Where are they?

KATHERINE

—doing here? I told you the rest of your things were at the gallery. How did you get in?

JOEL

I used my key.

KATHERINE

Which you were supposed to drop off when you got your stuff.

(Joel takes the key out of the door and places it on the table.)

What were you looking for? I told you I'd—

JOEL

Is it true, Katie?

KATHERINE

Your lawyer called. You couldn't tell me personally that you're pulling out of—

JOEL

Is it true?

KATHERINE

...Yes.

JOEL

The masters of her films. Her notes, diaries. All of it.

KATHERINE

Horst sent them.

JOEL

Why?

KATHERINE

She bequeathed them to me.

JOEL

No: why did you accept them?

KATHERINE

Because it's her legacy.

JOEL

I guess it is.

(Beat.)

At lunch today three students started berating me for my connection to all this. "Don't blame me," I said, "I didn't know who she was until it was too late." And Erik, this quiet kid who never says a word in class, screams at me, "Isn't that what the Germans said about Hitler?" I can't defend you anymore, K.

KATHERINE

I never asked you to.

JOEL

Well you seem incapable of doing it yourself. As evidenced in your interview in *The Times*.

KATHERINE

What about it?

JOEL

A full-page feature and you never once mention yourself. You have this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to talk about your work, your gallery. How you had to carry this massive family burden. But instead you talked about Leni: her work, her story.

KATHERINE

That was what they asked about.

JOEL

You're smarter than that, K. You know how to manage reporters, spin a story. And reading that made me realize: what you said about wanting your own life, that wasn't

true. You live in Leni's shadow because you choose to, because you like it there. I mean, my God, you said that you were proud of her.

KATHERINE

She was an amazing artist.

JOEL

Your father's inaction led to your mother's death and you've never forgiven him for it. Leni's actions contributed to the death of six million Jews, and yet you're proud of her.

KATHERINE

She had nothing to do with that.

JOEL

Whose truth is that?

KATHERINE

It's the truth.

JOEL

Not mine. Not most people's. God, I was so blind! I never saw how much you used me!

KATHERINE

What are you talking about?

JOEL

I'm a Jew! You knew that someday somebody would trace your great-aunt back to you. And the best way to defend yourself would be to point out that you were dating a Jew.

KATHERINE

That's insane.

JOEL

Is it? Every single guy you dated before me was Jewish. That's just coincidence?

KATHERINE

Of course it is; we live in New York!

JOEL

You're a smart woman, Katie.

(Beat.)

A great business woman.

KATHERINE

Our relationship was not a lie. You know that, Joel. You know it.

JOEL

I know you loved me. But I also know that you see love as something that eventually

forces you to lie and run away. Your father. Leni. I can't even be mad at you because I think that life just gave you a very raw deal.

KATHERINE

Did your new reps at the Blackman write up that bullshit for you?

JOEL

For the record, I never contacted them; they approached me.

KATHERINE

Of course they did. They've been poaching all my artists and clients since this happened.

JOEL

Because nothing is selling in your gallery anymore. I'm not the first to leave.

KATHERINE

No. But you're the one that hurts.

(Long moment.)

JOEL

What are you going to do with Leni's masters? Her diaries?

KATHERINE

Is that why you're here? Did you break in looking for—

JOEL

I had a key! And I can't just stand by and watch you make the biggest mistake of your life. I still—

(Stops himself.)

Adam said you're putting them together in an exhibition?

KATHERINE

Yes.

JOEL

How can you even consider that?

KATHERINE

It's important work that deserves to be seen.

JOEL

And "Great art inspires others."

KATHERINE

Yes, it does.

JOEL

Doesn't that terrify you?

(Beat.)

Have you even thought about how much this will hurt people, rip open the wounds of the past?

KATHERINE

People deserve to know who Aunt Raini was.

JOEL

They already do! Why else did she live in the country—in exile!—for the rest of her life? She took up photography because no one would fund her films anymore. For God's sake, she had to go underwater to find a world that didn't despise her!

(Katherine turns away. Joel crosses to her; turning her towards him.)

I'm not saying this to be hurtful, K. I'm really not. But you've got to see things how they are, not how you want them to be. There's only one truth. You can't just create another because you don't like it.

KATHERINE

(Grabs his photo off the floor and holds it out to him.)

Sure you can, Joel.

(Long beat.)

JOEL

I came here to convince you to call a press conference. Atone for what your aunt did, and then destroy everything she sent you.

KATHERINE

What are you—

JOEL

I spoke to the Blackman about it. They're willing to set it all up, pay for everything.

KATHERINE

So they come off looking like the—

JOEL

Katie, let me help you! Something good can still come out of all this. You can still salvage your reputation.

KATHERINE

This doesn't even make sense. So I destroy her work, so what? There are copies of it all over the world.

JOEL

But only one master. Think about the symbolism of that. How much healing it can do.

KATHERINE

Aunt Raini didn't leave me her art so I could destroy it.

JOEL

Didn't she?

(Beat.)

She could have left it to Horst, or kept it all locked up somewhere, but she didn't. Because she needed you to do what she wasn't strong enough to.

(Beat.)

Let me help you, Katie. Please. I'm still here because I want to help you through all this.

(He slowly takes her hand.)

...So what should I tell the Blackman?

The lights fade to black.