Two scenes from a longer play: Inked

Scene 1

(A small stereotypical tattoo shop. There are pictures plastered on the walls of all different crazy tattoo designs. There is a single tattoo chair as well as random tools and knick-knacks. From the back of the shop in walks JULIAN. He is 28, slim, and gives off a dark and brooding vibe. He turns music on and starts organizing things, getting the shop ready. He goes in back to grab more things. In the shop DANI walks in, she is 23. She gives off a weird almost mystical vibe. She looks at all the pictures on the walls while JULIAN comes back out and is startled by her.)

JULIAN
Oh, I didn’t see you there.

DANI
Is that a nymph or a fairy?

JULIAN
What?

DANI
At first glance you would think it’s a fairy because of the wings, but it almost seems to be made of water, like a water nymph. So?

JULIAN
Um a fairy ...I guess.

DANI
You guess? You put this on someone’s body forever but you don’t know what it is?

JULIAN
Um... Can I help you with something?
DANI
You have an obsession with trees don’t you?

JULIAN
Excuse me?

DANI
I just mean there are so many trees... oak, birch, cherry blossom. Even a cartoon tree... jeez.

JULIAN
It’s actually called New School-

DANI
It’s a cartoon.

JULIAN
Okay yeah...but...well...well, people really like trees.

DANI
Ironic, isn’t it?

JULIAN
How are trees ironic?

DANI
That people like trees so much, but because of people trees are dying out.

(JULIAN just stands there looking at her like she is insane, which she may be)
Oh, please tell me you're not one of those people that doesn’t believe in global warming.

JULIAN
What...No...I just wanted-

DANI
I mean the signs are everywhere, man! The landfills and the CO2 levels. Oh, and the polar bears. The poor polar bears, come on! I mean-

JULIAN
CAN I PLEASE HELP YOU WITH SOMETHING?!

DANI
Do you always blow up like that when someone disagrees with you? I mean, that can’t be healthy. You should talk to someone about that.

JULIAN
What are you even talking about? I have literally said nothing!

DANI
Maybe that’s your problem. You talk but you say nothing.

JULIAN
If it wasn’t 10 a.m. I would think you're drunk right now.

DANI
Why would time matter? I mean if I was an alcoholic then time wouldn’t matter at all. I imagine that the first thing I would think about in the morning is alcohol. So it wouldn’t be at all unreasonable for me to be drunk at 10 a.m.

JULIAN
So are you drunk?

DANI
No, why would I be?

JULIAN
So what are you doing here?

DANI
I’m here to get a tattoo, obviously. I mean this is a tattoo parlor, isn’t it? I don’t see any puppies around so it isn’t a PetCo.

JULIAN
I feel like I may regret this question, but what are you looking to get?

DANI
Something 1 in 867,000.

JULIAN
So you mean something unique?

DANI
Well, yes, but not too unique. I mean not something one in a billion or even a million. I can’t be that original. I have to be different enough that it’s difficult, but not so different that it’s interesting.

JULIAN
So no trees then?

DANI
(Chuckles) Yeah, no trees.

JULIAN
Do you wanna come sit and look through some of my old designs? Maybe it will inspire something..

   (DANI just stares at him critically.)
What?

DANI
You're just interesting is all. You listened to all my weird rants and never even questioned me about them. I think I like you.

JULIAN
Well, I’m flattered, I guess, but I have a fiance and-
DANI
Oh, I didn’t mean like that you lugnut. I’m just intrigued by you. You haven’t even tried to make an excuse to get me to stop talking.

JULIAN
Why would I?

DANI
I don’t know. It’s just what people around me seem to do lately.

JULIAN
Well, that sucks...I guess.

DANI
Yeah, but that’s my suck and at least it’s way better than some other people's. What’s your suck?

JULIAN
Oh, I don’t know....Do you want to discuss any designs?

DANI
Ahh now you're getting annoyed.

JULIAN
No, I’m not.. I just-

DANI
Want me to stop talking I get it.

JULIAN
No, I swear-

DANI
Be truthful.

JULIAN
Okay maybe a little.
DANI
Thank you.

JULIAN
For insulting you?

DANI
No for your honesty. Honesty is what’s most important. I’d rather someone be brutally honest than deceptively mean.

JULIAN
Now you intrigue me.

DANI
I’m glad. Have you figured out your suck yet?

JULIAN
Ugh.. I don’t know. Maybe I don’t have one. I mean, I have a good life.

DANI
I’m not saying you don’t have a good life. I’m just saying that no one’s life is perfect. There are hills and valleys. What are your valleys?

(JULIAN looks deep in thought for a second and it seems like he’s going to spill his guts to a complete stranger, but then he pulls himself together.)

JULIAN
Really I’m good. I’ve got great friends, a good job, a cool girlfriend.

DANI
Ahh now I see.

JULIAN
See what?!
DANI
Before you said fiance and now you say girlfriend. That leads me to believe that the change is a recent development and you are not really happy about that.

JULIAN
What?? No.. I love Lysa and I asked her to marry me, so why would I not be happy about it?

DANI
It sounds more like you’re asking yourself than asking me.

JULIAN
No, really. She’s great and we’ve been together for almost..three years, it makes sense.

DANI
So you asked her to marry you because it made sense?

JULIAN
Well, yeah..among other things. Have you thought of a design yet?

DANI
Ahh I see everytime I get to a touchy subject you try to divert me.

JULIAN
Why should I tell you anything? You’re a complete stranger to me. I don’t even know your name.

DANI
That’s understandable. My name in Dandelion Love but my friends just call me Dani.

JULIAN
Are you serious?
DANI
Don’t you think if I was going to tell you a fake name I would come up with something better?

JULIAN
True. You must hate your parents.

DANI
Why would I hate my parents?

JULIAN
For naming you that. I can guess that you had a lot of bullies with that name.

DANI
No, not really. Everyone always just said the name fit me. Plus I grew up on a Wind Farm.

JULIAN
Interesting.

DANI
Not really. Are you not gonna tell me your name?

JULIAN

DANI
Nice to meet you Julian.

JULIAN
You too Dandelion.

DANI
So now that we know each others name. Can we talk about Lysa?

JULIAN
There’s nothing to say.
DANI
You say you love her but you don’t sound very in love.

JULIAN
What do you know about love? You don’t look like you can be older than twenty.

DANI
I’m twenty three actually and it’s funny you mention that because I’m recently engaged as well.

JULIAN
(deadpan) Mazel Tov. Can we get talking about tattoos?

DANI
Not yet, we are finally getting to something. My fiance is named Phil. He’s the sweetest. Do you wanna hear how he proposed to me?

JULIAN
Let me guess. It was a big romantic ordeal wasn’t it?

DANI
Not at all it was nothing really special. We were sitting in my backyard wrapped in a blanket. This was last fall so it was a bit chilly. We were talking about the bad movie we just watched inside. He looked at me. It was one of those looks that just makes me you know that the person really sees you. They see all of you even the bad parts and still love you unconditionally. Then he said, “It’s finally time to ask you something I knew I’d be asking you the first time I met you.” Then he popped the question. It was perfect, understated and I knew he really loved me. Was your proposal like that?

JULIAN
Well...no.

DANI
What happened?
JULIAN
We were fighting and it sort of just came out.

DANI
I see.

JULIAN
Would you stop saying that? What do you see? What could you possible see from a simple statement.

DANI
You felt trapped in the whatever you were arguing about so proposing was a way out if the argument for you.

JULIAN
What..I...No. It wasn’t... I mean I may have... If you were there then... She was expecting... ok maybe. Please don’t say you “see” again.

DANI
Nope I don’t see I hear.

JULIAN
Can I ask you something for a change?

DANI
Yes but only if it’s not about a tattoo and no matter what we will be coming back to this topic.

JULIAN
Yeah fine. Do you normally do this?

DANI
Come into tattoo shops and have extremely interesting conversations? Unfortunately no but I hope this will be a repeat occurrence.

JULIAN

No I meant ask practically strangers extremely strange and personal questions?

DANI
Now that I definitely do.

JULIAN
Why?

DANI
Sometimes people just need someone objective to talk to. Having someone there and eager to listen to your problems is a luxury most people don’t have.

JULIAN
But you don’t get anything out of it?

DANI
Now there you are wrong. I get immense joy helping people and then I don’t have to focus so much on my own problems.

JULIAN
So you avoid your own problems by making other people face their problems.

DANI
Basically. Now about your Fiance.…

JULIAN
Ugg..I really don’t want to talk about it.

DANI
What were you two fighting about?

JULIAN
It’s personal.

DANI
So, it’s not like I have anyone to tell.
JULIAN
I don’t ...

DANI
Julian come on. What will take for you to open up? Do you need to hear more about me and my Phil? Will that help you open up? Well Phil has a birthmark on his right butt cheek that is the shape of Nevada and I-

JULIAN
She’s pregnant.

DANI
Ahhhh. So you did the classic stupid man move.

JULIAN
Yeah, I guess you can say that. I just-

DANI
Just what?

JULIAN
Don’t know if I did the right thing.

DANI
That’s something I can’t answer for you. You have to figure it out for yourself.

(JULIAN Looks extremely conflicted.)
What are you feeling? Go ahead let it out.

JULIAN
I’m not ready to be a dad. I just not ready. I’m not ready to be a husband even. I can barely take care of myself. I’m just gonna screw it up. I’m gonna screw it all up. I should just leave. They would be better off without me.

DANI
You would really leave your pregnant fiance who you claim to love and just disappear?
JULIAN
I think I should.

DANI
Then you're not the man I thought you were.

JULIAN
You don't-

DANI
If you truly love her, then you should never ever leave. When a person finds love, which is so difficult in this current world, you should always stay. Always...Always... You stupid stupid man.

(DANI runs out of the shop angry and JULIAN just looks confused.)

Scene 3

(Same Place. The Rolling Stones is blasting and JULIAN is sitting in the tattoo chair with his back to the Audience. The door of the shop opens and PHIL pokes his head in the door.)

PHIL
Are you open?

(JULIAN swings around in the chair revealing he is reading What to Expect When You're Expecting and not looking up from his book.)

JULIAN
Uh...yeah. How can I help you?

(PHIL, 24 dorkish vibe, walks in holding a business card.)

PHIL
Are you Julian...Julian Katish?
JULIAN
Yup. What can I do for you?

PHIL
My name is Phil. Phil Stevens. I’m Dani Love’s fiancée.

(JULIAN smiles, turns down the music, puts down the book and stands up from the chair.)

JULIAN
Oh, it’s great to meet you. I’ve heard a lot.

PHIL
She told you about the weird birthmark on my left butt cheek didn’t she?

JULIAN
(Chuckles) Yeah.

PHIL
For some reason she always thought that was a great story for small talk.

JULIAN
She is one of a kind.

PHIL
Was…

JULIAN
What?

PHIL
She died two weeks ago.

(JULIAN is stunned and they have a moment of awkward silence.)

JULIAN
I am... so sorry.

PHIL
Thanks and it’s okay. We all knew it was coming and she was herself right to the very end. The last thing she said to me was to eat more cotton candy because if she had more time she would eat so much cotton candy.

JULIAN
Yeah, that really sounds like her. May I ask why you're here? I mean I’m glad you came and told me, but why?

PHIL
Truthfully, I kinda wanted to meet you. She really enjoyed your conversations. She said you were a ruby soul drowning in a cerulean sea... Whatever that meant. I just felt like you deserved to know, but it was also a kinda selfish journey for me as well.

JULIAN
What do you mean?

PHIL
Her tattoo. What was she getting?

JULIAN
She never told you?

PHIL
No, she was so secretive about it which is so weird. Dani was many things, but secretive was not one of them. I mean, you met her. She would say whatever was on her mind. I know how important it was for her to get this tattoo as a final stand of some sort. So I really want to know what she was getting.

(JULIAN stares at him questioningly for a minute, then nods and walks out back. He comes back out carrying a large sketch book. He finds the right page in the book and walks over to PHIL.)
JULIAN
Here it is...it’s...well, it’s pretty self explanatory.

(JULIAN shows PHIL the sketch but it faces upstage so that the audience can’t see it.)

PHIL
Oh wow..it’s incredible.

JULIAN
Thanks.

PHIL (Tearfully)
It’s so her, but it’s also..

JULIAN
You. She told me you said that.

PHIL
Yeah, it was right after we found out...she had..

JULIAN
Man, are you okay? Do you wanna sit down?

PHIL
No.. No.. I’m fine. I want it.

JULIAN
Of course. The drawing is all yours. It’s the least I can-

PHIL
No. I want the tattoo. Can you do it for me? I’ll pay you anything.

JULIAN
No, no. I won’t take your money.

PHIL
Please. I need this.
JULIAN
Are you sure you want this kind of reminder on your skin everyday for the rest of your life?

PHIL
Julian. She’s gonna be with me everyday from now on anyway. At least this way it’s not just invisible. It’s visible for everyone to see. It’s like a tattoo of her soul. This is a way for her to still be seen in the world.

JULIAN
You sounded like her just there.

PHIL
Will you please tattoo me?

JULIAN
Of course. (snaps back into business mode) I have to go set things up and you have forms to fill out. Why don’t you go take a minute. The bathrooms right there.

PHIL
Thank you.

(PHIL hands JULIAN the sketch book and heads offstage. JULIAN looks deeply at the sketch.)

JULIAN
Dani is a beautiful name for a girl.

(He puts the sketch book on the chairs so the audience can finally see it and walks in back. The image is a beautiful dandelion in rainbow colors in the shape of a heart that has pieces missing. The steam of it is a quote “You may have a broken heart but not a broken soul.”)