

The Storage Unit  
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## THE STORAGE UNIT

### Characters

JUSTIN, a young man in his late twenties to early thirties

ALEX, a young man in his late twenties to early thirties

### Setting

A storage unit: filled with an assortment of boxes and a bed with a unique headboard set up in the corner

## THE STORAGE UNIT

At rise. JUSTIN and ALEX are looking through boxes and cataloging the contents (Directors note: cataloging can be done on paper, a tablet, a phone, etc.)

ALEX

Did you find anything yet?

JUSTIN

Nope. This one is full of broken bird feeders. Why do old people hold on to so much random junk?

ALEX

I knew it was a long shot, but I really thought that there would be at least something in here. Even if it was just an old brush set. I could have gotten something for that.

JUSTIN

At least we got the bed. This thing is going to be way more comfortable than my sister's futon.

ALEX

Well I'm glad at least one of us will be getting something out of this buy.

JUSTIN

Hey man, it's like you said. It was a long shot. There was no guarantee that any of his old art stuff would be in here. He probably kept it in his house. Or maybe his family already came and picked it up.

ALEX

He didn't have any family. No one was listed in the obituary. No one even showed up to help clean out this house. George Bentley died alone.

JUSTIN

So then how did you know about his storage unit?

ALEX

Martin. He knew Bentley was one of his renters. He called me when he saw the obituary.

JUSTIN

Is he allowed to do that? Isn't there some sort of renter privacy or something?

ALEX

Not when the renter is dead. The point is, Martin remembered my interest in Bentley and figured I'd be able to figure out if there's anything valuable in here.

*(Pause)*

Martin asked me about you. He wanted to know how you've been doing... you know... since you've been out.

JUSTIN tenses

He was really nice about it. He said that he thinks the whole reason that the government won't just legalize marijuana is because –

JUSTIN

You said Bentley was pretty famous during his career, right?

ALEX

(Taking the hint)

Yeah, during the 70s and 80s he had two galleries out in New York.

JUSTIN

Did you ever find out why he stopped painting and moved home so suddenly?

ALEX

No. He'd never let me interview him. Everything I know about him is from what I've read or what his neighbors said. He didn't talk to anyone. He barely even left his house. I was hoping there would be something in here, like a journal or maybe some of his paintings, that would fill in some of the gaps about his life.

JUSTIN pulls a book out from a box and begins looking through the pages

But all we've managed to find are broken bird feeders and -

JUSTIN

His sketchbook!

ALEX

What?

JUSTIN

His sketchbook! Look! It's full of drawings and watercolor paintings!

ALEX

Let me see! Oh wow. Oh wow! This is it, Justin!

JUSTIN

You're sure it's his?

ALEX

It has to be. It's in his storage unit. His name is on the front cover. And here. That's his signature.

JUSTIN

There are dates on some of these.

ALEX

Some of these go all the way back to the 60s. They may have never been seen before!

JUSTIN

Some of these are incredibly erotic.

ALEX

He certainly had an eye for beautiful women.

JUSTIN

Well, I'm happy for you man. It looks like we're both coming away with something today. I got a new bed, and you have the sketchbook of your favorite local legend.

ALEX

We have more than just that, Justin.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry?

ALEX

Do you know how much people would pay to get their hands on something like this?

JUSTIN

You want to sell it?

ALEX

Think about it, Justin. Bentley might have died a nobody, but at the height of his career his work would sell for thousands of dollars. Sometimes hundreds of thousands. Can you imagine how much someone would pay for his original sketches?

JUSTIN

I have no idea.

ALEX

We're talking millions of dollars here! Some original works can sell for millions on their own. We have a whole book!

JUSTIN

Come on, Alex. You don't know that. You're not an art historian. You're not an art collector. You don't even watch Antiques Roadshow!

ALEX

I don't think you're giving me enough credit!

JUSTIN

You did a report on the guy in high school. Do you really think that makes you an expert on how much people would pay for his work now?

ALEX

Hey, I learned a lot about the art scene in the 70s and 80s from that project. I might not know exactly how much something like this is worth, but I do know that people collect things like this, and they are willing to pay ungodly amounts of money for it.

JUSTIN

Ungodly?

ALEX

I'm being serious, Justin! If we can sell this, we'll have enough to pay off all our student loans. You could move out of your sister's place. This could be the financial cushion that you've needed while looking for a job!

JUSTIN

I don't know about all of that, but I guess it would be worth it to at least look into it. But listen, we can't do anything until we finish getting these other boxes cataloged, the bed taken apart, and everything loaded up on the truck. The sign out front says they close at six. That gives us just over an hour. We've got to get this finished up.

ALEX

You're right, you're right. I can finish cataloging these last boxes if you want to start taking the bed down and loading it on the truck.

JUSTIN

Sure. Just, try to keep focused. I don't want to give Martin a reason to come over here.

JUSTIN slides under the bed. ALEX is about to resume cataloging but gets distracted again by the sketchbook.

JUSTIN

Hang on. There's something hidden under here.

JUSTIN pulls a small trunk out from under the bed.

ALEX

Maybe that's what Bentley kept his supplies in. Maybe there's another sketchbook in there!

JUSTIN

I've got my pocketknife. I bet I can cut through these straps.

While JUSTIN works, ALEX becomes absorbed in one of the pictures in the sketchbook. He looks between the picture and the bed as if comparing the

two. He starts quickly flipping to other pictures in the sketchbook.

ALEX

I think Bentley might have used this bed for his models when he was painting. The pattern on the headboard shows up in most of these paintings of the women.

JUSTIN

What, so now you think the bed is worth something, too?

ALEX

Maybe...

JUSTIN opens the trunk.

What's in there?

JUSTIN

A folder of old newspaper articles and some photo albums.

ALEX takes the folder and looks through the newspapers. JUSTIN flips through the photo albums.

ALEX

These are probably stories about Bentley's shows.

(Looking closer at the articles)

These are all news stories. About missing women. From Memphis, Cottontown, Portland, Lewisburg, Chattanooga...

*(Pause)*

Justin?

JUSTIN is staring at the pictures in the photo album.

What are you looking at?

(Turning attention to the photo album)

Oh my god. Oh my god.

JUSTIN

There are locks of hair stuck in with some of them.

ALEX

Is that the same bed? Are they tied up to this same bed?

JUSTIN

It looks like the same headboard. It's hard to tell, though. There's so much blood. Wait.

JUSTIN grabs the sketchbook and holds it beside the photo album.

Alex. They're the same. The same women. He painted them and tortured them and kept the articles and photographs as trophies -

(Bringing attention back to the storage unit)

We need to call the police.

JUSTIN pulls out his phone.

ALEX

Wait a second.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry, what?

ALEX

Just... hold on.

JUSTIN

Hold on? Alex, we can't "hold on." We need to get the cops here now.

JUSTIN begins to dial, but ALEX snatches the phone away and throws it on the bed.

ALEX

Just let me think for a second!

JUSTIN

What are you doing? This is serious! This could be a crime scene – for all we know we could be standing in the exact spot where this guy murdered these women.

ALEX

I know.

JUSTIN

Do you know how risky it is for me to even be here right now? This could put my whole parole in jeopardy!

ALEX

You're absolutely right. That's why we can't tell anyone.

JUSTIN

Are you insane?



ALEX

Think about it for a second, Justin. No one else knows what we've found. If anyone else knew what was in here, they would have reported it by now. These disappearances -

JUSTIN

- murders -

ALEX

- happened what, 40, 50 years ago? They're cold cases by now. I bet no one even remembers them anymore.

JUSTIN

That's exactly why we need to call someone.

ALEX

No, that's exactly why we don't need to tell anyone. We can make this disappear. The only things that link together these disappearances -

JUSTIN

- murders -

ALEX

- together are the photo albums and the newspapers. If we get rid of those things, then all we are left with is this stupid bed and this sketchbook of original, genuine, incredibly valuable paintings. You can take the bed back to your sister's house and then we'll sell the paintings. No one ever needs to know the connection between them.

JUSTIN

You think that I still want to keep this murder bed after all of this?

ALEX

Then can get rid of the bed, too. The bed and this trunk. I can just burn them out in the field behind my house.

JUSTIN

Alex, We can't -

ALEX

Why not? Who is it hurting?

JUSTIN

These women had families!

ALEX

Had. It looks like they were all young. Probably unmarried, no kids. At this point, most of their families have probably passed away. Even if they haven't, it's been 50 years. They've moved on by now.

JUSTIN

You don't know that.

ALEX

All we would be doing is reopening old wounds. After all this time, do we really want to go digging up any residual trauma?

JUSTIN

At least they would have answers.

ALEX

So what do you want to do? Just call the cops?

JUSTIN

Yes! That is exactly what I want to do!

ALEX

You know what? Fine. Do it. Call the cops. Let them come down here and take all of this into evidence. Let them take all of these paintings and lock them away. Let it all just sit in some backroom somewhere.

JUSTIN

You're not thinking clearly! We can't just pretend -

ALEX

And while you're at it, why don't we take out my life savings and burn it? Because that is essentially what you're doing here. This sketchbook could be worth millions, but that doesn't matter. We'll just let the same cops that locked you up lock it all away.

JUSTIN

This is an entirely different situation -

ALEX

I'm trying to protect you! You said it yourself – it *is* risky for you to be here. What are the cops going to think when they find you here surrounded by all of this evidence? You think they're just going to let you walk away from this? You think they'll take the word of some pothead?

JUSTIN

That's not fair. That's not fair and you know it.

ALEX

No, you know what's not fair? How hard it's been to watch you struggle since you got out. You can't get a steady job. You're living in your sister's guest room and sleeping on her futon. None

of our old friends want anything to do with you because they're afraid you're going to narc on them. Your parents don't even want to be associated with you!

*(Pause)*

I am the only one who has stayed loyal to you. I was the only one at your trial – the only one who came to visit. The only person you called. And I was the only one there on the other side of the gate the day you got out. For the past 15 years, all I have ever wanted is the best for you. Why can't you just trust me?

JUSTIN

*(quietly)*

I do trust you.

ALEX

Then prove it.

*(Pause)*

JUSTIN

What do you want to do?

ALEX

I told you. I can just burn the bed and everything in the trunk in the field behind my house. My family has bonfires all the time, so no one will think anything of it. The fire should also get rid of any DNA evidence. That's what they say on those true crime shows, anyways.

JUSTIN

What about Martin? He knows we bought this unit. He knows what was in here.

ALEX

He knows about the bed, but not the trunk. If he ever brings it up, which I doubt he would, we'll just tell him we sold the bed to someone out of town.

JUSTIN

I don't want anyone to get hurt.

ALEX

No one else is going to get hurt. We're the only ones who know about the connection between Bentley, the disappearances -

JUSTIN

- murders.

ALEX

Fine. We are the only ones who know about the connections between the murders. And we aren't going to get anyone else involved.

JUSTIN  
But Bentley –

ALEX  
Bentley is dead, Justin. He can't hurt anyone else.

*(Pause)*

JUSTIN  
No one can ever know. And I mean no one.

ALEX  
We'll take it to our graves.

JUSTIN  
So... what now?

ALEX  
I'll finish demoing and loading the bed. You just worry about the boxes. I'll drive the truck home and do the bonfire tonight. It will be like none of this ever happened.

JUSTIN  
Okay.

ALEX  
Okay?

JUSTIN  
Yeah. Let's just get this stuff out of here and be done with it.

ALEX  
Okay. I'm going to get the rest of the tools off of the truck. I'll be right back.

ALEX exits.

JUSTIN stands alone for a moment, then wearily returns to a box. He looks inside and withdraws a small birdcage. He looks at the cage and then directly at the audience.

Blackout.