

BROKEN?

written by

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OVER BLACK:

Someone shifting in a chair. Followed by a long silence.

Finally --

DOUG (V.O.)
Who'd like to go first...?

INT. DOUG'S OFFICE - DAY

DOUG, 40s, glasses, salt and pepper hair, sits in a chair.
Hands together.

On the couch across from him:

ADAM, 30s, messy hair, dressed down in worn jeans and a
Grateful Dead t-shirt.

SANDRA, 20s, petite and wearing an oversized sweatshirt. Hair
in a messy bun. No trace of makeup.

Doesn't look like either of them has slept well in quite some
time.

Adam and Sandra glare at each other, then quickly look away.

Doug nods. Understanding how this is gonna go.

DOUG
I can't help you if you don't let
me in. While I do think we've made
some progress, I need you to open
up. I know it's difficult --

ADAM
It's not difficult! I just don't
see the point in talking when what
I say doesn't matter.

SANDRA
Then why'd you even come?

Adam looks at her, trying to find the words. He looks away
instead.

SANDRA
He won't communicate with me. It
feels like I'm in this alone.

ADAM
I don't communicate because you
don't care what I have to say.

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)
 You never have. And if you don't
 ignore me, you interrupt me.

SANDRA
 I don't interrupt.
 (to Doug)
 Do I interrupt?

DOUG
 Well... I haven't --

SANDRA
 (to Adam)
 See? I can listen.

Doug raises a hand. He has a firm yet gentle air to him.

DOUG
 I have an idea. We'll do this one
 at a time. Sandra, if you say one
 thing to Adam with no
 repercussions, what would it be?

ADAM
 This outta be good.

Sandra looks shoots Adam a dirty look. Tries to let it go.

SANDRA
 Honestly, if I could say anything,
 it would be why am I not good
 enough?

Adam raises his eyebrows. Confused.

ADAM
 What?

SANDRA
 You heard me. Why am I not good
 enough? When we first started
 dating, it was like I meant the
 world to you. We laughed, we
 smiled, we actually enjoyed
 spending time together. Then it
 was like someone flipped a switch.
 You don't want to spend time with
 me, you won't talk to me. It's
 like we're not even the same
 people anymore.

ADAM
 That's bullshit, and you know it!
 (MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)

Things have been stressful at work. I'm dragging my body around all day long. It takes everything I have just to stand up. I feel the same way about you now that I did when we go together.

Sandra "fails" to suppress a snort of laughter. Crosses her arms. Clearly not buying it.

SANDRA

Yeah? When was the last time you asked me how my day was and actually listened? How long's it been since you went out of your way to let me know you love me?

Adam rubs his forehead vigorously. Tension building.

ADAM

We've been married for almost four years. Common sense tells you that things aren't going to feel as fresh as they did when we got together.

SANDRA

I know that! That's not what I'm talking about. There's a difference between being with someone -- I mean completely with someone -- and just being two people existing together.

(to Doug)

I feel like that's what we've become. We might as well be two strangers living in the same house. We're like fucking roommates.

A tense silence falls between them.

Adam and Sandra stare at the walls, the floor, the window, anything but each other.

Doug sits forward. Engaged. He's got something started here, he just has to dig further.

DOUG

Good. Very good. Now we're getting somewhere. All right, Adam, your turn. What's the one thing you'd say to Sandra?

Adam thinks hard on this. He looks to the floor, shaking his head. Sighs.

ADAM

I don't feel like you appreciate me, either. I'm so stressed I'm about to fucking lose it. I can't tell if you don't know, or you don't care. But I haven't exactly felt like you're there for me either, lately. I feel like I'm in this alone.

Doug nods.

DOUG

What's been going on that's so stressful?

ADAM

I got cut back at work. I'm struggling to pay bills. I can't find another job to supplement what I've lost. I feel like a fucking failure.

Sandra perks up at this. She turns to face Adam.

SANDRA

Why didn't you tell me?

Adam just shrugs.

SANDRA

No! That's not an answer. I work too, you know? You're not in this alone!

DOUG

Looks like what you two have is a problem with communication. Relationships are a fifty/fifty split. Neither of you are psychic, you can't read each other's minds. If you feel something, you have to talk about it.

Adam and Sandra look like scolded children. The guy's got a point.

ADAM

It's hard to open up sometimes. That wasn't how we did things when I was growing up.

(MORE)

ADAM (CONT'D)

My dad got up, went to work, ate three meals, and did it all over again the next day. Wasn't a lot of time left for sharing our feelings.

DOUG

Do you ever wish there had been?

Adam nervously fidgets his leg, bouncing it up and down.

ADAM

Sometimes.

His voice breaks. Low. Almost like he's ashamed.

DOUG

Sandra, what would you say in response to that?

Some of the harshness fades from Sandra's face. Replaced by a look of understanding.

SANDRA

I'd say that you can always talk to me. About anything. I'm always here for you.

Adam looks at her. Comforted by her words.

DOUG

Adam...?

ADAM

I'd say... I guess... I'd say that I'm here for you too. Even if it feels like I'm not. You mean everything to me. I hate that you don't see it.

DOUG

I probably shouldn't be telling you this, as if might put my job in jeopardy, but external support is good. It can help you get a fresh perspective. But most of making a relationship work comes down to just talking to the other person.

(beat)

Listen to what they have to say, don't just hear.

Doug gets up from his chair and starts pacing back and forth. Really in a groove.

DOUG

The human mind has a way of
creating problems out of nothing.
Or taking a small problem and
making it bigger.

Doug stops. Leans against his desk, arms folded.

DOUG

You can avoid of lot of these
problems by talking to your
partner, if I haven't hammered
that home enough yet.

SANDRA

(to Adam)

So what do we do now?

Adam leans towards her. Takes her hand.

ADAM

What do you wanna do?

SANDRA

I want us to be like we were
before. I want to lay on your
chest at night and fall asleep to
you stroking my hair. I want to
spend time together, it's doesn't
have to be something that takes
money. I just want to enjoy being
with you again.

(beat)

No fighting, no stress, no feeling
alone.

(beat)

I want to be... us... again.

Sandra tightens her grip on Adam's hand. On the verge of tears.

ADAM

I honestly don't know if I
remember how.

DOUG

Maybe you should find out
together. This won't work if both
of you aren't willing to give the
other what they need.

Doug returns to his seat.

DOUG

A relationship takes work. The question is: are you both willing to put in the time?

Adam looks down at his hand, which is still holding Sandra's.

ADAM

I think I am if you are.

Sandra looks from their hands to Adam's face. They look eyes.

There's still pain, but there's also a spark. A connection.

SANDRA

I'd like that very much.

DOUG

Good.

Doug checks the clock.

DOUG

We've still got a while left. Who'd like to go next?

Adam and Sandra just stare silently at each other. Anxious, but relieved. A huge weight off their shoulders.

Sandra sighs. Ready to dig further. Determined.

SANDRA

Well...

FADE TO BLACK:

THE END.