

Older: It's hard to navigate work and stuff, y'know?

Younger: But that's paying bills. This is my career.

*Silence.*

Older: When you... when you get older things change.

*Beat.*

Younger: What does that mean?

Older: Just... stuff isn't like it is in school. There are bills and, and problems. It gets harder to keep up.

Younger: So you give up.

Older: I didn't say that.

Younger: So what *are* you saying?

Older: Just that sometimes things go on the backburner.

Younger: Stop dancing around it. You're not acting anymore.

*Silence.*

Younger: (*Quieter, to himself*) You're not acting anymore.

*Beat.*

Younger: What are you doing instead?

Older: It's not that I've... that I've *stopped*. Just that it's not a great time right now.

Younger: When will it be a good time?

*Beat.*

Younger: It's all we're good at. It's... it's who we are. How could it *not be a great time*? You should be working every day to make it happen. That's what I'm doing. How can you not hold up your end of the bargain? I'm trying now to get as good as I can so that when I go into the world I'll get noticed. I'll *have* to be noticed. And you-

Older: It's not as easy as you think.

Younger: I don't think it's easy!

Older: Yes you do. You just don't realise it yet. You're a point where you pay lip service to the fact that it'll 'be a lot of hard work', without ever thinking that through. And if you do, that's not taking into account how much every failed audition or bad review stings. How

*worthless* it makes you feel. And before you tell me that you're ready for disappointment, you're not. You really aren't. Because to you, right now, disappointment is just a word. It's not the punch in the gut that you have to try time and time again to get up from.

*Beat. Older Will runs a hand through his hair, takes a deep breath.*

Older: Everyone told you to get ready for it. Over and over again. And you *will* be ready for it. The first time someone turns you down, you think hey, it'll be fine, I'm still young, everyone goes through this. The first ten, twenty, forty times it'll be okay. But then you've been trying for eight years and you start to think, what more am I meant to do? What more do these people expect of me? I've been through pain and misery and hurt and I know how to bring that to what I do. I believe I'm talented.

*Beat.*

Older: But then for the first time you start to think that maybe you're...not. Maybe you're just not as good as everyone told you you were. Maybe I was the idiot for listening to my friends and parents and all the sycophants I now know I was surrounding myself with just to avoid hearing any real criticism. And yeah, you push that away, because it's just a thought and it doesn't mean anything. But already, just thinking it has eroded some of your defences. And the more you're rejected, the weaker that armour gets and the more it starts to hurt.

*Beat.*

Older: The biggest lie anyone told me was that you get used to rejection. You don't. It's easy when you're fifteen, because you've still got so much to learn and look forward to. And hey, maybe at twenty five you still do. But that, that right there is the worst part. Because if you're still no better than you were at fifteen then really, what's the point? Why even try?

*Beat.*

Younger: Because I'm the best. You were the best. At school-

Older: Yeah, I was the best actor in my school. You know what happens to the best person in a school? They go out in the world and they compete with all the other bests and they start to realise just how insignificant their tiny bit of talent actually is.

*He looks his younger self directly in the eye.*

Older: You are a big fish in a small pond. But out in the ocean, you're just a shark's lunch.

*Beat.*

Younger: I don't think that's true.

Older: You don't have to think it. It is.

Younger: I think you've given up.

Older: I haven't given up. I'm just being realistic.

Younger: Where did being realistic ever get anyone?

*Older Will snorts.*

Older: You think that sounds smart and inspirational. It's neither.

Younger: I don't think any of our idols got where they were by being realistic.

Older: No, they got where they were by being exceptional.