

PICTURES
IN AN
EXHIBITION

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At 5:00, the warning comes over the PA.

“The museum will be closing in 30 minutes.”

The gift shop’s grate is half-lowered. The art students finish their sketches. Parents collect their protesting children. Couples finish their coffees at the cafe and offer to walk one another home.

By 6:00, the halls are empty.

By 7:00, everyone in the back has wrapped up their work, rushing home for dinner.

Then it’s just the security guards on rounds with their flashlights, but it’s not a hard job—their cameras pick up any movement at floor-level, and it’s not like anyone can sneak in and go about the museum without touching the floor, is it? This isn’t *Mission Impossible*.

But they know better. And they’re waiting.

The minutes tick by... the hours...

Somewhere, a clock clicks over to 11:00. But they can’t see it. They don’t go by a clock. All the artworks in the museum know is that for the next two hours, they are awake.

They blink and stretch, groan and giggle. They rush to share news of their day, observations they’ve made and held onto for hours, revelations that occurred to them as they watched themselves being watched.

Each night, after spending all day long immobile, frozen in their places and able only to watch and observe, finally they have the power to move, to speak, to interact. And they take advantage, being with one another, discussing their lives, the coming and going of a world happening around them while they watch.

The world around them may change, and they may never interact with one another. But in this time, they have each other.

Pictures in an Exhibition is a video-chat LARP for up to seven players. In the game, you'll select a type of artwork and costume yourself and your background to portray that work. You'll spend each session acting out the artwork coming alive for a two hour period each night over three acts.

Not every work of art is Alive.

Most are what they seem to be - brushstrokes on canvas, or lines on paper, or shapes in stone - static and unknowing. It is only when a work of art has been loved, truly and deeply by a person, that it awakens to the world of the Living. When you are Alive you can feel the world around you, you can observe your observers, you can think and wonder for yourself. And, for an hour on either side of midnight each night, you can even move and speak - provided you are unobserved by humans.

Your movement is not registered on cameras or motion detectors, nor can your voices be recorded. But when human eyes are watching, you are still and silent.

Once a piece gains sentience, they keep it forever, but they may exist for many years before "waking up." Sometimes multiple figures in the same work are all alive. Other times, only one is. Sometimes the part that comes to life isn't a human figure, but an animal, an object, or a part of a landscape. Most agree that it's not the figure who is awake—it's the art itself.

Exactly who you are or what it means to be Alive is as much a mystery for you as it is for anyone, but like most people, you tend to take your own existence for granted.



This is such a regular fact of life for art that wondering over it isn't especially relevant to the setting. (Unless, of course, you'd like to create your own canon!)

As with most of our rules, feel free to bend or break these guidelines if it better suits your play.

Setting Up

Pictures is meant to be played by a group of three to seven players, over the course of three to five sessions. Please read over the full instructions before beginning play, so that you know what to expect.

Step 1. Designate a Curator

In this game, **the Curator** serves the role of the game master, acting as organizer and facilitator for the game in addition to playing.

The Curator's job is to:

1. Organize the game - Take point on setting up play times and scheduling
2. Give the Prologue - You'll set the scene for the start of each Act
3. Keep the Pace - Make sure the story keep moving forward and doesn't stagnate, as well as keeping the time and setting up a timer to ring for "midnight," when the Act will end
4. Facilitate healthy play - Nudge shy players into the spotlight, and don't let anyone hog the spotlight; ensure all players share screen time
5. Run the debrief - You'll be asking the questions and keeping time during the debrief (though you should answer and participate as well!)



Being the Curator is a level of additional work, but still plenty of fun, and absolutely necessary for the game to run.

Step 2. Select a Setting

The Setting will serve as the backbone of your game, giving you structure and limitations to the world. The Settings are varied, and offer plenty of options for player customization, so no two games will ever be exactly alike. Read the overview for each setting and choose one. The Curator should read all of the Setting information once one is chosen, but the Players may prefer to only know the basic prompt to avoid spoilers.

When you've agreed on a Setting, take time to agree on any world limitations you'd like to impose. These may be creative limits (such as everyone playing with a particular archetype or Complication) or logistical limits. For instance, many famous, classic works of art depict nudity, sex acts, violence, or assault - are there limits to what the players feel comfortable having as part of the world?

One good way to share limitations is to set up an anonymous shared document, where players can list soft and hard world limits. Soft limits are things that exist in the world, but will not be in the spotlight, while hard limits do not exist and will never be touched upon in any way.

We suggest that you determine your Setting and world limitations before getting attached to a character idea, as they will inform what you'll choose.

Step 3. Create your Masterpiece

Each player will need to **select an Archetype** - this will be the foundation of their character during the game. The Archetypes are general headings, and are not constricted to any one style of art or one way to play. As such, multiple players can play the same Archetype, offering an interesting way to create conflict in the story, especially if their Complications are different.

Once each player has an archetype, they will need to **select a Complication**. A Complication is a sort of story challenge or thematic element for the player to explore over the course of the story. This helps differentiate the characters (especially if multiple people play the same archetype) and gives them each a personal goal to strive for over the course of the story.

While the player selects Archetypes and Complications, they should be fomenting ideas about what they want their Piece to look like. Players are not limited to the realm of painting or two-dimensional images, and should feel free to portray any kind of visual art or artifact. A Gothic suit of armor or embellished instrument might come alive side-by-side with a marble statue or a figure in a woven tapestry. After all, your only limit is the definition of "art".

We recommend handling the set up as a pre-game "Session 0" to give players a chance to think deeply about what kind of game they'd like to play, and to give them time to costume and set-dress their play area appropriately.

Once all this is complete, the stage is set and the game can begin!

Playing The Game

After Session 0, your next three sessions will be divided into three “Acts.” Each Act represents a different stage of the story: beginning, middle, and end.

At the start of each Act, the Curator will read off the appropriate prompt for the correct Act of the chosen Setting. Once the scene is set, the players will get into position, reflecting the way they’re posed in their medium. The Curator will set a timer, and when it begins, each player will “wake up.”

Gameplay proceeds from there, with the Curator acting as a moderator and instigator for the flow of the story as the Pieces interact and discuss their Complications, the world around them, and other things that matter to them.



Act One

Act One is all about setting the stage. In this act, you’ll start your story. Your Pieces may already know one another well, or there may be newcomers to the group.

Use this act to feel out the relationships between the different Pieces—how do they feel about one another? And how does each Piece express their Complication?

Act Two

Act Two is all about changing. The world around your Pieces shifts, and they have little agency to enact, inhibit, support, or defy that change.

How do your Pieces handle that? How have their relationships started to alter, and what’s new about their Complications?

Act Three

Act Three is the climax of your story. In this act, you’ll see how the changes brought in the first two acts have ultimately impacted the world around you. The relationships formed in Act One have, in one way or another, become fundamentally different.

How do the Pieces manage their feelings around this change? What are their hopes and fears for their future? How do they connect with and remember one another?

Ending The Game

When Act Three comes to a close, there's still one more thing to do before the game ends. Like the set up, this can be its own session or added onto the end of Act Three.

You'll have the chance to answer a question: *How does your art endure?*

Does your piece end up in a fine art gallery? A private collection? It is replicated and beloved, forgotten in a dusty attic, or destroyed in a demonstration? And how does its impact linger beyond that ending? Only you can decide what becomes of your art, and how it endures a week, a year, or a century later.

Each player will have two minutes to briefly narrate, in first person, what becomes of your Piece after the events of Act Three.

The game may end with a whimper or with a bang, depending on what your Setting was and how your Pieces dealt with their Complications.

Once each player has had their turn, the Curator will lead a debrief. You may be dealing with heavy emotions over the course of this game, and the debrief is a chance for you to talk about them, along with how you and your fellow players felt about the story you told together.

During the debrief, you can ask the following questions, or create your own:

1. How are you feeling?
2. What was the most impactful moment of the story for you? Why?
3. What are you taking away from this experience?



Creating your Masterpiece

Creating your character (which we call your *Piece*) is a two-step process. First you'll choose an archetype as a starting point. Then you'll choose a complication to make it more interesting. Note that each archetype has a *desire*, something they inherently want. Use your desire to inform how your character reacts to their complication, which we'll get to later.

Remember, "art" includes more than flat images or classical masterworks. Players are encouraged to explore the definition of "art" and stretch whatever boundaries they find. As you create your Piece, think about what you want them to look like. You could portray an established work, or you could make one up. What medium is your Piece? What style and era?

Think about what you will display in the "frame" of your video-chat window. Though you could just set an image as your icon and forget it, we recommend you keep your face visible in some way. Non-verbal communication is important to the game, and this way you have to get creative!

Choosing a Character Archetype

Archetypes are broad and trait-based, open to interpretation in art style and subject. Players should narrow it down to two or three, choose their favorite, and roll with it.

Don't be afraid of multiple people selecting the same archetype! This can make a story a lot more complex. Does a gallery full of Lovers feel drawn to one another? Are two Leaders frequently butting heads? Use archetypes to create drama between the Pieces.

The Caregiver - Context is everything, and you exist in the context of those you care for. Everyone can count on you for support and empathy, and knowing that gives you a sense of pride. Your selflessness is legendary, but it might make you an easy target for exploitation.

Desire: Protect and help the others

Where would they be without you? Where would you be without them?

The Dreamer - What's more important: truth or beauty? For you, it's hardly a contest. Some say you have your head in the clouds, but you would rather be smiling into the sky than crying on the ground. You use your natural curiosity, vivid imagination, and observational skills to shape the world you perceive into something extraordinary.

Desire: Escape to something better, avoid real ugliness

Where do your dreams come from?

The Explorer - The unknown is only an obstacle until someone has the bravery and wits to explore it... and you are that someone. You know that knowledge is power, and you're willing to boldly go where none have gone before, asking the questions others are too afraid to ask. Maybe your curiosity and daring make you seem like an arrogant know-it-all. Maybe you have more intelligence than wisdom. Maybe you never quite fit in, socially speaking.

Desire: Learn the answers and use them to your advantage
How do the pieces fit together?

The Innocent - The starry-eyed optimist, you are a newcomer to the setting in some way. Some might see you as naive or empty-headed, but you know that you're emerging into an exciting (and maybe terrifying) new world.

Desire: Find happiness
What do you lack that would make you happy?

The Joker - If you're not living for today, then what are you living for? Some might call you frivolous, but that doesn't bother you (...right?). Your exuberance, fun-loving nature, humor, and penchant for chaos make you an instantly-likeable addition to the display.

Desire: Live life to the fullest, be happy right now
Do they like you? How can you make sure they do? What will happen if they don't?

The Leader - Heavy is the head that wears the crown (or abstract equivalent)... Without you, things would fall into chaos (at least, that's what you wholeheartedly believe). You are the voice of reason, the authority figure who holds this motley crew of artwork together. Some might resent you for your role upholding order, or call you power-hungry, but you know that you're doing what's right, or at least, what must be done.

Desire: The Best for those under your command, Control
How do you maintain your mantle of authority? What makes you the most worthy of leadership?

The Lover - You are a painting of two lovers entwined, but only one of them is Alive. Why? Your partner is frozen, lifeless. They're more of a prop to you than anything. Maybe you appreciate their steadiness and stability, or maybe you long for some new, dynamic presence in your life. Either way, you feel incomplete.

(*Note* - For practicality's sake, it can be assumed that your "lover" is just off-screen throughout the game. If you'd like, set up a high-backed chair or a large pillow to the side of your play space, so you can lean against/drape yourself over/etc a stand-in just out of frame of your webcam.)

Desire: Become complete through a relationship (not necessarily romantic)
What are you missing? What are you afraid to lose?

The Orphan - You came from difficult circumstances, facing a dull existence, but were plucked out of anonymous drudgery and chosen for display. Now you're an admired part of the collection. Being the center of attention is nice, but you feel out of place. This makes you eager to please and fit in with the group.

Desire: Connect with others, feel special

What makes you special? Why were you chosen?

The Rebel - Just because you're stuck in a frame doesn't mean your life has to be static. You have wants and needs that are not being served in your current situation, and you're probably not the only one—the others are just too scared to do anything about it! You know that things could be better, and you're ready to fight to make the necessary changes.

Desire: Break the status quo

What are you fighting for? What changes do you want to create?

The Sage - You're a thinker, but not much of a doer—which works out fine if you're stuck in a frame. Maybe you used to dream about changing the world around you, fighting from the confines of your frame... but something happened that changed that, and relegated you to the realm of theory. A natural mentor, you project wisdom and thoughtfulness, but you might also be too cautious for your own good.

Desire: Guide the pieces around you

What do you have to teach?

The Warrior - You are defined by your conflicts. You are the negative space around your weapons and your battle scars. You might be admired for your strength, confidence, and courage... or you might be seen as an egotistical bully.

Desire: Save the day, prove your worth

What is your battle?

Keep in mind as you select your archetype that these are broad headings that can be applied to *any* type of artwork from any style, any era, and any culture. Don't feel limited to only famous, Western artwork. At the same time, if you choose to portray art from a culture you're not part of, please do your homework and keep your portrayal respectful. Diverse art is excellent, race face is not.



Choosing a Complication

Each Piece is not simply its archetype. It has, in addition, a Complication to make its story more complex. Choose one from the list below, and then ask yourself about it. Does your character know? Do any of the other works? Remember, secrets are no fun if they remain secrets! Everyone's dirty laundry should come out in the course of the game.

1. You are unfinished. Is there any hope that you will be completed? If you are, will you still be you?
2. You are not an original—you're a reproduction, a cast, or a forgery. There are dozens, maybe hundreds or thousands, like you. The artist's hands have never touched you.
3. You have fallen in love with a regular visitor.
4. You are going to be moved to a position of honor and prestige away from the other Pieces.
5. You are considered especially notable... but it's because of an imperfection in your creator's technique.
6. Your creator is still alive and well at the start of the game. But they haven't visited you in many years. This weighs heavy on your mind.
7. You were created as a commission, for money rather than love or inspiration.
8. You are out of context. You weren't meant to be hung on a museum wall or displayed in a glass case. You were meant for something else, but now your existence has been altered or reduced to this.
9. You are impermanent: a temporary installation, a performance piece, or something made to be destroyed. Your days are numbered, and you know it.
10. You are painted in one particular emotion... but you're still not sure what the emotion is. You've overheard it given various interpretations, but so far none of them have been quite right. Supposedly, this emotion is all you can feel. It is who you are. But what is it? What are you? Can you be something else?
11. Some people don't consider you "art" at all. What if they're right?
12. You're not a human figure. You're an animal, a still life, a landscape, or an abstract image. Does this make it difficult to connect to more traditional human figures?
13. You're old. Really, really, *really* old. This means you've been alive for much longer than any of the art around you. How do you express yourself in a world you weren't designed for?

The Settings

Settings are the world around your characters, the place where they have been placed. Because the Pieces are (mostly) inanimate objects, they have almost no power to affect their shared environment or the isolated environments of the other Pieces. Much of the story is happening *to* them, and your roleplay will be focused on how they use what agency *is* available to them and the ways they process the changes in their world.

As the story progresses, the Setting will change around the Pieces. In some cases, the Pieces may reflect these changes. An unfinished Piece may have updates made to it, another Piece may be damaged or altered in some way. A Piece may even be gone entirely, replaced by a new one. We strongly encourage players to change their costuming and set dressing to reflect these changes!

You can customize each of these settings as much as you want, based on the prompt. Where in the world is your museum located? What is the nature of the disaster or political upheaval that happens to change everything? What kind of artist keeps the gallery? These small changes can alter the entire game.

Once you feel more confident, you can create your own Settings. All you need to do is choose a base, create a moment to change everything, and determine what the aftermath of that moment looks like. Think about where you might find a grouping of art, and what historical or fictional moments interest you and your group.

A optional additional rule

If a more complex story is something you're looking for, consider adding in this additional fact about the world. You do not need it to play, but it may create more drama in your story.

Each living work can take shape and leave their painting or pedestal for ONE night. When the sun rises that day, they go back to being an inanimate painting permanently—an effective death sentence. If a character chooses to take their One Night, the player may come back into the game as a different painting.

They say that Mona Lisa had her One Night long ago, and she came back with her smile.

Setting One: The Museum

For many artists and their works, the honor and dignity of a museum is the greatest aspiration they have. You're the type of work that has been chosen (or stolen) and placed on display for the masses. Your lives will surely be cushy and comfortable forevermore.

But what if something happens to disrupt this comfort and dignity? What will your Pieces do when faced with disaster they can neither understand nor control? How can they reconcile their expectations with their new reality?

The nature of the destruction is purposefully left undefined. You may choose to specify or elaborate on it as suits your story, but we recommend leaving it a mystery.

Act One

You spent the daylight hours perfectly still, perfectly silent under a thousand passing gazes. The gallery flowed with children on school trips corralled by chaperones, guided tours in a variety of languages, art students with sketchbooks, people nodding at you with furrowed brows, and more. But now the visitors are gone and the lights are dimmed.

It's the night of the bi-weekly Hall Meeting, designed to offer all Pieces space to air their grievances and discuss museum matters. The Chairpiece (players: decide which character takes this role) leads the meeting, and each piece raises a hand, appendage, or otherwise visually indicates when they wish to speak. This meeting is especially significant because an acclaimed art critic who visited your hall last week has just published their special review.

You have two hours. Remember, even when you are not on display to the public, you are on display for each other. It's difficult to keep secrets in a gallery. There is no privacy, but is connection even possible, when you're stuck in your settings?

From the lobby, the clock strikes eleven.

Act Two

Not long after that meeting, something shook the museum to its foundations, accompanied by an ear-splitting boom. Some claimed to have seen a flash of light, but your hall does not have a view of the outside. A few paintings were knocked askew, there was a cracked frame here or there, but as far as you can tell no serious harm came to the collection.

The museum opened as usual the next morning, and for a while it seemed that everything would carry on as usual. Then you noticed things changing. The crowds of

visitors began to thin and change shape. Familiar faces vanished without fanfare. The eyes observing you grew heavy with fear and weariness.

Rumors and theories worm their way throughout the halls, but you have no way of knowing for sure what's going on in the outside world or what it means for your future.

From the lobby, the clock strikes eleven.

Act Three

They say the city is burning. You can hear a crescendo of shrieks, whistles, and booms from outside, but they give you no better idea of what is going on. That first blast foretold some great destruction, and now it is upon you.

Periodic tremors shake the hall, cracking the plaster of the ceiling and sending handfuls of it crashing to the floor. They say the museum will be a ruin by sunrise. The janitors, security guards, and tour guides are gone.

There is nothing you can do to stop this. There is no way for you to run from it. All you can do is weather the storm where you are, in touch with, but not touching, the Pieces you've come to know so well (or not well enough). Even if you survive the night intact, your existence will be forever changed.

From the lobby, the grand clock strikes once, twice - but falters and falls silent before it can reach the hour.

Epilogue

There are no more ticket-sellers or art critics at the museum. The once-proud building has crumbled, and in some places completely collapsed. The gallery at the eastern end has been reduced to rubble, so your hall is now open to the air. Sunlight reaches you through the skeletal rafters. The people who see you have changed. How they see you has changed.

Each player should now take two minutes to describe what becomes of their piece.



Setting Two: The Gallery

Not all art is in a museum. Some pieces of art are held in private collections. You're all part of one such. You've been collected because of your importance to the owners—perhaps to showcase vanity, or wealth, or good taste, or perhaps because you have a real personal significance to them.

This story can take place at any time or place in the world's history, from 1780s Versailles to a mansion in present-day Malibu. Who owns you? Why did they collect you? How do they display you?

What becomes of you when the world changes drastically for the owners of the private gallery?

Act One

A gala, one of many, has just ended. The last of the guests have filtered out. The staff have cleaned up the wine stains and the crumbs. The owners of the gallery, the collectors of these works of art, have retired to bed.

You are the treasures of someone important. The valuable pieces of art that make up their collection, the decoration and centerpiece and conversation starters for their parties. You've heard yourself spoken of all night... but you've also heard plenty of news about what's happening in the world. There are those who do not like the people visiting the gallery.

You hear the clock strike eleven.

Act Two

The parties continue and you're just as valuable as ever. You must be, because early this evening, something terrifying happened: someone broke into the gallery.

Maybe it was a brick through the window, or maybe it was a key slipped into the right hand. Someone from the outside world invaded the gallery and attempted to steal one of the Pieces. And they seemed to know exactly what their target was.

The thief was caught and stopped, and you heard raging about *them*, the same ones who you've heard of before, spoken of with derision at galas and parties.

Who did they try to steal? Why do you think they did it? What might have happened had they succeeded? How is the owner of the gallery going to keep it from happening again?

Everything is finally quiet. The grand clock in the foyer strikes eleven.

Act Three

What began as whispers and even jokes has now become all too real for you. The parties finally stopped, and your place in the world is questioned. *They* have broken in. The owner of the gallery is gone—perhaps dead, perhaps imprisoned. Instead, the gallery and the house beyond is now occupied by a radically different force.

You heard them talking beyond the closed gallery doors: tomorrow they'll decide what's to be done with you and all the other valuables in the house.

Who is here? What do they believe? What will they do with each of you? And how do you feel about your upcoming fate?

You can't hear the clock. It's already been taken away. You wake all the same.

Epilogue

Revolution came and the world kept turning. Maybe you were sent elsewhere. Or maybe you were destroyed. Regardless, it's unlikely that you're all still together. Where are the Pieces now?

مه در جواز شرکت و تزویج و سفر
جامه پرواز اهل قلم حاجت خواه

بیکوست اگر کنی توای کان هنر
دار و مخزور و مہی کن از فصل حذر



مه در سیرط ان جامه بویزدن شاید
جومر خود در آن سفر کنی کنگوست

ورداروی مسهل نخوری نوز آید
بفرست رسول هر کجا کت ماند



مه در اسدست کارانش بیکوست
بیاذنه و قصل کن و عهد اسد

ورزد ملوک حاجت خویش بخیر
وزد و خشن و پوشش شی شولسو



Setting Three: The Studio

The one thing that all art has in common is that it must be *created*. An artist, be they a sculptor, photographer, painter, or something totally different, must have a hand in the creation of each work of art. Even if the art is a found object, the hand and eye of the artist is what transforms it from an object to an *object d'art*.

These Pieces all have an additional thing in common: they were created by the same artist. You are works collected in a studio, the creations of the same artist's hands and eyes. Perhaps you're the same style, or perhaps you're all different. Perhaps you're the works in progress of a great master... or perhaps you're half-scrapped attempts by an Art Major frantically trying to finish their senior exhibit.

When the artist makes some changes, will your Pieces be united in their similarities? Or divided in their differences?

Act One

The studio is a chaotic mess. There's notes scribbled on everything, tools laying wherever they were dropped, sketchbooks marked with their spines cracked open, dishes unwashed and left over from meals half-eaten.

You know what this looks like, and you know what it means. It's as obvious as the fact that many of you are unfinished. Your artist is suffering from a block.

They were up all last night working, trying to finish something, anything, and you all watched as they grew more and more frustrated. Tonight they were too exhausted to try that hard again, and collapsed into bed early.

What does it feel like to be unfinished? Who is further along, and who is barely started? Do you have theories on why the artist has stalled?

You can almost hear them snoring as the small clock on their desk chimes eleven.

Act Two

A miracle! The artist's block has ended! But it came at a cost: their style, their form, their entire *approach* to their craft has drastically changed. They've been frantically working for weeks, a flurry of change so extreme that you haven't been *awake* enough to actually discuss it all because of the ongoing late night work. But tonight your artist is resting at last.

Some of the Pieces have been overhauled or restarted. Some have been changed halfway through. Some may have been scrapped entirely.

What changed? How does it feel to be changed so drastically? Or abandoned? Or remade? How do you cope with so much change?

The artist's desk clock chimes eleven.

Act Three

The studio is gone. Or at least, for the first time ever, you're all gone from it. You've been moved to a showcase of the artist's work. Today was opening day, and you got to hear your artist (in person or in a recording), talking at length about you as visitors came to see the changes.

What did the artist say? How did it make you feel? How did *the public* react to you? Did they like the change in your artists style... or loathe it?

The clock near the entrance to the darkened showcase strikes eleven, and you get your first chance to talk about how it all went.

Epilogue

The showcase was one thing. But you couldn't stay there forever. How you were received on opening night has a massive impact on how your life has gone since.

Who was sold to a buyer and why? Who now resides in a museum? Who was given away as a gift? Who returned to the studio? And who ended up scrapped in a dumpster or worked over?



Setting Four: The Show

The Semi-annual Arts and Crafts Festival has become the pride of the tri-county area. Artists, vendors, and craftspeople flock from miles away to display their work in tents and booths that spill through the streets from the public library on the eastern edge of town to Convention Hall on the western side. Visitors wander miles of temporary galleries and displays, browsing, shopping, and enjoying the air. You have the honor of sharing a corner of tents on the lawn of Convention Hall.

Act One

It is eve of the festival, and you are arranged in the newly-assembled displays, waiting for morning and the flood of observers, admirers, and potential buyers. How do you feel about your debut? Is this your first show, or are you a veteran? Are you for sale, or display only?

There has been a disturbing whisper among the Pieces. A watercolor that had been displayed in the library disappeared after last year's Festival, and was never seen again. According to the rumor, it had been vandalized with a rude drawing, and was no longer fit for display. No one can say for sure what the drawing was... Some claim it took the form of a misshapen eggplant still-life, others claim it was a fearsome abstract of a tower flanked by guard houses. (For some reason, the younger library patrons laughed hysterically whenever the subject came up.)

But surely, that's just a story told to frighten the newcomers... Right?

Act Two

Night has fallen on the first day of the festival, and frightening news has reached the Pieces. Rude symbols had been found scrawled across several pieces on display at the eastern side of town. The reports described strangely divided reactions - onlookers either gasped and clutched their pearls, or they burst into paroxysms of laughter. No work seemed to be immune - paintings, prints, lawn statues, and tea cozies alike fell victim.

From what you can tell, the menace has been moving west across the festival. How long until it reaches you? Is anyone safe?!

Act Three

Over the days of the festival, the looming horror has grown from a limp rumor to a turgid plague. The unwholesome images have appeared on more and more displays, like a rising storm swinging irrevocably towards Convention Hall. The festival authorities have issued a statement, even offered a reward for any information leading to the culprit's capture, but to no avail.

You find yourself asking: what becomes of a piece of art, once it has been thus altered? Is this a vandal, or a rogue artist, expressing some inner truth? What separates a "tasteful nude" from a portrait of Washington with a dick drawn on his noble brow?

Tomorrow is the last day of the festival. How will you face the danger?

Epilogue

The Semi-Annual Arts and Crafts Festival has ended, and the tents are being packed away for this half of the year. What becomes of these pieces? Did you escape unaltered? Or do you have a new... *ahem...* addition? How do you feel about being chosen, or overlooked? Was the vandal ever caught? What do you think they were trying to express?



Special thanks to Lyn Hilton for inspiring "The Show".

Credits

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