

START

*He answers. Lights reveal John D'Agata (late 40s–late 50s) for the first time. He is seated in a comfortable, worn, and perhaps slightly feminine (e.g., floral-patterned) armchair.*

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Hello?

JOHN. Is this Jim Fingal?

JIM. Uh, yes, this is Jim Fingal.

JOHN. Listen Jim Fingal: You're not going to fix anything. Nothing's broken.

JIM. Mr. D'Agata, I think we got off to a bad start. Please, let me clarify—

JOHN. There's nothing to clarify.

JIM. It's policy—

JOHN. "Policy" does not—

JIM. —to fact check all nonfiction pieces. There are a lot of facts in your piece and your claims sometimes get a little inflammatory. So could you help me out with that number?

*Pause.*

JOHN. Inflammatory?

JIM. Not—inflammatory—

JOHN. Then what?

JIM. —just—hard-hitting—in an intriguing way. Sorry, wrong choice of words.

*Pause.*

JOHN. Why are you doing this?

JIM. Excuse me?

JOHN. Who are you?

JIM. Who am I?

JOHN. Why are YOU doing this?

JIM. Why am I doing this?

JOHN. Who ARE you?

JIM. It's my job.

JOHN. Yes, but why?

JIM. Why is it my job?

JOHN. Yes.

JIM. Because Emily Penrose told me to. Look, we got off to a bad—

JOHN. How old are you?

JIM. I don't see why that matters.

JOHN. It matters. How old are you?

*Pause.*

JIM. Younger than you?

JOHN. Let me give you some advice—

JIM. I really just want the exact number—

JOHN. Ask yourself why Emily Penrose would trust this essay to someone like you.

JIM. I understand—

JOHN. An intern.

JIM. —your frustration.

JOHN. Seriously, why?

JIM. Talent and dedication?

JOHN. Are you asking me or telling me?

JIM. Telling you?

JOHN. No, *I'm* telling *you*. She's giving you busywork. She's getting you out of her hair.

JIM. If you say so, but—

JOHN. You're not Daniel Menaker and this isn't Mr. Shawn's *New Yorker*. Check a few dates and get it back to her, she'll say "fine" and everyone will be happy.

JIM. But I kind of want to do a good job. This is an opportunity for me.

END

JOHN. Sure, whatever. Just don't overestimate your importance in the whole process.

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JIM. Uh—