

The Sweet Room

by

Brandon Ramos

© Brandon Ramos
45-08 40th Street
Sunnyside, NY 11104
Brandon.Ramos@Gmail.com

(Madeline, an attractive, early twenties woman lies on a couch in small, bare studio apartment. There is a coffee table strewn with magazines and a worn copy of Plato's Republic in front of her. Madeline is dressed in loose, flannel pajamas and a robe. She watches the audience like a television. The sound of a late night talk show is audible.)

Hannah, Madeline's sister, enters the apartment. She is twenty one, thin and very attractive. She is dressed smartly. She wears high-heeled boots and carries a large purse.

As soon as she enters she begins to work off her boots. Madeline clicks off the television and the background sound ceases.)

HANNAH

Why, hello my favorite and only sister.

MADELINE

You're home early.

HANNAH

It's not that early.

MADELINE

I wasn't sure if you were coming home tonight.

HANNAH

It was only date number two. You know I have rules.

MADELINE

But you said you liked him.

HANNAH

Yeah.

MADLINE

You're rules change when you like them.

HANNAH

Whatever. I've decided to be more mature. Is there anything to eat?

MADLINE

No.

HANNAH

What about that pizza?

MADLINE

You ate it yesterday.

HANNAH

Oh my god, I'm starving. Don't you have any money?

MADLINE

Didn't you eat on your date?

HANNAH

Yeah, but I didn't just wolf it down in front of him. Second date.

MADLINE

What did you order?

HANNAH

Salad.

MADLINE

Salad. Nice.

HANNAH

What? What is that supposed to mean?

MADLINE

You're dating ... whatever his name is. Mr. Trump, Mr. Moneybags?

HANNAH

Tom.

MADELINE

Tom - whatever. Tom, 'let's go to le Circe' Tom. We're both starving here and you're ordering a salad. At least one of us could have eaten tonight.

HANNAH

What? Did you want me to bring you home a doggie bag?

MADELINE

Yes. Yes, that would have been nice. They wrap it up in a nice tin foil swan for you, there.

HANNAH

Oh Maddie, you need to go get your own man. Then you'll find out how it is.

MADELINE

And you need to go find your own job.

HANNAH

You don't have a job.

MADELINE

I'm back in school, Hannah. And we're living off my unemployment, aren't we?

HANNAH

Barely.

MADELINE

What?

HANNAH

Nothing. I will get a job. You'll see. And then I will take care of my brainiac sister.

MADELINE

I know you will. I'm sorry. I'm just hungry. Ramen and carrots didn't quite do it tonight.

HANNAH

Tell me about it. Wouldn't it be great to have, even just an apple?

MADELINE

Yes. Yes, it would.

HANNAH

And maybe some vodka.

MADELINE

I guess.

(Hannah opens her large purse and pulls out a half filled vodka bottle and an apple.)

HANNAH

Ta-dah!

MADELINE

What is this?

HANNAH

It's your doggie bag, stupid.

(Hannah slices the apple in half and gives one piece to Madeline and washes it down with a sip from the vodka bottle.)

MADELINE

You got this from the restaurant?

HANNAH

No. Another place.

MADELINE

What other place?

HANNAH

A place Tom took me to after dinner. It was called The Sweet Room.

MADELINE

Really? And what is that?

HANNAH

Maddie, I thought you'd never ask!

(Hannah finds her purse and fishes out a business card. She presents the card to her sister. Madeline examines the card.)

MADELINE

'The Sweet Room?' Did he take you to a strip club?

HANNAH

No!

MADELINE

Then who's this little hooch on the card?

HANNAH

Just listen.

(Hannah snatches the card away and sets it down on the coffee table.)

So, at the end of dinner Tom says, "Do you want to slum it?"

MADLEINE

Slum it?

HANNAH

I know. I had no idea what he meant. I thought maybe he meant we would go Dutch on the check and my heart was in my throat ...

MADELINE

Oh my gosh.

HANNAH

But he paid, luckily, and we walk West, like three or four long avenues. I can see the water. And there is nobody around. And I am like, 'oh my god, Tom is a serial killer and I am dead.'

MADELINE

Oh no.

HANNAH

But then I see on the corner, this tiny red light. And Tom says, 'this is it.' We walk up and there's this giant, monster-guy in a black suit and turtleneck. He didn't even look at me. But Tom and the man spoke to each other in Russian.

MADELINE

Tom is Russian?

HANNAH

I think so.

MADELINE

Well, if he was speaking Russian ...

HANNAH

I think it was Russian. The guy at the door looked like a Nazi.

MADELINE

The Nazis were German, sweetie.

HANNAH

Whatever, Histo-girl. They were speaking something not American. And then Tom slipped him a fifty?

MADELINE

Fifty Dollars?!

HANNAH

Yes. Fifty. So what? It was kind of hot seeing him do that.

MADELINE

Oh please, Hannah!

HANNAH

That's not the good part though. When we got in there, the place was unbelievable. Inside this dark little building was this really incredible bar. Nice wood and candles. Jazz music. It was really nice.

MADLINE

Wow. Like a speakeasy.

HANNAH

Totally. We sat way in the back at this little booth with a candle. The menu was in Russian, or German or whatever. But Tom ordered us martinis.

MADLINE

That's very cosmopolitan.

HANNAH

I don't know. I didn't really like it. I just ate his olives. They come with olives, you know.

MADLINE

Yes. Olives or a twist.

HANNAH

Whatever. We're drinking and Tom says, 'look over there. Over at the bar.' And there's this old guy at the bar, maybe fifty or sixty, and he's totally bald but he's got this handlebar mustache. Like the monopoly guy. And right next to him is this girl.

MADLINE

So?

HANNAH

That's what I was like. And Tom says, 'how old do you think she is?' I look again and I realize, maybe, maybe she was eighteen.

MADLINE

Oh my God. What was she doing there?

HANNAH

Right? So I look around and I realize all the men there are like fifty and all the girls are all totally underage.

MADLINE

You're kidding me.

HANNAH

No! So, I'm watching her. She's in this tiny little black dress and she is all over this guy. And he's like beat red and drooling.

MADELINE

Oh that's so gross!

HANNAH

I know. It was totally gross but I just couldn't look away. Every few seconds he'd take his hand and put it on her leg. It just looked so nasty, seeing his veiny, old hand squeezing this white little girl leg.

MADELINE

That makes me gag just thinking about it. I wouldn't, I mean I just couldn't... What did she do?

HANNAH

She was all smiles. Totally oblivious. I mean she wasn't oblivious to him, she was flirting with him like crazy, but she pretended not to notice his nasty-ass hand creeping around.

MADELINE

Can you imagine?

HANAH

So then they leave together and Tom says, "I wonder how much she went for?"

MADELINE

Oh my God, she was a hooker?

HANNAH

Oh see, you get it right away. I was like, 'what do you mean, "go for"?' Tom had to like, spell it out for me.

MADELINE

That she was a prostitute?

HANNAH

Yes. Well, kind of. He said the whole place, The Sweet Room, it was a place where rich old guys go to meet these little tramps.

MADLINE

You went on a date to a whorehouse?

HANNAH

No!

MADLINE

Well then, what the hell was it?

HANNAH

It was more like these guys meet these girls and buy them stuff, or pay their rent or give them expensive jewelry. And then they get married.

MADLINE

But they still sleep with them, right? I mean it's still sleeping with a nasty guy to get paid. That's called prostitution.

HANNAH

Yeah, well, it just didn't seem like that.

MADLINE

And for my own edification here, just how did Tom know about this place?

HANNAH

His dad.

MADLINE

His dad?

HANNAH

Yeah. He said his dad divorced his mom when he was fourteen. His dad is really rich. I mean like 'which summer home this weekend?' rich.

MADLINE

That must be nice.

HANNAH

Yeah, well, his dad went to this place like twice a week for a year and pretty much picked out a new wife.

MADLINE

Really? He married a girl from there?

HANNAH

Tom is older than her - older than his new mom by a month. It sure makes you wonder...

MADLINE

What?

HANNAH

It makes you wonder why a girl would do that.

MADLINE

'Cause they're poor. And desperate.

HANNAH

We're poor.

MADLINE

We get money from Mom and Dad.

HANNAH

Not much.

MADLINE

Not as much as we would like.

HANNAH

And we have to fight for it. Mom went crazy the last time I asked her. She was like, 'get a job. You're not in collage anymore.' And I tried telling her that I'm an actress and you can't just get an acting job - you have to *audition*.

MADELINE

I know. I got the same thing only it was get another job and get a boyfriend while you're at it.

HANNAH

I know!

(Pause.)

MADELINE

I'm still hungry.

HANNAH

Me too.

MADELINE

Why don't you call Tom and have him buy us some food.

HANNAH

Oh, that's so cheap.

MADELINE

No, it's not cheap, that's the problem.

HANNAH

If you ever tried to get a boyfriend you'd know it was different.

MADELINE

That's really nice, Hannah. Thanks.

HANNAH

I'm not trying to be mean.

MADELINE

But you are.

HANNAH

But I'm not trying to be.

MADELINE

Why don't you go back to your little hooker nook and shake it for some cash.

HANAH

Madeline!

MADLINE

What? I'm not trying to be mean.

(Pause.)

HANAH

Can you imagine?

MADLINE

No.

HANAH

I mean what would you do if you were there and a guy approached you.

MADLINE

I don't even want to think about it. Why would I ever be there?

HANAH

What if he was hot?

MADLINE

A hot senior citizen with nasty, veiny, spotty, gropey hands?

HANNAH

They weren't senior citizens?

MADLINE

Our father is in his fifties. And I'd love to see his face. "Oh no dad, he's younger than you by three whole years."

HANNAH

Oh your right, it's nasty.

(Pause.)

MADLINE

But, I mean, I guess I have found some guys who are a little older attractive.

HANNAH

Like who?

MADLINE

No way.

HANNAH

Come on!

MADELINE

No.

HANNAH

Seriously. Come on.

MADELINE

Do you remember Dr. Gifford?

HANNAH

The guidance councilor? Oh my God! He was such a pervert!

MADELINE

He was not!

HANNAH

Yes he was. He had that look. The 'I'm undressing you in my perv basement' look.

MADELINE

No.

HANNAH

You liked that look, didn't you? You totally did!

MADELINE

No ...

HANNAH

Oh you totally did. You wanted to be in his perv basement.

MADELINE

I just thought he had sexy glasses.

HANNAH

MMmmm sexy glasses, sure. He was like sixty you know?

MADELINE

Yes.

HANNAH

And it was worse because you were in high school.

MADELINE

I know.

HANNAH

Wow. You were totally in love with him.

MADELINE

Shut up. I was not. I just, yes, I thought he had sex appeal. He was always so tan.

HANNAH

Yeah, he totally had alligator skin.

MADELINE

It was nasty, I know, but it was rough, kind of. I liked it.

HANNAH

That's so bad! Oh my god. You know who I liked. Dad's friend. Mr. Moriello?

MADELINE

Paul Moriello - the guy who called himself the Italian Stallion?

HANNAH

I know, but I thought it was so hot. And he was just so broad you know, like a bear. Blue-collar hot. Rocky hot.

MADELINE

Shut up.

HANNAH

I remember they showed us that video in health class, where that girl got molested by her dad's friend. And I kept thinking, 'why doesn't Mr. Moriello do that to me?'

MADELINE

Oh my God, Hannah!

HANNAH

I know. I was sick for him. I couldn't help it.

MADELINE

Well, they say it's natural, I mean, biological for you to think that way.

HANNAH

I didn't want to just think about it.

MADELINE

Yeah, but you didn't do it either.

HANNAH

So would you, with your Guidance Counselor?

MADELINE

No!

HANNAH

Come on. Let's say you meet him at a bar, and you have a drink?

MADELINE

A martini?

HANNAH

Yes. You're having martinis with pervy Dr. Gifford. And he leans in and says, 'why don't we go back to my place?' And you say, 'I would but I have to work tomorrow. My rent is killing me.' And he says, 'well, what if I took care of that?'

MADELINE

Oh my god, you have totally thought about this.

HANNAH

Well, would you?

MADELINE

I don't know...

HANNAH

See. It's more tempting than you think, right?

MADELINE

No, it's just different...

HANNAH

When it's not like he's leaving you money on the nightstand, and suddenly it's all like, maybe it wouldn't be that bad.

MADELINE

Yeah, but the The Sweet Room didn't sound like the type of place Dr. Gifford goes for a martini.

HANNAH

No. But I mean some of the guys weren't that bad.

MADELINE

You think you'd like this ...

HANNAH

Maybe.

MADELINE

But it's not Dr. Gifford, and it's not dad's friend. It's some random man that wants you ...

HANNA

Yes, that wants you.

MADELINE

He wants what you are ... *not you*. Your youth, your prettiness, he wants *it*, I don't know ...

HANA

I'm just saying, can't that be exciting?

MADELINE

Yes. And it might be really disgusting too.

HANNAH

You're afraid of it.

MADELINE

It?

HANNAH

Men.

MADELINE

Shut up. Why do you always have to do that?

HANNAH

What?

MADELINE

You and mom, both. Just because I don't throw myself at men, it's like I'm the ugly sister.

HANNAH

Maddie ...

MADELINE

No. You don't know what it's like. I'm looking, okay? Its not like I am not open to it. But I don't want to be desperate about it like an animal can be desperate, or a baby.

HANNAH

Okay. Okay. Sorry. Oh my God! Get this girl something more to eat!

(Pause)

MADELINE

I'm sorry, you're right. That apple just made me hungrier.

HANNAH

I know! I am desperate for some calories. Who would've thought you'd hear us saying that?

MADELINE

I know. We just don't have what it takes to be anorexic.

HANNAH

What's that?

MADELINE

A hard will, dear sister. That and burning desire for social acceptance.

HANNAH

Mmmm, no, last time I checked I was missing both of those.

(There is a knock on the door. Hannah and Madeline look surprised and then exchange a questioning glance. Madeline rises, closes her robe and peeps through the watch-hole.)

HANNAH (WHISPERING)

Don't open it!

MADELINE (WHISPERING)

It's a pizza man.

HANAH (WHISPERING)

Open it!

(Madeline twists open three locks and opens the door. Outside is Martin. He is holding a pizza wrapped in a maroon carrying case and a bottle of soda. Martin is attractive, in his later twenties. He wears black square glasses and dressed in an off-beat, creative way.)

MARTIN

Hi. 2B?

MADELINE

Hi.

HANNAH

Come in.

(Martin enters hesitantly and starts unwrapping the pizza.)

MARTIN

It's twenty two...

HANNAH

I'm Hannah.

MADELINE

I'm Madeline.

HANNAH

We're sisters.

MARTIN

Nice to meet you - both. I'm Martin.
And here's your ...

HANNAH

Martin would you like a drink?

MARTIN

What?

MADELINE

What?

HANNAH

Maybe a ... *martini*?

MARTIN

Um. Is this 2B?

MADELINE (WHISPERING)

Or not to be? That is the question.

(Martin laughs, overhearing Madeline's
joke.)

MADELINE

Sorry.

MARTIN

No. It was funny.

(Hannah forces herself to laugh along)

HANNAH

Barely.

MARTIN

I thought it was funny. Hey, would you
mind if I used your bathroom? I've been
lost for like fifteen minutes. I really

don't know my way around the lower east side.

(Martin places the pizza and soda on the coffee table.)

MADELINE

Sure, it's around the corner.

MARTIN

Thanks.

(Martin walks off-stage, looking around at the decoration of the apartment. Madeline and Hannah are all smiles as they watch him head down the hall. As he steps off stage they are immediately panicked.)

MADELINE

What the hell are you doing?

HANNAH

Working.

MADELINE

What?

HANNAH

I've found myself and acting job.

MADELINE

As a, as a what? A pizza-whore?

HANNAH

Yes, dear sister. I'm going to bring home the bacon.

MADELINE

(Gesturing to the pizza) Right now all you're doing is bringing home some pepperoni, honey.

HANNAH

It's a start.

MADELINE

What?! You're going to sleep with him.
That man in our bathroom? You're not
serious.

HANNAH

Just watch. And help, if you can.

MADELINE

Why?

HANNAH

Because I want ...

(Martin returns and both sisters
immediately put on a demure air.)

HANNAH AND MADELINE

Hi.

MARTIN

This isn't 2B, is it?

MADELINE

No.

HANNAH

Oh, Martin, we're so sorry. We just
smelled your pizza and we were so
hungry. And we were just talking about
how we were so in the mood for Italian,
weren't we, Maddie?

MADELINE

Among other things.

HANNAH

I hope you're not too mad at us. Are
you?

MARTIN

No, I'm not mad. I mess up this pizza
thing all the time. Once more wont
matter. Anything to get by, you know?

HANNAH

Sure. I love a man with hustle.

MARTIN

Yeah well, that's all you do in graduate school.

HANNAH

Oh, and smarts.

MADELINE

Where are you studying?

MARTIN

Columbia.

(Madeline becomes suddenly more interested in Martin.)

MADELINE

Oh. And, what, what?

MARTIN

I'm there studying History. American Studies. Who knows if I'll ever get a job with that?

MADELINE

Oh yeah, you're completely unemployable.

(Madeline and Martin both laugh. Hannah joins in late.)

HANNAH

So Martin, about this pizza we don't have any money.

(Hannah runs her hand over the hem of her skirt. Martin is momentarily hypnotized and Madeline shakes her head in disappointment.)

MARTIN

Well, I, uh.

HANNAH

Maddie, be a dear and get Martin a glass, with some ice.

MADELINE

Sure. I'll be right back.

(Madeline charges off stage angrily.
Hannah cheerfully watches her exit.)

HANNAH

So Martin, we're going to have to come
to some sort of agreement...

MARTIN

So you're sister is a student?

HANNAH

Yeah, she's been one like her entire
life. Now, for this pizza pie, I am
willing to trade ...

MARTIN

Really?

HANNAH

Yes, I am.

MARTIN

No, ah, you're sister.

HANNAH

Oh, yes, she's a student at NYU.

MARTIN

I have a friend who teaches there.

HANNAH

Oh. That's great.

(Madeline enters carrying a tray with a
glass filled with ice. Her hair is up
and she is wearing make-up that brings
out a stunning model's face. She
approaches awkwardly in high-heels.
She sets the tray down in front of
Martin letting the front of her robe
hang open. He watches her wide-eyed as
does Hannah.)

MADELINE

Oops.

(Madeline stands clutching her robe and throws Martin a flirtatious, scolding look. Hannah roles her eyes in disbelief.)

HANNAH

Oh my god.

MARTIN

You're sister told me you're a student at NYU.

MADELINE

I am.

HANNAH

Can't you tell?

MADELINE

But I have other interests too. Like massage therapy and hot yoga ...

HANNAH

And reading Plato on Friday nights, lets not forget how you love that.

MADELINE

It's better than scrap-booking your countless boyfriends. Don't you think Martin?

HANNAH

Is it better than Internet chatting all day? How about that? Every guy loves a girl with a hot profile online.

MADELINE

How about one who didn't have the attention span to finish the DaVinci Code?

HANNAH

Oh! Who's the pizza-whore now?!

MARTIN

I think I am just going to go.

(Martin moves to collect the pizza.)

HANNAH

No!

MADELINE

Wait.

(Madeline whispers something to Martin. They both look at Hannah and nod. Then she whispers again. Martin gives a card to Madeline and they laugh.)

MADELINE

Martin is going to leave the pizza.

MARTIN

It was nice meeting you, Hannah.

(Martin leaves waving goodbye to Madeline.)

HANNAH

What did you tell him?

MADELINE

I told him you were a crazy person and that if you didn't eat with your medication you would have a seizure.

HANNAH

Oh. Nice!

MADELINE

You wanted the pizza didn't you?

HANNAH

Yeah, but ... No! This was supposed to be exciting.

MADELINE

It was exciting.

HANNAH

Yeah. For you. Now I'm the crazy sister. (Pause) He gave his phone number didn't he? I saw that you know?

MADELINE

You don't have to be the crazy sister. So he gave me his number. So what?

HANNAH

So he was supposed to, to, you just don't get it.

MADELINE

No. I don't. I'm going to bed.

(Madeline heads off-stage. Hannah slumps onto the couch and starts eating the pizza. As she goes in for a second large bite she spies the card for 'The Sweet Room' on the table. She picks it up and stares at it, considering the implications. She drops the pizza, sets the card down and rises. She quickly zips her boots back on and runs her hand through her hair. She returns to the table, gazes again at the card and tucks it into her bra. She makes for the door and opens it. Madeline enters from the hall, back in her pajamas.)

MADELINE

Where are you going?

HANNAH

Out. I'm going out.

MADELINE

Wait. Wait, I just wanted to say sorry. I didn't mean ... I liked him a little, that's all.

HANNAH

It's okay, dear sister.

(Hannah and Madeline embrace.)

MADELINE

Okay. You're sure you're going back out? Did you call Tom?

HANNAH

Yeah, um, yeah, Tom. I meeting him out.

MADELINE

OK. Sorry ... have a good time.

(Madeline exits. Hannah abruptly opens the door but doesn't leave. She looks back down the hall and slowly lets the door close. She returns to the couch and removes her boots. She picks up the remote control, aims it at the audience and clicks on. The end theme to *I Love Lucy* plays from the television. Hannah takes a big slice of pizza, smiles brightly at it, and takes a bite.)

BLACKOUT