

# SAND & GRANITE ON LIBERTY

**CAST:**

SANDY, a middle-aged English professor, a reasoner

GRANT, a proudly uneducated ruffian

JANE, Grant's girlfriend

**TIME:** The Present

**SET:** The stage is the living room of a seedy apartment in Georgia. It is littered with empty pizza boxes and crushed beer cans. There is a door upstage right, leading to the entry hallway. Next to the door is a tattered sofa. Center stage is a cheap card table, with plastic poker chips spread all over it. There is a deck of cards that has been thrown from the table, leading in a trail off of the table. On the stage left wall are two doors, one leading to JANE & GRANT's room, the other to the kitchen. Down stage left is a small and simple cage.

*(From the black, a spotlight slowly begins to rise during the following monologue. It reveals SANDY in his cage. He is a gaunt man, wearing a plastic flower in his lapel. The size of the cage forces him to hunker over, though he still manages to maintain a sense of dignity.)*

SANDY

Presumptuous Man! The reason wouldst thou find,  
Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?  
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,  
Why formed no weaker, blinder, and no less?  
Ask of the mother earth, why oaks are made  
Taller and Stronger than the weeds they shade?  
When the proud steed shall know why Man restrains  
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains;  
When the dull Ox, why now he breaks the clod,  
Why now a victim, and now Egypt's God:  
Then shall Man's pride and dullness comprehend  
His actions', passions', being's use and end;  
Why doing, suffering, checked, impelled; and why  
This hour a slave, the next a deity.  
Then say not Man's imperfect, Heaven in fault;  
Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought:  
His knowledge measured to his state and place;  
His time a moment, and a point his space.



Rafael Untalan as Grant in  
Stark Raving Theatre's 2000  
staged reading.

GRANT

Sandy, would you shut the fuck up!

*(The lights on the rest of the room come sharply up. GRANT is lounging on the sofa, wearing faded blue jeans and a T-shirt.)*

SANDY

I love Pope. He could barely get out of bed. What a will that man had. Crippled by nature, trapped inside his own deformed body. You noticed how every two lines rhyme. They're called rhyming couplets. Very amusing.

GRANT

Amusing. Funny. Not like me, my life.

SANDY

No, not precisely.

GRANT

No, it's not fucking funny. What was it you called this. . . this whole thing? Queer. That's it. Stupid thing to say. It's not queer, the world's not bright, or gay. It's a hole. When you're born, your mom squats over a hole and pumps you out, and as you're falling down this dark stinking hole, grabbing at your rope, you feel them cutting it, and you spend the rest of your life getting deeper, till you make up your mind you'd like to hit the bottom. Shit. Fuck. I hate it when I talk like you, I wish to God I'd never stolen you. You fucked up the way I talked, Sandy.

SANDY

Well, I hate to harp on this point, but you could—

GRANT

No. Don't you say it. There's no way out of this. You don't get out, I don't get out, things don't go back up the—fuck! What's that kind of thing called again?

SANDY

Well, I'd call it a somewhat elongated metaphor. You're getting much better at them. They're so. . . I'd say colorful, but let's just call them varied from the normal.

GRANT

I don't want to be better at them. They're stupid.

SANDY

They can be very beautiful.

GRANT

I don't care. I fucking hate them. Is that all right?

SANDY

Oh, well, of course.

GRANT

I'd kill you. No Jane, you'd be dead. No question about it. No more of your crap. There's a question I'd actually still like to ask you, after all this time. What was I thinking, when I thought that stealing you would make a difference in me, my. . . you're a snob, I'm a normal guy. Why wasn't I happy with that?

*(GRANT starts casually cleaning the room.)*

SANDY

“He who let's the world, or his portion of it, choose his plan of life for him has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation.” My daddy told me that when I was very young. He loved to read to me. All sorts of material. He and I would walk along the street and he would pontificate, no, sorry, I should say that we conversed, on all sorts of subjects. One night, we were traversing the town, discussing the last work of Oscar

Wilde. It's called. . . I remember thinking at the time that it was the saddest thing I had ever heard. I wanted to weep. And out of a back alley, a large ungainly fellow lurched out in front of us. He had a very large knife, and he grunted out something at us about handing over our money, I was terrified. Despite believing my father to be the most potent protector on earth, he was not a virile man. Somewhat sickly, in fact, and I hoped that he would surrender his wallet to the onerous man. But he wouldn't, which I believe I knew already. He said, "I will no sooner give you my wallet than I will commence flying. You may take it from me by force if you so choose, you boorish and overbearing cretin, but I will never simply give in to your nasty and brutish overtures, as if somehow you deserve my money because you are larger than I am. Never, Sir!" The mugger was dumbfounded, abashed, and he stammered something about his "old lady," for which my father lambasted him with John Stuart Mill: "It is not because your desires are strong that you act ill; it is because your conscience is weak!" I have never before or since seen a more defeated man, utterly destroyed. I almost pitied him.

GRANT

What? What was all that?

SANDY

My father—

GRANT

You've made me forget my question.

SANDY

Oh. I am sorry. I get to talking about my father, and I get wrapped up. He was a marvelous man.

GRANT

You start talking about anything and you don't quit talking till everyone's tired of listening. I was asking you a question. What the hell was it, I've forgotten. It was about. . .

SANDY

You asked me why you weren't content with where you were before you abducted me.

GRANT

Yeah. What, was *that* your answer?

SANDY

I believe you were simply misanswering your primal call to expand yourself into something greater than you now are.

GRANT

Don't push this. I like me fine, you're the problem.

SANDY

Oh. Very sorry.

GRANT

Never mind. Why the hell did I ask you?

SANDY

I'm not at all certain.

GRANT

*(pause)* Sickly. What does that mean, really? Sounds like your dad coughed a lot. But that ain't it, is it, Sandy? I can't believe I ever wanted to become you, like you. It's all about lying to yourself, making up words, acting like you know everything when you don't know shit about the things that really matter in life. Thank fucking God I figured out what you're all about before I got sucked in, that's all I can say, thank fucking God.

SANDY

But people have to grow, we need progression in our lives. "A life led unexamined is not worth living." I see no reason why you simply don't—

GRANT

Because I examined my life and it's a shit hole! I can't even hit bottom and finish it, because my bottom is filled with wet shit a mile deep, and I can't get through. I want to die, but I have to. . . Jane needs me. A man has to live up to his responsibilities, his debt, the people he owes.

SANDY

Oh. I suppose—

GRANT

That's the only thing my dad ever said to me that meant anything.

SANDY

Who do you owe more than me? You kidnapped me to educate you and your. . . lady friend about culture, to throw off the shackles of your oppression by creating mine. It's all from the inside. Can you not understand that all the change you're seeking, it's not a liquid that's inside my soul, that you can simply pour out of me into yourself. We. . . Grant.

*(During this speech, GRANT has gone and gotten a truncheon out of the top drawer of the dresser.)*

GRANT

That's enough.

*(Slapping the club in his hand, GRANT advances on SANDY, who cringes away from him.)*

SANDY

Don't. Please, Grant, don't.

GRANT

Don't beg.

*(The lights fade out as GRANT reaches the cage. There is a brief silence, followed by the sound of SANDY screaming from being hit. The following dialogue is recorded and is heard over the sound of SANDY being beaten. It is distorted, surreal seeming.)*

GRANT

All right, professor, I read some of it, most of the first chapter.

SANDY

Yes, well, all right, then let's discuss just the first chapter of On Liberty. It's just the introduction, really. John Stuart Mill is laying the foundation of one of man's oldest conflicts: the individual battling society. Now, in earlier times, this conflict consisted of subjects versus their ruler. It was an antagonistic relationship, almost by necessity. Their rulers primary job was to keep the peace in the society, prevent the stronger members from preying on the weaker members. But, as Mill said, the king of the vultures was as prone to prey on the weak as anyone else.

GRANT

King of the vultures?

SANDY

Yes.

GRANT

Long way to go to say the sky is blue. Doesn't work, none of it works. You've got this all wrong. I want to improve my life, not learn some guys stupid ideas. The strong always win. I'm the king of the vultures, I get what I want, from you, whoever. And there ain't anything stopping me. Pick another book.

*(The lights come up in the apartment. SANDY is in the cage with his hands behind his back. JANE is kneeling next to the couch with a TV. dinner, feeding him with a plastic*

*fork. She is a plain girl, wearing a simple dress.)*

JANE

Is it good?

SANDY

Well, as a rule, I'm not a big proponent of Mexican food. . .

JANE

Aw. . .

SANDY

But in this case it was wonderful. Thank you. The beans were particularly edifying. Thank you ever so much.

JANE

You're very welcome. There's still a little rice left, would you like it?

SANDY

No. *(pause)* Jane, dearest Jane. I need you.

JANE

What? What are you talking about?

SANDY

You have to see me, really see me, my predicament. You can not keep ignoring this, treating it as the status quo. This all has to end. Grant won't tolerate me much longer, I can feel him reaching the bottom of his. . . it cannot continue.

JANE

Oh, now you're being silly. You know I can't—

SANDY

No. Listen. Please.

JANE

Grant said you shouldn't do this anymore. He knows. He told me you're going to trick me.

SANDY

Please!

JANE

He protects me from. . . I need him.



Nicole Turley as Jane in Stark Raving Theatre's 2000 staged reading of *Sand and Granite on Liberty*.

SANDY

I love you. (pause) I've grown very to have a very strong affection for you, Jane.

JANE

What?

SANDY

I can take care of you. You understand? You don't need to rely on that man. I can extricate you from his power, if only you will let me.

JANE

You're not Grant. You couldn't take care of me. He knows me. He loves me.

SANDY

No. I love you. I can do it, take care of you as well, better than he can. We'll leave together. I still have an estate. I will keep you safe. You don't need him any more, you do not need to need him. It's beautiful, my home. Flowers on the walkway, very beautiful. It smells like a park.

JANE

I—

SANDY

In the spring, everything is a deep green, with lovely hedges. My daddy left it to me. He died an old man, confined to his bed. Jane. I do not want to die here, in this cage, at his mercy. You have to help me. I cannot bear up under much more of his tyranny. I am beginning to lose my touch with the world. I am dying in here. Jane—

*(GRANT enters from the hallway. He is unkempt, and appears tired. He crosses to JANE, grabbing her and kissing her very roughly, then breaking away.)*