Synopsis of Painting Faye Salvez
Three years after Faye Salvez went missing, her family and friends still have no closure. When a young artist promises he can capture Faye’s essence in a family portrait by speaking with her loved ones, Faye’s friends and family gather for a series of interviews over the course of one day. As tensions build, memories clash, and truths are challenged, we are faced with the question: Is it the responsibility of an artist to present the truth, even if it’s not what an audience wants to see?

Characters in this excerpt:
Jonathan - the artist.
Aidan - Faye’s boyfriend at the time of her disappearance.
Taylor - Faye’s oldest friend.
Sage - Faye’s best friend.
Meredith - Faye’s mother.
Blake - Faye’s father.

Act II, Scene 3
The living room. Aidan and Jonathan at the tail-end of an interview.

JONATHAN
So, like a housecat or a jungle cat?

AIDAN
(Distracted) What?

JONATHAN
There’s a big difference between saying she was like a domesticated cat and saying she was like a Saber Toothed Tiger. (Beat) Or an Asiatic Lion. (Beat) Or a meerkat.

AIDAN
Sorry. Sorry. Domestic cat.

Jonathan makes a note.

JONATHAN
Great! Thank you so much. That’s all I need from you.

AIDAN
Really? That’s - ok. Ok! Thanks.
Aidan gets up but does not leave.

JONATHAN
Is everything ok?

AIDAN
(A little dazed) Yeah. Yeah. I’m sorry. I just - I feel like I just, like... lied?

JONATHAN
What?

AIDAN
Not lied. I just - nothing.

JONATHAN
What?

AIDAN
Nothing. I don’t know why I said anything. It’s not. /Anything.

JONATHAN
It’s something. (Beat) It is. Right? (Aidan doesn’t answer) You can talk to me about it. If you want.

AIDAN
I don’t want to mess up your whole / thing.

JONATHAN
Please, no. If it has to do with your interview? It’s far more beneficial to disclose - I mean. Don’t feel like you have to? But it’s fully confidential. And transparency goes a long way.

AIDAN
Ok. Yeah. I mean - I feel like it doesn’t really make sense? Do you ever like… Do you ever say something and you feel like you lied somehow, but that was never - you didn’t lie, you just? Do you ever say something, and you’re telling the truth but like you almost can’t reme- (he stops.)

SONG: I KNOW I DID
(TRACK #13)
AIDAN
Do you ever say something you’ve said a thousand times
And you know it’s true because you’ve always known it’s true
But you start to forget what it’s based on
And you know it’s true, but... do you?

Do you ever say something you’ve started to memorize
And you sort of space out halfway through?
You know that you didn’t make it up
You know it’s true because at some point you knew.

Sometimes I wonder if it ever really happened.
I mean, I know it did.
I know it did.
But sometimes I get scared that I never even knew her
I know I did.
I know I did.
I know I did.

Do you ever say something you’ve subconsciously rehearsed
And you know it’s real because everyone agrees
And it starts to feel more like a story than the truth
And halfway through it you just freeze?

Because sometimes I wonder if it ever really happened
I mean, I know it did.
I know it did.
But sometimes I get scared that I never even knew her
I know I did.
I know I did.
I know I did.

But sometimes it hits like speeding train
And I can’t tell what’s sadder
Sometimes keeling over like it just happened
Or sometimes feeling like it didn’t even matter

(On another part of the stage, we see the porch. Sage stands, shaken, holding the sweater. It’s soaking wet, and she rings water from it. Taylor enters.)
TAYLOR

Oh my god.

SAGE

(Hurt) Really? Really, Taylor? You left it out in the rain?

TAYLOR

Sage. I - (at a loss) I don’t know what to say. I am so, so sorry.

SAGE

You don’t have to apologize to me.

TAYLOR

No, I do. You shouldn’t have had to -

SAGE

Better I find it than Ms. Salvez.

TAYLOR

Oh my god. I really didn’t think -

SAGE

I know you didn’t. (Beat. Broken, spilling out) It’s just kind of hard to feel like I’m the only one of us who even cares anymore?

TAYLOR


Taylor holds Sage.

SAGE

(From inside the hug) Sometimes it feels like it never really happened.

Do you get that?

AIDAN

Does that make any sense?

TAYLOR

/. Yeah.
JONATHAN
(when did his stomach drop?) Yes. It does.

A transition. We are in Jonathan's head. He blinks, and -

Act II, Scene 4
The living room. Meredith and Blake sit facing out. They don’t exist in the same scene. Jonathan sits in the middle, pen and paper in hand. He speaks out, interviewing both of them in separate worlds.

MEREDITH
I don’t know why I’m nervous!

BLAKE
Hi.

MEREDITH
Not nervous. Excited.

JONATHAN
It’s normal to be nervous. The important thing to remember is that, by definition, you can’t be wrong. We’re going to talk a bit about your subjective experience, so. As long as you feel it, it’s true.

MEREDITH / BLAKE
Yes. Great. Ok.

JONATHAN
We’ll start with some snap-answer questions. It’s really gonna be a mixed bag - some are about character, others are more abstract. It may be tempting to think a lot about them, but the goal is to get out of your own head, sort of? So - yeah. Try to go with the first thing that pops into your mind. Ok?

MEREDITH / BLAKE
Sounds great. Yeah.
JONATHAN
Ok! So. (Reading from the pad) If Faye was an element, fire, water, earth and air, which would she be?

MEREDITH / BLAKE
Hmm...

JONATHAN
Try not to think about it.

MEREDITH
Air.

BLAKE
Water.

JONATHAN
Was she trusting?

MEREDITH
Yes.

BLAKE
Not… exceptionally.

JONATHAN
Self esteem, from one to ten?

BLAKE
I don’t know.

MEREDITH
Seven.

BLAKE
Ten.

JONATHAN
Biggest fear?
BLAKE/MEREDITH

Public bathrooms.

MEREDITH

And rejection. And spiders.

JONATHAN

What - physically - of your features could you see in her?

SONG: INTERVIEW II
(TRACK #14)

MEREDITH

She’s got my chin, my cheeks, my skin, my curls
When you see her, it’s very clear
That she’s my girl
Dimples like her father’s
A smile like sunshine
The smirk I think is his
But that smile - no, that’s mine
Someday you’ll get to see it.

BLAKE

She had this lean, sort of this - I mean, the way she stood
When you saw her, I mean - when you draw her
To include that would be good

MEREDITH

The dimples are her father’s

BLAKE

She had Meredith’s hair

MEREDITH/BLAKE

She had/has his/my mother’s eyes

BLAKE

I’d know them anywhere.
I wish you could have seen them.
Did she ever want siblings?

She does.

She wanted a sister.

A little sister.

If she was a color - any color, you don’t have to stick to the basic color scale - what would she be?

Ruby red. She loves it. Ruby everything.

What would she be? I don’t - she liked red, does that -

What was her reaction to good news?

Um… good? She… She’d be happy, she’d…

She has the warmest, most beautiful smile.

(Overlapping) She had a great smile.

Alright, ok…nice.
I was just the same at that age
I guess it’s a family trait
Always busy,

BLAKE

Always moving,

MEREDITH

Always smiling,

BLAKE

Always late.

MEREDITH

Someday you’ll get to meet her.

BLAKE

If she knew about this, what would she say?

MEREDITH

When she smiles, it lights up her whole face

BLAKE

If she really was out there, would she want it this way?

MEREDITH

And when she comes home, she’ll warm up the whole place

BLAKE

We never got answers, they say it’s a cold case
Sometimes I can’t remember who we were in the first place -

(Beat. Jonathan is taken aback, Blake caught himself off guard. For a second, it looks like Meredith heard him. Then balance between the worlds is restored. Meredith smiles at Jonathan, waiting for the next question. Jonathan is focused on Blake, who takes out his phone)

BLAKE

(Uncomfortable) Sorry… I gotta take this. Sorry to cut things short, just (distracted) - let me know if you need anything else.
Jonathan watches as Blake gets up, starts to leave. Meredith is still in her scene, looking warmly at Jonathan. Blake turns before he exits:

**BLAKE**

My wife is very excited about this. What you’re doing - it’s a very nice thing.

**JONATHAN**

*(To Blake)* Thank you.

**MEREDITH**

*(To Jonathan)* Please, thank you. That’s really everything?

**JONATHAN**

*(Snapping back into it)* Yeah. That’s about it.

**MEREDITH**

*(Getting up)* So quick! *(Lightly)* Well, I could talk about her for hours. So if anything else comes up that you forgot to ask -

**JONATHAN**

Yeah. I’ll let you know. Of course.