

PROVENANCE
A One Act Play
by
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Synopsis: A near-homicidal art collector confronts the forger whose painting he bought.

Cast: ALDO BRANZINI – an eccentric artist/forger
BENJAMIN COX – a middle aged businessman

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PROVENANCE

Setting: an artist's loft, filled with canvases; to one side are a table, chairs and small cabinet.

At rise: ALDO BRANZINI, an older disheveled artist stands at an easel, painting. Aldo daubs at his palette and realizes some colors have run out. He sets it down and wipes his hands on a paint rag. He takes out his iPhone and hits 'record'.

ALDO

Note to self: I need more vermilion and cerulean blue. (He spots some ratty brushes on the floor and picks them up.) And I think the dog got into my brushes again. I'm going to need some new ones.

(There is a knock at the door.)

Hold on.

(He puts away his iPhone, then answers the door. Standing in the doorway is BENJAMIN COX, a middle-aged well-dressed man; he holds a painting.)

Yes?

BENJAMIN

Are you Aldo Branzini?

ALDO

Yeah.

BENJAMIN

The artist.

ALDO

Uh huh.

BENJAMIN

Would you mind if I come in?

ALDO

Uh...I'm kind of in the middle of something. And you are...?

(Benjamin pulls a gun.)

...an art critic, I'm guessing.

BENJAMIN

No. I'm Benjamin Cox. A sucker who bought one of your forgeries.

ALDO

Oh.

(He backs Aldo up and closes the door behind him.)

BENJAMIN

I saw you on the news. They put you on trial...you confessed to being a forger!

ALDO

Well no, actually that's not what I said. What I said was I do paintings in the style of other painters of the past.

BENJAMIN

And then you put their names on them!

ALDO

(shrugging)

True.

BENJAMIN

And then those paintings get sold to people like me who think they're originals.

ALDO

Well, they ARE originals; they just happen to be mine.

BENJAMIN

But you passed them off as being painted by others!

(beat)

ALDO

I see your point.

BENJAMIN

And after you admitted all that, they let you go??

ALDO

No, I posted bond. I don't have to report to jail for another few days.

(Benjamin snorts in disgust and begins to pace.)

BENJAMIN

Unbelievable.

ALDO

You seem unhappy.

BENJAMIN

Unhappy?? No, I'm furious! I paid half a million dollars for this piece of shit.

ALDO

You did? Let me see.

(Benjamin shows it to him.)

Oh, I remember this one. It's in the style of Max Ernst.

BENJAMIN

No, it's not just in the style of Max Ernst. It has his name on the bottom. I was told by experts that it WAS a Max Ernst.

ALDO

Well, 'experts'. You can't trust them, can you? Then again, it certainly looks like a Max Ernst, doesn't it?

BENJAMIN

Yes! My God, the colors...the composition...who wouldn't be fooled by this?

ALDO

Exactly. So it's a great painting, right?

BENJAMIN

What?

ALDO

It's a great painting.

BENJAMIN

That's not the point. The point is I paid half a million dollars for it!

ALDO

Cheap at twice the price, if you ask me. Can I get you anything? Water...tea?

BENJAMIN

You can get me my money!

ANTON

Ah. Well, that's going to be difficult.

(Benjamin again points the pistol at Aldo.)

But we can certainly talk about it. Here...sit, sit...

BENJAMIN

You DO have the money, yes?

ALDO

Well...

BENJAMIN

What?

ALDO

You know, everybody has to take a piece: the auction house...Uncle Sam...and the bond, Jesus...

BENJAMIN

I want my money!!!!

(beat)

ALDO

Let me ask you something: why did you buy the painting? Did it speak to you? Did you fall in love with it?

BENJAMIN

What? No. I...I liked it. I wouldn't say I loved it.

ALDO

Then you shouldn't have bought it.

BENJAMIN

It was an investment! I was told if I invested in this painting, I could sell it in a few years for 600,000...maybe 700,000 dollars.

ALDO

So that's why you bought it. Because a Max Ernst would be a good investment.

BENJAMIN

Yes.

ALDO

Because he's famous.

BENJAMIN

Yeah!

ALDO

And how did he become famous?

BENJAMIN

How did he...? By painting great works of art.

ALDO

Well yeah, but also by dying! See, most of us artists don't become rich or famous until after we're dead. Until then, we're usually a bunch of broke nobodies. But once we die, WHOA! We're geniuses worth a whole lot of money!

BENJAMIN

Yeah, it's called supply and demand. When the supply stops it makes the demand greater.

ALDO

And that's what you demand: paintings by dead men.

BENJAMIN

TALENTED men.

ALDO

And I don't have talent?

BENJAMIN

Well, yes, obviously you do. You have to have talent in order to copy a painter like him.

ALDO

Or like Paul Klee... (He points out a canvas that is done in the style of Klee)...or Andy Warhol... (He points out another).

BENJAMIN

Oh my God. You did these too?

ALDO

Oh yeah. There are ten or twelve painters that I do.

BENJAMIN

How can you do this?!

ALDO

Well, years and years of practice. (beat) Oh...I see what you mean... Well, it's not like I'm trying to pass off a painting that already exists. I'm not saying, "Oh look: I just happen to have the Mona Lisa here; would you like to buy it?" None of these are copies of famous paintings; these are works that those artists MIGHT have gotten around to painting one day. They just never did.

BENJAMIN

So you did.

ALDO

Yeah.

BENJAMIN

And then you put their names on them!

ALDO

Well, if my name had been on there, you'd have said, "Who the hell is THAT guy?"

BENJAMIN

Exactly!

ALDO

That's just not right. You know, there's a famous Swiss collector named Buyler; he called a Rothko I did a 'sublime unknown masterwork.' It's hanging it in his museum right now.

BENJAMIN

I can't believe this. You think it's right to sell your works this way?

ALDO

You know the saying: "If fools didn't go to market, fake wares wouldn't be sold."

BENJAMIN

You calling me a fool?! (He raises the pistol again.)

ALDO

No no! Present company excluded. You know, you can put the gun away; it's pretty obvious I'm not a violent criminal. I'm not going to stab you with a paint brush or something. Are you sure you wouldn't like something to drink? How about some grappa? I find it's very conducive to seeing things in a new way.

BENJAMIN

Go ahead. I would never deny a man a last drink.

ALDO

E molto gentile. That's very kind. Please...sit. You know, you look familiar. Were you at the gallery when the painting was auctioned?

(He opens a cabinet and withdraws a bottle and two glasses.)

BENJAMIN

No, I had a representative do the bidding for me.

ALDO

Huh. I could have sworn I've seen you before.

(They sit down; Benjamin places the gun in his lap as Aldo pours. He hands Benjamin a glass and toasts him.)

ALDO

Salut.

BENJAMIN

Uh huh.

(They drink.)

ALDO

So...you're an art collector.

BENJAMIN

I collect a lot of things.

ALDO

Must be nice. To have that much disposable income, I mean.

BENJAMIN

Yeah, it is.

ALDO

How did you acquire your fortune, if I may ask?

BENJAMIN

I'm in financing at First American Investments.

ALDO

Ah. Banking. Gambling with other people's money.

BENJAMIN

Not gambling; investing! Allocation of capital. Mergers and acquisitions. I suppose those concepts might be too complex for an 'artist' to comprehend.

ALDO

Subprime mortgages? Collateralized debt obligations? Credit default swaps?

BENJAMIN

Oh. You've heard of those.

ALDO

I try to stay current. Wait! The hearings before Congress: THAT'S where I know you from. C-SPAN! Hey, we've both been on TV!

BENJAMIN

All right...

ALDO

You were subpoenaed before Congress.

BENJAMIN

I was asked to appear! I was asked to come in and provide some information so people could understand what our bank had done to help people.

ALDO

To help them. Didn't your firm give out billions in bad loans to people you knew couldn't pay them back?

BENJAMIN

That's what the Senate committee asked. And I'll tell you what I told them: you're not being fair. We didn't know for sure those loans wouldn't be repaid.

ALDO

Then why did you take out billions in insurance policies betting that those folks would default? Because when they did, your firm made a killing.

BENJAMIN

Which is perfectly legal!

ALDO

Why?

BENJAMIN

What?

ALDO

Why is what you did legal?

BENJAMIN

Because the politicians who write the laws say so.

ALDO

And how much money has your firm contributed to their election campaigns?

BENJAMIN

Wait now...

ALDO

No, no, you and the Wall Street boys and the hedge fund operators spread out a ton of money to the politicians so that they'll be able to stay in office; then those politicians write laws saying you big contributors never have to go to jail.

BENJAMIN

Don't try and turn this around and pretend that I'M the criminal. What you did is a felony.

ALDO

Which only proves one thing.

BENJAMIN

What?

ALDO

I should have given millions of dollars to Congress, too.

BENJAMIN

And then it would be OK to use someone else's signature?

ALDO

Isn't that what you guys did with all that robo-signing?

BENJAMIN

Oh, come on!

ALDO

What? You did! You and the other banksters hired people to sign hundreds of mortgage foreclosures without their ever reading them or knowing any of the facts about them. Then the notaries notarized their affidavits. That was all fraud too, wasn't it?

BENJAMIN

It's different.

ALDO

You're right, it's very different; I create beauty. You create homeless people.

BENJAMIN

I'm not the one who signed them! (He points the pistol at Aldo again.)

ALDO

OK, OK! (beat) Could I ask: what is a banker doing with a gun anyway?

BENJAMIN

What do you think?

ALDO

I don't know. I thought the easiest way to rob a bank was to own one.

BENJAMIN

Ha ha! I don't OWN my firm...and I didn't rob anything. After the stock market crash and the Congressional hearings, I began to get some death threats.

ALDO

I'm not surprised.

BENJAMIN

My attorney suggested I start carrying a gun for self-defense.

ALDO

Or for shooting artists.

BENJAMIN

Maybe. In fact, you did say death is what makes an artist's work valuable, right?

(He cocks the pistol.)

ALDO

Ha ha...me and my big mouth. But you don't want to kill me. YOU'D be the one going to jail, not me. And I'm guessing that if you could afford to pay a half a mill for that painting, you must have a pretty nice life style. You don't want to lose that, do you?

BENJAMIN

I'll think about it. (He lowers the gun.)

ALDO

Nice of you to consider my posthumous reputation though.

BENJAMIN

Don't mention it. You know, I'm not just some rich shmuck who collects things. I really DO appreciate art.

ALDO

Good for you.

BENJAMIN

I have quite a number of beautiful pieces. In fact I just acquired a small piece by David Hockney last month that all my friends...oh no!

ALDO

What?

BENJAMIN

It's not one of yours is it?

ALDO

No! I don't do Hockney!

BENJAMIN

Thank God.

ALDO

But you'd be surprised how much of my work IS in rich people's living rooms... art galleries...most of the big museums...

BENJAMIN

Seriously?

ALDO

Oh yeah. In fact, the last time I was looking at all my work hanging at the MET, I remembered thinking I should have signed my name and then forged the famous artist's name on top of it in disappearing ink. Then after a few years their names would fade, my name would magically appear and everyone would say, "Huh! I always thought that was by Matisse; but it's by Branzini. Oh, and this one too. And this one. They're all by Branzini! Who knew he was so prolific?"

BENJAMIN

You're actually proud of what you've done, aren't you?

ALDO

Kind of, yeah. The prosecution DID say I was the best in the world. So you see, killing me to make me famous isn't really necessary; I'm already famous.

BENJAMIN

You are not.

ALDO

You said you saw me on television, didn't you? That's the epitome of fame in America.

BENJAMIN

Oh please...

ALDO

How many other artists have you seen on TV?

(beat)

BENJAMIN

OK, not too many. So what? So what if you have some fame now?

ALDO

So, that painting you bought is already starting to go up in value.

BENJAMIN

No way.

ALDO

Oh yeah! You wanted to buy a painting by a famous artist, right? Well congratulations, you've done it! I've been on TV, I'm in the press – so I'm famous now! In fact, if you like, I'll take Max Ernst's name off your painting and I'll put mine on.

(He takes the painting, puts it on the easel and re-signs it.)

BENJAMIN

Wait, what?

ALDO

Your rich friends are going to be so jealous. “Oh my God! You have a Branzini? He's famous! And you only paid half a million? You lucky bastard!” There, that should be dry in a few minutes.

BENJAMIN

You really think you belong in the same company as famous artists?

ALDO

Look, you like the Warhol I did, right?

BENJAMIN

Very impressive.

ALDO

You'd pay a million dollars for a Warhol, wouldn't you?

BENJAMIN

For an ORIGINAL Warhol, I might.

ALDO

Do you know what Andy Warhol called his studio? The Factory. You know why? Because that's what it was. He had all these people scattered all around the studio doing all the work for him: painting, silk screening. And when they were done, he would sign it. So you see, a lot of the work being sold today isn't actually Warhol's; it's really his assistants'. People are just buying his name.

BENJAMIN

Shit. But OK, you're talking about one artist.

ALDO

Well, there's also Rembrandt...

BENJAMIN

No. Don't tell me that.

ALDO

Botticelli...Titian...Rubens...a lot of their works were actually done by their studio assistants.

BENJAMIN

You're just saying that to excuse what you've done.

ALDO

Oh no, it's true. And now that you know that, are their works not masterpieces anymore?

BENJAMIN

I'm getting confused.

(Benjamin pours himself another drink; Aldo strolls among the canvases.)

ALDO

These artists...and I don't mean just painters, but REAL artists...these were people who came up with a brand new idea or technique. Then they would teach those ideas and techniques to their assistants who would do the work. So I like to think of myself as a faithful assistant to these artists. I just happen to be assisting them after they died.

BENJAMIN

Really.

ALDO

Yeah, it's like I channel them; I channel them into me: Branzini!

BENJAMIN

(snorting)

Branzini. You know, I never heard of you before this. Is that an Italian name?

ALDO

I guess.

BENJAMIN

Don't you know?

(beat)

Wait a minute. It's not your real name, is it?

ALDO

It's one of them.

BENJAMIN

My God! Is there anything about you that's real?

ALDO

The talent. The talent's real.

BENJAMIN

If you do say so yourself.

ALDO

No, you said so too.

BENJAMIN

All right. But if you have all this talent, why didn't you put out works using your own name? Whatever it is.

ALDO

At first I did. When I was first beginning, I couldn't get anyone to buy my work and I couldn't figure out why 'cause it was good! Then I realized after a while that talent's not enough; I didn't have the emotion or the personality that makes someone truly great. Picasso had volcanic passion. He once said, "Every act of creation is first an act of destruction." Van Gogh had visions. Caravaggio, religious fervor. I didn't have any of that; I'm not a very emotional guy. But what I lacked in emotion, I more than made up for in logic. I could take apart another artist's technique the way a jeweler takes apart a watch. And when I started to put the watch back together again...when I started to paint like them...I could suddenly feel the way that they once did. I could feel the world instead of just looking at it. Ever since then, for short periods anyway, I get to be a real artist instead of just a painter.

BENJAMIN

So you're like a chameleon.

ALDO

I wish. If I want to change colors, I have to open up tubes and squeeze them onto my palette. That reminds me... (he takes out his iPhone again and speaks into it.) I also need some burnt umber to finish the De Kooning. And don't forget the flea market this Saturday for more antique frames. (beat) Oh wait; I won't be here will I? (into phone) Never mind.

BENJAMIN

Antique frames. Don't tell me: you buy old frames to help convince people the paintings are old too.

ALDO

Yeah. Old canvases too; I'm always on the lookout for lousy paintings from a hundred years ago so I can paint over them.

BENJAMIN

You know, if collectors like me begin to think that all we're buying are fakes, we'll just pull out of the market.

ALDO

Good. Then the prices will come down and everyone can have a Chagall or a Rothko. I mean, my versions of them.

BENJAMIN

You can't do that!

ALDO

Why not? You burst the housing bubble; maybe I'll burst the art bubble.

BENJAMIN

I forbid you! Collectors expect to buy originals!

ALDO

Yeah, and the 'experts' will tell you that they are! You know, there's this myth that there are only certain people who 'know' what is Art and what isn't. But when I realized how often experts got fooled by forgers, it meant you couldn't trust them. Not their taste, not their recommendations, nothing. See, a lot of these so-called experts are collectors too. So they have a vested interest in saying that this or that painting is authentic.

BENJAMIN

Because that drives the price up.

ALDO

Exactly. For them, and for the auction houses, the museums... So who knows what Art is? Marcel DuChamp once put a used urinal on display; and sure enough, the experts said, "My God, that is fine art!"

BENJAMIN

Well great; I have five bathrooms in my house. I guess that qualifies it as a gallery!

ALDO

Yeah! Which means you should buy even more of my paintings to hang there! Ha ha! Oh come on—as one criminal to another, we support one another. You bought one of my paintings...I probably bought one of your subprime mortgages for this space.

BENJAMIN

Stop saying I'm a criminal! And by the way, if you're such a criminal mastermind, how did you get caught?

ALDO

I was doing another Max Ernst painting and I wanted to have an area that was all white. (He picks up a paint tube.) Well, there's this very beautiful shade called Titanium White, so I used that. Then the buyer got suspicious for some reason. He hired a scientist who took a little sample from the canvas, put it under a microscope and identified it. Turns out Titanium White hadn't been invented when Max Ernst was alive. Too bad...it's really a nice white...

BENJAMIN

What kind of white did Ernst use?

ALDO

I don't know.

BENJAMIN

Well, maybe you should channel him and ask!

(They both laugh.)

ALDO

Ah, good one! You DO have a sense of humor after all.

(Benjamin pours himself another drink.)

BENJAMIN

You know, this is pretty good shit.

ALDO

Yeah well, outside of art supplies, good booze is about the only luxury I indulge in.

(Benjamin drunkenly waves the gun again.)

BENJAMIN

Well, see, by killing you I'll be doing you a favor. If you went to jail, the only alcohol you'd get would be fermented prune juice cooked up by your cell mate.

ALDO

Ew...

BENJAMIN

So bottoms up.

ALDO

And gun down. (He gently pushes the gun barrel down; they both drink.)

BENJAMIN

How much time were you supposed to do anyway?

ALDO

I think they said six years.

BENJAMIN

Jesus. You'd have been an old man when you got out.

ALDO

I'm old now. But I think I would have had a few more good years in me after I was released.

BENJAMIN

So you could pick up where you left off.

ALDO

Too late to pass myself off as a brain surgeon.

(Benjamin gets up and looks around the studio)

BENJAMIN

So...were you planning to sell all these other paintings before you went away?

ALDO

Some. Like I said, they'll probably be worth a lot more after you...you know, after I'm gone. I suppose the rest of them should go to my girlfriend.

BENJAMIN

Oh yeah? Wait—is she here?

ALDO

No, she got out when the Feds were closing in. Good thing she left or you'd have had to shoot us both. What about you? Is there a Mrs. Cox?

BENJAMIN

Oh yeah.

ALDO

Is she an art lover too?

BENJAMIN

Well, she loved it enough to take half of it with her when she left.

ALDO

Oh. Sorry.

BENJAMIN

Don't be. (beat) I guess we both suck with women.

ALDO

So we are kind of alike. In fact, I used to use your bank.

BENJAMIN

You mean you had an account with us?

ALDO

No. I took out a big insurance policy on one of my fake paintings and paid to store it in one of your vaults. Those insurance documents were supposedly proof of the work's value, you know? So then I'd get investors...not unlike yourself...to buy shares in the painting.

BENJAMIN

Because over the years, the value of the painting was supposed to go up.

ALDO

Uh huh. These people never even saw the painting; they just owned a piece of it.

BENJAMIN

My God. (beat) Wait! Is my firm liable for this? Is it still there?

ALDO

Oh no. I took it out and did the same thing in three different banks in three different cities.

BENJAMIN

You son-of-a-...! (He hesitates, then chuckles.) You know what? I'm not even mad. You wouldn't believe the shit that banks do. I found out that there were major banks that had been laundering billions of dollars for the drug cartels for years!

ALDO

What?

BENJAMIN

Oh yeah. 'Cause they knew that the regulators, the SEC... everybody would look the other way because it made the economy grow! "Don't ask how; don't rock the boat. Everything's going up, up, up!"

ALDO

Until it all went down, down, down.

BENJAMIN

And even then we all got bailed out.

ALDO

And you're still making your seven figure salary.

BENJAMIN

It's funny: you think it's important to make all that money, to be able to buy all these things...the penthouse, the cars, the art work. And then you wind up in an empty home with no one to share it with.

ALDO

You could always quit.

BENJAMIN

And do what? Like you said: too late to become a brain surgeon.

ALDO

Well, if you're that unhappy, maybe you should do something therapeutic on the side.

BENJAMIN

Yeah right. Like painting?

ALDO

That's not a bad idea. Come on.

(He puts a fresh canvas on the easel and hands Benjamin his palette and brush.)

BENJAMIN

Get out of here. I don't know how to paint anything.

ALDO

Then you'll do an abstract. You know what Picasso said? "If I paint a wild horse, you might not see the horse...but you sure as hell will see the wildness." Go wild! Go on.

BENJAMIN

Uh... (He makes a couple of tentative strokes.)

ALDO

Oh come on! How do you feel? How do you feel about your wife leaving you?

BENJAMIN

Bitch! (He makes a broad stroke.)

ALDO

Yeah! Tell her!

BENJAMIN

You should have stayed! I loved you!!! (He starts stabbing at the canvas with more and more paint.) I gave you everything! You had no right to take half of it with you! I loved you!!!

ALDO

Keep going! Who else? What about the congressmen who made you testify?

BENJAMIN

Oh, those fuckers. (He continues with even more violent brush strokes.) You hypocrites are asking ME questions? You take \$175,000 a year to sit on your asses and do nothing!!! Here's to your three martini lunches! And your golf games! And your sucking up to everybody who gives you money to get anything done! FUCK YOU! FUCK IT! FUCK ALL OF YOU!!!

(He finally stops, breathing heavily. He steps back and drops the brush, then looks to Aldo.)

ALDO

You want to sign it?

BENJAMIN

Oh. Right. (He picks up the brush and signs it.)

ALDO

So...how do you feel?

BENJAMIN

I had no idea painting was so exhausting.

ALDO

It's liberating though, isn't it?

BENJAMIN

Yeah...in a weird way.

ALDO

See, you have the emotion of a great painter.

BENJAMIN

Yeah, I guess so.

(They both stand for a moment contemplating his work.)

So...you think it's worth anything?

ALDO

Not a penny. But that's not the point. It's a creative outlet. And that was very creative. In fact, if you don't mind, I'd like to keep it.

BENJAMIN

Really?

ALDO

Yeah.

BENJAMIN

You're not going to sign some famous painter's name to it and pass it off as a masterpiece, are you?

ALDO

I wouldn't worry about that. Tell you what: I'll trade you for it. You like the Warhol right?

BENJAMIN

Yeah.

ALDO

We'll swap. (He fetches the Warhol painting.)

BENJAMIN

You mean...like a credit default swap!

ALDO

Right! Only with art.

(He hands him the Warhol and the painting he walked in with.)

Now you've got two paintings for the price of one. So...are we good?

BENJAMIN

Yeah, what the hell. You know, after you telling me how you had to fake your emotions to paint...your girlfriend leaving you...now you're going to jail...you're kind of sad. You're too sad to shoot.

ALDO

I agree. Save your bullets for a happier man.

BENJAMIN

Plus, I'm pretty drunk; I'd probably shoot and miss you anyway. All right, I guess I should be off then.

(He gives Aldo an awkward hug and heads for the door.)

ALDO

Oh wait! If you're going to take the Warhol, you should take the provenance too.

(He removes a paper from a desk drawer and hands it to Benjamin.)

BENJAMIN

The what?

ALDO

The provenance. The document that shows how the work has passed from owner to owner through the years. It confirms its genuineness. You got one with the Ernst painting, didn't you?

BENJAMIN

Oh yeah, I did. (He looks at the paper.) Wait -- so the painting IS real?

ALDO

No; I forged the provenance too.

BENJAMIN

Oh Jesus! All right, I'm leaving. Maybe I'll see you in six years when you get out.

ALDO

Maybe. Or maybe I can get some time knocked off by trading some paintings to the warden.

BENJAMIN

Yeah, that's a brilliant idea: more crime! Why don't you just forge a pardon from the Governor?

(Aldo turns and stares at him, delighted at the idea.)

ALDO

Hey!

BENJAMIN

That was a joke!!!

ALDO

No Benjamin, I like the way you think!

BENJAMIN

You are a sick man.

(He exits with the paintings. Aldo crosses to his work desk, picks up the tape recorder and takes center stage.)

ALDO

Note to self: research where to acquire government-issued stationery. 'From the office of the Governor to Warden Smith, Bennet Penitentiary. Dear Warden: It has come to my attention that a prisoner named Aldo Branzini is serving time there. I feel he is deserving of an immediate and full pardon.

(The lights begin to fade.)

After all, where would our great country be without her artists? And in my opinion, Aldo Branzini is a true original.'

FADE OUT

THE END

(Author's note: in keeping with the theme of 'fake' painting, all the canvases can be blank to allow the audience to use their collective imagination.)