

SOUVENIR FROM COPENHAGEN

a play in two acts

by Michael James

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CHARACTERS & BREAKDOWN FOR A CAST OF 10

- Actor 1 DAVID SINCLAIR, a gay actor, in his 20s
- Actor 2 JONATHAN WELLS, a middle-aged gay CPA
 JONATHAN'S FATHER, homophobe, in his 70s
- Actor 3 EDDY, a gay office worker, in his 20s
- Actor 4 BOB SINCLAIR, David's father, in his 50s
 FATHER RAY, a gay Catholic priest, in his 50s
 A SMALL THEATER PRODUCER, in his 50s
 BERNIE, a talent agent, in his 50s
 CARLOS, a mailroom attendant, in his 50s
- Actor 5 MANUEL, a doorman, in his 20s
 DENNIS, a gay actor, in his 20s
 AN AIRLINE STEWARD, in his 20s
- Actor 6 ANGEL, a concierge, in his 20s
 TEX, a bisexual actor, in his 20s
 A WAITER, in his 20s
- Actor 7 CLARENCE LITTLEWORTH, an asexual playwright, 92
- Actress 1 NINA NELSON, a lesbian theatrical agent, about 80
 MS. DINESEN, a morgue employee, in her 70s
 JONTHAN'S MOTHER, homophobe, in her 70s
- Actress 2 FRAN SINCLAIR, David's mother, in her 50s
 CATHY, an office manager, in her 50s
 A POLICEWOMAN, in her 50s
- Actress 3 LUCY, a stage manager, age 13
 A HOMOPHOBIC TEENAGER, age 13
 LILY, a Catholic out lesbian, age 13
 MONICA, Eddy's niece, age 13

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in New York City and briefly in Copenhagen and Indianapolis.

TIME

The present

A MEMORY PLAY

Souvenir from Copenhagen is a memory play; therefore, the set design should be spare. At center stage are two easy chairs with, in between, a small round table covered with a tablecloth on which rests an elegant, decorative cremation urn for human ashes. Somewhere upstage, stands an old, open armoire with various props and articles of clothing to be used by the actors.

Since the action of the play unfolds in several short, episodic scenes and in different locations, the lighting design should be varied but kept simple. A few stage lighting effects are suggested in the script, but these can be ignored or changed by the lighting designer and stage director; other lighting effects may be added. Occasionally, some photographs or images are projected onto the back wall; these should be used sparingly. The use of videography should be avoided as it would be too realistic and distracting for a memory play.

ACT ONE

When the LIGHTS COME UP, we see DAVID SINCLAIR in his apartment at stage right and JONATHAN WELLS in an exercise room at a YMCA at stage left. While Jonathan is doing stretching exercises, David removes the lid from the cremation urn and takes out a bag of human ashes.

David, a strikingly handsome, muscular gay man, appears to be in his mid-twenties. Jonathan, also gay, is average-looking, thin if a bit flabby, and could be in his mid-forties. It is obvious that Jonathan does not know how to exercise: his sit-ups, push-ups and waist bends all look awkward and painful; yet one cannot help but admire him for trying.

NOTE: David is both narrator and protagonist of the play. While addressing the audience, he sometimes looks at and interacts with the other characters, but they, of course, are never aware that he is a narrator.

DAVID

(holding up the bag of ashes, to audience)

In case you're all wondering what's in the bag ... these are my late husband's ashes.

(He shakes the bag.)

He hanged himself a while back. That's him over there exercising at our local YMCA. Don't ask me why he hanged himself. I don't really know.

(He puts the bag back in the urn. While speaking, he replaces the lid on the urn, and secures it with screws.)

He didn't have the courtesy to leave me a suicide note ... You'd think I'd be entitled to some kind of explanation. After all, I was married to him for almost two years ... Anyway; the YMCA on West 63rd Street in New York City is where I first met him.

(David joins Jonathan, and starts exercising. Unlike Jonathan, David is a real athlete. Jonathan gives David a bright smile. David smiles back, perfunctorily.)

JONATHAN

Hi.

DAVID

Hey.

JONATHAN

...You come here often?

DAVID

(tries to ignore Jonathan)

I'm here every day.

JONATHAN

This is my first time. You can tell, right?

DAVID

You don't want to overdo it, if this is your first time.

JONATHAN

You do anything else besides stretching exercises?

DAVID

I swim. Play squash. Jog. Shoot baskets. Work out in the cardio room. I do it all. I get my money's worth.

JONATHAN

Wow. No wonder you're in such great shape. Wish I could be like you. By the way, I'm Jonathan.

DAVID

David.

JONATHAN

Glad to meet you...David.

DAVID

(nods and smiles at Jonathan; then to audience)

I think he's cruising me ... What do you think? ... Hmm. Now he's staring at my crotch.

(bored)

Everyone stares at my crotch. This happens to me every single day.

(David turns his back on Jonathan, and keeps exercising. He's a pro, not only strong, but also coordinated and graceful in his movements.)

Jonathan tries to copy him, but unsuccessfully. Sustain. Then all of a sudden, Jonathan cries out in pain!)

DAVID

(stops exercising)

Hold it! Don't move. *Don't move!*

JONATHAN

Oh, my back. I ... *Oh!!*

DAVID

(coming to Jonathan's aid)

Here. Lie down on your stomach. You threw your back out. That's what happens when you do too much the first time. Here, let me help you.

(Jonathan does as he's told.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(touches Jonathan's lower back.)

Is this where it hurts?

JONATHAN

... A little lower ... Lower.

DAVID

That low??

JONATHAN

(moves David's hand to one of his buttocks.)

There. Right there. Oh, God!

DAVID

C'mon, it can't be that low.

(to audience)

He wants me to feel his ass; that's what he's after.

(moves his hand up a bit higher.)

I think it's more like *here* ... Am I right?

JONATHAN

Yeah, yeah. Right there! ... O-o-oh!

(David massages Jonathan's lower back. No dialogue for a moment.)

DAVID

Did you know you have scoliosis?

JONATHAN

Oh that. I've had scoliosis since I was a kid.

DAVID

(to audience, while massaging Jonathan)

Yeah, his spine isn't straight; it's curved, shaped like the letter S. People with scoliosis always look like they have a crooked back.

JONATHAN

...Oh, that feels good ... Where did you learn to do that?

DAVID

I'm a personal trainer.

JONATHAN

Ah. I'm not surprised ... Wish those guys over there would stop staring.

DAVID

Pay no attention. I get stared at a lot ... OK, that's it; you're done.

JONATHAN

(after a moment)

I feel much, much better. You have the magic touch, David. Thanks.

DAVID

Listen, you better take it easy for a couple of days. But before you go, let me show you one exercise you can do for your scoliosis. It won't straighten your spine, but it might make you look...a bit less crooked.

(While David demonstrates, Jonathan follows instructions.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Stand with your right side next to the wall. Now lean your hips to the right; keep your right arm at your side. Good. Keep your shoulders back; look straight ahead. Now hold

DAVID (Cont'd)

that position for five seconds. Count to five: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Now let go. No more than five seconds. Repeat the exercise ten times, twice a day. Like I said, it won't straighten your spine, but your shoulders should look a bit more even.

JONATHAN

Gee, thanks. I'll make sure to do that.

DAVID

Good.

JONATHAN

Listen, I ...um ...why don't we go somewhere for coffee? After what you've done for me, the least I can do is buy you a cup of coffee.

DAVID

No, it's OK.

JONATHAN

Really, David, I'd like to. Let me thank you.

DAVID

You don't have to. I'm a CPT: putting people back together is what I do. Besides, coffee shops around here are awful.

JONATHAN

You're right, they are. Well, how about coffee at my place? Or tea? Or ... or my special *homemade cranberry juice*? I live right around the corner.

DAVID

(to audience)

How convenient. Gosh, he looks sad, doesn't he? I guess I better accept or he might cry.

JONATHAN

Please ... David ... Say yes.

DAVID

(to audience)

The vulnerable type. It never fails. I always attract the vulnerable type.

DAVID (Cont'd)
(back to Jonathan)

O-o-kay. *Homemade cranberry juice* it is.

(Jonathan beams at David!)

DAVID (Cont'd.)
(to audience, but occasionally looking at Jonathan and at the urn)
And that is how I met Jonathan. My future husband.

(The LIGHTING changes. David and Jonathan are now out in the street, walking towards Jonathan's apartment.)

DAVID (Cont'd)
(to audience)
As we were walking along Central Park West, on our way to his apartment, we started getting acquainted.

JONATHAN
So you're a CPT, certified personal trainer. I'm impressed.

DAVID
Oh, I do that just to supplement my income. I'm really an actor.

JONATHAN
(flatly)
Oh.

DAVID
(to audience)
"Oh." I guess he doesn't care for actors. --
(to Jonathan)
What about you? What do you do?

JONATHAN
I'm a CPA.

DAVID
(to Jonathan)
Oh. A certified public accountant.

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

Steady job, guaranteed income – not like acting. He's the kind of man my mother would like for me.

(back to Jonathan)

You like being a CPA?

JONATHAN

It can be stressful, but it's what I'm good at. Besides, accounting is all I know...
Whereabouts do you live?

DAVID

Way over there – way, way west -- all the way, practically into the Hudson River.

JONATHAN

Mind if I ask you if you live alone? ... I'm sorry; I shouldn't've asked that -- really none of my business. Don't answer if you don't want to.

DAVID

(to audience)

I'm always asked that question, but he sure didn't waste time asking it.

(back to Jonathan)

No. No, I don't live alone.

JONATHAN

Ah, you have a boyfriend. Well, I'm not surprised – a good-looking guy like you.

DAVID

No. No boyfriend. I have two roommates. Also actors.

JONATHAN

I see.

DAVID

(to audience)

Three struggling actors sharing a railroad flat.

JONATHAN

Well, here we are.

DAVID

This is where you live? Wow, that's some building. Art Deco, right? It's huge!

JONATHAN

A little over 400 apartments.

DAVID

(to audience)

A uniformed doorman wearing white gloves greeted us.

MANUEL

Good morning, Mr. Wells, did you have a nice workout?

JONATHAN

Yes, Manuel. Thanks for asking.

DAVID

(to audience)

Inside the lobby, we were greeted by a concierge.

ANGEL

Welcome home, Mr. Wells.

JONATHAN

Thank you, Angel.

CARLOS

(suddenly appearing)

Mr. Wells, I have a package for you in the mailroom.

JONATHAN

(to David)

Probably the Dostoevsky novel I've been waiting for. In a new, acclaimed translation.

(turning to Carlos)

Thank you, Carlos. I'll ...I'll pick it up later.

CARLOS

(sizing up David)

Not a problem. Have a good day, sir.

(He smiles professionally.)

(The three staff members exit, chatting in Spanish.)

DAVID

(to audience)

So this is what they call a white-glove building. In the softly lit elevator, Jonathan kept smiling at me; all the way up to the 38th floor ... Notice his lower lip is beginning to twitch. That means he wants me bad. This happens to me all the time.

(Gradually the stage is bathed in bright sunlight.)

JONATHAN

Well, here we are. Welcome to my home, David.

DAVID

Wow, this is some living-room. It's huge. It must be 30 by 40.

JONATHAN

Not quite.

DAVID

You have so many pictures; it's like being in a museum. These are all woodcuts, right?

JONATHAN

Some. Some are lithographs. Over here, are the oil paintings, away from the sunlight. Sunlight must never touch an oil painting, or the colors will fade. The sun can be cruel.

(A photograph of Rockwell Kent's famous lithograph *Prometheus Unchained* is projected onto the back wall.)

DAVID

(referring to the lithograph)

Wow, get a load of this guy. He's hot. Someone you know?

JONATHAN

It's *Prometheus Unchained*. Once chained to a rock, he's now breaking his chains, setting himself free. *Free at last!* It's by Rockwell Kent. Are you familiar with Rockwell Kent?

DAVID

I'm familiar with Aeschylus's play *Prometheus Bound*. That's a powerful picture.

(The lithograph fades away.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

And this – this is a great dining alcove. And a windowed kitchen! So much counter space. Miele appliances. I bet you're a gourmet chef.

JONATHAN

I don't like to brag, but I am.

DAVID

That reminds me, where's that homemade cranberry juice you promised me?

JONATHAN

Oh, sorry, I forgot. How silly of me to forget. Coming right up.
(He exits.)

DAVID

(looking around)

This is huge for a one-bedroom apartment.

JONATHAN

(offstage)

Actually, it's a two-bedroom. Two bedrooms, two baths.

DAVID

Oh, you live with someone? A boyfriend maybe?

JONATHAN

(returning with two glasses of cranberry juice)

No, no such luck. I live alone. I've always lived alone.

DAVID

(to audience)

"I've always lived alone." His voice cracked when he said that. Did you notice?

JONATHAN

I know it's awfully big for one person, but I got a good deal on it. The previous owners were getting divorced -- and boy! were they eager to sell. Cheers.

DAVID

Cheers. Hmm-mm, this is delicious. I never had homemade cranberry juice before. Sure beats the kind you buy at a supermarket ... And a panoramic view of Central Park. Central Park in the spring... You have a million dollar view.

(to audience)

My apartment looks out onto an airshaft. A very narrow airshaft.

(Suddenly Jonathan kisses David on the mouth. No reaction from David. Jonathan, letting go of David, is embarrassed.)

JONATHAN

I'm sorry. I ... I don't know what came over me. Please accept my apologies.

DAVID

(to audience, while looking at Jonathan)

I looked into his eyes. I could tell he was awfully lonely. He couldn't take his eyes off me. My God, it's like he's falling in love with me. No, no, no, no, he can't be!!

(to Jonathan)

It's getting late, I better go. I have an audition at eleven.

(to audience)

I didn't have an audition.

JONATHAN

(awkwardly)

Maybe ... maybe we'll run into each other again at the Y. Meanwhile, I'll make sure to do those exercises...

DAVID

Tell you what. I'm in a show right now. Why don't you come see it? It's called *Superman Takes On The Republican Party*. I play Superman. It's a farce, but it's relevant.

JONATHAN

Sure. I'd like to. W-when?

DAVID

Tonight?

JONATHAN

Tonight, I can't; I have to work late. It's tax season. Gee, I'm sorry.

DAVID

What about tomorrow night? Saturday. You don't work Saturday nights, do you?

JONATHAN

Tomorrow night's fine. Where is this show?

DAVID

Well, don't expect Broadway or even off-Broadway. It's off-off-Broadway. Way off. Here I have a flyer...somewhere.

(He rummages through his backpack, takes out a flyer)

This is the address.

JONATHAN

659 West 22nd Street. That's practically in New Jersey.

DAVID

It's on the 4th floor. The theater is in an office building, right next to a parking lot. You can't miss it.

JONATHAN

They have theaters in office buildings?

DAVID

Off-off-off-Broadway, it happens. It's at 8. I'll leave a ticket in your name at the box office. Well, thanks for the homemade cranberry juice. Really great. See you tomorrow after the show.

JONATHAN

I can prepare a little snack for us afterwards, should you care to come back.

DAVID

That'd be cool. Thanks.

(He bumps fists with Jonathan.)

JONATHAN

(with emotion)

See you tomorrow night ... David.

DAVID

Don't tense up. It's bad for your back ... Relax.

(David runs offstage. BLACKOUT)

(The following night. A theater poster is projected onto the back wall showing David, bare-chested, wearing a flying Superman cape. The poster reads *David Sinclair is Superman in "Superman Takes On the Republican Party."* We hear an unseen audience in a very small theater roaring with laughter.)

(A LIGHT picks up Jonathan sitting in the theater where David is performing. The audience's laughter builds to a crescendo, but Jonathan never laughs. He manages a few smiles, and that's it. Finally, the unseen audience bursts into wild applause, whistles, bravos, etc., as David, bare-chested, wearing a Superman cape, takes a curtain call. Jonathan, not understanding the audience's enthusiastic response, applauds and stands through the obligatory standing ovation. David keeps bowing, thanking the audience, false humility written all over his face. The applause subsides. David runs to Jonathan.)

JONATHAN

Congratulations. You were terrific. And very funny.

DAVID

How can you say I was funny? I took a few peeks at you -- you didn't laugh *once*.

JONATHAN

That's just me, I'm not a laugher. Honest, you were funny.

DAVID

Did you see who was in the front row?

JONATHAN

Yes, Bill and Hillary. Who could miss them.

(David's dressing-room. LUCY, a pert teenager, enters and takes a towel out of the armoire. During David's speech, she starts toweling his chest.)

DAVID

I couldn't believe it. They never come to small theaters like this; they go to Broadway. Did you see their reactions when Trump shouted 'It's a witch hunt, it's a witch hunt!' and I pushed him into the witches cauldron? They couldn't stop laughing. They ate it up!

JONATHAN

I guess they felt validated. You better put on a shirt, you'll catch cold.

(Lucy, wishing Jonathan would leave, takes a shirt out of the armoire, and helps David into it.)

DAVID

Thanks. Jonathan, meet Lucy, the producer's daughter and our little stage manager.

LUCY

(flatly)

Hello.

(She starts buttoning up David's shirt.)

JONATHAN

Glad to meet you, Lucy.

DAVID

Lucy, I can button my own shirt, thank you.

(Lucy, annoyed, just stands there while David buttons his shirt.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

See you tomorrow, Lucy. Thank you and goodnight.

LUCY

(sadly)

'Night, David.

JONATHAN

Goodnight, Lucy.

(Lucy, ignoring Jonathan, exits.)

JONATHAN (Cont'd)

That kid has a crush on you.

DAVID

I know. I can't get away from her.

(to audience)

We hopped into a cab, and flew to his apartment.

(The LIGHTING changes. Jonathan's apartment. Intimate lighting. David speaks to the audience, while Jonathan refills wine glasses.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

Jonathan had prepared -- not a snack -- but a sumptuous midnight supper. A beautiful shrimp salad with a homemade green mayonnaise made with chives and watercress; a side of asparagus, very al dente, of course. A few sprigs of fresh mint to cleanse our palate. For dessert, crème brûlée. Homemade, of course.

(turning to Jonathan)

This was an excellent supper, Jonathan. You *are* a gourmet chef.

JONATHAN

Thank you. Cheers. Tell me, David, where do you come from?

DAVID

Milwaukee. Cheers. And you?

JONATHAN

...Old Greenwich, Connecticut. I assume your parents are still alive.

DAVID

Oh, yeah. Dad's an environmentalist and Mom's a psychologist. I'm an only child. I'm very fortunate: they paid for my education at Juilliard. But, after I graduated, I insisted on being on my own. What about you?

JONATHAN

Both my parents are dead, I'm sorry to say. Yes, they died in a car crash. I was sixteen when it happened. I'm also an only child. I have no family.

DAVID

That's awful. I can't imagine losing my parents like that. I'm sorry.

JONATHAN

I'm curious. When you're onstage, do you always take off your shirt?

DAVID

Yeah. And I'm tired of it! I didn't want to take off my shirt in this show. But the producer insisted. Critics spend more time reviewing my muscles than they do my acting. As a Juilliard graduate, I want to be taken seriously. I made about twenty movies – shorts mostly and a few low-budget independent features. No matter what I'm in, I'm always asked to take off my shirt. Sometimes my pants. But I won't do full frontal nudity. There I draw the line. Onstage, onscreen, my private parts remain private.

JONATHAN

I'm glad to hear that. Like some more wine?

DAVID

No thanks, I already had three glasses. Say, you're not trying to get me drunk, are you?

JONATHAN

Not drunk. Just mellow.

DAVID

(to audience)

The midnight supper over, I helped him clear away the dishes, tidy up, when all of a sudden he fell to his knees, and rubbed his face into my crotch. With great intensity, as you can see.

JONATHAN

(looking up at David)

It's O.K. You don't have to do me. Just let me do you. .

(As Jonathan starts unzipping David's fly, David grabs him by the shoulders and pulls him up to his feet. Jonathan doesn't know what to say.)

JONATHAN (Cont'd)

I'm sorry. David, I, I ... I didn't mean to offend you. If you want to leave, I'll understand perfectly.

DAVID

Jonathan, sex with me is a two-way street. I like to reciprocate. I wouldn't be here if I didn't want you.

(Jonathan, pleasantly surprised, slowly breaks into a smile.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

What do you say we adjourn to the bedroom?

(to audience)

Which we did. We made love. All night long. Nonstop.

(They tear their shirts off each other.)

DAVID (cont'd)

(to audience)

He was ravenous. So was I. He was a nipple enthusiast, as you can see. Over the next few weeks, we devoured each other. We didn't play specific roles, like who's the top and who's the bottom. Sometimes I'd fall asleep inside him; sometimes he'd fall asleep inside me. Our lovemaking was never predictable. He was the most passionate sex partner I ever had.

(gazing at the cremation urn)

Now he's nothing but a heap of ashes.

(turning to Jonathan)

Why, Jonathan, why did you hang yourself?! ... Why?

(Jonathan doesn't answer and exits slowly. The LIGHTING changes. The *Superman* theater poster is projected onto the back wall again. David is at the theater in his dressing room.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

I went on playing Superman for a few more weekends. Then one night after the show, the producer came up to me.

(The Producer enters with Lucy. She rubs David down with a towel.)

PRODUCER

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, David, but I'm afraid this is your last show. I have to let you go.

DAVID

What are you talking about? I have two more weekends to go.

PRODUCER

I'm sorry, but I have to replace you.

DAVID

Replace me? Why?! I'm good! I got raves from both The Advocate and Gay City News! Say, what's going on here?

LUCY

You can't replace him, Dad. You do that, I quit!

PRODUCER

It has nothing to do with your performance, David. But Superman is no longer considered relevant. Superwoman has taken over. It's all about women now. Women in power! I'm sorry, but I have to replace you with an actress; I mean a female actor. I don't like doing it, but lately we've been playing to a lot of empty seats.

(While the Producer speaks, Lucy helps David into his shirt.)

PRODUCER (Cont'd)

I'm sorry, kid, but I have to sell tickets.

LUCY

I'm gonna miss you, David.

(She takes a selfie of herself with David. In a daze, he can't believe what's happening to him.)

LUCY (Cont'd)

Let me know when you're on Broadway, will you? I'll go see you.

PRODUCER

In the end, theater is all about the box office...I have to pay rent. I'm sorry.

(Lucy tearfully waves goodbye to David, and exits with Producer. David furiously punches the back wall, and the poster fades away. The LIGHTING changes to reveal Jonathan in his apartment.)

DAVID

Superman becomes Superwoman. What do you think of that?!

JONATHAN

Never mind. You'll get another show. A better show. One that's worthy of your talent.

DAVID

(to audience)

Jonathan was very supportive. Thanks to him, I soon got over it. And with tax season over, I saw more of him, and spent many nights at his apartment. Then one night, while I was asleep, something strange and unexpected happened. I heard him cry. That woke me up.

(going to Jonathan)

He was in the living-room watching TV.

(A series of photographs of a TEENAGE GIRL with a battered face is projected in quick succession onto the back wall. Jonathan, appalled, is in tears.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Jonathan, what is it?

(Jonathan points at the TV.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

God, who is she? What happened to her?

(A photo shows the Girl with her mouth wide open, ready to scream.)

JONATHAN

She was beaten by her parents, repeatedly. Look at her. She wants to scream ... She can't. The scream is stuck in her throat. She can't let it out!

DAVID

Oh, that's enough!

(He snatches the remote from Jonathan.)

JONATHAN

Don't turn it off.

DAVID

(snaps off TV; the images fade away.)

Who wants to see a documentary about abused kids at three o'clock in the morning?

JONATHAN

How can any parent do that to their own child? Is that why they brought her into the world – to beat her up?!

DAVID

Come back to bed.

JONATHAN

That poor kid. What will she be like when she grows up?

DAVID

(to audience)

Trying to calm him down wasn't easy. He finally cried himself to sleep. I never saw him like this before. I know what he saw on TV was horrible. But he was so disturbed by it. It was almost like he knew that girl personally.

(after a beat)

Jonathan was not always gloomy. True, he never laughed, but he could be playful when he wanted to.

(The LIGHTING changes from night to bright sunny day. At the YMCA, Jonathan is doing some exercises. David is coaching him.)

JONATHAN

(in a good mood)

You know, David, we've been seeing each other now for what? Three months? And I don't know how old you are.

DAVID

You saw my résumé. My age range is 25 to 35.

JONATHAN

Age range. Seriously, how old are you?

DAVID

25 to 35.

JONATHAN

How old?

DAVID

You never told me how old you are.

JONATHAN

How old do you think I am?

DAVID

Well, you're older than me -- that much I know. You're probably older than you actually look. I'd say you are in your late thirties ... early forties.

JONATHAN

35 to 45 may be *my* age range, but if you look at my passport, you'll see that I am 54.

DAVID

54?! Get out of here!

JONATHAN

Please don't say I'm well-preserved. I hate it when people say that.

(David laughs.)

JONATHAN (Cont'd)

Seriously, how old are you?

DAVID

Stage secret. You'll never know. You can Google me, you can look me up on IMDB, you can follow me on Facebook; you'll never find out. We, actors, have to protect our image; especially when we're leading men. With character actors, age doesn't matter so much: character actors are always old. But as a leading man, I have to be ageless for as long as I can. You'll never know. Sorry.

JONATHAN

I know nothing about you. I never even saw where you live. I want to see your apartment.

DAVID

There's nothing to see. I told you, I live in a dump.

JONATHAN

I want to see it.

DAVID

No, you don't. It's a fifth-floor walkup. You'd be out of breath by the time we'd get to the third floor.

(They towel their faces, getting ready to leave the Y.)

JONATHAN

I want to see it now. Let's go.

DAVID

Now?!

JONATHAN

Now.

(They leave the exercise room.)

DAVID

(to audience)

Well, I couldn't keep everything about me a secret, so I took him to my humble abode.

(A tough, unkempt, teenage GIRL enters, hauling heavy garbage bags and dumping them on the stage.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

As we arrived, the super's daughter of our building was putting out the garbage. Why wasn't she in school, I don't know. I don't think she ever went to school.

GIRL

Eh, faggot! Don't forget, the rent's due tomorrow. Just because you're a fag, that don't mean you can fall behind in your rent --

JONATHAN

(overlapping)

Excuse me!! What did you call him? ... What did you just call him?!

DAVID

(glaring at her, overlapping)

Don't bother with her; she's homophobic, like her father!

JONATHAN

(overlapping; threatening her, but not physically)

What did you call him?!

GIRL

You heard me, cocksucker. – Go ahead, hit me! My old man's also a cop; he's right inside. Hit me and I'll call him. You wanna be charged with child abuse?... Hit me!!

(Jonathan, outraged, is shaken.)

GIRL (Cont'd)

All you fags oughta be locked up! Sentenced to life without parole!

(She spits and exits.)

JONATHAN

I'd hate to know what she'll be like when she's old enough to vote.

DAVID

I warned you, this is not a white-glove building.

(to audience)

Inside, as we were climbing the linoleum stairs, I kept hoping that my two roomies, Dennis and Tex, would be out. Dennis, also known as Blanche Dubois, is on the queenie side. And Tex, aka Pothead, is usually stoned by nine a.m.

(to Jonathan)

Well, here we are.

JONATHAN

What's that smell?

DAVID

Oh, that's the toilet over there.

JONATHAN

Your toilet is *outside* your apartment? -- In the *hallway*??

DAVID

All the toilets in our building are in the hallways. But it's private; see there's a padlock on the door. I must also warn you, our bathtub is in the kitchen. According to the Landmarks Preservation Commission, this is the oldest railroad flat in the city. It is landmarked and can never be torn down.

(to the audience)

As we entered the kitchen, Dennis, or Blanche Dubois, in his/her peignoir, was primping before a medicine chest mirror.

DENNIS

(imitating Vivien Leigh playing Blanche Dubois, to Jonathan)

Heavens, you startled me. Why, I didn't hear you come in. How do you do? I'm Blanche Dubois. It's French. It means white wood.

JONATHAN

(taken aback, shaking hands with Dennis)

Glad to meet you ... Blanche. Oh yes, Blanche Dubois: that's...oh, what's the name of that play?

DAVID

(annoyed with Dennis)

A Streetcar Named Desire!

DENNIS

Goodness, such a firm grip. I do so like a man with a firm grip. Shall we move away from the bathtub, and adjourn to the front parlor? We do have a front parlor, I believe.

DAVID

(to audience)

But just as we were about to move into the parlor, Tex came out of his room.

(TEX shuffles in, in his well-worn pajamas and bathrobe.)

TEX

Eh, man, what's goin' on?

DAVID

(most embarrassed, to audience)

"Eh, man, what's goin' on?" is how Tex greets everyone – including the pope and Queen Elizabeth, were he to meet them.

DAVID (Cont'd)
(turning to Jonathan)

Jonathan, I'd like you to meet my other roommate, Tex.

TEX
(grabbing Jonathan's hand and pumping it)
Man, we heard a lot about you, haven't we, Blanche?

DENNIS
Oh, yes. And it was all good. I should say "All laudatory." May we offer you some coffee, Jonathan, or perhaps... some cranberry juice, although our cranberry juice is not homemade, I'm afraid.

DAVID
That's enough, you two! Cut it out!!

JONATHAN
Much as I would like to stay, I'm sorry I can't; it's late; I must be at work. But I'm glad I finally got to meet you guys. I've been looking forward to this. Before I go, I'd like to use the restroom, if I may.

TEX
You'll find the high-tank, pull-chain toilet right outside --

JONATHAN
High tank, pull chain. Old world charm. That's a detail you forgot to mention, David.

TEX
(ceremoniously handing Jonathan the key.)
Here, man, the key to the kingdom. Good luck.

(David is beyond embarrassment. Jonathan exits.)

DAVID
You! And you! You behaved like total assholes!! You and your Blanche Dubois act. Get this straight, Dennis, when Tennessee Williams wrote that part, he wrote it for an actress. You'll never get to play Blanche Dubois!

DENNIS

(suddenly acting butch)

If Glenda Jackson could play *King Lear*, I can play Blanche Dubois.

DAVID

And you, must you always greet people in your Kmart pajamas?

TEX

(taking a gun out of his bathrobe pocket)

At least I didn't greet him with my gun.

(David sighs with exasperation! Tex puts gun back in pocket.)

TEX (Cont'd)

Look, David, we were just messin' around; having a little fun with your boyfriend; breakin' the ice, if you will. A little levity, man; please, it's only eight thirty in the morning. Haven't had my joint yet. -- Have a heart!

DENNIS

Tex, David has every right to be angry. We did not make a good first impression. We acted rather immaturely. We apologize, David, if we embarrassed you.

DAVID

You embarrassed yourselves!

TEX

Agreed. We went too far. Man, I'm sorry.

DENNIS

Look, when he comes back, we'll act normal, won't we, Tex?

TEX

Sure. We'll make amends.

DENNIS

Anyway, let me congratulate you. I like Jonathan. I can tell he's responsible, and he has a sense of refinement. He's like a gay Gregory Peck. And he's mad about you: the way he looks at you with those sad puppy eyes. That man will do anything for you – and I mean *anything*. Honey, you've got it made. Hang on to him.

TEX

Yeah, nice Armani suit. Ferragamo shoes. Hugo Boss necktie. Yeah, you hang on to him.

DAVID

(mellowing, laughs with them)

Oh, you guys are impossible.

(They all laugh. Suddenly, offstage, Jonathan lets out a scream.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

What the...!

(running out of the apartment.)

Jonathan, you OK?

(Jonathan comes out of the toilet, looking livid.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

What's the matter?

JONATHAN

Just as I was washing my hands, guess what I saw crawling out of the faucet?

DAVID

Don't tell me. A water bug.

JONATHAN

That long. I'm out of here. So are you. Let's leave -- *now!*

(He hands Tex the bathroom key.)

(Dennis and Tex exit.)

DAVID

(to audience)

Without saying goodbye to Dennis and Tex, we ran down the stairs and out of the building.

GIRL

Don't forget the rent tomorrow. Anal lover!

JONATHAN

Get this, you little runt! Mr. Sinclair won't be paying rent tomorrow, or next month, or any other month! Mr. Sinclair is moving out today!! Come on, we're out of here!

(The Girl gives them the finger as she exits howling with laughter.
The LIGHTING changes: David and Jonathan are now in the street.)

DAVID

What do you mean I'm moving out?

JONATHAN

You're moving in with me. You can't live there -- with those two goons.

DAVID

Dennis and Tex are not goons. Off-the-wall, maybe, but they're decent guys.

JONATHAN

I can't believe they're actors. They can't be. Who'd hire them?

DAVID

Dennis is in between jobs, like me. And Tex is touring New Jersey on weekends, doing children's theater.

JONATHAN

Playing what? The Big Bad Wolf?

DAVID

Playing Prince Charming in an acclaimed production of *Sleeping Beauty*. Look, Jonathan, I can't just walk out on them. We've been close friends ever since we performed together at Juilliard in a well-reviewed production of *The Three Queer Musketeers*. The apartment costs us thirty-three hundred bucks a month, and --

JONATHAN

How much?! What's your share?

DAVID

Eleven hundred. We split the rent three ways.

JONATHAN

Thirty-three hundred dollars a month for a toilet in the hallway and a bathtub in the kitchen? In New York City, wonders will never cease.

(He takes out a checkbook)

DAVID

What are you doing?

JONATHAN

I'm writing out a check to cover your rent for the next two months. Two months should give your pals enough time to find another roommate. As much as you value their friendship, David, you can't go on living there. You need a good, nurturing environment. I can provide that; they can't. I have plans for you. That little guest room in my apartment – *our* apartment – that'll be your study where you can learn your lines; do your vocal warmups; whatever it is you actors do. You need your own space. I know how much you want to succeed... And I want to help you.

DAVID

Why are you doing all this for me?

JONATHAN

Because ... I love you! In case you haven't noticed. I love you, David. There I've said it. Look, I'm running late. Just pack your bags, say your goodbyes.

(taking out cash)

Here, take a cab. See you tonight.

(moving away from him; hastily)

We'll have dinner out and celebrate. You can wear that nice jacket I bought you ...

(very emotional)

David, I'm alive when I'm with you.

(He runs out.)

DAVID

(to audience)

And he ... disappeared into the subway. I didn't go right back to my apartment. I was confused. I didn't know what to do. I liked Jonathan, but living with him? Full-time? I wasn't sure. I went to a diner nearby for coffee. I had to think things over. Everything was happening so fast. Too fast.

DAVID (Cont'd)

Jonathan is offering me great living conditions: a washer/dryer in the apartment. I won't have to schlepp to a laundromat anymore. Two full bathrooms; one for him, one for me. My very own toilet. And an unobstructed view of Central Park. I'll no longer have to stare out at an airshaft.

But ... living with Jonathan ... Am I ready? For that matter, am I ready to commit to anyone? I mean, Jonathan's great; he's awfully good to me. He treats me to the best restaurants; he buys me cashmere sweaters. You heard him: "David, I'm alive when I'm with you." He loves me so much. Too much! I love him, but never as much as he loves me. Do I love him or do I love his... apartment? Maybe that's the question. Well, I'll soon find out, won't I?

I went back to my place. I was glad Dennis and Tex were out. It made my moving out easier. No big emotional scene. I put Jonathan's check down on the kitchen table. I wrote a short note: "Dear Fellow Musketeers, I'm sorry, but I decided to move in with Jonathan. I'm sure you saw this coming. Here's a check to cover two months' rent. That should give you plenty of time to find a new roomie. Please don't think that this is the end of our friendship. We'll stay in touch. We'll always be the three queer musketeers. One for all, all for one! David, aka. D'Artagnan." I packed the few things I had, and left.

(The LIGHTING changes. Evening. Jonathan's apartment)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

From a tenement to a luxury Art Deco condo. It sounds too good to be true, doesn't it?

JONATHAN

(as he appears)

Welcome home, David. Let me show you what I have in mind for you. As I said, the guestroom will now be your study. Of course you'll need a desk; I'll order one for you. And a bookcase for...over...there. But let's keep the daybed. It's a Shaker bed. 1848.

DAVID

'Course you have to keep the bed for when you have a guest.

JONATHAN

I never have guests. I don't know anyone.

DAVID

Jonathan, you do so much for me. What do I do for you? Nothing

JONATHAN

David, your presence is all I require.

DAVID

Tell you what. You like cooking – you do the cooking. And I'll do the housecleaning.

JONATHAN

No need to. I have a cleaning woman for that.

DAVID

Forget her. I'll do the housecleaning. That'll be my contribution.

JONATHAN

(surprised and moved)

...That's very thoughtful of you. Thank you.

DAVID

(to audience)

And so on Saturday, we did the food shopping. And on Sunday morning, after we made love, I changed the bed and did the laundry, while he went to church. Jonathan was a good gay Catholic.

JONATHAN

I wish you'd come to church with me.

DAVID

Jonathan, you know I'm agnostic.

JONATHAN

Still, it'd be nice to have you at my side.

DAVID

You won't be lonely, you'll be with God. And while you're praying for my agnostic soul, I'll clean the bathrooms.

(Jonathan exits, looking sad. David then addresses the audience.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

And off he went to church while I stripped away the mildew in the bathrooms. In the afternoon, Jonathan started preparing all kinds of casserole dishes for the week: boeuf bourguignon; veal Marengo; cauliflower baked with rigatoni. He made everything from scratch. We ate like kings. Was our relationship perfect? It had its glitches. I quickly found out we didn't have all that much in common. For starters, although Jonathan was very supportive of my acting, he never attended the theater unless, of course, I was in a show.

(Jonathan enters, reading a very big novel.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(turning to Jonathan)

Jonathan, what is it you don't like about the theater?

JONATHAN

Oh, plays are always about conflicts. Same with movies. I hate conflicts.

DAVID

(to audience)

I don't know how he could hate conflicts, he was always reading Dostoevsky.

(Jonathan exits, still reading)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(still to audience)

As for music, he favored atonal, dissonant composers like Schoenberg and Stockhausen, while I favored melodic composers like Tchaikovsky and Rachmaninoff. In general, though, our relationship was good. We disagreed from time to time, but we never really quarreled. However, one day, the stability of our relationship was put to the test when my agent, Nina Nelson, summoned me to her office.

(The LIGHTING changes. Nina Nelson's office. NINA, about 80, is a warmhearted, effusive talent agent.)

NINA

David! Darling! Have I got news for you! Sit down. It's what you and I have been waiting for. Guess what, I have a real acting job for you – a *paying job!*

DAVID

(tentative but hopeful)

Oh ... Might it be... Broadway?

NINA

No, sweetheart, we're not there yet.

DAVID

Off-Broadway?

NINA

Try Indianapolis, Indiana.

DAVID

Indiana?! I can't go there! That's Mike Pence country!

NINA

It's also Pete Buttigieg country. And you're going to play at the Indiana Repertory Theater for six weeks. Six *paying* weeks! I'm finally gonna make money off you.

DAVID

Six weeks in Indiana?! Doing what? A revival of *Getting Gertie's Garter*?

NINA

Doing Tennessee Williams's *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

DAVID

Oh, no. They want me to play Chance Wayne. A gigolo. I hate that play. I hate that character. If they're going to do Tennessee Williams, why can't they revive *The Glass Menagerie*? It's a much better play. I always wanted to play Tom.

NINA

Glass Menagerie may be a masterpiece, but how many times do we have to sit through it? They never stop reviving that play. You'd think that's all Williams ever wrote.

DAVID

How did you get me into this? Nobody knows me in Indianapolis.

NINA

Well, apparently, one of the big wheels at IRT saw you in *Superman*, and he was quite impressed.

DAVID

Oh, because of my chest. They like my chest. And Chance Wayne is bare-chested, most of the play. Beefcake, that's what they're after. Well, I'm sick and tired of being known as Mr. Muscles. I won't do it.

NINA

Yes, you will. If it was good enough for Paul Newman, it's good enough for you!

DAVID

Can't you get me something on Broadway? Do I have to schlepp to Indiana?

NINA

Darling, I can't get you on Broadway till you have your Equity card. Schlepp to Indiana, and you'll get your Equity card. Then I might be able to --

DAVID

(overlapping)

My Equity card? ... My Equity -- !! Well, why didn't you say so in the first place --?

NINA

You didn't let me; you kept interrupting --

DAVID

My Equity card! At last! On, Nina, I could kiss you!

NINA

You may. But only on the cheeks. No hanky-panky.

DAVID

(He does so.)

Well, I guess I'm gonna have to like that play -- and the character. Chance Wayne, a gigolo, a ne'er-do-well. A loser! Ugh!

NINA

You don't have to make him a loser. Go for the subtext. When you do, you might find some redeeming quality in the character. I'm not worried – you will. You'll have those discriminating Hoosiers eating out of your hand.

(Her phone rings.)

NINA (Cont'f)

(answering phone; professional charm)

LGBTQ Talent Agency, Nina Nelson speaking, how may I help you?

(flatly)

Oh, hello, Schlomo.

(back to David)

My husband. Talk to you later. Meanwhile reread the play -- *and try liking it!*

(They blow kisses at each other. Nina is out of sight.)

DAVID

(to audience)

That night, as Jonathan and I were finishing dinner, I mustered up the courage to announce I was going to Indianapolis to play in –

JONATHAN

Indianapolis, Indiana? Are you out of your mind? That's Mike Pence country.

DAVID

It's also Pete Buttigieg country. Jonathan, I have to go, I'm getting my Equity card! Actors' Equity!!

JONATHAN

... How long will you be gone?

DAVID

Oh, five, six weeks.

JONATHAN

Six weeks?! ... What about me? What will I do while you're gone?

DAVID

I guess you'll do whatever it is you did before you met me.

JONATHAN

I didn't have a life before I met you. You know that.

DAVID

Jonathan, my love, it's only six weeks.

JONATHAN

What about my exercises? You won't be here to coach me. I'll be lost.

DAVID

You don't need me for that anymore. You'll do fine by yourself.

JONATHAN

You'll be surrounded by actors, most of them gay, I'm sure ... They'll be hitting on you.

DAVID

Don't you trust me? Just make sure *you* behave.

JONATHAN

You don't have to worry about me. Nobody wants me.

DAVID

Oh, I've seen guys cruise you in the locker room.

JONATHAN

They cruise *you*. Everybody does! Everybody wants your ass!

DAVID

Well, I can't help that.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry. I shouldn't've said that. That was vulgar, most vulgar. I apologize. But, David, New York's your home. Can't you get a job here? What's wrong with Broadway or even off-Broadway?

DAVID

I have to get my Equity card, first. To be a professional actor, one has to belong to the Equity. I can't do showcase productions in office buildings for the rest of my life ... Don't you *want* me to succeed? I thought you did.

JONATHAN

Of course I want you to succeed. It's just that I'm so used to seeing you when I come home from work. You're always here to greet me. You pay attention to me. I never had that before.

DAVID

We'll talk on the phone, we'll text each other.

(Jonathan moves away.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Jonathan, I'll only be gone six weeks.

(to audience, as Jonathan wanders offstage.)

For the first time, I realized how insecure Jonathan was. I didn't know anyone could be so insecure.

(The LIGHTING changes as David is now in his dressing room in Indianapolis. A theater poster of *Sweet Bird of Youth* is projected onto the back wall.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(still to audience)

My experience in Indianapolis turned out to be better than I thought it would. The actors I worked with were all very professional; no one, not even the leading lady, hit on me. It was a lot of hard work. But it paid off. We all got excellent reviews. I sure did. Not too much mention was made of my physique, thank God. The critics recognized my talent. The Indianapolis Star raved: "Mr. Sinclair is electrifying. You dislike the character he plays, yet you can't help but feel sorry for him. This kind of duality elevates the play to heights only a superior actor, like Mr. Sinclair, can achieve." The Indianapolis Recorder enthused: "Mr. Sinclair makes Williams's poetical dialogue soar. With his strong baritone voice, he caresses every word." Here's my favorite from the Indianapolis News: "Newcomer David Sinclair is an actor to watch. Let us hope the theater doesn't lose him to television." I emailed that to Nina. "Go for it, Nina! Sell me to TV! You know I want my own series!"

Something unexpected and really nice happened, too, when, on closing night, after the show, there was a knock on my dressing room door.

DAVID

Come in.

(David's parents, BOB and FRAN, breeze in.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Mom! Dad! This is a surprise! You didn't tell me you were coming...You're the best!

(Much hugging and kissing)

BOB

Son, you were terrific. Congratulations!

FRAN

You were so believable as a hetero gigolo. Wasn't he, Bob?

BOB

Those women out there couldn't get enough of you; they were twitching in their seats.

FRAN

Oh, Bob, let's not exaggerate.

BOB

It's true. As for the gays, well, they couldn't contain themselves; they went wild. Son, you had the whole audience under your spell. We're mighty proud of you.

FRAN

You'll go far, David, this is just the beginning. Next year, Broadway. It'll happen. I can feel it! Our son David, the star.

(They laugh. There is a knock at the door.)

DAVID

Come in.

(Jonathan enters with a small, gift-wrapped package.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Jonathan!

(to his parents)

I don't believe it! My boyfriend! Another nice surprise!

(He runs into Jonathan's arms, and embraces him.)

BOB & FRAN
(melting with joy, to each other)

Aah!

JONATHAN
Congratulations. You stole the show. God, it's good to see you. Six weeks without you, I thought I'd die. Never again. No more separations. No more separations.

DAVID
Mom, Dad, you've met Jonathan on Skype. Well, here he is now -- live, in person!

JONATHAN
(shaking hands with Fran and Bob)
Fran, Bob, it's so good to finally be with you in the same room.

FRAN
It sure is. You two make such a handsome couple, don't they, Bob?

BOB
They do indeed. You know, Jonathan, you may not know this, but you are David's first serious boyfriend.

JONATHAN
(handing David the package)
Actually, he's also my first serious boyfriend. Here, love. A little something for you.

DAVID
Hope it's nothing extravagant. It better not be.
(He opens the package, takes out a luxury watch.)
I knew it. It is extravagant. Wow, Jonathan ... You must've spent a fortune.

JONATHAN
(as he puts watch around David's wrist)
You're worth it.

DAVID
It's beautiful. Thank you.

BOB
That watch...looks like a Patek Philippe. Is it?

(Jonathan, awkward, nods yes.)

FRAN

Oh my. A Patek Philippe.

(Bob and Fran exchange glances. This is not lost on David. David embraces Jonathan.)

(The LIGHTING changes. Enter a WAITER carrying a tray with four glasses of wine. They take their glasses. Waiter will exit.)

DAVID

(then turning to audience)

Afterwards, we went out to a wine bar to celebrate my success. My parents liked Jonathan. But somehow I could sense that they also had some reservations about him. I took Dad aside.

(to Bob)

Well, Dad, what do you think of him?

BOB

I like him. He's a decent guy. He's madly in love with you; that's obvious.

DAVID

You're holding back on me.

BOB

Well...he's awfully intense. When he said to you: "Six weeks without you, I thought I'd die. Never again. No more separations." That's pretty intense, even for a gay man, isn't it?

DAVID

Well, Jonathan's the romantic type...

BOB

That's some watch. Does he always give you such expensive gifts?

DAVID

(awkward, not lying very well)

Sometimes.

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

Dad didn't say more. He went back to the bar to join Jonathan, I took Mom aside. Mom's a psychologist: she might have more to say about Jonathan than Dad did.

(to Fran)

So what do you think of him?

FRAN

My first impression? To be honest, he strikes me as being a very sad and lonely man. Of course I couldn't pick up on that when we spoke on Skype. Let me ask you. At some point in his life, was he...was he badly hurt? Do you know?

DAVID

I told you, his parents died in a car accident when he was in his teens. He doesn't like talking about it.

FRAN

(observing Jonathan while he's talking with Bob)

Does he ever laugh?

DAVID

...No...No

BOB

(from afar; waving at Fran)

Fran, they're gonna turn on the music in a few minutes; we can dance if you like.

FRAN

Great!

(back to David)

David, a man who never laughs has to be handled with great sensitivity. Be gentle with him.

(Waiter returns to collect the empty glasses.)

DAVID

I'll remember. Thanks, Mom.

(Dance music starts playing. Bob comes over to Fran, and invites her to dance. They're not great dancers, but they have fun. The music

drowns the dialogue, but we can guess what the characters are saying. Sustain. David asks Jonathan to dance with him. Jonathan refuses. So David joins his parents, and they dance, having a good time. They motion to Jonathan to join them. But Jonathan, lost, declines with a wave of the hand. Sustain, as Jonathan sadly observes the happy trio. Finally, as the music ends, BLACKOUT)

(DAYLIGHT. Jonathan and David are on a plane, sitting in their seats. An AIRLINE STEWARD enters.)

AIRLINE STEWARD

Please fasten your seat belts, we're about to take off.

(He exits.)

JONATHAN

You're very lucky to have such open-minded parents. They're not the least bit homophobic. Everyone – gay or straight -- should have parents like that.

DAVID

Yes. I am lucky.

JONATHAN

They're so much in love. And so are we!

DAVID

The watch you gave me is beautiful; but it's way too expensive.

JONATHAN

What do you say we get married?

DAVID

(laughing)

You're proposing to me now on a plane? Shouldn't we discuss this at home, in private?

JONATHAN

What's there to discuss -- we're in love, like your parents.

DAVID

Jonathan, people can hear you.

(Airline Steward returns, all smiles.)

STEWARD

Would the gentlemen care for a cocktail before lunch? Glass of wine? Coffee? Soda?

JONATHAN

I'll have a tomato juice.

DAVID

I'll have a ...whiskey sour.

JONATHAN

Whiskey sour? Don't you think it's a little early in the day for a --?

(to Steward, smiling)

The gentleman will also have a tomato juice.

DAVID

(to Steward, assertively)

The gentleman will have a whiskey sour, thank you.

(The Steward smiles knowingly at David, and exits.)

JONATHAN

David, a whiskey sour at 11 AM is not a good idea. Oh, please don't sulk. All I want is what's best for you. You know that.

DAVID

How often do I have a drink in the middle of the day? Never. Jonathan, I don't like to be told what I should or shouldn't do. Do not control me -- alright?

JONATHAN

I'm sorry. I wasn't aware I was controlling you. Why, that's the last thing I would want to do... I'm sorry. Of course, you can have a whiskey sour.

(LIGHTS go down on Jonathan, but remain on David.)

DAVID

(to audience)

I was tense: the show was over; again I had to face unemployment. There was no need for me to feel insecure because a few months later, Nina got a call from The Public

DAVID (Cont'd)

Theater. They wanted to revive *Romeo and Juliet* with two well-known TV stars for the leads. Somebody from the Public saw me in *Sweet Bird*, and recommended me for the part of Mercutio. I auditioned and I got the part! This time, I not only liked the play, I also liked my character. My off-Broadway debut. Could this be my breakthrough performance? God, I hope so.

(A LIGHT picks up Jonathan. The men are in their apartment. David, full of bravado, grabs a sword, and starts fencing with an imaginary opponent. He ends up chasing Jonathan playfully around the room. Jonathan, not amused, tries running away from him, but to no avail.)

JONATHAN

Stop! ...Will you please stop!

DAVID

(stops chasing Jonathan)

You're no fun at all, Jonathan. You can't have a good time, can you? You never laugh!

JONATHAN

That's OK – you never cry. That makes us even.

DAVID

You're right, I don't cry. Frankly, I don't see much point in crying.

JONATHAN

Anyway, I'm glad you won't be out of town, this time. You'll come home after each performance. No more separations. OK, Mercutio, let's run over your lines.

(picks up a a copy of *Romeo and Juliet*)

So you've been stabbed in front of Romeo, and you scream!

(David/Mercutio, wounded, lets out a painful cry. His body contorted with pain, he lets his sword slip out of his hand as he sinks gracefully to the floor.)

DAVID/MERCUTIO

"I am hurt.

A plague o' both houses! I am sped.

Is he gone and hath nothing?"

JONATHAN/BENVOLIO

“What, are thou hurt?”

DAVID/MERCUTIO

“Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch. Marry, ‘tis enough.
Where is my page? – Go, villain, fetch a surgeon.” Oh, what’s the next line?

JONATHAN

The page exits, then Romeo says: “Courage, man, the hurt cannot be much.”

DAVID

Right.

(as Mercutio, in excruciating pain)

“No, ‘tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but ‘tis enough. ‘Twill serve. Ask for me tomorrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world. A plague o’ both your houses! Zounds, a dog, a rat, a mouse, a cat, to scratch a man to death! A braggart, a rogue, a villain that fights by the book of arithmetic! Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm.”

JONATHAN

Romeo says: “I thought all for the best.”

DAVID/MERCUTIO

“Help me into some house, Benvolio,
Or I shall faint. A plague o’ both your houses!
They have made worms’ meat of me.
I have it, and soundly, too. Your houses!”

JONATHAN

Then you die.

DAVID

Not quite yet.

(David/Mercutio, before dying, tries to sit up, grabs Jonathan/Romeo by the lapels, and kisses him passionately. He collapses and dies.)

JONATHAN

(consulting the script)

Now wait a minute. Shakespeare doesn't say anything about Mercutio kissing Romeo before he dies.

DAVID

Shakespeare won't mind.

(to audience)

And on opening night, I did kiss Romeo fully on the mouth before I died. As I did, I could hear a collective orgasmic gasp rise from the audience, followed by thunderous applause. I stopped the show; I was that good. Most important, the critics thought I was more than just a heartthrob. They praised my delivery: how I made Shakespeare's intricate language sound conversational. And they went wild over my body language. "Mr. Sinclair moves like a wounded panther."

(executing "a few wounded panther movements")

That's from The New York Times. The critics, though, didn't care much for the two TV stars who played the leads. I won't tell you who they were: I don't like to speak ill of my fellow actors; but, it's true, they were *awful*. Even though I had a small part, I was the star of the show. And I went on to win the Obie Award for Distinguished Performance by an Actor.

(Some applause from backstage. David, with false humility written all over his face, makes a phony gesture of 'Oh, please stop.')

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

Again, my parents flew in to attend my last performance. They were ecstatic. Jonathan saw more than one show, and cried every time I died. I was interviewed all over the place. I even landed on the cover of OUT Magazine.

(A photo of the magazine cover is projected onto the back wall.)

JONATHAN

(brandishing the magazine)

I am not happy with this!

DAVID

Why – what's wrong with it?

JONATHAN

You promised you'd never do full frontal nudity.

DAVID

What nudity? I don't see any nudity. I'm wearing a jockstrap.

JONATHAN

Your pubic hair is showing, darling. Nice curls!

DAVID

You can't see my virile member. It's fully encased. Look again!

JONATHAN

It's indecent, and you know it. What would your parents say if they saw this?

DAVID

They've already seen it -- online. They're OK with it. They're not prudes. They also like the interview I gave. Very life-affirming, they thought. Look, I didn't mention your name in the interview. I knew you wouldn't like it if I did. I always respect your privacy.

JONATHAN

I still think it's cheap. It's tawdry. It's beneath you. Don't ever pose like that again!

DAVID

I will if I want to. I know what's best for my career. Stop telling me what I should or shouldn't do! I told you before: I don't like being controlled!

(Jonathan is lost.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Are you sure you still want to marry me?

JONATHAN

Of course I do. You know I can't exist without you. We'll be together till death do us part!

(He storms out.)

DAVID

(to audience)

Till death do us part. That sounds like a very long time. A few days later, I went to see Nina. I needed advice. And Nina was always free with her advice.

NINA

(entering)

You don't look too happy, bubula. What is it?

DAVID

I'm not convinced that Jonathan is the right husband for me.

NINA

We all think that way before we get married. But it's like having first night nerves, it'll pass.

DAVID

He controls me! Always tells me what I should or shouldn't do. This morning, he flew into a rage when he saw my picture on the cover of OUT Magazine. He thinks it's indecent. He told me – *ordered* me never to pose like that again! He's a control freak!

NINA

I'm sorry to hear that. Have you told him?

DAVID

Yeah. And each time he apologizes. He promises me he won't do it again. To make amends, he buys me cashmere sweaters. You should see the collection I have.

NINA

...Let me ask you: In your relationship, is one of you the lover and the other the beloved?

DAVID

(thinks this over, then awkwardly)

Well ... He is the provider. I guess that makes him the lover. And I accept whatever he gives me. I suppose I'm the beloved. I never give him anything. I'd like to. But he never lets me. Why do you ask? Is that how it works with you and Schlomo? One's the lover, the other's the beloved?

NINA

Schlomo's gay, I'm a lesbian. We're in a lavender marriage. So there never was any real grand passion between us. We married for friendship and mutual respect. We don't go for big-time emotionalism. Emotionalism works fine onstage; at home, it must be *suppressed*. Even if Jonathan holds the purse strings, why don't you two quit the role-playing game of lover and beloved, and try to be *equals*? Schlomo and I have been equals for 57 years. Trust me, equality works. Try it.

DAVID

Nina bubula, you've opened my eyes. I think I know what I have to do. You're more than an agent, you're a pal. Thanks.

(He chucks Nina under the chin. As she exits, Jonathan enters.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Jonathan, I made up my mind. I will marry you.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry I lost my temper earlier. I promise I'll never ever try to control you again.

DAVID

I'll marry you but under one condition.

JONATHAN

(nervously)

... What?

DAVID

That you let me pay for the wedding reception.

JONATHAN

I can't let you do that. A reception at the Boathouse in Central Park – that'll run into money.

DAVID

The Boathouse I can't afford. But if we hold the reception right here in our apartment, I can afford a caterer, a bartender. And a harpist.

JONATHAN

David, I don't mind paying for the reception --

DAVID

You always pay for everything. That has to change. I made good money on my last show. With the reviews I got and an Obie award, I'm bound to get another show soon. Let me share some of the expenses. You decided on Copenhagen as our honeymoon destination, and you're paying for it. Let me decide on the location of our wedding reception, and let me pay for it.

JONATHAN

David, I don't mind paying for everything.

DAVID

Well, I mind. I won't be a trophy husband.

JONATHAN

What's wrong with that?

DAVID

I'm tired of always taking from you and never giving you anything. I'd prefer it if we were *equals*. Marriage should be based on equality ... Shouldn't it?

JONATHAN

Yes, of course. I ... I just didn't know you cared that much about me.

DAVID

I must care. If I didn't, I wouldn't be marrying you, would I? By being equals, I think we can avoid petty arguments and live a normal life.

(Jonathan, surprised and moved, takes David in his arms. The LIGHTING changes. David takes out his iPad. He and Jonathan tap on it to view their wedding photos. They comment on the photos as they are projected onto the back wall.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

As agreed, the wedding reception was held in our apartment. It was an intimate affair. Here are some pictures.

(to audience and Jonathan)

Ah, Mom and Dad with you. They look happy. It's a shame you're not smiling.

JONATHAN

Well, you know me. I'm not a smiler.

DAVID

Our wedding cake with two little grooms. That's us in miniatures. Cute.

JONATHAN

That cake must've cost you a fortune.

DAVID

It did. Ah, Nina and Schlomo munching on baby lamb chops.

JONATHAN

Never met a lavender couple before. I wonder how many lavender couples there are today.

DAVID

(to Jonathan and audience; tapping on a few photos)

Fewer, I'd imagine. Ah, here's Dennis. He didn't channel Vivien Leigh or Elizabeth Taylor or even Ethel Merman. He tried to be himself which means he was kinda lost.

JONATHAN

Yeah, there he does look lost.

DAVID

Sometimes I wonder if he knows who he really is. He's more Vivien Leigh than she ever was. It's like he doesn't have an identity of his own.

JONATHAN

Anyway, he did behave himself.

DAVID

(to audience)

Dennis is now in the hit musical *The Book of Mormon*. I'm glad for him. Financial security at last. Ah, Tex. Tex has finally given up weed. And he's also given up acting. He's moving to Silicon Valley; going back to school to study computer science, hoping to join some high-tech company.

(to Jonathan)

Hard to believe Tex is giving up acting altogether.

JONATHAN

Well, he can't do children's theater for the rest of his life.

DAVID

(to Jonathan and audience)

Some people know how to reinvent themselves. I don't know how they do it. I could never change my identity, could you?

JONATHAN

(He doesn't answer that.)

Ah, my old friend: Father Ray. Good picture of him.

DAVID

(to audience)

Father Ray didn't actually marry us. Being a Catholic priest, he's not allowed to. We were married at City Hall. But he did bless us at our reception.

(to Jonathan)

And you read St. Paul's famous epistle – the one that's often read at weddings.

JONATHAN

(reciting)

“Love is patient. Love is kind. Love is not jealous. It is not boastful. Love is never rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Love never ends.”

DAVID

(to audience)

He read it with that kind of intensity. Dad's right: Jonathan is ... *was* intense. Much too intense.

(A selfie of Jonathan and David kissing at the reception is projected onto the back wall.)

JONATHAN

That's a sweet picture of us. I think we should have it enlarged and framed. We'll hang it up in the bedroom. We can look at it before falling asleep.

DAVID

(to audience)

We have other pictures. Jonathan's bosses with their wives. We won't bother you with those. We also have pictures with all the food. So much food it was almost obscene. All prepared and served by LGBTQ caterers. And we had a teenage harpist, a prodigy – there she is – to play appropriate dinner music. No Schoenberg, no Stockhausen. Mostly French impromptus by Boieldieu.

(End of photo montage. The LIGHTING slowly changes.)

JONATHAN

Thanks to you, my loving husband, the reception was a resounding success!

DAVID

(to audience)

After the reception, we flew off to Copenhagen! We stayed at the historic Hotel d'Angleterre where we occupied the newlyweds suite. That first day, we just lazed around the pool, indulged in full body massages, drank champagne, made love. Then, just before falling asleep, to my surprise...Jonathan started to cry.

(Jonathan looks away.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Jonathan, what is it?

(Jonathan doesn't answer.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

What's the matter? ...Talk to me.

JONATHAN

...Someday ... I know that someday you'll want to leave me. You will leave me, David. It'll happen, I know. I pray and hope... it isn't soon.

DAVID

...What are you talking about?

(Jonathan, brushing away tears, remains silent.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

What makes you say that?

JONATHAN

You are interested in other men -- don't deny it. In the shower at the Y, some of the guys -- I see them...lathering themselves up with soap and grinning at you. And you, shampooing your hair, you smile right back at them.

DAVID

They're my fans. I can't just ignore them.

JONATHAN

The selfies you take with them. Don't you ever get tired of taking selfies with your *fans*?

DAVID

Jonathan, I owe them my livelihood. Without them, I'd be nowhere. They pay good money to see me. Taking selfies with them is my way of saying thank you. Surely you can't be jealous of my public. I don't exactly fuck my public!

JONATHAN

I'm sorry. I shouldn't've said what I said. I don't even know *why* I did.

DAVID

You often think about this, don't you -- that someday I'll leave you? You believe that.

JONATHAN

I never loved anyone as much as I love you! I couldn't stand losing you.

DAVID

Don't be possessive. Trust me and you won't lose me.

JONATHAN

I'd kill myself if you left me.

DAVID

If you're so damn afraid of losing me, then why did you marry me? All this talk of me leaving you -- you killing yourself -- what kind of a wedding night is this?!

JONATHAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. I drank too much. It's the champagne talking. I could never hold my liquor. I need to calm down. Would you mind massaging my back like you did when we first met? Remember when I threw my back out at the Y?

DAVID

(still upset; while massaging Jonathan's back, to audience)

We spent the next few days sightseeing. We saw what every tourist sees in Copenhagen: the Little Mermaid; the house of Hans Christian Andersen; the Royal Museum; Tivoli Gardens. Don't get me wrong, we had fun. But I couldn't forget what he told me. That wasn't the champagne talking. He was convinced that one day I would leave him.

(As Jonathan exits.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Only I didn't leave you, Jonathan. You left me.

(to audience)

Back in New York, we resumed our daily activities. While he was at work, I auditioned. I did a TV commercial for a car service company. I played a chauffeur driving an upscale Black couple to Lincoln Center. Such a challenge. Nothing was happening.

(Exercise room at the Y. CLARENCE LITTLEWORTH, a very old and frail man, wearing thick eyeglasses – so thick we can't see his eyes -- enters, lifting little kiddie dumbbells.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

One morning at the Y, I met a very old guy. A nonagenarian. I'd never seen him before. He stared at me, but I couldn't see what he looked like: he wore such thick glasses I couldn't see his eyes. He smiled at me; a creepy kind of smile – yeah, just like that. He exercised with kiddie dumbbells. He kept studying me. Later on, he'd jot down a few things in a notepad. Is he taking notes on me?

CLARENCE

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be staring at you, but I know you're the famous new actor David Sinclair everyone is talking about – please don't stop exercising on my account. – I saw you in *Romeo and Juliet*. Congrats on your Obie award and all that. Let me come to the point. I'm a playwright, and I'm writing a play, an autobiographical tragedy, if you will, based on the life of Edgar Allan Poe. You are familiar with Edgar Allan, I trust?

DAVID

Of course I know Poe. Everyone knows Poe. He wrote *The Masque of the Red Death*, *The Fall of the House of...uh...uh* --

CLARENCE

(annoyed that David doesn't remember)

Usher! *The Fall of the House of Usher*!!

DAVID

(to audience)

Who is this guy?

CLARENCE

In this life, I am known as Clarence Littleworth (a most unfortunate surname), but in one of my past lives, I was *the* Edgar Allan Poe.

DAVID

(to audience)

Uh-oh, is this gonna be a reincarnation story? I don't know about you, but I don't warm up to reincarnation stories. Especially at 8 o'clock in the morning.

(to Clarence)

You'll have to excuse me, I must go; I have, uh, an audition?

CLARENCE

You don't have, uh, an audition! But before you dismiss me so cavalierly, I just want to tell you, David, (if I may be so bold as to call you by your first name), as soon as I finish my autobiographical play, I want you to read it. I think you'd be perfect to play me as I was in my former incarnation.

DAVID

Why, sure ... I'll be glad to read it. But only after it's finished. I don't read first drafts.

CLARENCE

Of course you don't. I'm not worried; you'll do my play. It'll be a smash hit for both of us, you'll see. Besides being a playwright, I'm also a clairvoyant and I'm never wrong in my predictions. Never ... I can see us, on opening night, celebrating our Broadway success together! ...Hate to leave you, but I must dash to my yoga class. See you soon.

(He waves goodbye, and exits, huffing and puffing.)

DAVID

(to audience)

You meet all kinds of crackpots in show business, but this one ... this one is unique. Anyway, a few days later, I received an unexpected phone call -- a phone call that I thought might change my professional life for the better.

(his iPhone rings. He answers.)

Y-y-yes?

BERNIE'S VOICE

(his voice is heard on David's iPhone. We never see Bernie.)

David, let me introduce myself, I'm Bernie Mitchell of Mitchell & Mitchell & Mitchell Mega Talent Agency in Hollywood, California. I'm sure you've heard of us.

DAVID

(to audience)

Never heard of them. I'm sure you haven't either.

(to Bernie)

'Course I heard of you, Bernie. Who hasn't?

BERNIE'S VOICE

Well, kid, I got great news for you. How would you like to be a major TV star?

DAVID

(to audience)

Is this really Hollywood calling? Or is this a robocall?

BERNIE'S VOICE

Here's the scoop, Davey my boy. Some of the big guns here at NBC are developing a new sitcom about a bisexual cop -- and you're being considered for the lead. They want you to do a pilot. One of their talent scouts saw you in New York, in some play by -- oh, what's that guy's name?

DAVID

Shakespeare?

BERNIE'S VOICE

Yeah, him.

DAVID

Romeo and Juliet. Yeah. I played Mercutio. I won an Obie for it.

BERNIE'S VOICE

Listen, kid, do yourself a favor, forget the theater. Theater's for people who can't make it in the movies or on TV. You're in with the big guns now! Now listen carefully. Our New York office is gonna sign you up tomorrow. You should be getting our email any second now to confirm all this. I'll meet you next week right here at our headquarters. After a power breakfast catered by the Beverly Hills Hotel, I'll personally escort you to NBC where you'll meet all the big guns. What d'ya say to that?

DAVID

Great! But wait! What about my --? Bernie, I already have an agent.

BERNIE'S VOICE

You mean ya had one: yeah, Nina Nelson, the old-timer. Don't you worry. You have no written contract with her. She can't sue you. Now you're in with us, *am-I-right- or- am-I- right?!!*

DAVID

(He's almost scared out of his wits)

Right! I'm in with the big guns!!

BERNIE'S VOICE

Now you're thinking like a winner. Listen, kid, got to go, I have Meryl waiting on another line. Check your inbox *now*, our email is there waiting for you. See ya next week. And welcome to Mitchell & Mitchell & Mitchell Mega Talent Agency!

DAVID

(to audience)

Prime time TV. This is too good to be true. I feel like bursting into song. It's like I'm in a musical!

(singing at the top of his lungs)

It better be true, David Sinclair!

(consults his iPad)

It is true. Here's the email. They are signing me up tomorrow at 11 *pronto!*

(laughs; then texting)

Looking forward to meeting you, too, tomorrow at 11 *pronto!* Warm regards, David Sinclair.

(after an uncomfortable pause)

God, what about Nina? She must feel awful. I can't just ignore her – I have to see her.

(Nina enters, fuming.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

I'm so sorry, Nina. Really I am.

NINA

No you're not. It was bound to happen. You're hot property! The money those sleazebag Mitchell brothers are gonna make out of you. That money should be coming to me!!... But I can't blame you for signing up with them.

DAVID

I feel awful. You took me on when I was fresh out of Juilliard. You got me my Equity card. Off-Broadway, the Obie. After all you've done for me. And what do I do?

NINA

You screw me, you leave me and you feel like a heel. You'll get over it.

DAVID

Look ... What can I do for you? Can I at least take you to lunch?

NINA

Unh-unh!! No lunch, no gifts; above all, no tears. Just a parting hug will do nicely.

(Teary-eyed, they hug.)

DAVID

Gosh, Nina, I wish you were the one to represent me in all this.

NINA

David, I'm just a one-person agency. Small agencies like mine don't exist anymore. How can I compete with ICM and the rest of them mega jerks? I only handle theater and a few small film companies here in New York. I've no connections with the West Coast. I'm a relic of the past, a theatrical dinosaur! Time for me to close up shop.

DAVID

Don't say that!

NINA

It's time. Schlomo's going downhill fast. He needs me full-time. I should put him in a nursing home. I can't. Married to him 57 years. He's the only friend I ever had. Yeah,

NINA (Cont'd)

time for me to close up shop. So long, bubala, good luck with the pilot. You'll do fine. You were born to be a star. Remember one thing though. No matter what those illiterate movie scumbags in Hollywood say -- *Theater! ... Theater still matters!!*

(Fighting back tears, she blows him a kiss. He waves sadly goodbye to her as he watches her wander off.)

DAVID

(to audience)

On my way home, I felt terrible about leaving Nina. But the prospect of my becoming a major TV star – I was ... I was beyond ecstatic.

(A lighted decorated Christmas tree is projected onto the back wall. Jonathan is setting up a crèche under it.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

I couldn't wait to tell Jonathan. I knew he'd be thrilled for me.

JONATHAN

(after a beat; matter-of-factly)

Of course that is a nice offer. It could be very lucrative. But, David, you can't go to L.A.

DAVID

What do you mean I can't go? 'Course I can.

JONATHAN

Aren't you going to say something about the Christmas tree?

DAVID

Jonathan, I'm going to L.A.

JONATHAN

No, you're not -- you can't. New York's your home. I know you're an agnostic, but what do you think of the Holy Family? Don't they look peaceful?

DAVID

Jonathan, NBC wants me. Aren't you happy for me?

JONATHAN

I always knew you'd leave me!

DAVID

Oh God, here we go again. I'm not leaving you. I'm going to be away for ten days to shoot a pilot. Ten days! That's it!

JONATHAN

A pilot? What's that?

DAVID

A TV pilot, it's like a test. With me, they'll shoot an episode before a live audience to see if the audience likes the show or not. If they do like it – and they better like it! – it's a deal! Then they start shooting regular episodes that get aired eventually. If the first season is a hit – and it better be! – then we move on to a second season; hopefully a third; a fourth. *The Big Bang Theory* ran for something like twelve seasons.

JONATHAN

While I'm left here alone – alone for twelve years, watching you once a week on some dumb sitcom!

DAVID

I don't believe it. You can't even congratulate me.

JONATHAN

Can't you find an acting job here in New York? You're Equity now!

DAVID

To be in a TV series is a much bigger deal. The money I'll make; the recognition. Jonathan, I could become a household name. Think about it!

JONATHAN

We'll be separated for twelve years! I am thinking about it.

DAVID

Very few sitcoms run that long. It might be eight; six; two seasons. I don't know.

JONATHAN

All that time, I'll be without you.

DAVID

(playfully)

Look, if the series is a hit, you can always quit your job and move in with me in L.A. I'll support you. I'll buy *you* cashmere sweaters.

JONATHAN

I'll never move to L.A. New York's my home. I've lived here all of my adult life. I'd be homesick in L.A. I'd be lost; I couldn't find my bearings; all those highways, freeways and thruways. I don't even know how to drive. New York with its crumbling subway system is what I'm used to. It's where I belong. And you belong here, too. With me!

DAVID

Look, let's not get ahead of ourselves. After watching the pilot, the network might decide to cancel the series –

(quickly to audience)

God forbid.

JONATHAN

They won't. You'll get your series. You always get what you want!

DAVID

Jonathan, I can't pass this up.

JONATHAN

You leave me, David -- God only knows what I might do.

DAVID

When I was in Indianapolis, I was gone six weeks, and you did fine. This time, I'll only be gone ten days.

JONATHAN

Only this time you won't come back. They'll sign you up for a long-term contract.

DAVID

Look, if and when that happens, I'm sure we can work something out. We'll be together, I promise.

JONATHAN

Once you're an established TV star, everyone'll be after you. Some big movie producer will come along and cast you in one of those two-hundred million dollar summer blockbusters! You'll get your Oscar! And that'll be the end of me!

DAVID

You're cracking up, Jonathan. For Christ's sakes, get a grip!

JONATHAN

You go, David, and I'll kill myself.

DAVID

You wouldn't know how: you're too clumsy. You don't even know how to use a can opener, let alone pull a trigger.

JONATHAN

Years ago, before I met you, there were times when I thought of killing myself.

DAVID

Obviously you didn't do it.

JONATHAN

I did try!

DAVID

I'm going to L.A.! You can't stop me!

(The Christmas tree fades away. Darkness seeps in.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

That night, Jonathan insisted on having sex.

JONATHAN

I want it rough. I want the kind of sex we never had before. Give it to me!

(Only their faces are lit.)

DAVID

(to audience)

I wasn't in the mood for any kind of sex, kinky or otherwise. But I'm an actor, I can perform. Besides, I thought I should comply with his request. Obviously, he was going through some kind of trauma. Good Samaritan that I am, I gave in.

(David and Jonathan are now in total darkness. We only hear their voices.)

JONATHAN

I want you to fuck me. Hard. Real hard. Even if I scream, don't stop, just keep pounding. Don't be afraid to hurt me. Hurting me shouldn't be too difficult for you!

DAVID

(to audience)

I was having a hard time getting it up but I managed. Again, I'm an actor, I can rise to any challenge. I didn't fuck him. I *stabbed* him, like he asked me to. He was in such pain I was about to pull out. --

JONATHAN

Don't stop!!

DAVID

(to audience)

I obliged him, I stayed in.

JONATHAN

(overlapping)

Harder! Faster!

DAVID

(to audience)

I was riding him as hard and as fast as I could --

JONATHAN

Go on, hurt me ... Deeper!

DAVID

I can't go any deeper --!!

JONATHAN

You can! Fuck me like you hate me. *Hate me! Kill me!!*

DAVID

I lost my erection! I'm pulling out!

(LIGHTS return to their faces, but it is still dark around them. David, panting, turns to Jonathan, and glares at him. The two men stare each other down for a few moments. Sustain.)

JONATHAN

You won't ever forget tonight -- not for as long as you live.

DAVID

"Hate me. Kill me" ... Is hatred what you want from me now? ...Why?!...Why?

(David shakes Jonathan. Jonathan does not answer.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

What's wrong with you?!

(Jonathan, without saying a word, exits.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

He went into the bathroom, and took a shower. I took a shower in the other bathroom. When I came out he was already in bed, waiting for me.

(to Jonathan offstage)

I'll sleep in the guestroom tonight.

(to audience)

He didn't say a word. Complete silence. The next few days were fraught with tension, but we managed to be civil. We didn't say much at mealtimes, except maybe for 'Please pass me the butter.' Sexual activity was out of the question. Every night, I slept in the guestroom.

Then the night before I left, I woke up in the middle of the night. I heard him singing.

(Again, the Christmas tree is projected onto the back wall. Jonathan, standing in front of the crèche, is singing *Silent Night* softly and movingly, unaware that David is watching him.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

There he was, looking at the crèche. Sometimes he would pick up the nativity figures and hold them up to the light; yeah, just like that. It was as if he wanted to make contact with the Holy Family.

(Jonathan finishes singing.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(after a few moments, to Jonathan)

You have a nice voice, Jonathan. You should sing more often.

JONATHAN

(not looking at David; focusing on the crèche)

You don't mean that. You're just trying to be nice because you're leaving me tomorrow.

DAVID

I do mean it. You have a nice voice. When you sing, you seem to be at peace. You should sing more often.

(The Christmas tree fades away. The LIGHTING slowly changes to daylight.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

The morning I left for L.A., he looked at me, but didn't quite know what to say.

(to Jonathan)

When I come back, Jonathan, we have to talk. We can't go on living like this. I know I can't. I feel trapped. Like I'm your prisoner.

JONATHAN

I love you too much. That's my problem. My whole life revolves around you. I'm alive only when I'm with you.

DAVID

That has to change. Got to go. I'll call you every day to see how you are. Don't forget your exercises. Aren't you going to wish me luck?

(Jonathan cups David's head in his hands, kisses him on the forehead,)

JONATHAN

I don't have to wish you luck. You always get what you want; you always will. You lead a charmed life.

DAVID

...Goodbye.

(Jonathan waves goodbye to David, and starts to exit.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

I'll call you, soon as I check into the hotel.

(Jonathan is now out of sight.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

It never crossed my mind, when I left, that I would never see him again.

(A LIGHT CHANGE occurs.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(to audience)

Everything in L.A. went great. The director, the writers, the cast members – everyone was pleased with my work. Most important, the live audience was responsive: I was believable as a bisexual cop, and I got laughs on every punchline. As promised, I called Jonathan every day. He sounded OK, not too emotional; he seemed to be under control; no tears. However, on my last day in L.A., I tried calling him a few times, but couldn't reach him. I emailed him, texted him; no reply. Finally in New York, back in the apartment, I tried calling him at work, but was told by the receptionist that Jonathan had left the company.

(into his cell phone)

What?! May I please speak with Cathy, the office manager, please? I'm David Sinclair, Mr. Wells' husband. Thank you.

(to audience)

That's weird. He's been with the company for more than thirty years. Why would he quit now?

(CATHY, irritable, enters, holding a phone receiver.)

CATHY

Yes, David, what is it?

DAVID

Cathy, hi, what's with Jonathan?

CATHY

Didn't he tell you? He's been fired.

DAVID

What? Fired? Why?

CATHY

(curt)

Don't ask me. Ask him.

DAVID

He's not here. I just got back from L.A.

CATHY

(abruptly)

Well, you ask him why when you see him. Sorry, can't talk. I'm in a meeting

(She turns off phone and exits. End of phone conversation.)

DAVID

(to audience)

Fired? How come he's not home if he's been fired? He knew I was coming back today. Where is he? I then happened to look at our landline phone. The light on the answering machine was blinking.

(He presses a button on the phone.)

DANISH WOMAN'S VOICE

(on answering machine; slight Danish accent)

Hello. This message is for Mr. David Sinclair. This is Ms. Petra Dinesen calling from the city morgue of Copenhagen. I'm sorry, Mr. Sinclair, to inform you that your husband, Mr. Jonathan Wells, has been found dead in his room at the Hotel d'Angleterre. A suicide, I'm afraid. Death by hanging, to be precise. We at the morgue would like you to come to Copenhagen as soon as possible to identify the body. We've already notified

DANISH WOMAN (Cont'd)

the Consulate General of Denmark in New York, and we advise you to contact them right away. Here's their phone number: 212 --

(David, shaken, abruptly turns off answering machine.)

DAVID

(to audience)

He did say he'd kill himself, if I left him.

(looking away; to himself)

But I'm back, Jonathan. I'm here!

(looking back at the audience)

He hanged himself where we spent our honeymoon.

(He laughs a little; shakes his head in disbelief. He looks away, lost)

Why, Jonathan? ...

(As the LIGHTS DIM SLOWLY OUT.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

Why?! I came back. I'm here...!

(He collapses into a chair; confused, softly)

I'm here.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Copenhagen, city morgue. Creepy morgue lighting. David is alone onstage pacing the floor, looking impatiently at his watch.

DAVID

Where is she? I've been waiting 45 minutes.

(Offstage, we hear the sound of approaching squeaky wheels. David tenses up as MS. DINESEN, elderly and officious, enters wheeling in a metal table on top of which lies a corpse wrapped in a sheet.)

DINESEN

How do you do, Mr. Sinclair. I'm Ms. Petra Dinesen, head of the city morgue of Copenhagen.

(Dinesen draws back the sheet. NOTE: The audience never sees Jonathan's face. David gasps in shock, looks away, controlling his emotions as best he can.)

DINESEN (Cont'd)

Is this your husband?

DAVID

(occasionally glancing at Jonathan; to audience)

His face was blue. Why I don't know. I didn't ask. His mouth was wide open like he was ready to scream. Couldn't they have closed his mouth?!

DINESEN

(getting impatient)

Mr. Sinclair, is this your husband?

(Without looking at her, he nods yes. He doesn't know whether to touch the body or not.)

DINESEN (Cont'd)

Please do not touch the body. You'll be fined if you do. Morgue policy.

(She covers the corpse.)

DAVID

Tell me, Ms. Dinesen ... Was Mr. Wells ...? At the Hotel d'Angleterre – do you know what room he was in?

DINESEN

According to the coroner's report, he occupied the newlyweds suite. The front desk attendant told the police that Mr. Wells insisted on having the newlyweds suite. Odd request, isn't it, considering he was alone. Now do you want the body to be shipped to you via cargo plane, or would you prefer it cremated? We recommend cremation: it's much cheaper and you can take the ashes with you on the plane.

DAVID

Yes.

DINESEN

Yes what?

DAVID

Yes, cremation!!

(regaining his composure)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to ...

DINESEN

There's no need to apologize. We're quite used to these hysterical outbursts!

DAVID

(to audience)

Why would anyone want to work in a morgue is beyond me.

DINESEN

Your husband's ashes will be ready for pickup tomorrow morning. Anytime after eleven. Not before.

(She exits wheeling out the body.)

DAVID

(to audience)

I signed the cremation order and all kinds of other papers. That night I stayed at a small hotel near the morgue. I was awake all night. "Hate me. Kill me." His words kept coming back to me. Maybe he did want me to kill him. If I had, I could've saved him

DAVID (Cont'd)

the trouble of hanging himself. Next morning, I went back to the morgue to collect the ashes.

DINESEN

(enters and hands David a package)

Here you are, Mr. Sinclair, the cremated remains of your husband, all neatly wrapped up.

(hands him a few more papers for him to sign.)

Please sign here, here and here. We're very sorry about your loss, sir. Please accept our heartfelt condolences.

DAVID

(to audience, while signing the papers)

Heartfelt condolences! There's nothing heartfelt about you, honey.

(returning papers to Dinesen)

Thank you, Ms. Dinesen. You are a model of efficiency.

(Dinesen exits in a huff. Cathy enters.)

DAVID (Cont'd)

(back to audience)

Back in New York, I met up with Cathy.

CATHY

Jonathan was fired, because he started making mistakes on some of our clients' tax returns. Sometimes they'd get a refund from the IRS when in fact they owed money. We lost some of our best clients, that way. He just wasn't concentrating on his work. I'm afraid, David, you were part of the problem. You see, Jonathan was convinced you'd never come back from L.A.

DAVID

Yeah, well, I did come back!

CATHY

I know, but he didn't believe you would. Jonathan was always afraid of being ditched. He had other boyfriends before you, you know.

DAVID

No, I didn't know.