

# **A Homeless Thanksgiving**

**by  
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**Characters:**

**Devon** - Mentally vulnerable fifty-year-old gay man

**Melanie** - Tempestuous thirty-five-year-old lesbian

**Joel** - Out of control straight teenager

## SCENE 1

*A fifty-year-old man, DEVON, is pacing in a homeless tent with a camp propane heater, cans of food, a sleeping bag, books, newspapers and piles of sweaters. He tries rubbing his hands by the heater to get warm. He kicks it.*

DEVON

Why aren't you working? I fed you oil.  
I've been nice to you, and this is how  
you repay me? Seems like you only  
work when Melanie is around.

*DEVON starts singing "You're no good. You're no good," but stops when a thirty-five-year-old woman, MELANIE, enters the tent. She is carrying two hot drinks.*

MELANIE

No, go ahead. Keeping singing. You  
have a nice voice. Not sure singing to  
the heater is going to do anything to  
get us warm.

DEVON

Where did you get the coffee?

*She hands a cup to DEVON. He is about the taste it when MELANIE stops him.*

MELANIE

Hey, not so fast! You're going to burn  
your mouth. I want to savor it with  
you. Make believe we're having a  
proper breakfast. Just like I used to  
have with Diane.

DEVON

Oh God, you're going to bring her up  
again, after what she did to you?

MELANIE

I can't just turn off my feelings like  
you. I still love her when I'm not angry  
and hating her.

DEVON

You have to move on. Just like I did  
after Carson died.

MELANIE

It's different. Diane didn't die.  
Although sometimes I wish she had.

DEVON

I can't believe how you broke up. No  
warning. She just said to you, 'that's  
it'.

MELANIE

'I don't love you. You have to move  
out.' And there was no discussion.  
And you're right, It came out of  
nowhere. And when I mentioned  
couples therapy, she laughed and  
shook her head. I was in shock.

DEVON

And you have no clue as to why? I  
guess that would make me crazy. But  
what good is it rehashing your life  
together. It's like every single thing we  
do brings some sort of memory of that  
woman.

MELANIE

And you never think of Carson? I  
don't believe that. You're not sharing  
those memories with me.

DEVON

Can we just have the coffee now  
before it gets cold? I'm shivering as it  
is.

*There is a small table with stacking chairs where they sit. DEVON looks  
around for something to have the coffee with. He sees a bagel and shows it  
to MELANIE.*

DEVON

You think it's safe to eat this? It's from  
that Tom's Supermarket, stuff they  
dumped in the garbage, but it was

sealed. And way past the expiration date. What do you think?

MELANIE

It's fine. What's the worst that could happen? We'd get sick and die. We'd be put out of our misery.

DEVON

I don't know about you, but I'm not quite ready to pack it in.

MELANIE

Just shut up and let's eat it.

*DEVON slices the bagel in half and hands half to MELANIE.*

MELANIE

Hey, how come your half is bigger?

DEVON

Just think of it as being half full instead of half empty!  
So, tell me, how'd you get the coffee.

MELANIE

I found money in the garbage bin. Right near the Second Time Around Thrift Store. I was going through all the crap, and I guess someone forgot to empty their pockets. \$5.00! Just enough to get two coffees.

DEVON

You should have gotten real food. I mean it's nice to have something hot, but it's not going to fill us up.

MELANIE

You're such a killjoy.

DEVON

So why don't I believe you. Tell me how you *really* got the coffee.

MELANIE

I found a wallet on the ground right by a BMW. It was in that ritzy

neighborhood, Valley Woods. \$5.00 was the only cash in there. So I took the cash and knocked on the door of the nearest house asking if they had dropped the wallet. And I guess the way I looked, they just wanted me to go away. They wouldn't even listen when I said I found a wallet. So I went to the next place, and I started using my fist - banging on the door - trying to get their attention. And when I kicked the door, they shouted through the door saying they were going to call the police. So I couldn't even find the owner.

DEVON

So, what did you do?

MELANIE

I just left it by the car. I figured they would find it or someone else would steal it. At that point, I didn't give a shit.

DEVON

People can be such idiots. I guess you could think of the \$5.00 as your reward. But why didn't you tell me the truth?

MELANIE

I don't know. I was embarrassed. It felt like I was stealing. I didn't want you to think badly of me. You know my history.

DEVON

I doubt either of us is in a position to be judgmental about each other.

MELANIE

Whatever. I wanted to treat myself; well, ourselves. Just enjoy it.

DEVON

Should we make a toast?

MELANIE

*L'chaim.* To life

DEVON

Oh, getting in touch with your Jewish roots. I can go along with that. To life and to our friendship.

MELANIE

Has it really been a year since we met?

DEVON

We were at the LGBTQ Community Center Soup Kitchen where they were handing out food. I was waiting in line, and you butted into the line like you knew me and I was saving a spot for you.

MELANIE

And that asshole clobbered me with his elbow. Well, I smacked his face good. He kept screaming, 'Get to the back.'

DEVON

But you scared me when you pushed him to the ground. It was like you were an animal. Out of control.

MELANIE

I was just sticking up for myself.

DEVON

It reminded me of my lover, Carson. He had anger issues. I mean, he never hit me, but I worried about verbal violence. That if I said something wrong, he would lash out. I remember, we were watching television once. I had the remote and was channel surfing. I guess there was this PBS show that he thought was interesting, and out of nowhere, he screamed at me. Took the remote out of my hand and threw it across the room. He went

off on me about how I was so controlling or some bullshit. Or that I was like his father. I started walking on pins and needles after that even though there wasn't another outburst for a long time. I just never knew when it would happen.

MELANIE

Diane used to accuse me of the same thing. That I had *infantile anger*, whatever that means. But you sure found a way of getting the situation with that creep fixed at the Soup Kitchen.

DEVON

That's right. I told him you were my sister and very sick.

MELANIE

It wasn't a lie. I *was* sick. Sick in the head.

DEVON

You were a mess, but everyone in our situation has mental problems. I mean who wouldn't, being homeless.

MELANIE

Damn, I think it was our anniversary, and all I could think about was that I should have been celebrating with my girlfriend, not living on the streets.

DEVON

Somehow it was a good omen when we met. And you jumped at the chance when I asked if you needed a place to stay.

MELANIE

You led me to this tent, and I was thinking you weren't homeless. Finding this abandoned tent was a miracle! Whoever lived here before really had it made.



DEVON

I know. When I saw it, I said it's 'move-in ready'. Do you ever think about how we ended up here? Homeless?

MELANIE

No, but I have so much anger bottled up inside me. Like how none of the friends we had as a couple checked up on me. But it was my fault that I didn't have any friends of my own. My life centered around Diane.

DEVON

Same thing with me. But in our case, it seemed like once Carson got really sick, people stopped coming to visit. Carson was my best friend. I never thought I needed anyone else. And then when I had that breakdown, no one wanted to have anything to do with me.

*After DEVON takes another sip of coffee, he looks ill.*

MELANIE

What's wrong?

DEVON

I can't get warm. I have three sweaters on and I thought this hot drink would help.

*MELANIE gets up from her chair and feels DEVON's head.*

MELANIE

You have a fever. I don't know what we can do. What if we lie down and hold each other? Maybe my body heat will help.

*They snuggle in each other's arms and fall asleep.*

SCENE 2

*MELANIE enters the tent bleeding from the head. DEVON runs over to her assessing the damage.*

MELANIE

Don't ask me what happened. Just see if you can stop the bleeding. I don't even know where it's coming from. I'm dizzy. I hope I don't have a concussion.

*DEVON checks MELANIE's scalp and once he finds where the wound is, she winces.*

DEVON

You've got a deep gash. I've got to clean it up except we don't have any alcohol.

MELANIE

Of all the homeless in the world, and neither of us are alcoholics.

DEVON

Let me check around and see if anyone has vodka. I'll be right back.

*After DEVON leaves, MELANIE looks around the tent for something to stop the bleeding.*

MELANIE

Damn it. Everything is dirty. Crap, it's just going to get infected.

*During her search, she gets woozy and collapses. When DEVON returns, he rushes over to MELANIE and tries to wake her up worried that she has fallen into a coma.*

DEVON

Come on Melanie. It's not a good idea to sleep when you might have a concussion. I've got some tequila.

*DEVON takes out a tissue and starts rubbing it on MELANIE's head wound. It wakes her up.*

MELANIE

Ow! It feels like you're burning my brain.

DEVON

Good! That means there is enough alcohol content to disinfect your mind!

MELANIE

I'm not ready for any of your sick humor.

DEVON

Don't I get any credit for being resourceful and finding first aid?

MELANIE

Give me a break. I'm not thinking straight.

DEVON

Well since you're a lesbian, I would hope you aren't thinking straight! I lucked out after I left the tent. That old man that keeps attacking people was getting carted off by the police. Someone must have reported him. The guy had a bottle of tequila in his hand and dropped it just as he got picked up. So I grabbed it.

MELANIE

Oh God! He was probably drinking directly from the bottle. Who knows what kind of germs are in my scalp now?

DEVON

I wouldn't worry about it. There's probably enough alcohol there to kill anything. You should be lucky I found something.

MELANIE

I hope so. I think we're running out of luck though after getting beat up. I haven't even told you what happened. And it's not just my head that got

bashed in. I was punched in the stomach and the back.

DEVON

I hope you didn't cause this to happen.

MELANIE

You always do this! Trying to blame me! As if I get myself into these situations on purpose while *you* never do anything to defend yourself. You have no spine. Everything with you is avoiding any conflict.

DEVON

Just tell me why you were beaten up.

MELANIE

I know you're not going to believe me that I was minding my own business. I was doing my *going through the garbage* thing. You know, seeing if there was anything to recycle and sometimes if someone had trashed clothes or food that looked safe. This was behind that Third Kitchen Restaurant.

DEVON

Hey, that's my territory.

MELANIE

Shut up! So I heard this shouting and screaming. All of a sudden, this man and young kid, probably father and daughter, comes out the back door, and he's smacking her behind. And I'm not talking about a little pat; these were hard wallops. And she was no more than five years old. She tried to run away, but he caught her. I couldn't stand it. I ran up to the guy and got him to loosen his grip on the girl. I told her to run. Then we get into an intense brawl. He wouldn't give up. Kept whaling on me. Eventually I

stopped and ran away. I thought he was going to kill me.

DEVON

But why didn't you just ask for help at the restaurant and have someone call the police? You must have known you'd never win that battle. Sometimes I don't understand you. It's like you get possessed.

*MELANIE turns away from DEVON. You can hear her sniffing.*

MELANIE

You don't know why this happened? Think, you idiot! It reminded me of my father who used to beat me so bad I could hardly walk.

DEVON

You never told me exactly what was going on with your father. I just knew you didn't want anything to do with him.

MELANIE

And this man looked so much like him. Oozing with charm coupled with a chiseled jaw line. As if that was enough to get by. Never needing to be a nice guy.

DEVON

So it was just physical abuse with your father, nothing verbal or sexual?

MELANIE

I found that so confusing. I didn't know why I was being hit. And not only that, but I had no visual marks on me, like he knew exactly where to punch me so it would stay hidden. He controlled the abuse. I never had a broken bone. And when other women talk about being sexually abused, I can't even identify because that didn't happen to me. I'm meant to think that I

had it good, I suppose; that daddy didn't touch me sexually.

DEVON

And what about your mother. Did he hit her?

MELANIE

How would I know; she died before I turned three. I don't have any memories.

DEVON

And you never asked him why he hit you?

MELANIE

He didn't answer me. And he wasn't even drunk. I couldn't even use *that* as an excuse. Just some sort of mean streak. Almost like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

DEVON

Well, whatever it was, you inherited *that* gene. Hope that wasn't why Diane broke up with you.

MELANIE

No comment! Look, I think it's safe for me to go to sleep now. I don't think this is a serious concussion. I'm wiped out.

DEVON

I understand. I'll stay here and watch you. Make sure you don't die on me. It's the least I can do since you got my fever down when I got so sick. I can't believe you found so many ice packs and shoved them all over my body.

MELANIE

And you were screaming at the top of your lungs. But it worked, didn't it?

DEVON

You would have made a great torturer.

*MELANIE doesn't answer and falls asleep, and DEVON watches her like a guardian angel. Listening to make sure she is breathing. Lights dim.*

### SCENE 3

*MELANIE combing her hair when DEVON enters with a large bag.*

DEVON

I made a killing today. Went to two different soup kitchens and the LGBTQ Community Center.

MELANIE

I'm starving, let's eat now although I'm afraid to ask what you got. Even if it's stale bread, as long as there's plenty of it, I'll be happy.

*DEVON puts the bag down on the table and starts setting the table and puts food on each of their plates. As they are both seated, DEVON puts his hands together as if praying.*

DEVON

Bless us O Lord, and these Your gifts which we are about to receive from Your bounty, through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

MELANIE

I don't understand how you still believe in God. And thanking Christ for this crap. I wouldn't even serve this to a dog.

DEVON

Everything with you is negative. Things could be worse.

MELANIE

I doubt that.

*They eat in silence, gulping the food. MELANIE leaves the table and goes back to brushing her hair and putting on makeup.*

DEVON

Hey, what's with the hair and makeup?  
Are you having a hot date or an  
interview? Do I detect the beginning  
of a smile?

MELANIE

It's for *you*. It's my birthday, and I  
wanted to look nice. Maybe we could  
fool around. You know just for fun.

DEVON

Ha! And ruin my premium gold star  
status.

MELANIE

What's that?

DEVON

Well, *gold star* means you've never  
had sex with a woman, and you get to  
be *premium* gold star if you were born  
by Caesarean.

MELANIE

Well, I don't fall into either of those  
categories. But how would a *woman*  
get to be premium gold star?

DEVON

Test tube baby?

MELANIE

So, you were never curious about how  
it would feel having sex with the  
opposite sex.

DEVON

No. I came out very young. Like  
fifteen. I never had to prove to myself  
that I was straight. And remember, I  
got together with Carson when I  
turned twenty-one. Never had a  
chance to sow my oats. Oh God, did I  
actually use that old-fashioned phrase,  
*sow my oats*?



MELANIE

But that is so you, Devon.  
Listen, I know Carson died of  
pancreatic cancer, but you never told  
me the whole story as to how you  
ended up on the streets. You had a  
mental breakdown?

*DEVON shakes his head, yawns and takes MELANIE's hand and leads her to her sleeping bag. DEVON goes to his own sleeping bag and both begin napping. Lights dim and when they partially come up again, DEVON has risen from his sleeping bag and is talking to his lover, Carson, who is offstage.*

DEVON

I know we talked about this, that if  
things got so bad that I would help  
you. Please, Carson, don't make me do  
this. You're lucky you're an atheist,  
not Catholic. I'm probably going to be  
cursed for the rest of my life. Don't  
laugh. I'm not being a drama queen.  
I'll have to go to confession.

*DEVON laughs then cries before continuing..*

DEVON

I don't know if I'll be able to live with  
myself. It's bad enough losing you, but  
feeling that I'm responsible for your  
death. I thought I could handle this,  
but now . . . Please don't beg me. Yes,  
yes, the pain; and you keep saying  
they can't get the meds right. Why  
don't you want the morphine? You  
don't know if it's going to make you  
into some sort of zombie. What's the  
harm in at least taking a little bit. See  
if it helps. Isn't there something we  
can do to distract you? Listening to  
Barbra Streisand or watching Aretha  
sing "A Natural Woman" on the  
Kennedy Center Honors program?  
Don't keep saying that I don't  
understand. Look, I went along with  
you when you decided to stop the  
chemo. You would rather have some

decent quality of life. You said you appreciated how I didn't insist you keep trying. Someone else would have told you that it was selfish to just give up. I'll do whatever you want. Just don't keep asking me to help you die. No, it's *not* that I care about it being illegal, and that I'll get arrested. This is so fucked up. Stop looking at me like I have to do this. If this was a movie, at the last minute, just before the lover gives his partner pills or has to decide about pulling the plug, the guy ends up dying. So there'd be no guilt. But we're not in a movie. Oh, god! Please, please don't cry. You don't know if this is for the best. How the hell am I going to get . . .? Wait a minute, what are you doing? Stop it. What the fuck! No! No! No! Are you trying to bite your tongue?

*DEVON tries to stop an off-stage Carson from biting his tongue.*

DEVON

'I love you, Devon.' I want those to be the last words you say. That's how I want to remember you. Just say it. Please . . .

*The lights come back up. MELANIE gets up from her sleeping bag and begins shaking DEVON.*

MELANIE

Wake up! You were having some sort of nightmare. You kept mumbling, 'stop, kill you, love you . . .'

DEVON

That wasn't a nightmare; that's what really happened. I murdered Carson.

MELANIE

What?

DEVON

I gave him secobarbital; it killed him.

MELANIE

No, I don't believe it.

DEVON

Yes, it *did* happen. Why do you think I'm such a mess?

MELANIE

I'm sorry. Had you guys had some sort of pact, that if either of you was in so much pain that you would help one another commit suicide?

DEVON

No. We never talked about it. In fact, when Carson got sick, he refused to talk about dying. He kept saying, 'I want to stay positive. I'm going to beat this.'

MELANIE

My goodness, is that why you're always telling me to be positive?

DEVON

I guess so.

MELANIE

What changed that Carson would even consider suicide?`

DEVON

He was living in a dream world. And then with the side effects of chemo -- the constant nausea, throwing up, writhing in pain all day long -- he said, 'I've had enough.' I remember the day he stopped treatment and went on hospice. The smile on his face was almost frightening. He couldn't stop crying, but he said they were happy tears. No longer having to fight the cancer. Wanting to enjoy some sort of quality of life. He hated being some sort of guinea pig. Trying all the different trial studies.

MELANIE

I think I understand. What about his family? How were they handling all of this?

DEVON

He only had a sister, Francine. And when I talked to her about funeral plans, wills, trusts, she practically disowned me. Francine said, 'It's your fault he's dying. All your negative thoughts. It's killing him and killing me.'

MELANIE

That's really fucked up.

DEVON

So, she just wrote me off. You know the condominium was in Carson's name. She's the one who tried to evict me. Eventually, I just moved out. I couldn't stand being there. It was like Carson was haunting me.

MELANIE

How did you get away with assisted suicide? What did Francine say?

DEVON

She didn't pursue it. Maybe she was relieved. I don't know. Francine just wanted to get rid of me. I was so out of it, and she probably figured if I didn't make any kind of claim and just moved out, she wouldn't question the circumstances of Carson's death.

MELANIE

So, that's what you did? You didn't put up a fight?

DEVON

Correct. I'm not strong like you. I've never been able to stick up for myself.

*MELANIE hugs DEVON and then begins massaging his back. He responds favorably enjoying the sensation, periodically moaning. Suddenly, she stops.*

DEVON

Keep going. It feels so good. I just had a funny thought about having sex.

MELANIE

What could possibly be funny about sex?

DEVON

Role playing, but in a different way. I would be Diane and you would be Carson. Seems like we know enough about our respective partners.

MELANIE

It feels morbid, me bringing Carson back to life.

DEVON

No different than me being Diane. You said you wished she had died rather than leaving you.

MELANIE

So, now you don't care about your premium gold star status?

*They both start laughing and find their way to their sleeping bags. Both are shy about kissing but after they do, they open up the sleeping bag so they can snuggle together. As they start removing their clothes the light dims.*

SCENE 4

*During their sleep, MELANIE gets up from the sleeping bag, goes to the edge of the stage and begins talking to Diane.*

MELANIE

I apologized. I said I was sorry, Diane. What more do you want me to do? I don't understand why you won't talk

about what happened. You pushed my buttons. I do everything for you, Diane. Pick up your bras strewn all over the bedroom, clean your hair out of the bathroom sink, make your salad with sixteen ingredients and iron your blouses. And follow your ridiculous instructions with the laundry; cold, gentle cycle, and permanent press. I don't complain that you treat me like a servant. And, god forbid, I should ask you to close the kitchen cabinets or recycle or compost. And then, Diane, you went off on me about 'Why don't you get a job? I'm tired of being a sugar mama to you. You're taking advantage of me and I don't get anything in return!' Do you know how I felt when you said that? Like I was *nothing!*

*MELANIE stops and cries.*

MELANIE

So why are you surprised what ended up happening? I swear it was an accident. I never would hurt you. You know that. I love you. You just got me so angry. And it wasn't even a real hit. Just shoving you. And don't tell me that it had happened before. You know that's not true. Stop it! This isn't like when I gave you a hickey. And when we're in bed, I can't help it if my elbow sometimes hits you. Or when we're making love, it gets a little rough. I thought you liked that. You make it sound like I do these things on purpose. I'm surprised you didn't bring up that time I was cutting onions and you were screaming, 'You're doing it wrong.' I was pissed at you, Diane, and I threw the knife in the sink. You really thought I was going to stab you when I threw it?

*The lights come back up. DEVON wakes MELANIE.*

DEVON

Hey, you were having a bad dream or something. You kept repeating 'Diane.' I guess we're on a roll. First, I have a dream about Carson, and you must have had Diane on your mind.

*MELANIE laughs.*

MELANIE

Well, you did such a good job of playing Diane. You should have been an actor.

DEVON

You know it was kind of fun play-acting. But last night seems to be a blur to me. Did we end up having sex?

MELANIE

Yes. I guess I should get an award for my interpretation of Carson, or I've converted you to being a heterosexual.

DEVON

Heaven forbid that that should happen.

MELANIE

You know I keep forgetting to tell you what a great listener you are. Most people are in their own world. Only talk about themselves. Even Diane rarely asked how I was doing, and when she did, I didn't get any response. Like she wasn't even paying attention.

DEVON

Remember, I used to be a social worker in a past life. Well, until I stopped listening.

MELANIE

What do you mean?

DEVON

That was my job, but after Carson died, I really didn't take any time off

for grieving. I needed money to pay first and last on an apartment. So I took a week off, and when I came back, I was glad to have structure. But when I saw my clients and they told me their troubles, I would say, 'I understand,' but then start talking about Carson. How I missed him. Being lonely. Having to move out of our condo. And this would go on for most of the session. I didn't even realize I was doing it.

MELANIE

I guess I can understand, but eventually you had to help the people you were counseling. I mean isn't that why they were talking to you?

DEVON

Exactly. But I wasn't aware, and then my supervisor told me what was going on and that they had to let me go. That's when I really went nuts. I had no place to live. I was embarrassed to ask for help. You know, being a therapist myself. I ended up homeless.

*Loud sounds and scuffling are heard outside of the tent.*

MELANIE

Something is going on out there. I better check it out.

*DEVON searches for breakfast until MELANIE quickly returns*

MELANIE

We've got to get out of here. They're doing a sweep.

DEVON

I thought that was illegal. Shit, where are we going to go?

MELANIE

Let's just grab our stuff. We'll have to find another encampment. I don't want



them rounding us up like cattle and sticking us in a shelter.

*They grab their belongings and leave the tent. Lights dim.*

## SCENE 5

*Scene opens in another tent which has a similar setup but is larger. It's evening. They are both sitting at a table finishing dinner.*

DEVON

Well, should we make a toast? This is our first night in this place. Get out the champagne glasses.

MELANIE

These attempts at humor are not working. You know when I look at this place it reminds me of something Bette Davis said.

*DEVON interrupts and imitates Bette Davis.*

DEVON

'What a dump!' And it wasn't just Bette who said it; it was the opening line in the play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf*. So twenty years after Davis made the line famous, Elizabeth Taylor did the same thing in the movie.

MELANIE

I bet only a gay man would know that bit of trivia.

DEVON

You know for some reason this dump feels bigger than our last home.

MELANIE

Well, I guess we're moving up in the world.

DEVON

Of course, whoever lived here was a slob. It smells awful. And all these open cans and cigarette butts! I really lucked out with the last place. But at least this place is spacious. I bet we could even include another tenant!

MELANIE

Please don't even think that. It's bad enough living with *you*.

DEVON

Oh shut up! I'm the best thing that ever happened to you.

MELANIE

I can't believe when we sleep together that we stay in that spoon position. I could never do that with Diane. We always woke up in the middle of the night and ended up on the opposite edges of the mattress.

DEVON

Same thing with Carson. You and I are a match made in heaven.

MELANIE

I have to admit that once I got used to your body, it's not so bad having sex with a man. I mean I still think about women when we're doing it.

DEVON

Oh, you had to ruin it!

MELANIE

Don't tell me you don't think about some hunk.

DEVON

I'm not telling. It will have to be a secret; you . . .

*DEVON freezes. When he begins moving again, he looks confused. He starts wandering around the tent, staring into space. When he stumbles, MELANIE tries to help him back to the table.*

MELANIE

What happened, Devon? You looked like you were in another world.

DEVON

I spaced out.

MELANIE

Do you think you were having a mini-stroke?

DEVON

I don't even know what that was. I really can't remember. Didn't the same thing happen to you? Except you were drooling.

MELANIE

Is this some kind of competition as to who has the strangest disease?

DEVON

I think we're in a tie.

MELANIE

You know, I'm really getting tired of all this. It feels like the movie, *Groundhog Day*. We have to keep moving and then repeat the process.

DEVON

And every neighborhood is different. Where to find scraps of food? And it's the same food every day. Where is it safe? Checking out abandoned buildings. How do we know if someone isn't going to come into our tent and murder us or steal our things?

MELANIE

I would kill them first.

DEVON

Great! Then you'd go to jail, and I would have to fend for myself.

MELANIE

Sometimes I think the worst part is finding a bathroom to wash. Wearing these same dirty clothes.

DEVON

And I feel like my body is decomposing. I must have cavities. My toenails have gotten so stiff, I can't cut them, I itch all over.

MELANIE

Hey, I thought you were supposed to be the positive one around here. At least we're not in one of those cardboard boxes.

DEVON

I guess some of your negative thinking is rubbing off on me. I mean what is the point of all this. All this hiding. It's like history repeating itself. Keeping our being gay a secret. Hiding in the shadows, and now doing it again.

MELANIE

Same thing with being Jewish.

DEVON

Do you ever think about suicide? We really don't have anything to live for. It's so draining trying to be resourceful.

MELANIE

I wish I could say that our connection is making this crappy life worth it.

DEVON

That's what I was thinking, too. We have each other, but what is that really?

MELANIE

Do you ever wish that when we go to sleep, we don't wake up? You know, dying of natural causes.

DEVON

That only happens in movies.

*They cross to the bed only to be awakened by JOEL, a teenager with stringy hair and darting eyes. He has a large flashlight. MELANIE and DEVON are blinded by the light and jump out of bed.*

MELANIE

What? Who the fuck is that?

JOEL

You're in my tent. *I'm* here.

MELANIE

Not any more! Get the fuck out of here!

*MELANIE moves toward JOEL. JOEL pushes her away. She falls to the ground.*

MELANIE

Devon, do something!

*DEVON stands still and is frightened, paralyzed as JOEL kicks MELANIE. She moans.*

DEVON

Stop hitting her.

JOEL

Shut up! This is my place.

DEVON

You have no rights here. We thought it was abandoned. It's ours now.

JOEL

I don't care. It's mine. I said to shut your mouth!

*JOEL goes up to DEVON, punches him in the stomach and drops his flashlight. As DEVON crumbles to the ground, MELANIE gets up from the floor and pulls JOEL away from DEVON. MELANIE succeeds in immobilizing JOEL with a choke hold until JOEL grabs something from his pocket.*

DEVON

Watch out! He's got a knife!

*MELANIE stops choking JOEL, and he begins pressing the knife against MELANIE's neck. DEVON is crying.*

DEVON

Don't hurt her. We'll leave.

*JOEL is still holding MELANIE. DEVON is cowering in the corner.*

JOEL

Are you some kind of pussy. I can't believe you're even homeless. Just get your fucking things before I hurt your girlfriend.

*DEVON begins picking up their belongings, but when he sees the fallen flashlight, he grabs it and begins shining it into JOEL's eyes blinding him. JOEL drops his knife and releases MELANIE. MELANIE grabs the knife and points it at JOEL's chest.*

MELANIE

This is our tent now. You get the fuck out of here!

*JOEL begins shaking and crying. MELANIE puts the knife down.*

JOEL

I have no place to go. Do you know how much time it took for me to find this place? And it's safe. No chance of a raid.

DEVON

My goodness, you're like the Cowardly Lion in the Wizard of Oz. All bluster and a bully when you're really a crybaby!

*JOEL runs out of the tent.*

DEVON

Do you think he's really gone?

MELANIE

I think so.

DEVON

Are you okay? He was really choking you.

MELANIE

I'm fine. Thank goodness, when he kicked me, it didn't break any ribs. But what about you? He could have really hurt you by the way he was punching you.

DEVON

It wasn't so much the pain, but the scariest part was that I felt like I couldn't breathe. I thought I was going to pass out. But somehow I didn't.

MELANIE

You know I thought you were a wimp, but if you hadn't pointed that flashlight into the boy's eyes, he would have killed me.

DEVON

I'm afraid to go to sleep. What if he comes back?

MELANIE

He's not coming back. Let's just get to sleep. I'm exhausted from all that fighting.

*Both go back to bed. Lights dim.*

## SCENE 6

*The next morning. DEVON looks outside the entrance of the tent and sees JOEL sleeping. DEVON looks over at MELANIE, still in bed.*

DEVON

That boy slept outside the whole night. He must be freezing. What should we do?

MELANIE

Don't just stand there. Wake him up and bring him inside.

*DEVON leaves the tent and comes back with a groggy and shivering JOEL. Once JOEL is in the tent, he flops onto the sleeping bag bed. He falls asleep again.*

DEVON

It looks like he's on some kind of drugs.

MELANIE

That's all we need is a drug addict.

DEVON

We need to warm him up. Should we take him to a shower? I can't think of anything else to get rid of the chill. When I touched him, he was ice cold and trembling.

MELANIE

We don't owe this boy anything. Remember he tried to murder us last night.

DEVON

So what? We should just let him die?

MELANIE

He's not going to die. He's sleeping anyway.

*JOEL wakes up.*

DEVON

Well, he *was* sleeping.

*MELANIE, fearing that JOEL will attack again, finds some rope and ties him up.*

JOEL

What happened? I thought I was sleeping outside. Why am I tied up?

MELANIE

We dragged your ass into our tent. You don't deserve it after what happened last night.



JOEL

I told you this place was mine, and you threw me out.

MELANIE

Oh, don't start that again. It's not like anyone has a deed to this property.

JOEL

Do you have any coffee or something to eat? I don't feel so good.

MELANIE

This isn't a hotel.

DEVON

Are you on drugs or something?

JOEL

No. I just need coffee.

DEVON

Melanie, let me see if I can scrounge around and get us something hot to drink.

MELANIE

No! Are you crazy? Stay here, Devon. I don't want to be alone with this creep.

DEVON

Okay. So what are we going to do? Why are we holding him like he's a prisoner? Just let the poor guy go.

MELANIE

Not yet. I really want to know what his story is.

*MELANIE looks at JOEL.*

MELANIE

Why are you out on the streets? You don't even look eighteen. Shouldn't you be living with your parents?

DEVON

Melanie, maybe he's gay and his parents disowned him.

JOEL

I don't owe you any explanations. And for your information, I'm *not* gay, but my parents *did* disown me. Why don't you listen to your husband and let me go.

MELANIE

He's not my husband, and I'm not untying you until you answer my questions.

JOEL

My parents made me a ward of the state. Said I was incorrigible. That they couldn't control me.

MELANIE

That's not surprising. Pulling a knife on us. But explain something to me. If you're a ward of the state, why would you be homeless?

JOEL

They had me living in some shithole juvenile hall. I would be locked up in a cage when I went to school, or they would use Mace on me. The other guys told me it was worse than prison. And if you misbehaved, they would put you in solitary for twenty-three hours. Someone was watching my every move. I hated it. So I ran away. I'd rather be homeless than live that way. It was almost as bad as when I was living with my parents. My father was a real piece of work. He made me feel like I was always on the defensive.

DEVON

Did you threaten your parents with a knife? I used to be a counselor, and I

had parents who told me their son or daughter tried to kill them.

JOEL

No. And it wasn't drugs either before you ask that. I was always getting into trouble at school. Getting into fights. I got expelled a few times. My parents were super religious. They kept accusing me of stealing money from them. And they went ballistic when they found out I was smoking. But the thing that threw them over the edge was when I got this girl pregnant, and I wanted to do the right thing. That's when they threw me out. I dared to ask them for money to help Judy.

MELANIE

My god! When you said 'do the right thing,' I thought you meant you were going to marry the girl. What did you want money for?

JOEL

Judy didn't want to get married. Didn't even want a kid. Wanted me to pay for an abortion, or she was going to get me in trouble. But I didn't want her to have an abortion. It was my kid, too. I don't believe in abortion. But I realized that it should be Judy's decision. She kept saying it would ruin her life, having a baby.

MELANIE

So what happened with Judy?

JOEL

I ended up stealing money from my parents, but Judy had a miscarriage so I got into trouble for nothing. And even when I gave the cash back to them, they didn't care. Said I wasn't their responsibility. They pleaded poverty. So I just got dumped.

DEVON

So how have you been getting by?

JOEL

I've got street smarts. I know what's going on, and that really helps. Besides, I don't have a choice. And you know, I try to keep upbeat about this situation. It's much better here on the West Coast compared to Vegas. That's where I grew up. But once I escaped from juvenile hall, I had to move out of state or I'd maybe get caught. But one thing about being homeless. It's actually pretty difficult for anyone to find you. No address, no cell phone. I know this life is hard, but let me tell you, the type of freedom I have now, it's priceless!

MELANIE

So what was the big deal about this tent. I mean we couldn't even tell someone was living here.

JOEL

This was the first place that I thought had potential. That I could put down roots. I was tired of running. You know this tent is big enough for the three of us.

DEVON

You must be kidding.

MELANIE

It's not going to happen! We'd be at each other's throat. It's bad enough with Devon in these tight quarters.

JOEL

Can we at least try this setup temporarily? Just until I find something else. And I promise you, I'm not going to do any more fighting. And besides, I think I can help you guys. You sound like newbies to this

homeless world. I've been doing this for a while. I know what's going on. There are things you don't know.

DEVON

It's up to Melanie. And I don't think we need your help. We've been doing pretty well on our own.

MELANIE

I need more than a promise if you want me to untie you.

JOEL

What do you want?

MELANIE

A blood pact between the three of us.

JOEL

What does that prove?

MELANIE

I'm going to prick each of our thumbs, and then we'll press them together. We'll be taking a blood oath. This is going to be a covenant that can't be broken between the three of us. That's the only way I'm going to trust you.

JOEL

I think you're bat-shit crazy, but if that's what it takes, I'll do it.

MELANIE

We're going to use your knife, but I swear if you do anything to break this bond, I'll kill you.

*JOEL remains tied up while MELANIE gets the knife. DEVON sits at the table with his thumb ready to be pricked.*

MELANIE

Okay, I'm going to untie your hands. Don't make any sudden moves, or I'll slice off one of your fingers. What's your name, anyway?

JOEL

Joel.

DEVON

Is this going to hurt?

MELANIE

It's just a prick.

*MELANIE unties JOEL's hands.*

MELANIE

Okay, now I'm going to use the knife to just draw some blood. Devon, you used to be Catholic. There must be some kind of prayer for this. I can't think of anything in the Jewish religion.

*JOEL offers his thumb. Once MELANIE has pricked each of their thumbs, DEVON begins praying.*

DEVON

This shedding of blood is going to be a pact between the three of us that can't be broken. The three of us are joining together.

SCENE 7

*A week later. DEVON and MELANIE are sitting while JOEL is standing, looking like a teacher giving lessons.*

JOEL

Okay, class. Today I'm going to teach you about hygiene. You know you guys stink.

MELANIE

We've gotten used to it. We tried using deodorant but obviously that isn't working. Oh god, I feel like I'm in grade school.

DEVON

And we've tried using the faucet in the public restrooms but it's impossible to take off our shirts and pants to clean ourselves.

JOEL

You need to shower. Try to get a free one-day pass to a gym. That's the best. Another alternative is going to the beach; they have outdoor showers there. You just need soap.

MELANIE

It's going to be freezing. I'll need some kind of bathing suit and a towel.

JOEL

You know it's very healthy to take a cold shower. It's invigorating.

*JOEL had been standing still, but as he begins pacing the room, stamping on a roach, he winces.*

JOEL

Ow! Something hurts in my foot. It just started hurting when I stepped on that cockroach. And I didn't even stomp that hard. I couldn't have sprained my foot.

MELANIE

Take off your socks, let's see what it is.

*As MELANIE is examining JOEL's foot, she presses on the insole and he cries out.*

JOEL

Now it really hurts.

MELANIE

Seems like you have a splinter. We've got to take it out, or it will get infected. It doesn't look good.

JOEL

Reminds me of what my mother  
would do.

MELANIE

Devon, can you get me a match and a  
straight pin. Then you can get Joel  
ready for surgery.

JOEL

Hey, my mom would give me some  
sort of treat if I didn't cry when she  
took a splinter out.

*DEVON gives the straight pin and match to MELANIE as she begins the  
extraction. JOEL keeps fidgeting and moaning before she begins.*

DEVON

My goodness, don't be such a baby.  
It's only a splinter.

JOEL

Please stop; you're talking like my  
father.

DEVON

Here. I'll hold your hand while  
Melanie does her magic. She's really  
good at this. You won't feel a thing.  
I'm always getting splinters. And it's  
not just wood; sometimes toothpicks,  
glass slivers, tacks. You name it, and  
it's gotten into my feet.

*MELANIE uses the match to disinfect the pin then quickly removes the  
splinter and shows it to JOEL.*

JOEL

Wow! I didn't even feel that! You're  
better than my mom. Thanks.

MELANIE

How did a thorn get imbedded in your  
foot?



JOEL

I was wearing flip flops. Melanie,  
you'll have to teach me next time  
Devon gets a splinter.

DEVON

See, this is a two-way street. We can  
learn from each other. Hey, aren't you  
impressed with all the newspapers  
we've accumulated. We use it for toilet  
paper, a pillow, bed sheets and  
insulation. This place is so drafty.

JOEL

You know the newspaper can also be  
used to earn some cash doing car  
windows. There's something in the  
newspaper ink that works really well.

MELANIE

Where did you learn all this stuff?

JOEL

From the other homeless. And I'm  
pretty intuitive about things. Oh,  
before I forget, one of the key places  
to go is the library. There are water  
fountains, free internet, heat and air  
conditioning.

MELANIE

I never thought of that. And, of  
course, we'd be surrounded by books.

DEVON

So you're teaching us all these things,  
but you're still homeless. Sounds like  
this is permanent for you.

JOEL

No, that's not true. I'm trying to save  
up for an apartment, but it's really  
difficult getting work. They want an  
address. What about you guys? Isn't  
this just temporary for you?

MELANIE

It sure feels permanent. Don't see any way out of this situation.

DEVON

Sometimes I feel like this is a better coping mechanism. I'm trying to forget about my old life.

MELANIE

Me too.

JOEL

Are you giving up? Is that what happens when you get old?

MELANIE

We're not *that* old. Listen Joel, we appreciate this stuff you're teaching us, but you have your whole life in front of you. You can go to college and get a real job.

DEVON

Talking about jobs, I think I have something temporary. It might turn into something full time. It's at that Second Time Around Thrift Store. The thing is they want an address.

JOEL

Don't you have a family member, or sometimes you can use a church as your address.

DEVON

I have a brother, but we haven't spoken in years. And I'm not going to let him know that I'm homeless. It'll just give him a chance to gloat.

MELANIE

It's embarrassing. I would never want my ex to discover my situation.

JOEL

You shouldn't feel that way. That's the issue. You're surviving and doing the

best you can. Devon, why not just use your brother's address. It may just be a formality. He has no way of contacting you.

MELANIE

And he's not going to return the letter. I don't see a downside.

DEVON

Okay. I'll do it. I think it will be a good thing for me. No pressure. And their customers might be homeless. I could be very helpful. Knowing their circumstances. I'll go right now. Wish me luck.

MELANIE

Aren't you forgetting something?

DEVON

What?

MELANIE

You need some clean clothes and your hair is a mess.

JOEL

Not to worry. I have some no-water shampoo for your hair and we're the same size. Devon, your pants look fine, just your shirt. I think I have an old button-down white shirt.

*JOEL finds the shirt and helps DEVON put it on. MELANIE uses the waterless shampoo and then combs DEVON's hair.*

MELANIE

Well, I'm not sure you look completely presentable, but it's way better than before.

*DEVON leaves the tent.*

JOEL

You mentioned your ex. Anything you want to tell me?

MELANIE

No.

JOEL

Okay. Got it. You've really mellowed out since I started living here. I never told you, but I was really afraid you were going to beat the shit out of me that first night.

MELANIE

Well, I'm trying to get my anger under control. It's not easy. You're pretty volatile.

JOEL

I guess we're both trying to change.

MELANIE

But since you asked me about my ex, what about you? You never mention any girls except for the one you got pregnant. And you did say you weren't gay although with your looks you probably could make some money as a hustler.

JOEL

No way that's going to happen. And you have to admit, being homeless doesn't lend itself to dating.

MELANIE

You'd be surprised. Look what's happened to me and Devon. Talk about miracles. A gay man and a lesbian shacking up!

JOEL

But it's a *good* thing. It can be brutal being out there alone with no friends. I've known people who have pets, dogs or cats, just to keep them company. Of course, it's another mouth to feed.

MELANIE

Come on, Joel. What's your game plan? You've been here for a month. You still haven't gotten a job. It's hard for me to believe that you really like this setup.

JOEL

You know, I never felt like I had a father or mother. Sometimes I like to think that you and Devon are my surrogate parents.

*MELANIE comes toward JOEL with her arms stretched out.*

MELANIE

Do I remind you of your mother?

JOEL

Don't hug me.

*But MELANIE ignores his warning and wraps her arms around JOEL. He stiffens and pushes her away.*

JOEL

I said no! I don't want you to hug me because you feel like that's what I need. It has to be earned. I haven't done anything that makes me deserve this. My parents never showed any signs of affection. Stay away!

MELANIE

Fuck this shit. I'm just trying to be nice. You're an immature baby. You make it so difficult. No touching, but it's okay to fight!

JOEL

I'm just asking you to leave me alone.

*MELANIE refuses to step aside and when JOEL nudges her, she starts hitting JOEL pounding on his chest.*

JOEL

Now I get why your girlfriend threw you out. If you don't get your way, you get nuts!

MELANIE

Fuck you! I'm going kill Devon if he told you my story. It's none of your business.

*MELANIE storms out of the tent as light fades.*

SCENE 8

*Two weeks later, DEVON runs into the tent, distraught.*

MELANIE

What happened to you?

DEVON

You won't believe who I ran into at the thrift shop today?

JOEL

Mother Teresa?

DEVON

My brother showed up! And it's your fault. I should have never given out his address.

MELANIE

But you wouldn't have gotten the job.

DEVON

I don't care. My brother, Gerard, came right up to me, grabbed me by the arm and forced me outside. I couldn't even tell my boss that I needed a break.

JOEL

What an asshole.

DEVON

He starts going off on me. 'How come we never hear from you? Don't you care about your niece and nephew? You never answer your phone. I went by your apartment, and the landlord said you moved out months ago. And I tried the counseling office where you

worked, and they said you didn't work there anymore. It was like you disappeared from the planet'.

MELANIE

So it's really true? You never talked about having a brother. And you also have a niece and nephew?

DEVON

I don't feel like I have a brother. I was never close to his kids. He was just trying to make me feel guilty. Do you know what he did to me after Carson died? He blamed *me* for Carson's death. He told me 'I know you helped him die. I don't know how you got away with it. I never liked you being gay. That's probably why Carson got sick. That's what God does to homosexuals.' He threatened to report me to the police.

JOEL

So, why did he care about you communicating with him now?

DEVON

No idea. And he kept poking at me with his finger. He wouldn't let up. And I just lost it; started crying. I told him I was homeless and embarrassed about it, and that's why I hadn't called him. How I lost my job and had a breakdown.

MELANIE

So, did he say he was going to help you?

DEVON

I don't know if I would have accepted his help. He told me that everything was my fault. You should have seen the pity on his face. That was it, and then he just left. And I felt so awful; I just left, too. Didn't say anything to

my boss about leaving. I just came back here.

JOEL

I'm sorry this happened to you. He's a real shit! You don't deserve to be treated like that.

*MELANIE starts to give DEVON a hug and motions for JOEL to do the same. JOEL hesitates before joining the group hug.*

DEVON

You know one good thing happened today. I realized that I'm resilient. And afterwards, it kinda' felt good admitting to my brother that I was homeless. That we're not just surviving. Something else is going on.

MELANIE

Hey, does that mean you're developing a spine?

DEVON

Always making jokes! I thought *I* was the jokester. But yes, I'm not going to let this incident with Gerard screw me up. And I'll contact my niece and nephew. I don't know if I'll ever have a relationship with my brother, but those kids are my only family.

MELANIE

I wonder about this generation gap we have with *you*, Joel. It's actually three generations between us. It's amazing; the fact that I'm lesbian, Devon is gay and you're straight, and yet somehow, you've been able to bridge us all together despite our age differences.

JOEL

I wish I felt the same thing. There's something that happened that I haven't told anyone about. And it's thrown me for a loop seeing how you guys have lived your life. Always moral and



ethical, never breaking the law.  
You've never spent a day in jail!

MELANIE

I had no idea we would get brownie  
points for that.

DEVON

Are you saying you did something  
illegal?

JOEL

I haven't told you the real reason why  
I left Las Vegas, and why my parents  
disowned me. I was a hustler and got  
caught.

MELANIE

I want to hear this. Let me get some  
wine that I've been saving for a special  
occasion.

*MELANIE brings a bottle to the table and pours a small amount into three  
cups. DEVON pretends they are in an elegant restaurant, smells the wine  
and tastes it. Takes on a posh accent.*

DEVON

It's very dry, but it will do.

JOEL

Don't look at me as if I couldn't be a hustler.

MELANIE

But I thought you said you weren't  
gay.

DEVON

Typical! My goodness, I thought this  
generation was more accepting, but  
here you couldn't even tell us you  
were gay.

JOEL

I'm not. I was doing it with women.

MELANIE

And that's a crime? Especially in Las  
Vegas?

JOEL

Yes. I served some time, and I moved here for a new start.

DEVON

So the story you told us about your parents and the girl you got pregnant, that wasn't true?

JOEL

No, it was basically true. At least about the girl. But no, I wasn't a ward of the state. I went to jail, and my parents didn't want anything to do with me.

MELANIE

I can't picture you as a male hustler.

JOEL

I needed money and that was the easiest way to get it.

DEVON

Money for what?

JOEL

I had all these dreams about going to City University to get a degree in nuclear engineering and getting a Mini-Cooper. I knew my parents would never give me a dime.

MELANIE

How did you get caught?

JOEL

I was so stupid. This woman was very different from my usual. Classy, oozing with money. She offered me \$1,000 for the night. Way more than I'd ever made before. She even gave me money for clothes. Said she didn't want to be embarrassed. She was staying at the Skylofts in the Taj Mahal Hotel. I heard about the panoramic view from those rooms. As soon as I was let into her room, I was

handcuffed. I thought it was part of the deal. A little S&M, so I had to do some role playing. Why not? But no, she was the Feds. I was taken to the police station, fingerprinted and thrown in jail. I tried calling my parents, and they hung up on me. I had no one who could make bail.

MELANIE

Entrapment! I thought that was illegal. And what's the deal with prostitution. Especially in Sin City Las Vegas.

JOEL

All I know is that it's on my record, and every time I try to apply anywhere, including schools, it always comes up. And I don't want to lie.

DEVON

People make mistakes. You're young. There has to be a way to overcome this. We can try to get your arrest record expunged.

MELANIE

We'll figure this out, Joel.

DEVON

All for one, and one for all!

MELANIE

Yes. We're the Three Musketeers!

DEVON

I can't believe I let myself burst out with such a cliché!

JOEL

What does that mean about us being the Three Musketeers?

MELANIE

Oh, I forgot that you weren't born yet when the movie came out, and I guess you never read the book.

DEVON

Melanie, we all seem to be having our moments, but what about you? I feel like our lives are turning around.

MELANIE

Something *did* happen, but I don't want to jinx it.

JOEL

You don't seem like the superstitious type. But I agree with Devon, there *is* something going on.

MELANIE

Okay. I got a potential job offer, but the circumstances are beyond surprising. I ran into Diane last week. Talk about embarrassing stuff! When I saw her, my first instinct was to duck into an alley. I looked awful. This was the first time I'd seen her since she threw me out. I didn't want to give her any satisfaction that I ended up being homeless. But then I saw the look on Diane's face. So happy! Looking way younger than I remember. Then I had all these regrets. What did I do wrong? Let a woman that I loved dump me. Like I told you, I had no idea what was going on in Diane's head. Why she really wanted to end the relationship.

DEVON

I thought it was because of your violent nature. That she was afraid of you.

MELANIE

That was just a small part of it. And I told you before, shoving someone is different from hitting them. I would never want to do anything like my father.

JOEL

But if you loved her, why didn't you  
fight to win her back?

MELANIE

I had such a low self-image, like I  
didn't deserve her. Diane was verbally  
abusive. Constantly making me feel  
like nothing. And sexually, she used  
me as a tool. Never caring about me  
reaching orgasm. Only herself.

DEVON

So does that mean you didn't see  
Diane?

MELANIE

After I had a good look at her, I *did*  
turn away, but then I heard her calling  
out my name. I wanted to ignore her,  
but she kept calling out, 'Melanie,  
Melanie!' Obviously, she recognized  
me. I didn't know what to do. So I  
ended up saying hello. She didn't say  
anything about my looks, thank  
goodness. Although I can imagine  
what she was thinking.

JOEL

And at least you're really good about  
using deodorant every day so you  
didn't smell.

MELANIE

She started asking all these questions.  
What have I been doing? Where did I  
live? Was I working? Really just small  
talk. I was clenching my fists because  
I was afraid that I was going to hit her.  
No apology about throwing me out.  
Nothing about us being lovers for  
fifteen fucking years. Just like I was  
an acquaintance.

DEVON

What a shit!

MELANIE

Right! So I told her I was homeless and living in a tent. And you should have seen her face. She just started backing away. I think she was afraid I was going to ask for help or for money. And she just turned around and walked away. I was stunned.

JOEL

Good for you for telling her.

MELANIE

And this whole thing made me think. I'm a better person than she is. And I'm going to figure out how to make this homeless thing somehow work for me.

DEVON

And what did you do?

MELANIE

I went into one of those homeless shelters. They had an opening for a job. I filled out an application laying it all out on the line about my situation. But I think I convinced them that I would be perfect for the job. That I knew how a homeless person thinks; what they would need. And if things got rough, I could be a bouncer. A good way to use my temper and anger in a productive way.

JOEL

Wow! That is such amazing news!

MELANIE

Yes. Now I haven't gotten the job yet, but I'm supposed to go by there later today to find out.

DEVON

I know you'll get it. You're fearless!

JOEL

I think this merits another group hug.

*Lights dim.*

SCENE 9

*The tent is filled with Thanksgiving decorations, including a table with a Thanksgiving table cloth. DEVON is finishing setting the table. MELANIE and JOEL enter carrying large grocery bags.*

JOEL

I think we have enough food for all the homeless in the neighborhood, and we'll be eating leftovers for weeks. I like the idea of having our own Thanksgiving the day after the holiday.

MELANIE

It was Devon's idea, also. We both had a miserable time yesterday. I don't know about you, Devon, but I felt awkward and out of place. I mean I was sorta' happy that Diane invited me considering how I thought she didn't want anything to do with me.

DEVON

I was so shocked when my brother had me over to his house to share the Thanksgiving meal. But I did not have a good time even though it was family. That's why I thought of us celebrating today with the people I've really grown to love.

MELANIE

Look at all this food -- rutabagas, oyster stuffing and two kinds of cranberry sauce. Diane wouldn't let me leave without taking all the leftovers. And Devon has his own haul of leftovers, too. What about you, Joel? How did your Thanksgiving go?

JOEL

Well, very different from yours since I don't have any family. So I

volunteered at the Soup Kitchen serving meals. It felt good to do that, but I agree with both of you. That I would rather be with my tentmates.

DEVON

I never thought we were going to go hungry, but this is going to be our last meal here.

JOEL

That must mean that you have enough cash for first and last month and deposit.

DEVON

Yes. What a nightmare trying to prove that between the three of us we can afford the monthly rent. It had to be a percentage of our salary. We just made it.

MELANIE

Don't forget we had to have someone co-sign. No landlord was going to let us rent without doing a credit check. I can't believe how much rents are. And this is a one bedroom!

JOEL

I know. We'll make it work. Of course, we still haven't decided who's going to sleep in the living room on a sofa bed.

MELANIE

Enough about the future. Let's enjoy this last meal together.

*Once DEVON and MELANIE have placed the food on the table, and MELANIE serves wine all around, the three of them sit down. JOEL grabs a turkey leg.*

DEVON

Hey! No eating until we go around the table and say what we're thankful for.



JOEL

No, please don't do *that* round robin.

MELANIE

Yes. Devon is right. We have a lot to be thankful for. I'll start. You know a lot of people would say how can someone homeless be thankful for anything. Well, first off. We found each other and created a family. But also, I'm thankful that we've all been changed by knowing each other. We've left our mark. That's a big deal.

*DEVON and JOEL clap.*

JOEL

OK, I learned a lot about myself. It's not just surviving, but I've actually been thriving. I've been able to focus on what I want to do. What will make me happy. I finally got accepted into City University.

DEVON

Are you going to be a Nuclear Engineer?

JOEL

No. I've been volunteering at City Juvenile Hall, and I think I would make an excellent probation officer. I need to get a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, Social Work, or Criminal Justice.

DEVON

Hey, I have my degree in Social Work. I can help you. And did I tell you that I'm getting promoted to manager at the Thrift Shop. And one more thing. I've finally forgiven myself for how I assisted Carson. I have changed so much. Before we started living together, I couldn't make any decisions. Carson did everything for me. But now you guys . . .

MELANIE

Don't start crying; we don't want to get  
infected by your tears! Looks like  
we've become the working wounded.  
And now, my honorary Jews, *L'*  
*Chaim!*

*All lift their cups, and DEVON and JOEL both join in with "To Life!"*

THE END