

Interwoven

**a collection of 10-minute plays highlighting
the human desire to reach out
and connect**



Gordon Blitz

SCENE 1

Fairfax High School 1968.

Lights come up. PAUL, a 16-year-old with a girlish quality is onstage. We hear laughing and shouts of 'faggot, queer, sissy.' Another slightly feminine boy, MARC, comes out of a classroom (from offstage). He is thin and wiry.

MARC

Hey, are you from Bancroft Junior High. I don't remember you.

PAUL

No, Burroughs. Do you know where the bathroom is? It was stuffy in the classroom. I need to pat my face dry before I start melting.

MARC

Here I've got a handkerchief. Use that.

PAUL

I'm Paul. Thanks.

PAUL has makeup coloring his face. Covering acne. As Paul wipes his face, the white handkerchief turns colors. He hands it back to MARC. MARC looks confused but sticks it back in his pocket.

MARC

Do you live nearby?

PAUL

No. My parents usually pick me up after school. Why?

MARC

I'm just seven blocks away. I have the new 45 by The Supremes. You've got to hear it.

PAUL

Oh yes. I love them. I can't believe
they fired Mary Ballard.

MARC

Diana wanted her out. Now we have
Cindy Birdsong.

MARC AND PAUL walk offstage. .

Lights dim.

SCENE 2

Lights come up. A month later. PAUL and MARC walk in from offstage into the apartment where MARC lives with his mother. They sit on chairs.

PAUL

Hey Marc, where's your mom?

MARC

She's at work. She works for Playgirl Magazine. She just started working there about two months ago around the same time we became friends. Have you heard about it? Just like Playboy, except the centerfolds are men. It's so groovy, just like the Supremes. Do you remember when you first saw the Supremes on The Ed Sullivan show? We were living on Long Island at the time.

PAUL

Oh God, yes. I couldn't believe Diana's bulging eyes. The wigs and dresses! I was in heaven! Have you ever tried on your mom's high heels?

MARC

No! I wouldn't want to get caught.

PAUL

I love putting on my mom's dresses. We're the same size. Hey, before we moved to Los Angeles, we lived in New York, too.

MARC

My father died right after my Bar Mitzvah. Mom wanted to be with her family on the West Coast. It was difficult taking care of our Cape Cod on Long Island. The blizzards were horrible.

PAUL

How did your father die?

MARC

He had cancer of the spine. He'd had this pain on the right side of his chest for years. They kept telling him it was in his head. Then when he had a spinal tap, they discovered a tumor. You know he was in a wheelchair at my Bar Mitzvah, and he died two months later.

PAUL

I'm sorry. You know I didn't have a Bar Mitzvah. I was afraid to be in front of all those people, and my parents didn't push it. And I hated the thought of going to Hebrew School. Did you go?

MARC

Yeah. At first, I thought it would be okay since it was all Jewish, but they were just as bad about making fun of me. And I went for four years! My grandfather was very Orthodox, so I think that's why my dad made me go. My mother said that my dad, knowing that he would see me 'become a man,' was why he stayed alive. Didn't want to miss it.

PAUL

And you went to his funeral?

MARC

Yeah. The funeral was so awful! All that crying. And people coming up to me saying:

(in an affected voice)

'Your father died so young. I am so sorry. Your poor mother. A widow at 36.'

(returns to his own voice)

The part that really made me cry was when everyone had to throw dirt on top of the coffin. There was this pile of dirt and we couldn't leave until all the dirt was put on the coffin.

PAUL

I can't imagine what it must have felt like. So was it hard moving out here?

MARC

I had no friends, so I was glad we moved. We were the only Jews in our neighborhood. I felt so isolated. And Dad's family wasn't very helpful. At least my mom has a brother here in Los Angeles. You know another reason we moved? My grandfather told my mom that in the Jewish tradition, the widow is supposed to marry the brother of the deceased.

PAUL

Eeww! I can see why you moved. Fairfax High is so Jewish, but they are awful to me.

MARC

Oh, it's a little better here, but you're right. There are all these cliques, and again I don't have any friends. Wow! Where did you find those socks?

PAUL

At Orbach's. And don't you love the way they match my pink shirt. We should go shopping. You need a new look.

MARC

Uh, O.K. Do you like movies? I want to see *Valley of the Dolls*.

PAUL

Of course. Let's go this weekend. I just finished the book.

MARC

Great! Who do you have for Physical Education?

PAUL

Mr. Bain. I hate sports. And gym class is the worst. On Long Island, we only

had gym once a week because of the weather. Here it's every day! It's awful running around the track early in the morning. I wish I had a broken arm or a broken leg. Then I could be excused.

MARC

And the showers are disgusting! It smells awful, and I am always getting towel whipped.

PAUL

And it hurts my butt.

MARC

And I hate having to climb ropes. I never get it right, and when I slide down it burns off the skin on my hands. It's torture! And I'm always picked last for baseball or basketball. I can't catch or throw a ball. My father kept hounding me every weekend to practice with him. When he was throwing the ball

MARC

at me, I was afraid I would get hit. Have you told your parents about being made fun of?

PAUL

No. I'm afraid that they'll think I'm sick. My mom had a breakdown and stayed in a mental rehab hospital for a couple months. I don't want to upset them.

MARC

And I thought my life was filled with drama! Since my dad died, my mom remarried twice, but it was a disaster. She had both marriages annulled. But the worst is when I hear whispers when I enter a class-room. 'Hey girlie, faggot, queer.' They think I can't hear them.

PAUL

I can't wait to graduate. It must be better in college.

MARC

Yeah, I bet when we're adults everything will be okay. Come on, let's listen to the new song by The Supremes. Then we can play my *Funny Girl* original Broadway cast album. You know, I saw the musical on Broadway before we moved out west.

The beginning of the song, Reflections, plays.

PAUL

Oh, that song is so scary, like aliens are arriving from Mars.

MARC

But wait till you hear Diana sing. Do you want to dance?

PAUL

It's a slow song. I don't know how to dance.

MARC

It's easy. Haven't you ever seen your parents dance?

MARC puts his arms around PAUL. They listen to the rest of the song as they are dancing. At the end, MARC starts tickling PAUL.

PAUL

Stop it!

MARC

You're so ticklish!

PAUL starts tickling back.

PAUL

You're just as bad!

They both fall to the floor laughing. They start to wrestle. During the wrestling, PAUL and MARC freeze, and we hear their inner thoughts.

MARC

Why am I getting an erection? This is wrong. I'm supposed to get turned on by girls. I can't believe I'm doing this. I don't understand. It's like I've become a different person when I'm with Paul. I'm all mixed up. I should be happy, but I'm not, but he feels so good. I hate it! And he's grabbing my cock. Oh god, I feel something wet. Did I just piss? It feels like when I jack off, but not really. I want to stop, but I can't. I didn't realize I was so much stronger than him. It feels great to pin him down, and he's squirming. I've got power over him. Just like the beginning of the song, *Reflections*. Paul's right, I *do* feel like an alien at school because I don't act like everyone else. It was only when I met Paul that I saw a sort of reflection of me.

PAUL

I wish he would kiss me. He's so cute. I don't care that it hurts. It's a good kind of hurt. I think he's enjoying it. I imagine him hugging me. I want him to trap me and keep me pinned to the floor. He's so different from me. I can feel his cock getting hard, and it's damp. It's like those times when I'm in gym class, and I have to hide the fact that I have an erection from looking at all those guys. I stay hard for such a long time, and it feels like my dick is leaking.

MARC and PAUL unfreeze. PAUL tries to kiss MARC, but MARC looks scared and moves away from PAUL.

Black out.

SCENE 3

A month later at MARC'S apartment. PAUL is wearing a purple paisley shirt.

PAUL

What do you think about this shirt?

MARC

It's so loud.

PAUL

It's a perfect color that goes with my red hair. And I found this purple jacket for you. It goes great with your coloring.

MARC

I've been thinking about our friendship. You know, I've never had a best friend before. I love going to the movies with you. And talking on the phone every day. And the best part is I don't have to watch what I say to you. I hate being on guard.

PAUL

Me too. It's nice having someone to talk to. You're lucky you can look masculine if you want. I don't have that choice.

MARC

So you think it's an act when I'm not feminine?

PAUL

Yes. Your body type is way more masculine than mine.

MARC

I've been having these strange feelings about you.

PAUL

What do you mean?

MARC

I don't know. I'm very confused. I think this is something like 'falling in love.' I'm not used to talking about this. I'm embarrassed to tell you. Sometimes I stare at guys. I want to be like them.

MARC

Popular. Have lots of friends, I think. If I could work out and have muscles. And they all have this perfect hair. But I want to be *with* them. Don't you want that?

PAUL

No, I can't see that for myself. I feel close to you. Like I could tell you secrets. And I do love you, Marc. I think about you all the time.

MARC

You don't have any secrets. We've told each other everything, right?

PAUL

Well, there is this one thing. I'm not supposed to talk about it, but I want to tell you. It was when we first moved to Los Angeles. I was thirteen and went to the dentist. I was getting braces. I would take my bicycle. My mom didn't need to drive me. So while the dentist attached the braces, he would start touching me. You know, down there. I got scared, but it sort of felt good. And every time I saw him, he started doing other things to me. He unzipped my pants and played around with my thing.

MARC

Really? I don't believe you. Why would a dentist do that?

PAUL

He must have been homosexual or something. And then he put his mouth on my cock, and I giggled. He told me

to stop giggling. That it wasn't funny. He thought I would like it. And he seemed angry and said he was going to tell my parents that I was a bad boy. I knew something was wrong. I ended up telling my parents.

MARC

No! I can't believe you told your parents. What did they do?

PAUL

I don't know. I mean, they found me a new dentist and I had to go to therapy. They said they were worried that I was traumatized, and I should talk to someone about it.

MARC

What did you tell them?

PAUL

I didn't want to go so I just told them, "I'm okay now." So I only went that one time, and my parents never talked about what happened. They *did* say I shouldn't tell anyone.

PAUL and MARC awkwardly kiss.

MARC

I've never done that before. Does this mean we're homosexual?

PAUL

I don't know.

MARC

Your lips felt all mushy. I didn't even know where to put my tongue.

PAUL

It's called French kissing. Where you use your tongue.

MARC

Can we try again?

They try kissing again. MARC caresses PAUL.

PAUL

Have you ever had sex?

MARC

No. I don't even know what we would do.

PAUL

We could masturbate.

MARC

I'm afraid.

PAUL

Of what?

MARC

I don't know. This is so scary. Is it okay, or are we sick?

PAUL

I like you.

MARC

Sometimes I wish I had a girlfriend so no one would make fun of me.

PAUL

I don't like girls. I can't imagine being with a girl. I would never want to get married or have kids.

MARC

Just think. It would be so easy. I'd be popular. I wouldn't worry about guys screaming 'faggot' at me. Don't you hate it?

PAUL

I'm used to it. I just ignore them.

MARC

But I want to get married when I grow up. I would cook and clean just like my mom; vacuum and dust. And I would do the gardening, too.

Sometimes I sit in the living room in our apartment and just stare at the beautiful furniture. It's so perfect; everything in its place. My mom sprays lemon Pledge on the coffee table and the end tables, and it smells wonderful. And I want to be a father. I'd do a better job than my own father. And if it was a boy, I wouldn't push him into sports or in walking a certain way. But if it was a girl, I don't know what I'd do.

PAUL

You're crazy. Don't you want to get a job and make lots of money? That way you could buy really neat orange bell bottoms and black and white checkered platform shoes. And get a special haircut.

Lights dim.

SCENE 4

Lights come up. MARC'S apartment with PAUL.

PAUL

I haven't seen you for weeks. We used to go to the movies every week. What's wrong? Why are you wearing that cross around your neck?

MARC

I'm Christian now. Mary says we can't be friends anymore. She says you're a homosexual.

PAUL

I don't understand. You're not Jewish anymore? And who is Mary?

MARC

I met her a few months ago at lunch. We've gone out a few times. Yes, I converted to Christianity.

PAUL

Does she know we've fooled around?

MARC

No; maybe I'm bisexual. You're a bad influence. Look, I am so tired of being harassed. I hate it. I want to be like everybody else. And Mary can be my girlfriend. No one will talk behind my back. Just think if you had a girlfriend.

PAUL

But I don't like girls. I like you, Marc. I thought we were best friends. You kept saying you never had a friend before. Someone you could really talk to and not be afraid of what you said. And didn't you say something about love?

MARC

You have to leave. I don't want to be friends anymore.

PAUL

You can't shut me out! Don't do this! You said you loved me!

MARC

Stop it, Paul! I didn't know what I was feeling. I was stupid!

PAUL

Come on! Please. I don't have any other friends.

MARC

I'm sorry, Paul. I can't continue. This is it. Goodbye.

MARC pushes PAUL out of the apartment. PAUL stands outside the door. Doesn't leave. He knocks on the door, hoping that MARC will answer, but MARC ignores the knocking. PAUL keeps knocking while he is crying. Lights dim.

MARC pushes PAUL out of the apartment. PAUL stands outside the door. Lights go down somewhat in the apartment, and PAUL is lit up at the side of the stage. He doesn't leave. He knocks on the door hoping that MARC will answer, but MARC ignores the knocking. PAUL starts to cry and keeps knocking harder over and over again.

Lights dim.

SCENE 5

MARC's apartment. PAUL standing by the door. MARC is standing in the middle of the room.

PAUL

I don't know why you called me.
I thought you didn't want to be friends
anymore.

MARC

I fucked up! You know that girl,
Mary? She kept telling me that
if I became Christian, it would
change my life. I wanted to
be her boyfriend. See if I could
have sex with her. I was tired
of being made fun of by those
bullies. I didn't want to be gay,
and I thought that Jesus would
save me.

PAUL

So what do you want from me?

MARC

But I was being stupid when
Mary convinced me to stop
seeing you. And she never
had any intention of being
my girlfriend. Please, can
you forgive me, please?

PAUL walks over to MARC, and they hug.

Blackout.

MASSAGE

DAVE, a forty-year-old gay man, is lying on a massage table. Standing next to DAVE is TIM, the masseur, lighting a candle, turning on some meditative music and putting lotion onto his hands that he will use on DAVE's body.

DAVE

Do you really have to go through this whole routine every time? I feel like it's wasting time. The only thing that matters are your hands and the deep tissue massage.

TIM

But I'm not just doing this stuff for you. It helps *me* get in the mood for the body work. Otherwise, it's like I'm just working on a piece of meat. I like to ease into it.

DAVE

Well, then just speed it up!

TIM starts applying the oil to DAVE's chest. DAVE moans when TIM starts pressing his fingers against DAVE's stomach, rib cage, and chest.

TIM

I still can't get over the order that you like things done. Most people want me to do their back first, but you're just the opposite.

DAVE

I just want you to loosen up the front before you get to my back muscles.

TIM

You seem to be in a pretty good mood. Things must be going well with Garth.

DAVE

Yes. Garth had a breakthrough. His voice is coming back, finally. You know, since his stroke, he's had trouble communicating. All he could do was write notes. And

DAVE

that was only with his left hand.

TIM

And you told me that he was right-handed. Is there any chance that he'll regain movement on his right side?

DAVE

The doctors aren't hopeful. It was a bad stroke. Even though he's young, barely thirty, and in good health.

TIM

I know. He was your trainer, wasn't he?

DAVE

The doctors think he was taking steroids, and *that* caused the stroke.

TIM

I just don't get it. I mean, the guy had a great body. Why would he even be taking steroids?

DAVE

Does it really matter?

TIM stops the massage.

TIM

It's time for you to turn to the side so I can do your back.

DAVE turns to the side, but his face can still be seen by the audience.

DAVE

I feel so sorry for him. You know, none of his friends ever visit. It's like they don't want to see this vibrant guy become a shell of himself. It makes me think that they were never his friends. All those gym rats! Showing off their bodies all the time. Running with no shirt. So full of themselves!

TIM

So many of my clients are like that. And talk about *vanity*! My goodness, if they have one ounce of fat or a pimple, it's like the end of the world.

DAVE

At least Garth wasn't that way. That's why I fell in love with him. So good looking and so sweet. I mean he had that smile that made me melt. And so supportive of me. It was almost like in addition to being a trainer, he was something like a life coach. I used to have such a poor body image.

TIM presses on DAVE's spine and DAVE screams.

TIM

Are you okay? You said you wanted me to be rough.

DAVE

Rough and torturing are two different things! I don't want to feel like I'm on the rack from the Inquisition!

TIM

Well, you are way beyond tight. No pain, no gain!

DAVE

Just ease back a little bit, okay? Otherwise I won't be able to see Garth this afternoon. I'm supposed to take him to the doctor.

TIM

You never told him how you feel about him?

DAVE

No. Even though he built me up, I knew I wasn't his type. He liked the bad boy trade.

TIM

Well, I just hope he's appreciative of what you've been doing.

DAVE starts crying.

DAVE

I don't know if it's your voice or those magic hands, but whatever you just touched got to me. It's like you've always said about breaking down scar tissue when you give me a massage. But you're also removing that wall around me. You're better than my therapist!

TIM laughs.

TIM

I wish someone would touch *me* and make *me* cry. Are you still seeing Garth every day? I don't know how you do it.

DAVE

Yes, and when I look into his eyes, I think I can tell how thankful he is. He never wrote those words down, but I'm hoping that now that he can talk, he'll tell me. Enough about me! What's going on with you and Bennett? The last time we talked, you said something was going to happen between you two.

TIM

Oh, I hoped you weren't going to ask me.

DAVE

Come on. I tell you everything.

TIM

Okay. Before I give you the sordid details, you know today is the anniversary of Caleb's death.

DAVE

Has it been a year already?

TIM

So, even though I'm not Jewish, I had been using this past year to mourn his death. I haven't dated.

DAVE

I didn't know grieving for a year is just a Jewish thing.

TIM stops the massage, and DAVE touches TIM's hand. Tim starts to cry.

TIM

Are you trying to get back at me for making *you* cry?

DAVE

I just wanted you to know that I understand.

TIM

I hardly ever cry anymore. I think I burnt myself out when Caleb died, and I couldn't stop myself. It got so bad that I didn't want to *start* crying, thinking it would never stop.

DAVE

I don't suppose you have a therapist.

TIM

No. You know, sometimes when I hear these stories from my clients, it clears my head. Makes me think everyone has this pain that they're carrying around. And not just physical pain, but emotional pain.

DAVE

That's exactly what you're doing when you give me these deep tissue massages. That's where you get to the root. And it helps me unwind.

TIM

My goodness, you should become a massage therapist yourself. You seem to know so much about it.

DAVE

Ha! No way would I want to spend all day digging into people's skin and muscles. Especially guys that smell!

TIM begins working on DAVE's feet. DAVE giggles, then moans.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Have I ever told you that when you touch my feet, I almost have an orgasm?

TIM

I should charge you extra.

DAVE

Even though I love when you do my feet, I hate the fact that it means the session is half over. Speaking about sex, weren't you planning on doing the deed with Bennett.

TIM

Yeah. I thought that since I've been friends with Bennett for twenty years, that maybe he should be the first person I have sex with since Caleb died.

DAVE

I remember you said you had a crush on Bennett, but that it didn't work out.

TIM

When we met in high school, he was like the first guy who really turned me on. It wasn't just his looks, but he knew so much about music. I mean, every kind of music, every genre. We would talk for hours listening to classic rock, pop, r&b, rap, country. And he was this *maven* about pop charts. How many weeks a song

was number one. I just went nuts! I couldn't keep my hands off him! But Bennett was closeted.

DAVE

So you never had sex with him as a teenager?

TIM

No. We wrestled a little bit, but he wouldn't let me kiss him. And when I said I was in love with him, it really scared him. We didn't talk for almost a year. But once I got together with Caleb, we became friends again. Bennett probably felt safer that I wasn't going to make him gay.

DAVE

Did he ever come out?

TIM

Yes. I guess he was just taking his time. And Bennett has been so good to me since Caleb died.

DAVE

You know some of this stuff is new info. You never really told me all of this. So what happened?

TIM

I was thinking about talking to him about trying sex, but then I thought, that's not very romantic! I mean, he was my first love. It took me almost six months to get over him during that year we didn't speak.

DAVE

And you probably knew that just because you were friends with someone that it didn't necessarily lead to getting romantic. But it sounds like you were willing to risk it?

TIM

I just kept thinking; I love this guy. And if Caleb hadn't come into my life, and Bennett had come out earlier, I probably would have been lovers with Bennett. Anyway, I had him come over for dinner, and I set a romantic mood. Candles, and I set the table with my good china. Even crystal glasses for the wine. I thought maybe he would get the hint. I was going to play the song, "You Are Woman" where Nicky Arnstein seduces Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl*

DAVE

Please tell me you didn't do that!

TIM

No, I didn't, and we had a great time. Eating and drinking. Very relaxed. After dessert, I said why don't we sit on the couch? As we sat there, I didn't speak and he was quiet, too. I love that we both aren't afraid of silence. I looked at him, and we kissed. This was the first time we'd done that. I could tell this wasn't something he did often. He's never talked about sexual conquests. He's never lived with anyone, and no mention of a boyfriend. I often wondered if he had ever had sex with *anyone*!

DAVE

So after you kissed?

TIM

I took his hand and led him to the bedroom. I started taking off my clothes and then his. He giggled a bit, but he didn't stop me.

DAVE

My goodness, you're dragging this out.

TIM

Okay, okay! Once we were naked, I knew something was wrong. I couldn't get hard. I don't know why. Maybe it was because Bennett had gained some weight, or maybe because we'd been friends for so long. How is it possible that someone who I wanted to pounce on and who I was so into no longer did it for me?

DAVE

Was Bennett getting excited?

TIM

Yes, I thought so. I was getting embarrassed. Something that I had wanted for so long, and now it was like I couldn't even imagine having sex with him. Such a turn around.

DAVE

Well, at least you took a chance. Look at me, I'm afraid to even tell Garth how I feel. Afraid that he'll reject me.

TIM

I just wanted to get dressed and try to forget the whole incident. I really didn't want to talk to Bennett about it, and he seemed okay with that. He just got dressed, too. We haven't talked about it. I mean, there's nothing to say about it, anyway.

DAVE

I get it. Better to have a friend for life. Sex might have destroyed your friendship.

TIM

Seems like both of us are stuck. In the old days we would have been fuck buddies. I guess that doesn't happen anymore.

DAVE

You and I are almost in a competition for who can go the longest without having sex!

TIM

Wasn't that in a Seinfeld episode?

DAVE

Well, that was actually about masturbation.

TIM

Well, I'm definitely not giving *that* up.

DAVE

I agree.

TIM stops the foot massage.

TIM

Okay. We're all done. You can get dressed.

DAVE

Isn't it funny? I've been coming here every week for the last two years, and we tell each other everything that's going on in our lives. We should go out. I mean, not like a date or anything, but as friends.

TIM

I thought you have Garth.

DAVE

And you have Bennett. Well, you can never have too many friends, right?

TIM

I'm not supposed to see clients outside of work.

DAVE

Oh, please! I can't believe anyone follows *that* archaic rule.

TIM

I do like you, and there is something about giving you a massage and the way you react. It's a real give and take. Not like my other clients. They don't really get into any heavy discussions like we do.

DAVE

I feel that, too. What could be more intimate than what happens here. Talk about being vulnerable! I know I feel like you've stripped away a lot of shit.

TIM

And when I touch you, there is some sort of vibration going on. I can't explain it.

DAVE

Don't question it. We should just go with the flow. Can I give you a hug?

They hug each other.

Lights dim.

THE END

TUNNEL OF LOVE

On a darkened stage, there are six chairs; three sets of two chairs side by side along the sides of the stage giving the impression of parked cars. A short overweight man, DANIEL, is holding a theater program and strolls onto the stage. A dog BARKS, and he quickens his pace. He mumbles to himself.

DANIEL

I guess there are other cheapskates
like me who use this tunnel, and don't
want to pay for parking. I've never
seen it so crowded here.

He uses his car clicker to identify his car. He hears the sound of footsteps behind him. Just as he opens the car door, he stops. He feels an object digging into his back. A hand grabs his neck. TUCKER, a teenage boy, gets him in a chokehold and fakes a manly voice to sound older than his nineteen years.

TUCKER

I want your wallet.

DANIEL turns around and sees TUCKER and his age, and he relaxes a bit.

DANIEL

Leave me alone. Help!

TUCKER

I said, give me your wallet!

DANIEL

Help!

TUCKER

If you cry 'help' again, I'm going to
stab you. Where's your wallet?

DANIEL

It's in my front pants pocket.

TUCKER keeps one arm around DANIEL's neck and uses his other hand to reach into DANIEL'S pocket.

TUCKER

It's not there.

DANIEL

It's in the other pocket.

As TUCKER rummages around DANIEL's pocket trying to find the wallet, DANIEL is squirming and begins moaning.

TUCKER

Hey, are you trying hit on me? You queers are all the same.

TUCKER pulls his hand away.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

It's too tight. I can't get into the pocket. My hands are too big.

DANIEL

Let me do it. I have to loosen my belt.

TUCKER

I have a knife, so if you make any sudden moves, I'll stab you.

TUCKER keeps his chokehold on DANIEL as DANIEL nervously undoes his belt to retrieve his wallet. TUCKER reaches over and tries to grab the wallet from DANIEL's hand. DANIEL keeps holding on to the wallet.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Let go of it!

DANIEL lets go of the wallet, and it falls to the ground. TUCKER loosens his hold on DANIEL and scoops up the wallet from the ground. He looks in the wallet.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Fuck! There's no money. Fucking shit!

DANIEL

Nobody carries cash anymore.

TUCKER

You poor fucking faggot. Well, at least there are credit cards.

Offstage sounds of PEOPLE. TUCKER shoves the wallet into his own pocket and runs off. DANIEL pantomimes opening his car door. He is shaking and crying. He pantomimes driving away.

Lights dim.

Lights come up. DANIEL is driving. His iPhone rings.

DANIEL

Hi, Colton. Listen, something awful just happened to me. I got mugged. And don't start telling me 'I told you so' because I parked in the tunnel near the Music Center rather than paying for parking. Correct, I didn't get hurt, but he took my wallet with all my credit cards. No, nothing else was stolen.

(he pauses)

But I have to tell you; something weird happened. I was getting a little turned on when he was trying to get my wallet out of my pants pocket. I can't figure it out. In some ways it's a milestone. You know how I've told you that when I've been with these sexy guys, I couldn't perform? Crazy! And here I was getting mugged by this hoodlum, and I get a hardon! And he wasn't even good looking! I don't get it.

DANIEL starts laughing.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I can't believe I can laugh, but this whole incident reminds me of the song in *Carousel*, "What's the Use of Wonderin'," where Julie has fallen in love with Billy Bigelow who's a low-life. It was Jacob's favorite musical. Maybe this is a sign from him, from the grave. Let's face it. It's been five years since he died, and I've never had sex. I guess maybe there's hope for me.

DANIEL

And as if that wasn't enough, I got stopped by the cops for swerving between lanes. The cop thought I'd been drinking, and he couldn't understand why I couldn't show him my license. I'm not even sure he believed me when I told him I'd been mugged, but eventually he let me go. Yeah, I cried a little. That always works. I swear he must have kept me there for half an hour. He must have been checking out my license plate to see if I was a criminal! What a horrible night! Look, it's really late, and I just got home. We'll talk tomorrow.

Lights dim.

Lights come up. DANIEL is walking toward his condo when TUCKER jumps out and grabs DANIEL from behind and uses one hand to cover DANIEL's mouth and the other hand has a knife pointing at DANIEL's neck.

TUCKER

Now, don't make a sound. Open the door; we're going inside.

DANIEL is squirming and trying to cry for help, but Tucker's hand is covering his mouth.

DANIEL

Help! Help!

TUCKER

I said to shut the fuck up! Now move!

DANIEL uses his key to open the front door. TUCKER pushes him into his condo. TUCKER is carrying a backpack and pulls out a rope.

DANIEL

Help!

TUCKER

I told you to shut up!

TUCKER pushes DANIEL into a dining room chair and ties him up. He pulls out duct tape and shows it to DANIEL.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

If you make a sound, I'm going to use this duct tape on your mouth. Are you going to keep quiet?

DANIEL shakes his head up and down. TUCKER keeps moving around the room.

TUCKER (CONT'D)

Good! Now that you understand me, we're going to talk.

DANIEL

How did you get into my security building?

TUCKER

Ha! Are you kidding? I just followed one of your neighbors into the building.

DANIEL

How did you know where I live?

TUCKER

Your license was in your wallet.

DANIEL

And let me guess. You somehow flew across town and beat be home.

TUCKER

I'm tired of you asking so many questions. We're supposed to be having a conversation.

DANIEL

What do you want from me? There's nothing of value here. No jewelry.

TUCKER

Okay. Were you trying to hit on me in the tunnel?

DANIEL

Did you want me to? Let's face it, you were holding me at gunpoint. And now you've followed me home.

TUCKER

It wasn't a gun, anyway. It was a knife. And not very sharp. And you were getting a hardon when I went into your pocket.

DANIEL

I don't know what you're talking about.

TUCKER grabs another dining room chair, turns it backwards and sits directly in front of DANIEL. His eyes are darting back and forth. His hands are quivering.

TUCKER

I want to ask you something.

DANIEL

Go ahead.

TUCKER

Are you gay?

DANIEL

What does that have to do with anything?

TUCKER

Last winter I was caught with my best friend, Arthur, jacking off in the high school bathroom. We were taken to the principal's office. They called my father. When my dad found out, he started hollering:

(takes on a loud belligerent tone)

'Are you a fag? No son of mine is going to be gay. It's bad enough you're sickly. I'm going to beat the shit outta' you. Tell me what you were doing with Art! Tell me, god dammit!'

TUCKER

(returns to his own voice)

He kept screaming the whole time.

DANIEL

What did you tell him?

TUCKER

What do you think? I said:

(speaks loudly and definitively)

'No, I'm not gay. We were just fooling around.'

(returns to his own voice)

But I could tell he didn't believe me.

DANIEL

Can you loosen the rope? It feels like it's cutting into my skin.

TUCKER is grimacing and holding his stomach.

TUCKER

Where's your bathroom?

DANIEL

There's one in the hall over there.

TUCKER is keeling over as he runs offstage to the bathroom. DANIEL squirms for a while and tries to loosen the rope. Unable to break free, he hollers.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What happened to you? Did you leave?

TUCKER enters the dining room.

TUCKER

I told you not to shout.

DANIEL

It's been so much time, I thought maybe you left and forgot to untie me.

TUCKER smiles.

TUCKER

C'mon, you have to promise you won't scream for help, or I'll use the duct tape. Do you understand?

DANIEL

Can't you tell I wouldn't know the first thing about defending myself. I've never been in a fight. I'm a five-foot-eight, one-hundred-eighty-pound weakling.

TUCKER loosens the rope and DANIEL moans.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Careful, it's scraping against my skin. Feels like sandpaper. So, where was your mother when all this was happening?

TUCKER

She died when I was thirteen. My father kept hammering at me.

(takes on a loud belligerent tone)
'You faggot. Get out of my house. I don't want you here.'

(returns to his own voice)

He was out of control. He kept shoving me up against the wall. I thought he was going to kill me. I ran away.

DANIEL

Where'd you go? You had this friend, Arthur, who was with you in the bathroom.

TUCKER

Yeah, some friend. When we were in the principal's office, he said,

(takes on a whiny tone)

'Tucker pulled me into the bathroom and took out his dick. He started it.'

TUCKER

(returns to his own voice)

I couldn't believe he turned on me. We'd been friends since junior high. It had been a game. We would play with our cocks and see who could come first. He was daring me to do this in the school bathroom. Anyway, so I left home. Didn't want to deal with my asshole father.

DANIEL

Where did you live?

TUCKER

I met these guys on Santa Monica Boulevard, and I stay with them.

DANIEL

Hustlers?

TUCKER

Yeah. I don't know if I'm gay, but I suck off men, and they pay me fifty bucks.

DANIEL

How did you get from downtown to my place?

TUCKER

I hitched a ride.

DANIEL

I didn't think anyone hitched anymore. It's so unsafe.

TUCKER

I can handle myself. Most of these men are pussies. I'm good at reading people. If they look suspicious, I'm outta' there.

DANIEL

Please untie me, Tucker.

TUCKER slowly unties DANIEL. When DANIEL is free, he hugs TUCKER. At first TUCKER backs away. DANIEL faces TUCKER and holds his hands. They stare at one another. When DANIEL tries to kiss TUCKER, TUCKER turns away so that DANIEL's kiss lands on his cheek. TUCKER starts to cry.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

TUCKER

I don't really know. Why are you doing this after the way I treated you? I don't deserve any kindness.

DANIEL

Don't say that. I can see you're hurting and confused.

TUCKER

I'm afraid to be gay. I would hate myself if I was gay. I have enough problems in my life.

DANIEL

But you like men?

TUCKER

Can't I like men without having sex? I feel like sex is only good for making money.

DANIEL

Are you saying you always get paid? You've never had a crush on another boy or a teacher?

TUCKER

No. Ever since I got caught with Arthur, I don't trust anyone.

DANIEL

And what is this thing about you being sickly?

TUCKER

I have Crohn's disease. And my father refused to let me be treated for it. Said I should just take some Tums. My

TUCKER

doctor said there was a new kind of therapy, sort of like chemo, that could work.

DANIEL

God! Your father was a real shit!

TUCKER

Tell me about it! Don't be offended by this, but there's something about you that reminds me of my father. Maybe the way you comb your hair or the way you smile.

DANIEL

I hope you're not looking for a father in me.

TUCKER laughs.

TUCKER

Ha! No way, but I have to tell you that most of the tricks I've had were lonely older men. Married and, I guess, afraid to come out.

DANIEL

You'd think that wouldn't be an issue these days. It's almost the end of the twentieth century, for god's sake! Have you been having safe sex?

TUCKER

Yeah. I always use a condom even when I'm giving blowjobs. I'm very careful. What about you? What's your story?

DANIEL

I'm the Merry Widow. Well, that's what my friends call me. My lover, Jacob, died of AIDS five years ago.

TUCKER

Are you sick?

DANIEL

No. I'm fine. I get tested every six months.

TUCKER

Me, too. I get my blood taken at the LGBTQ Center.

DANIEL

What about your stomach problems? Crohn's is pretty serious.

TUCKER

That's why I had to use your bathroom earlier. Sometimes the cramps are unbearable. I've been trying to save up for getting those injections.

DANIEL

Is that why you mugged me? Thinking you could get cash.

TUCKER

Yeah. But honestly, I'd been following you, and you had a kind face. I thought you might be willing to help me.

DANIEL

You know, you're the first man that I've been attracted to since my lover died. I haven't had sex with anyone in five years!

TUCKER

Really?

DANIEL

I've been having a difficult time. But you've helped me. I almost feel like I should repay you.

TUCKER

No. Don't do that.

DANIEL

Maybe I can help you find a doctor.

TUCKER

And maybe we can have sex. I don't know if I'm gay, but I like talking to you, and, well, I find you attractive.

They both kiss and proceed to take off their clothes as the lights dim.

BEAUTIFUL SLUDGE

LUKE has a plunger in his hand trying to unplug his sink. He keeps repeating the action until he realizes that the drain is so blocked up that sludge is pouring under the sink. He's almost in tears. In the midst of the chaos, the doorbell rings.

LUKE

Who is it?

JONATHAN

Jonathan, your neighbor from downstairs. Water is coming from your ceiling. Do you have a leak?

LUKE

I am so sorry. My kitchen pipes are clogged, and I was trying to fix them. I didn't realize it would affect your ceiling.

JONATHAN

Why don't you let me in; maybe I can help.

When LUKE lets JONATHAN into his condominium, he stares at JONATHAN's muscles. When LUKE speaks, he stutters.

LUKE

Oh, god! You look like you could fix anything. Oh, I am sorry. I don't know what I'm saying.

JONATHAN

We need to shut off the water before it gets worse. Do you know where the valve is?

LUKE

No. Isn't it just one shut-off valve for the entire condo complex?

JONATHAN

I should know that. I'm on the board. Let's look under the sink.

When JONATHAN lies down on the floor, he realizes that there is water and sludge. But he can reach under the sink and finds the shut-off valve.

LUKE

You've done it. You're a miracle man. Oh, but your clothes are wet. Let me get you a towel or something to clean up. Maybe a shirt.

JONATHAN gets up from the floor and assesses the damage to his clothes.

JONATHAN

You don't have to bother. I can just go back to my unit and clean up there.

LUKE

No, no. This is the least I can do. Just sit right there. I'll be back in a second.

LUKE returns with a towel and shirt and helps JONATHAN remove his soiled shirt. LUKE is tempted to use the towel to wipe off the grime sticking to JONATHAN's chest, but JONATHAN grabs the towel and finishes.

JONATHAN

I can't believe we've never met. I've been in this building for six months. I'm Jonathan.

LUKE

We must keep different hours. I'm Luke.

JONATHAN

I really should get back to my place

LUKE

I know it's late, but I'd like to make it up to you. Supper? You pick the restaurant. It's my treat.

JONATHAN

That's not necessary. But I would like something to drink. Do you have wine?

LUKE gets some wine and glasses but as he begins to pour it, JONATHAN gets up from where he is sitting and picks Luke up off his feet. LUKE is startled and laughs nervously.

LUKE

You scared me.

JONATHAN

I'm just playing with you. You seem so serious. I didn't hurt you, did I?

LUKE

Were you just showing off your muscles?

JONATHAN

I saw the way you were looking at me. Don't get all embarrassed. And don't think I'm some kind of narcissist, but I find my looks can be intimidating. You would be surprised how many guys won't even approach me. They think I'm out of their league or some bullshit like that.

LUKE

Ha! I wish I had your problems.

JONATHAN

Why? You're good looking. A bit thin, but you just need to bulk up.

LUKE

Are you trying to become my trainer?

JONATHAN

What makes you think that? Oh, right. That's what people assume . . .

JONATHAN stares down at his muscles.

JONATHAN

. . . I'm an accountant by day and a gym rat at night.

LUKE

You probably have a boyfriend or maybe you're married?

JONATHAN

We broke up six months ago. I'll tell you about it sometime. Right now, I just want to check my kitchen and then crash. I hardly had any sleep last night. I think I'm becoming an insomniac.

LUKE

Why don't you finish your wine and you can tell me about your ex.

JONATHAN

I hate talking about him. He called today, and it makes me spin out of control when I hear his voice. What about you, Luke? Do you have a lover or an ex?

LUKE

No. I just turned fifty, and I've never lived with anyone. Actually, hardly ever dated. I don't even think I've ever told anyone I loved them. I guess I didn't want to be disappointed if they didn't feel the same way. I suppose I'm risk-averse. At least that's what my insurance agent calls me.

JONATHAN

Really! That's hard to believe. There hasn't been anyone?

LUKE

Oh I've had crushes on people, but that's all they were. I never followed up with anyone. When you mentioned guys thinking they were out of your league and were afraid to talk to you, that's kind of how I usually feel. Remember, I grew up during the AIDS years. Never met Mr. Right, I guess. Maybe I'm just not marriage material. I always had excuses to not get involved. It just seemed easier.

LUKE

And when people say, 'Don't you have any regrets?' I really don't. I guess I like being alone with myself. What about you? I bet you've done your share of dating.

JONATHAN

God, before I met Simon, I thought I was meeting Mr. Right all the time. I would date two guys at the same time! I couldn't imagine being monogamous with anyone until I got together with Simon ten years ago.

LUKE

So, what went wrong?

JONATHAN

I'm going to need another glass of wine.

After LUKE gives JONATHAN more wine, JONATHAN kisses LUKE on the cheek.

LUKE

You are such a flirt.

JONATHAN

I can't help myself. I just wanted some fun before I tell you my sad story. We adopted a teenage boy two years after we'd started living together. We'd both wanted children. Our relationship changed because we now had another human being to be responsible for. We took better care of our bodies. Stopped drinking. It was an unexpected revelation having Larry.

LUKE

Oh no! Are you in A.A., and I made you fall off the wagon?

JONATHAN laughs.

JONATHAN

Don't worry. That abstinence was short-lived. You'll see why. Larry turned out to be very difficult. I guess that's the risk with adoption; you never know. By the time he was in high school, he'd almost been arrested numerous times for stealing, drunk driving, fighting. We thought we were excellent parents setting a good example. It got so bad that we sent him to a boarding school in Northern California to finish his education.

JONATHAN stops talking and starts to cry.

JONATHAN

This is so emotional for me. I don't even know why I'm telling you all this. We hardly know each other. There is something inviting about your manner. Do people say you're a good listener?

LUKE

I guess so.

JONATHAN

Last year we got a call from the boarding school in Crescent City. They said it was an emergency. Larry had been arrested, and we needed to fly there ASAP. It turns out that Larry and two other boys were involved in a robbery of a Seven-Eleven.

JONATHAN begins sobbing.

LUKE

Jonathan, maybe you don't want to tell me anything more about this.

JONATHAN

Larry was almost eighteen, and he was tried as an adult. He was sentenced to five years in prison. It destroyed my

JONATHAN

relationship with Simon. I had to move out six months ago, and here I am.

LUKE

I am so sorry this happened. I can't believe you had to leave.

JONATHAN

There was no discussion. He just said, 'I've had enough. I don't want to be in a relationship any more, and I don't want to be involved with parenting.' I asked him about couples counseling, but he said he wasn't interested. He won't even visit Larry, even though it was a joint adoption. I really wonder about our whole relationship.

LUKE

What an asshole!

LUKE holds JONATHAN's hand.

LUKE

I had no idea you were going to tell me all this. This is probably more than you asked for this evening. Helping me with my sludge. Ruining your shirt.

JONATHAN

And me bringing up my own sludge. But really, this was good talking to you. I tend to keep things inside, and as I told you before, you're a great listener.

They embrace, and Luke opens the door to let JONATHAN out, but JONATHAN does not leave.

JONATHAN

Would you stay with me tonight? I haven't slept with a man in six months. I'd like it to be you.

*JONATHAN takes LUKE's hand and happens to look out of the window.
He points.*

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

And look outside. The moon is
winking at us; she wants it to
happen.

THE END

EXPLORING

A bedroom, with a 40-year-old man, LIAM, tentatively removing the bedspread. Each time he tries to get into bed, he stops, as if there is a force field preventing him from proceeding. He tries fluffing up the pillows. The door creaks open, and a younger man, Grant, enters.

GRANT

Oh, I'm sorry, it looks like you were trying to get to sleep.

LIAM

That's a good word, "trying," but not succeeding. You know, this is the first time I'm sleeping in this bed. Since Betty died, I've been sleeping on the couch in the living room. How could I dare to be on this mattress without her by my side?

LIAM almost tears up but stops himself.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Did you want to talk to me about something?

GRANT

The memorial service for Betty.

LIAM

I thought it went okay. I guess it was a good thing that we waited until all the family from out of town could attend. I think your sister would have appreciated the event.

GRANT

Yes. The thing is I'm worried about *you*. I know it would have been difficult for you to speak. But you hardly talked to anyone afterwards. You're usually such a good conversationalist.

LIAM

I think the grieving process is catching up with me, or I'm still in shock. We were married for fifteen years, but it feels like a *lifetime*. Cancer is such a shit storm. And we were so intimate with one another. I didn't want to share that with anyone.

GRANT sits down on a chair by the bed.

GRANT

I know that Betty wanted to be a mother. You both would have made such great parents.

LIAM

Don't remind me. If there had been a child, I wouldn't feel so alone.

GRANT

You know Betty told me that I should act like some sort of Guardian Angel after she died. That you didn't have any friends besides her. She wanted me to promise to take care of you.

LIAM laughs.

LIAM

Ha! She asked me to make the same promise about *you*, 'My brother is going to need lots of help after I'm gone. Think about it. He and I lived together most of our lives. And he's never had any kind of long-term relationship. It's a good thing he's living with *us*.'

GRANT

And she probably said I was immature and a slut because I've been with so many men. And that I was bad with money. She was so supportive of me with my dreams of being an actor. That was part of the reason she wanted me staying here. That if I didn't have

to pay rent, I could pursue my acting career full time. Look how *that* turned out. I failed her!

LIAM

Betty *never* said that. She was *always* proud of you. You don't know how lucky you are to even have a sister. I'm an only child, and so many of my friends are either not close with their siblings or even estranged from them. I mean, you guys were like twins!

GRANT starts to cry.

GRANT

If your goal was to make me cry, you've succeeded.

LIAM

But I have to tell you, that it's a blessing having you here. There are times when I get home from work and can't bear to open the door. Like this place is a tomb. So quiet without Betty. You're a piece of her, and that is so comforting to me.

GRANT

In some ways, you're a piece of Betty, too. You know the clichés about after you're married, you take on the characteristics of your spouse? Sometimes even looking alike? Look at you; how you would finish each other's sentences! I was jealous.

LIAM

Oh, come on! Talk about *jealous*! How do you think I felt when you and Betty were so tight with each other. There were times that I felt like a third wheel when you guys reminisced about the past.

LIAM looks at his hands and winces.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I've started chewing on my fingernails again since Betty died. Damn! She would always reprimand me. She would clean up my nails and figure out a way for them to heal. I miss that.

GRANT

I watched her do it once. Do you want me to attempt it?

LIAM

As long as it doesn't make things worse.

GRANT finds a bowl in the bathroom, fills it with warm water and takes LIAM's large rough hands and gently places them in the bowl. He begins massaging the palms searching for pressure points. Then GRANT cups his hands like a fist and rolls his closed fist up and down LIAM's fingers.

GRANT

Am I hurting you?

LIAM

No pain, no gain!

GRANT continues massaging LIAM's fingers, and then stops.

GRANT

Why don't you take off your wedding ring? You probably have dry skin under there.

LIAM

I've never taken off the ring since we got married.

GRANT

Just for a minute. I promise we'll put it right back on.

As GRANT uses oil on LIAM's fingers, the ring naturally falls off into the bowl. LIAM gasps, closes his eyes and lets GRANT take the ring out of the bowl. LIAM looks liberated. GRANT finalizes the massage. LIAM smiles looking at his fingers.

LIAM

You're a miracle worker. Almost as good as your sister.

GRANT

It *is* amazing, the change. Good enough for a commercial. Now don't let my work go to waste by biting your nails.

LIAM

How much do you charge?

GRANT

How about we do a trade? Wanna' give me a pedicure? My toes are in almost as bad shape as your fingernails.

LIAM takes the bowl of water and begins massaging GRANT's feet until GRANT starts giggling.

GRANT (CONT'D)

I'm ticklish! Stop!

LIAM

Don't be such a baby! I'm just getting started.

LIAM uses his knuckles and kneads them against GRANT's feet. When GRANT moans, LIAM stops.

LIAM

Your sister used to joke that when I massaged her feet, it felt like she was having an orgasm.

GRANT

Ach! Too much information.

After drying GRANT's feet, LIAM takes a special jasmine moisturizer and rubs some on GRANT's feet.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Boy, you *are* good! I can see why Betty fell in love with you. Wow!

LIAM

When I was massaging your feet, they reminded me so much of Betty's. Even your smell is similar to Betty's. In some weird way, it feels like Betty is still alive and with us.

As LIAM takes away the bowl, GRANT stands up. He loses his footing and collapses into LIAM. LIAM is about to kiss GRANT, but GRANT stops him.

GRANT

What's going on? Do you know what you're doing? I'm your brother-in-law!

LIAM

But I've seen the way you've looked at me. It never bothered me. To be honest, I was flattered by it. I've always been secure in my sexuality, but there *is* something going on between us.

GRANT

But still, this doesn't make sense! You should stop!

LIAM

And you're telling me that my wife dying at thirty-five makes any kind of sense?

GRANT

I'm going back to my bedroom.

LIAM doesn't let GRANT leave and attempts to kiss him. GRANT tries to resist but eventually succumbs to LIAM's affection. Then GRANT becomes the aggressor and begins sucking on each of LIAM's fingers. GRANT takes his hand and leads him to bed. Lights dim. (Pause)

When lights come up, LIAM is frantically searching the room.

LIAM

Where is it?

GRANT

What?

LIAM

My wedding ring. My hand feels
naked.

*GRANT gets up out of bed and finds the ring on the bedroom cedar chest
and shows it to LIAM. Only when GRANT slides the ring on LIAM's
finger, does LIAM relax.*

LIAM (CONT'D)

It's a sign from Betty. She wants me to
grieve. I don't deserve any happiness!
I don't deserve you, Grant!

GRANT holds LIAM's hands.

GRANT

Don't say what you don't deserve.
Honestly, I have always had a crush
on you, but I would never do anything
about it. I wouldn't dare do something
to hurt my sister. And anyway you're
straight.

LIAM

Then why am I feeling this way about
you? I just had a crazy thought. That
this is what Betty meant about taking
care of one another. Could she have
had that kind of insight? That we
might be *attracted* to one another?
This is dangerous territory, but you
know, maybe I don't care.

GRANT

I think she would approve.

GRANT begins kissing LIAM.

Lights dim.

THE END

THE MATHEMATICIAN AND THE PHILOSOPHER

Lights come up. The interior of an elevator with two men; one is twenty-one years old (WADE) wearing glasses and dressed in a sport jacket and tie, and the other is nineteen years old (GABRIEL) wearing glasses and in a costume that a Greek Philosopher might wear (toga, sandals). After WADE pushes the elevator button, he looks up at the floor numbers.

GABRIEL

Oh, you're going to the same floor.
That must be a good omen.
What do you think?

WADE ignores the comment and then mumbles to himself.

WADE

I don't believe in omens. I would
more likely be figuring the *odds* of that
happening.

GABRIEL

I didn't hear what you said.

WADE sneezes. He looks embarrassed because he doesn't have a tissue.

WADE

Hey, do you have a tissue?

GABRIEL reaches into the shoulder bag that he is carrying.

GABRIEL

I always carry these around for
emergencies.

GABRIEL hands WADE a tissue.

WADE

Thanks.

GABRIEL

I have a whole array of items.
Chewing gum and mints; you should
try one. Leftover habit from when I
smoked. People used to complain
about that smoky smell. Now, they
come in handy for bad breath. I also

GABRIEL

have this spray and cloth to clean my glasses.

WADE looks disgusted when GABRIEL mentions smoking. Then WADE blows into his hand checking his breath.

WADE

Okay. Let me try a mint. And while you're at it, I need to clean my glasses.

GABRIEL hands over a mint and glass spray and cloth.

GABRIEL

You look nervous. Do have some sort of special appointment?

WADE

I'm applying for a job as a tax accountant, and they're having the second round of interviews.

GABRIEL

Oh, god! A tax accountant! I'm not good with numbers, and that type of job sounds so serious. Don't take this the wrong way, but I would be bored out of my mind in that profession. You're so young to be having a job sitting behind a desk all day long.

WADE

That's why I want it. I'm thoughtful and pensive. *(pause)*

WADE looks up toward the floor numbers.

WADE (CONT'D)

This elevator is moving so slowly, and it's not stopping at any floors.

GABRIEL starts laughing. WADE looks angry.

GABRIEL

I can see by your face that you're wondering why I'm laughing. I'm sorry I laughed. It's funny how I've given you so many things. What

GABRIEL

would have happened if I wasn't sharing the elevator with you? And I was thinking about how funny it is being in this elevator. I'm a philosophy major, and I'm always trying to make a coherent sense out of the whole.

WADE

Let me stop you there. What is it with this outfit you're wearing?

GABRIEL

Oh, you mean this getup? It's part of my final exam to not only think like a philosopher but to look like one. A debate is being held in this building between two philosophers, and we're each supposed to take the role of one of them. I'm a bit early. Wanted to practice before the debate started.

WADE

I'm early too.

GABRIEL

See, we're both punctual. Nice coincidence, don't you think?

WADE

I suppose. But I'd still like to know how being in this elevator is funny.

GABRIEL

So, I realized that when the elevator door first opens, in a way we're taking a leap when we enter leaving the old reality behind as the door closes. And when we press the button, we activate energy to take us to our desired level. When this machinery moves, we can't influence the outcome. It forces us to let go. Then suddenly, we get to our floor, the door opens, and we're at a different level; a different reality.

WADE

You make it sound like we're in a time machine.

GABRIEL

Exactly! The whole thing seems humorous to me. Like we're here, two strangers, taking the trip together. Like in a road trip movie.

WADE

You know, I just realized that I don't actually remember entering the elevator. It feels like I've just always been in it with you.

GABRIEL

And come to think of it, I don't recall how I got into the elevator either.

WADE looks confused. GABRIEL is looking at the walls of the elevator.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

What do you think of these mirrors? They're supposed to reduce anxiety plus give a sense of space making it less cramped.

WADE

I don't like the mirrors. They make me feel self-conscious although I have to admit that being able to check my tie is helpful. I just don't want to see any of my flaws. When I was younger, I wished I was a vampire because they can't see their reflection.

GABRIEL

It's a blessing for me because I'm claustrophobic. Mirrors help me to avoid feelings of being trapped. Hey, have you heard of the *mirror rule*?

WADE

No, but I'm sure you're going to tell me.

GABRIEL

You *do* know about it. Where your right hand becomes your left hand in the mirror.

WADE

That's not the *mirror rule*. It's actually called the *left-right inversion*. The philosopher, Stephen Law, said it was an example of a problem that science couldn't solve. Philosophers and mathematicians, of which I am one, have been debating this forever. It was decided that it might be a scientific problem, but it was a trivial one at that.

GABRIEL

I can't believe that you know about Stephen Law. You actually brought up an excellent point. By the way, I'm Gabriel, and don't call me Gabe. It grates on me. I love my three-syllable name. . . Uh, doesn't it feel stuffy in here? Like there's no air circulating? You must be so uncomfortable. Who wears ties anymore?

WADE

My name is Wade.

GABRIEL

I can't remember ever wearing a tie. Does this somber attitude help with your job prospects? I don't know much about being a tax accountant. You must have been good in math.

WADE

It's important that I make a good impression.

GABRIEL

Do you want to have a debate about the mirror rule? It will be good practice for me, and maybe it will be good for your interview.

WADE

Uh, . . . I don't think so.

GABRIEL

So if you're a mathematician, why aren't you doing research or teaching?

WADE

It doesn't interest me. Research jobs are hard to come by, and I would hate to be a teacher. The money will be better as a tax accountant. But I love numbers, and I like puzzles. Solving a mathematical equation is no different than a puzzle. I could spend hours at it.

GABRIEL

Are you that nervous about this interview?

WADE

Yes. I heard it's like being cross-examined in court or feeling like you're facing a firing squad.

GABRIEL

I don't know why anyone would put themselves through that. It's like being in a torture chamber.

A strange sound is heard. WADE and GABRIEL hear the sound but try to ignore it.

WADE

How are you planning on getting a job without going on an interview.

GABRIEL

Well, I still have a few years to worry about that. And I *do* want to teach. I'm sure there's a shortage of philosophy teachers, and I've got a load of other choices.

WADE

Getting a degree in philosophy doesn't seem very practical. Despite what you say, I don't believe there are jobs out there.

GABRIEL

You are *so* wrong! I enjoy thinking through problems from multiple angles, and that's valuable to *any* organization. The name, '*Philosophy*', derives from the Greek, '*Philosophia*', meaning love of wisdom. That's why philosophers like to ask the big questions, like, 'What is Truth?'

WADE

I hope you find the truth.

GABRIEL

Hey, What's with the elevator? Our floor was lit up, and it didn't stop. This is crazy! Why aren't the doors opening? Oh, god, the top floor says seventy! I didn't realize that this building was so tall.

GABRIEL looks nauseous and suddenly crumples to the elevator floor. Wade looks in the callbox for a phone and realizes there isn't one.

WADE

Gabriel, just calm down, okay? If you faint, you might hurt yourself.

GABRIEL

We're trapped! Why isn't the alarm working?

WADE

Look, someone is going to know we're in here.

GABRIEL

You don't know that! There could be a whole bunch of elevators on the first floor.

The elevator suddenly stops. The doors automatically open, and they see that it has stopped between floors.

GABRIEL

Close those doors! I don't want to look at a bunch of bricks! If there's an earthquake they might crumble, and we'd be crushed. And look at the crack in the mirror. Can you imagine if the mirrors got loose and fell? We'd die from being stabbed by shards of glass.

WADE removes his tie and sports jacket and unbuttons his shirt collar. GABRIEL remains on the floor. The lights suddenly go out, and it is totally dark.

WADE

(in the dark)

It must be a power failure.

The lights come back on, and the elevator jerks and begins moving again. WADE is thrown to the floor. GABRIEL reaches out and hugs WADE.

GABRIEL

Thank you. It feels good to hold someone. I'm glad you didn't move away. I'm kind of a touchy-feely guy. It's instinct. What about you?

WADE

Totally the opposite. I can't remember the last time someone held me, let alone a stranger.

GABRIEL

I'm a harmless stranger. Honest I am! But you're sure this cuddling is okay with you?

WADE

It actually feels good. I'll tell you if I get uncomfortable.

WADE and GABRIEL remain on the floor. They stare into each other's eyes.

GABRIEL

Uh, . . . Thank goodness the elevator is moving again, but Wade, why is it going so fast? And look at the elevator floor numbers; they're flickering on

GABRIEL

and off! What does it all mean? What is the cosmic question we're expected to answer from all this! Where's the answer? Oh, god! We're going to crash!

WADE and GABRIEL clutch each other in fear.

WADE AND GABRIEL

We're going to crash!

The lights go out again, and it is totally dark. The elevator is heard suddenly coming to a screeching halt. The lights flicker on and off and then come up again.

WADE

Oh, my god! We're safe, and I'm not hurt! Gabriel! Gabriel! Are you okay?

WADE notices GABRIEL lying at the other side of the elevator with his face down. WADE goes over to GABRIEL and frantically nudges him until he starts to move.

WADE

Oh, thank god! I thought you were dead! Did you hit your head?

GABRIEL

I don't know what happened. Maybe I passed out for a moment. If I *did* hit my head that explains why I have a headache.

WADE is so relieved that GABRIEL is not hurt, he grabs him and hugs him tightly. During the hug, GABRIEL takes his hands and holds WADE's face and kisses him passionately. Suddenly a voice is heard.

VOICE

You guys sure took a long time to figure this out. Usually people don't spend this much time in Purgatory. And this is the first time we've had guests kissing in the waiting room. I guess you've earned the right to move on.

WADE and GABRIEL nervously laugh, There is a flash of lightning and clap of thunder, and all goes totally dark. When the lights come up, the elevator is empty.

VOICE

Welcome to heaven, guys!

THE END