

LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION.

A Play by
Chuck Blasius

Chuck Blasius
105 Charles St, 2R
New York, NY 10014
(212) 533-2520
chuckblasius.com
© 2009

SYNOPSIS

LOCATION. LOCATION. LOCATION. is the story of four male members of the same family (father, three sons), all played by the same actor.

In the first scene (AS A COURTESY TO OUR NEIGHBORS), Barry, the eldest, an essentially homeless man, meets a young, downwardly-mobile African American man in front of a coffee bar. Barry gives him a crash course in learning to survive by one's wits on the streets of New York.

In Scene Two (NO PEOPLE WITHOUT DOGS), the middle child, Greg, meets a wealthy woman late at night in a dog park. While we realize that these are two lonely people making a desperate attempt to connect, there is a dark secret at the heart of Greg's presence in the dog park. He's been in a long term relationship with a wealthy man whose attempts to transform Greg from unschooled stoner to a gay socialite "wife" have backfired.

The youngest son, James, is the focus of the third scene (PARK CLOSES AT DUSK). He, too, is in a long term relationship that is starting to crumble. The play deals with his attempts to get his 15-year old, adopted mixed-race son to understand why his parents are "divorcing."

In the final scene (LINE FORMS AT NOON), we meet Luther, the father of the family, as he prepares to meet his three sons on his 75th birthday. He is cared for by Edith, a middle-aged African American Medicare nurse. Their relationship is one of mutual need and mutual suspicion, two people who have essentially nothing in common but have been forced to form bonds as fate (in the form of the health care system) has pushed them together. Luther re-assesses his life in a way he never has, in a clumsy effort to understand his estranged relationship with his sons.

The play has four exterior scenes and has a cast of six - two Caucasian men (one is his 40s, one in his 20s), one African American man (in his 30s), one mixed race male (mid-teens), one African American female (40s) and one Caucasian female (early 40s).

SCENE BREAKDOWN

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: "AS A COURTESY TO OUR NEIGHBORS"

CAST OF CHARACTERS: BARRY, about 50
WALTER, in his mid-30s

TIME: A Wednesday afternoon in June

PLACE: The entrance to a coffee bar in
Manhattan

SCENE 2: "NO PEOPLE WITHOUT DOGS"

CAST OF CHARACTERS: GREG, in his late 40s
BETH, in her early 40s
MAN, in his late 20s

TIME: A Monday night in January

PLACE: A dog park in Manhattan

ACT TWO

SCENE 3: "PARK CLOSES AT DUSK"

CAST OF CHARACTERS: JAMES, in his mid-40s
JASON, 16 years old

TIME: A Sunday afternoon in May

PLACE: A pier at Hudson River Park,
Manhattan

SCENE 4: "LINE FORMS AT NOON"

CAST OF CHARACTERS: LUTHER, 75 years old
EDITH, about 50

TIME: A Saturday afternoon in April

PLACE: The steps of the TKTS Booth,
Manhattan

NOTE: Barry, Greg, James and Luther should be played by the same actor.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

"AS A COURTESY TO OUR NEIGHBORS"

(Lights up. Two benches on either side of the entrance to a coffee bar. WALTER, an African-American man in his mid 30s, is on the stage right bench, his laptop open on his lap, tapping away. Simultaneously, his Bluetooth is on. HE has an attaché/knapsack on the bench next to him. There's a newspaper under the bench)

WALTER

No, she hasn't picked up. If you can just let her know that I returned her call and I'd like to set up a meeting. No, my schedule is pretty... um, actually, I'm going out of town on Friday, so I'd like to get it in before then. Terrific. My number is... that's right, you've got it. Listen, thanks for all of your help.

(As HE ends, BARRY, a man in his early 40s, somewhat unkempt in dirty clothes, enters, goes directly up to WALTER)

BARRY

BLAAAH! Blaaahbitty blaaaah blah blah!

WALTER

(Jumps noticeably) Jesus!

(HE clicks off the call. BARRY laughs heartily. WALTER chooses to ignore him, goes back to his laptop)

BARRY

Hey, haven't you heard about all work and no play, boss?

(A pause. BARRY stands his ground. WALTER glances up at him briefly, goes back to work)

I need to get into a shelter tonight. Can you help me out, man?

WALTER

Sorry.

BARRY

Really, only ten bucks'll do me.

WALTER

Sorry.

BARRY

Well, can you help me out by getting me a cup of that fine coffee, man?

WALTER

Sorry.

BARRY

Jeez, guy. I used to give a buck to anyone who asked me. When I had it. I can see you got it.

WALTER

And if I give it to you, I won't have it anymore.

BARRY

Ooooh, that's cold. That's cold, man.

WALTER

Here, here.

(HE hands him a dollar)

BARRY

A dollar? For a cup of coffee? What is this, 1962?

WALTER

Fine. Give it back.

BARRY

Thought you were black, brother. Turns out you're just an Indian giver.

(HE gives him back the dollar)

WALTER

Hmmm. I guess beggars can be choosers.

(BARRY exits. A pause. HE slowly wends his way back onstage, sits on the stage left bench. Takes a joint out of his pocket, lights it, takes a hit. WALTER looks up, makes a face, shakes his head, goes back to typing. BARRY takes another hit)

WALTER

Listen, I'm sorry, but would you mind...?

(A pause)

The smoke is blowing right into my face.

(A pause. BARRY stares at him)

I'm allergic.

BARRY

Oh, don't worry, man. It's only grass.

WALTER

Please.

(A pause)

BARRY

You understand that we're outdoors and that this is a public place?

WALTER

Please. Please. Please. Please.

BARRY

Jesus.

(HE delicately puts it out. A pause)

You done with that newspaper?

WALTER

It's not mine.

(BARRY takes the newspaper from under
WALTER'S bench, starts to read. WALTER
dials a number)

Hey, sweetie, it's me.

BARRY

Move to fuckin' Dubuque if a little smoke is gonna freak you out.

WALTER

Walter. Who else calls you sweetie?... Awww, because you looked so cute, I didn't want to wake you. I do not snore, you snore. Yes, it's very cute snoring.

BARRY

Oh, you're fuckin' kidding me, right?

WALTER

I'm working from home today. No, not much. Just sitting around. Just having some coffee, reading the paper...

BARRY

Being an asshole...

WALTER

I thought I might check out that new store on Bleecker, see if they have anything I like. I'll die if I have to show up at that party without something new.

BARRY

Really? You promise?

WALTER

You're breaking up. Can you still hear me? No, not this weekend, honey. It'll have to be next weekend. I can't afford to go out again this weekend is why. Yes, I miss you. Yes I do. Awww, it's killing me too.

BARRY

Not quickly enough.

WALTER

What? Sorry, there's a dead spot in this apartment. I can barely hear you. Sorry, my reception sucks... I gotta change my cell service.

BARRY

Try two Dixie cups and a string.

WALTER

Can't we just rent a movie and order in? Well, we've been out three times this month. No, I'll let you pick it, I promise. As long as it's not Sandra Bullock or something.

BARRY

Oh, my God! (Reading from the paper at the top of his lungs:) Today: Rain showers late, high 68. Tonight: Rain showers ending, low 53. Tomorrow: More sunshine, then thickening clouds...

WALTER

No, no, there's somebody... (Puts his hand over phone:) Do you mind?

BARRY

You don't seem to mind. Why should I?

WALTER

(Into phone:) No, I decided to go to the deli, and there's this jerk who thinks he's being funny.

BARRY

(Reading:) G.M. loses 30.9 Billion. The automaker said its cash is running out and its survival depends on receiving more federal aid...

WALTER

I'll call you back.
(HE hangs up)
I'm trying to have a phone conversation.

BARRY

I'm trying to read the paper.

WALTER

And you have to do it out loud?

BARRY

Your voice is more important than mine?

WALTER

What are you talking about?

BARRY

I can't hear myself think with you squawking into that goddamned phone, Walter.

WALTER

I was trying to have... How the hell do you know my name?

BARRY

'Cause I'm a warlock. Listen, Walter, when you pick up that cellphone you may think you've entered your own universe, but the rest of us can actually still hear you.

WALTER

Shouldn't you at least purchase one item from this place before you monopolize that bench?

BARRY

What, are you gonna call the fucking Coffee Police?

WALTER

Here. Here's five bucks. That should buy you a couple of Colt 45s.

BARRY

Colt 45? Whaddya think, I'm... uhhh... I don't drink Colt 45. No, I really do want a coffee. A latte. A dopo mocha macchiachino. With an extra shot.

WALTER

Sure. Knock yourself out.

(BARRY enters the cafe with the five dollar bill. WALTER dials a number)

It's Walter again. What the fuck is going on? You said it was low risk. Well, I'm looking at it right now. No, it's plummeting. Do I hang on, or... Yes, call me back. And do it this time. No, no, the office switchboard is all fucked up. Call my cell.

(BARRY re-enters with coffee as WALTER hangs up)

BARRY

You know, Walter, they make offices for things like this. I don't know that the price of a cup of coffee entitles you to that bench for the rest of the day.

WALTER

Fuck off.

BARRY

Ooooh, hostility. Is that wise? I mean, who knows what I might be capable of? What might set me off? Really, Walter, you sit here for hours and hours, using up their juice, using their toilet, taking up some valuable real estate, stealing their fuckin' WiFi or whatever, and all for a four dollar cup of coffee. If that even is their coffee. Why not just run an extension cord from that outlet back to your apartment, make them pay to run your goddamned toaster.

WALTER

Maybe you wouldn't be quite so judgmental if you actually had to work for a living. What do you think?

BARRY

Oh, I've worked for a living. Found out it wasn't all it was cracked up to be. Four sons. My dad had four sons. First born. That was me. He expected us to take over his business, the one he'd built from the ground up. And I had dibs. Spent the summer after my senior year working for him. Thought I'd lose my mind. Oooh, don't say it. I see what you're thinking. Well, maybe that's true. Maybe just one summer of invoices and packing slips and deliveries out of the back of the station wagon while your friends are piling into the Camaro, off to the beach with the radio blaring, was enough to send me screaming into the abyss.

WALTER

I worked every summer from the time I was fourteen years old. After school, too.

BARRY

My hero.

WALTER

I'm saying that just because you had to do something you didn't want to do ONCE, doesn't mean the world owes you something.

BARRY

And all those paper routes, what did they get you?

WALTER

Huh?

BARRY

What do you do, man?

WALTER

Huh? I'm... I'm in real estate.

BARRY

Uh-huh. How's that working out for you?

WALTER

It's a rough time right now. And how's the panhandling market these days? Steady?

BARRY

Bit of a slump, actually. Not like the good old days. I may have to diversify.

WALTER

Oh, yes? To what? Mugging old ladies?

BARRY

No, no, no. I only participate in victimless crimes. Can I interest you in some primo weed? Oh, that's right, you're "allergic." Blow?

WALTER

No. Thank you.

Meth? Oxy?

BARRY

Seriously, I'm good.

WALTER

Well, the day's still young. You wanna blow job? I'm pretty good.

(WALTER shakes his head)

Yeah, it's hard to get laid when you smell like me. Where you from, Walter?

WALTER

Sorry, none of your business.

BARRY

I'm from the Island.

WALTER

Which island?

BARRY

Obviously you're not from around here. Long Island. It's... that way.

(HE points)

WALTER

No, I know where Long Island is.

BARRY

You from down South?

WALTER

Why, because I'm black?

BARRY

Because you drawl.

WALTER

South. Carolina.

BARRY

Yeah, I figured.

WALTER

And your point is...?

BARRY

No point, really. But I bet it was just as hard for me to get here as it was for you. Harder, I'll bet.

WALTER

How do you figure that?

BARRY

Physical distance is not really an accurate measure of how long or how hard it takes to get somewhere. But it makes all the difference in terms of going back.

WALTER

You've lost me.

BARRY

Well, for you, there's no going home. You're here now.

WALTER

I go home at Christmas.

BARRY

Not the same. You have sisters? Brothers?

WALTER

One brother. Three sisters.

BARRY

And I'll bet the sisters live close to Mommy.

WALTER

Pretty close.

BARRY

So they're not going to ask poor Walter to come all the way from New York City if Mommy has a doctor's appointment. Needs a lift to church on Sunday.

WALTER

Well, no.

BARRY

Where I'm always being dragged home for one stupid reason after another, since I'm just a train ride away. "Oh, your Dad needs new batteries for his hearing aid." "Gee, the garage could sure use a paint job." "You're not coming home for Ground Hog's Day dinner?" They keep pulling me back.

WALTER

Well, we all have our different crosses to bear.

BARRY

No, I'm not trying to say that being a nigger faggot is easy.

WALTER

Excuse me?

BARRY

Listen, my brothers are all faggots, so it's okay for me to say that.

WALTER

Unless your brothers are also niggers, it's definitely not okay.

BARRY

Oh, can't we all just... let it go?

WALTER

Okay, listen. This would be a good time for you to just sit there and keep your mouth shut. You don't know anything.

BARRY

Did I hit a nerve, Walter?

(WALTER'S cellphone rings)

WALTER

Sorry, but as much as I enjoy being psychoanalyzed by a vagrant, you'll have to excuse me.

(HE picks up)

Walter Pittman. Yes, yes, thanks so much for getting back to me. Yes, I'd like that very much. Umm... I'm about to get on a flight to L.A. for the weekend, but I'm back on Monday. Yes, that should work. Can you text me the details. Excellent. I look forward to meeting you. You too. No, not that you should have a safe trip, I meant... Yeah, terrific, thanks.

(HE hangs up)

Thank you for keeping your mouth shut.

BARRY

I was tempted.

(A pause)

WALTER

So how did you... wind up like this? You seem... intelligent.

BARRY

Wind up like what?

WALTER

Well... You couldn't always have been...

BARRY

Do you mean when did I realize that I didn't want to spend my life chasing an unattainable dream imposed on me by someone else?

WALTER

Come on, man. You weren't always homeless.

BARRY

Who says I'm homeless? I have a home. I've never had a credit card, if that's what you mean. I've never punched a time clock. I've been in my apartment for about thirty years. My rent is... nothing. Almost. Sometimes I sublet one of the rooms.

WALTER

You said you wanted money for a shelter.

BARRY

Sometimes it works. Don't take things so literally, Walter.

WALTER

But you have to make a living somehow.

BARRY

I just made five bucks. They always feel sorry for me here and give me free coffee. When confronted with crazy, people are usually generous. Sometimes I play guitar at the West Fourth Street station. I have a very small nut. I get by.

WALTER

So your family helps you out?

BARRY

In a financial sense, sometimes. In any other sense, no.

WALTER

Well, you've always got them to go back to. I don't. I don't have a cushion. I land hard on my ass.

BARRY

So the last time you saw your family was Christmas?

WALTER

Yes. Well, Christmas two years ago.

BARRY

You haven't seen your mother in two years? Your own mother? Oh, Walter.

WALTER

It's complicated. My mother has Huntington's disease.

BARRY

That's where I'm from! But I don't they named the disease after the town. The more appropriate name for my town would be something like "Cancer Corners." "Metastisizeville."

(HE laughs)

All the mothers on our side of the street got cancer. The men smoke and drink and go on making everyone miserable well into their eighties, but the women all get cut down by sixty-five.

WALTER

My mother wouldn't know if I walked into the room.

BARRY

Or so they tell you. I know I'm not the kind of person that the kind of person like you would take advice from. But go home. See her. You'll be glad you did. You can't say you've truly lived until you've come the full circle of changing your mother's diaper. Helped her get dressed in the morning. My Dad forgot to put the car in reverse when he was leaving the strip mall and got his license revoked. So there was no one to drive her to her appointments. So there I was, over thirty years old, living in my old bedroom for three months. It puts things into focus when you sit across from your Mom, watching them drip poison into her arm and all you want to do is make her laugh. Like she used to shake a stuffed bunny at you when the doctor was giving you a vaccination.

WALTER

My relationship with my mother was... I'm not getting into this with you.

BARRY

My mother was the only member of my family who thought I might be able to accomplish something, all appearances to the contrary.

(WALTER's phone rings)

WALTER

The church meant more to her than her own son, that's all I'll say. Excuse me. (HE picks up) Hello? Oh, hello, Mr. Newmark. No, no, I'm not avoiding you, what's up? I don't understand that. No, no, your bank must've screwed up. No, I'm looking at my balance right now. Oh, no, I see. You know what must've happened? I have an automatic funds transfer that must've... the mortgage is supposed to come directly... Let me call my bank right now. No, just wait an hour and re-deposit it. Sure, of course. No, no, don't call my office, I'm having lunch right now at Provence. Call me back at this number. No worries, Mr. Newmark.

(HE hangs up)

BARRY

Provence closed about a year ago. They used to throw out a lot of perfectly good wine.

WALTER

Shit.

(HE dials a number)

Hey, sweetie, Walter again. Listen, I need to ask you a really, really big favor, if you could call me back the second you get this message. Please. I'm waiting for your call.

(HE hangs up)

So what would you do if it all just... went away?

BARRY

What all?

WALTER
Your things. Your home. You know. The repo man shows up.

BARRY
(Laughs) Nothing to repo, man.

WALTER
Well, if you lost your apartment.

BARRY
Go someplace else.

WALTER
Well, if you couldn't afford...

BARRY
Move in with friends. 'Til I could find a place.

WALTER
You have no friends. They don't want you. What would you do?

BARRY
Go back to my family.

WALTER
Impossible. You can't go back there. They all... they're dead. And they didn't leave you anything. You've got a huge credit debt.

BARRY
So we're talking Fantasyland?

WALTER
No savings. You're starting from Square One. What do you do?

BARRY
Well... I'd stay in New York, that's for sure.

WALTER
Really? Why?

BARRY
'Cause it's easy to live here with nothing. Lots of places to sleep where they don't bother you. Lock you up. Ticket you. Subways. Parks. They can't touch you if you sleep on the steps of a church.

WALTER
Cold, though.

BARRY
Not in the summer. Maybe in the winter I'd go West. South. Who knows? Stay away from the shelters. They suck.

WALTER
And do I end up eating cat food?

BARRY

Cat food is actually quite expensive. You always find some brand of tuna on sale cheaper than cat food. And the taste is superior, I must say. Food's not a problem. All these places, Restaurant Row, the Flatiron District, Meatpacking District, they throw out more than gets eaten. 'Specially Meatpacking. Lots of models eating there. One bite and they put a cigarette out in their Artichoke. Much better shit than you get at the soup kitchens.

WALTER

And are you able to panhandle enough for... everything else? Clothes? Um... Water? Umm... What else do you need?

BARRY

I don't know. What else do you need? Stay off the drugs. That's where all the money goes.

WALTER

But how do you... once you've... How do you ever climb back up?

BARRY

Back up to what?

(A long pause)

WALTER

I don't think I could just walk up to a stranger and ask for money. I don't think I'd be very good.

BARRY

You work in real estate. I'm sure you've screwed people out of more than a handful of change.

WALTER

What's your line? I mean, do you have, like, a sob story?

BARRY

Look at me. A picture says a thousand words. Use what you've got. A surly black dude approaches a white blonde girl walking alone after dark? You'd be surprised how quickly the purse opens.

WALTER

Where do you go? Anyplace special?

BARRY

Again, Meatpacking. Celebrities, especially the newly rich ones still carry a lot of guilt that they have no trouble trying to buy off. Or they just want to show off in front of their entourage. Look for the ones with the most bling; they're the least secure. Give it a shot. Try Sixth Avenue.

(HE points off left)

Don't be crazy.

WALTER

Can't help it. Just am.

BARRY

(BARRY grins. A pause)
Worth a try. Take off the Armani jacket, though.

(HE takes off his jacket)

No, I can't.

WALTER

Sure you can.

BARRY

This is insane.

WALTER

I'll watch your stuff.

BARRY

How do I know you won't steal it?

WALTER

Honor code of the streets, my man.

BARRY

Okay. I will.

WALTER

Go for it. You might want to leave the Bluetooth behind.
Sends the wrong impression.

BARRY

This is silly.

WALTER

(HE takes off the Bluetooth, hands it to
BARRY)
Okay. Here goes.

Sixth Avenue. Look for someone looking at a map.

BARRY

Wish me luck.

WALTER

(WALTER exits, a little hesitantly.
BARRY sits back down on his bench. Re-
lights his joint. A beat, and WALTER's
phone rings. BARRY smiles, puts on the
Bluetooth. Picks up WALTER's phone.
Shrugs, pushes some buttons)

BARRY

Ummm... Walter Blahbidiblah's office?... I'm sorry, he's stepped away from his desk, may I take a message? Really? That's not possible, he paid that bill, I sent it out myself... I'm gonna stop you. Do you understand the kind of pressure he's been under?... Didn't you hear about the shooting?... Yes, that one. Well, Walter's parents live in Dayton. Yes. Killed. Both of them. So I am not going to interrupt his grieving process to ask about some stupid MasterCard payment... Well, that's better. (Tearful) If you had any idea what he's going through, man... Yes, I'll tell him. Thanks for having a heart.

(HE clicks off, laughs, enjoys his joint. WALTER re-enters, holding a dollar bill aloft)

WALTER

Wooooooo! I did it! I got one! A dollar! I did it! I didn't even have to do anything! First person I went up to, I said, "'Scuse me, man, but..." And he dug straight into his pocket and gave me a dollar! Fuck, that was easy. Thanks, man, thank you. Here. You can have it.

(HE hands BARRY the bill)

BARRY

No, man, you keep it. Your first dollar. You can frame it and put it on your first shopping cart.

(THEY sit on their respective benches.

BARRY gives WALTER the Bluetooth)

You don't have to pay your MasterCard bill this month.

(A pause)

Go home, Walter. See your mother. No matter how I screwed up, my mother always led me to believe I'd work it out.

WALTER

Not mine.

BARRY

Give her a chance. No matter what you think you've done, or she's done, what she hasn't done, what you haven't done, she won't mind anymore.

WALTER

She has no mind left.

BARRY

All the better. She can't say anything stupid. Just be close to her once more.

(A pause. HE hands WALTER the joint, who takes a hit and hands it back)

BARRY

I brought an escort to my mother's funeral. Just 'cause I knew my father was going to go into overdrive, and he did, you know, throwing himself on the coffin and shit. I wanted to show him I knew it was all a crock. And I wouldn't let it be all about him. And a pretty skanky escort at that, you should've seen this gal. About twice my size. Well, I didn't want the rest of the family to think she was actually a friend. And of course I didn't tell her I was hiring her for a funeral, so she was dressed... (HE laughs) ...in an inappropriate manner. I thought it was pretty damn funny at the time, but then I dropped her at the train station and went and got plastered and cried my eyes out... It'll be ten years in December.

(A long pause)

Are you married, Walter?

WALTER

(Laughs) No. No, I'm not married.

(A pause)

BARRY

You live alone?

WALTER

Yes.

(A pause)

BARRY

Any kids?

WALTER

Nope. No kids.

BARRY

So it's just you?

WALTER

Yep.

(A pause)

BARRY

Just like me.

(A very long pause)

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

"NO PEOPLE WITHOUT DOGS"

Lights up. GREG on a park bench. BETH standing. BOTH in winter gear. THEY both look out front. A long pause)

BETH
Awww. Boy or girl?

GREG
Hmmm? Oh. Girl.

BETH
Awww. She's sweet.
(GREG nods. Turns away)
What's her name?

GREG
Sofa.

BETH
Awww. Hello, Sophie! Good girl, Sophie.

GREG
Hmmm. Yeah, well. No. It's "Sofa," actually.

BETH
Oh. Ummm. Uh-huh.
(A long pause)
Interesting. Like couch? S-O-F-A?

GREG
(Quickly:) Yeah, well. When she was a puppy I used to yell at her to get down off the new sofa. I'd just yell "Sofa! Sofa!" And she started responding like it was her name. So I kept it.

BETH
Oh. Uh-huh.
(A pause)
(Laughing:) So how do you get her off the sofa?

GREG
I whack her.

BETH
(As if she's been whacked:) Oh!
(A pause)
How old?

GREG
No idea. Got her at the pound.

BETH
You don't know her story?

GREG
They said she was three. Who knows?

(A long pause)

BETH
What is she?

GREG
(As if she's from Mars:) Dog.

BETH
No, I know, but I mean... she looks like she's got some Shepherd. Maybe a little... Standard Poodle, maybe?

GREG
It's not really important to me. What are you? A little bit Jew, maybe? With some Russian on the side?

BETH
Jesus. God, I'm sorry. Forget I was here.

(BETH moves away. A pause)

GREG
Sofa! Sofa, stop!

BETH
They're just playing.

GREG
She can sometimes... her playfulness gets mistaken for aggression.

BETH
They'll work it out.
(A long pause, until BETH can stand it no longer)
Mine's Barney. He's two, at least that's what they told me. He's a rescue, too, so they're well-matched.

(A pause)
They're so much more affectionate, I think. The purebreds at this run act like they own the place. And want nothing to do with the other dogs, have you noticed? When I first got him, he was so skittish, wouldn't go near the other dogs, but he's warmed up a lot. I've had him almost a year. He certainly takes to... to... Sofa. Is this her first time here?

GREG
No.

BETH
She looks familiar, but... I don't think I've seen you... Does your... your wife usually take her? Or your kids?

GREG
(As if to a retarded child:) I'm homosexual.

BETH

Oh. Uh-huh. Yes. Ummmm...

(A long pause)

I don't like to come here this late, but now when it gets dark at five o'clock, well... I make my husband take him for his last walk. But he's out of town this week, so I'm stuck... Well, not stuck. I love him. The dog, I mean. Well, no, I love my husband too, of course; that sounded funny. But I don't look at him as a burden. A kid - THAT might be a burden. But I don't... They don't light this place well enough, don't you think? I'd complain, but with the little bit I contribute every year, they'd tell me to jump in a lake. Do you come here the same time every night? Being alone here at night freaks me out just a little. One time I was here late and a bunch of drunk college kids... They just wanted to scare me, I guess. Well, it worked. So I try to only come here if I see someone I know.

(A long pause)

I'm glad he's got someone to play with. He's been pretty much housebound all week because of the rain and he's been driving me crazy. I hope he gets it all out of his system. Barney! Barney, no! If there's a mud puddle, he goes straight for it, can you beat that? He's gonna need a bath when he gets home, that's for sure. But I'm glad she's tiring him out. Go get him, Sofa! Get him!

(A long pause)

She's very fast, isn't she? I'm Beth, by the way.

(A long pause)

GREG

Hi.

BETH

Yep, a bath is definitely in order. Have you been to that pet shop on... on Greenwich? A bottle of dog shampoo is twenty dollars. It's insane! My shampoo isn't twenty dollars. I can't imagine spending more money on my dog than I do on myself. Does that sound terrible? Are you one of THOSE pet owners?

(A pause)

A can of ordinary dog food, not gourmet, or organic, or whatever, is two-fifty. A can of Spaghettios with meatballs is one-fifty. And he prefers the Spaghettios. I just don't see the point in... Of course, my husband just babies him. If he were here, he'd have Barney dressed in one of those horrible houndstooth sweaters and those silly little booties. I always think the dogs that have to wear those always look so sad. Humiliated, almost, like they know the other dogs are laughing at them. Of course my husband... well, I think he'd take better care of the dog than he would of me. He certainly wouldn't care if I went out into the cold without a sweater and little booties.

GREG

Well, you can take care of yourself, can't you?

(A pause)

BETH

Well, yes, I suppose...

(A long pause)

Looks like Sofa is... taking, making... doing her business. Behind the tree.

GREG

Hmmmm.

BETH

Do you need a bag? I've got plenty. I've learned my lesson with that more than once.

(GREG shakes his head)

There's a shovel by the garbage pail. If you want to use that.

(GREG nods. A long pause)

You should probably do it before somebody steps in it. Or one of the dogs. One time Barney came home stinking to high heaven 'cause he'd run through some, got it all over... Here. Here's a bag.

(A long pause)

Sometimes one of the other dogs will start to, you know, eat it. That's not good. You better... you know...

GREG

I will.

(A long pause)

BETH

You have to, you know. It's the law, even inside the dog run, you know.

GREG

I know.

(A long pause)

BETH

Well, fine. I warned you.

GREG

You did.

(A long pause)

BETH

Oh, listen, I'll do it.

GREG

LEAVE IT!

(A pause)

I'll take care of it. I promise. If anyone comes in, I'll make it clear: That's MY shit.

(A MAN enters, holding a leash, a cellphone in his other hand)

MAN

(Into phone:) I told you, I don't want to. 'Cause she's a fuckin' pain in the ass is why. No, I'm in the dog park now. I dunno, 'cause nobody's barking right now.

GREG

That's my shit.

(BETH moves away, embarrassed)

MAN

(Into phone:) I dunno. Some guy. Well, where do you want to go? Never heard of it. How many stars did it get? And listen, are you ever going to respond to my e-mail about taking your MacBook Pro to Barbados?

(GREG takes a bag out of his coat pocket, looks at BETH, puts his hand in it and exits)

Oh, good, well ask her how many stars it got. No, I'll hold on.

(A pause. The MAN looks at BETH)

Hey.

BETH

Hello.

(A pause)

Big dog.

MAN

'Zat yours?

(GREG points)

BETH

No, he is.

(BETH points in another direction)

MAN

Obsession?

BETH

Barney.

MAN

No, are you wearing Obsession?

BETH

Oh. No.

MAN

Oh. Smells like Obsession. What'd she say?

BETH

Excuse me?

(The MAN holds up his hand; he's resumed his phone conversation)

Oh.

MAN

What the fuck, they won't take a reservation?

(GREG re-enters, holding a full bag.
GREG resumes his place on the bench,
places the bag at the foot of the bench)

BETH

(Pointedly:) Thank you.

(GREG stares at her. An offstage bark)

MAN

Like hell. I'll call. Text me their number. No, you sit.
Sit. I'll do it.

(The offstage barking turns into a
dogfight)

BETH

Oh, my God! Barney! Oh God, Barney!
(GREG immediately jumps off the bench,
runs offstage. To the MAN:)
Oh, God, your dog...!

MAN

They're playing. (Into phone:) Hold on a sec.

GREG

(Offstage:) Stop! Hey, Bud, you wanna get over here and
control your dog? Stop! Stop it!

BETH

Oh my God!

(BETH looks around helplessly)

GREG

(Off:) HEY!

(The MAN exits)

MAN

(Off:) They're just playing.

GREG

(Off:) This isn't playing, you moron. Your dog attacked
him. Get him out of here.

MAN

(Off:) Hey, I've got just as much right to... Don't you
touch my dog, Buddy!

GREG

(Off:) Get him out of here! Get him out of here! GET HIM
OUT OF HERE!

MAN

(Off:) Christ, alright, alright. Calm down, bitch. Come on, Mr. Pibb.

(GREG comes back on, sits on the bench.

BETH runs off)

No, some dame flipped out 'cause Mr. Pibb barked at her dog, and then this faggot chased me out of the park...

BETH

(Off:) Oh, please. Your dog's got bigger balls than you do.

GREG

(Shouting off:) Yeah, and he's been neutered!

BETH

(Off:) Yeah, and he's neutered!

MAN

(Off:) Eat shit!

(BETH re-enters. A pause)

BETH

Asshole.

GREG

Asshole.

(BETH laughs. GREG joins her)

Is he okay?

BETH

Just scared, I think. I didn't see any blood. Thank you so much.

GREG

No worries.

BETH

Now you know why I don't like to come here alone.

GREG

But you didn't know me. I could've been a bigger jerk than him.

BETH

No, no... I sensed you weren't. Oh my God, did it bite you?

GREG

No big deal.

BETH

Oh my God, we should get his name and the dog's papers... vaccinations... make sure...

GREG

Really. It's nothing.

(BETH sits next to him on the bench)

BETH
Thank you. Barney thanks you.

GREG
I did it for Barney.
(A pause)
Really, I'm sorry.

BETH
No, please.

GREG
Really. Before. I didn't mean to be so...

BETH
Really, it's fine, it's fine, please. Don't. Me, too.
I've been... not myself. We've been renovating our
kitchen, which has become an absolute nightmare. Have you
ever renovated a kitchen?

GREG
Yes.

BETH
Take my word for it: don't. My life hasn't been the same
for the past six months. I mean, the first month of washing
your dishes in the bathroom sink is an annoyance, but by the
third month, it's Abu Ghraib. God knows I can't have
guests. How do I explain a microwave in the living room?
And my husband says, "Let's do the bathroom next." And of
course he's saying this from a hotel in Scottsdale. "Oh,
sure. Why not just have me gang-raped in the courtyard by a
troupe of dwarves in front of all the neighbors? Much less
humiliating than watching me slowly disintegrate month by
month. Do you have... a partner?"

GREG
A partner? No, I'm unemployed.

BETH
No, a... you know what I mean.

GREG
Yes, I know.

BETH
What term do you use? Lover?

GREG
No, I wouldn't use that term. Would you call your husband
your lover?

BETH
Well, I... I suppose I... Is that it? Is he your husband?

GREG

Well, I can't really use that term, can I? What would you call your husband? That is, if you were no longer allowed to call him your husband? What would you call him?

BETH

Hmmm... I've never really... My mate?

GREG

Do you live on a seagoing vessel?

BETH

Well, fine then. Okay. My spouse. No, I hate that word. Sounds like "mouse." My significant other.

GREG

Is that good enough? For you, I mean? For him to call you? To always be the "other"?

BETH

My... love. That's good. I like that; it sounds so poetic. My love. My love is out of town on business. Makes it sound so much...

GREG

Phonier?

BETH

No, no, it just doesn't connote sex the way "lover" does. It feels... purer. Can't you call him that? Isn't he your love?

GREG

I suppose he was. Once.

BETH

Oh. I'm sorry.

GREG

(Shrugs) Things happen. I would have just called him my best friend. That's what he was. He took me off the street. Literally. I mean, my sixth host finally said I had to give up his couch after my fourth month there. I mean, it wasn't like drugs were an issue. Well, not a big issue. At least I didn't think so. I was sitting on my futon on the sidewalk waiting for my brother, who was the only person I knew with a car, to pick me up and move me... I don't know where. And he was already two hours late. This was in the days before everyone had a cellphone, so you know how long ago I'm talking. So all I could do was sit and wait. I was still pretty then. And I guess I was looking so forlorn, sitting on that futon on the sidewalk. Whimpering, probably. And he asked me out for a beer. I knew that his shoes alone had cost over a thousand dollars. I abandoned the futon, naturally, not to mention my brother and his car, and off we went. And he took me in. As he was fond of constantly reminding me.

BETH

That's kind of sweet.

GREG

Oh, sure, to all his friends he seemed like the Good Samaritan. But you know how it is; the years go by and suddenly it's no longer enough that the house is organized and you fetch him a cocktail when he gets home from work.

BETH

Oh.

GREG

I knew all his friends thought he was slumming, living with a mongrel like me, but once they saw the home I made, they warmed up. I not only oversaw the kitchen renovation, but the bathrooms, the bedroom, guest room, the expansion of the foyer, and then the summer house in the Pines...

BETH

Yikes.

GREG

The kitchen... I couldn't imagine spending that much money on just a countertop. We were one of the first apartments in New York City with a garbage disposal. A sub-zero freezer. A countertop range. We spent weeks dickering over paint swatches. We finally, after much negotiation, arrived at a color. When I told him the swatch was called "Mushroom Bisque," he went into a tirade about how "bisque" was a designation for seafood soup, from the Bay of Biscay, "mushroom bisque" was an anachronism he couldn't abide, especially in a kitchen... He sent me to cooking classes. I learned how to prepare a feast for twenty. Without help. Souffles, sauces, I could dress and roast and carve an entire suckling pig. Art classes, so I could carry on a conversation with him. Philosophy (like I cared), ballroom dance, comparative literature. In the end, it was a mistake, really. When we first met, it was just dumb love that kept me there, nothing else. Once I started to learn, you know, have opinions, I realized how absolutely little I had in common with him. Then, it was just comfort that kept me there. I just tried to stay out of his way. A warm place to sleep, food, and a pat on the butt every once in awhile.

BETH

This is all sounding horribly familiar... Sorry, what time is it?

GREG

Don't have my watch. Around ten, I guess.

BETH

My husband calls at ten. On the dot. Every night. I didn't want to be home when he called. Let the machine get it. I left my cellphone in the kitchen. Let him think I'm out, running wild, without him.

(SHE laughs)

I'm sorry, it's the little things. I didn't want to be alone tonight. I mean, I have the dog, I'm never alone. But still...

GREG

He doesn't trust you?

BETH

No reason why he shouldn't. I'm loyal to a fault. But still... He'll come home tomorrow and start barking about what I didn't do while he was gone. Stupid things. The dry cleaning. The closet door that sticks. And then I'll sulk for a few hours until he finally throws me a bone and takes me out to dinner at my favorite restaurant, all the while never letting me forget that I've somehow let him down.

(SHE laughs)

GREG

Do you have friends of your own?

BETH

He keeps me on a very short leash. I don't know what he's afraid of. I mean, I've never given him any reason to...

GREG

Get friends. That was my mistake. All my friends were his first. Loyal. I was so fucking lonely. Then I made the mistake of getting the dog. Without his permission. The minute I walked in the door with her, he started bitching. "Oh, she's too big for the apartment, she's not a purebreed, she's not a puppy anymore, she doesn't match the decor, my friends will think she's ugly, she's getting hair all over everything, she's gonna pee and ruin the imported mahogany flooring, I won't be caught dead walking her down the street, why didn't you get a cat," on and on. It was horrible. And she could sense it, too. She's no dummy. But then, as the weeks went by and he saw me getting closer to her, and her to me, he suddenly gets all territorial. And then he goes all Eliza Dolittle on her, taking her to the grooming shop, getting her nails done, her coat tinted. She's coming out of there with little bows in her hair, little rhinestone collars. I mean, look at her. You couldn't find a more loving dog in all the world, but she's not exactly what you'd call pretty. It was like putting a pinafore on Betty Friedan. It was absurd. He's feeding her foie gras and T-bone steaks, she's got diarrhea most of the time and she's getting fat and lethargic. He wouldn't take her to the dog run 'cause he was afraid, of, I don't know, afraid she'd get some disease, get hurt, pick up another dog's bad habits. He took her to trainers, dog whisperers, dog psychologists. She was miserable. She'd had spirit, and he turned her into this neurotic, high-strung mess.

GREG (CONTINUED)

He started mixing medication in with her kibble. Doggie Xanax, Pooch Prozac, whatever. It turned her into a dog-shaped rug that got up once a day to poop.

BETH

She seems pretty lively to me.

GREG

Well, I took her off it. Like people, I probably should have done it gradually, rather than just go cold turkey. That was probably a mistake.

BETH

Oh, absolutely. I had to wean myself off my antidepressant for months...

GREG

In any event, he spoiled her rotten. 'Til she wouldn't even raise her head when I called her name. I realized we were pretty much done. I'd take her with me, and we'd... find someplace to stay.

BETH

So the two of you are no longer... you know... together?

GREG

Well, you don't kiss that kind of relationship goodbye overnight. There's always... a piece of him somewhere nearby.

(HE laughs, a little hysterically)

BETH

Yes, I know. So are you... what? Roommates?

GREG

No, he's gone.

BETH

You mean... you... forgive me, but you got to keep the apartment?

GREG

Oh, no, it's not like that. But it's over.

BETH

Well, take MY advice and don't do anything rash. I mean, do you have any legal recourse? If he kicks you out? Any contractual... anything?

GREG

He won't be kicking me out.

BETH

Don't be so sure. I've seen it happen hundreds of times. I mean it. Hundreds. All my friends. Suddenly on the street after years of... service. Never mind friends. Get yourself a lawyer.

GREG

I probably should.

BETH

Do it. You think he's going to be generous after all this time, all that you've been through together. Next thing, you're moving your stuff to a shelter. I mean, do you have someplace to go?

GREG

Not really.

BETH

Use your head. No matter how angry you may be at him. And believe me, I know anger. But then I look at the reality of... of... what would happen. At least I can make a case for alimony. What have you got?

GREG

True. But it's my home as much as it's his.

BETH

Oh, sure, try saying that to the marshals as they escort you out the door with nothing but the clothes on your back. Is your name on the lease, the mortgage, anything?

(A pause)

Exactly.

GREG

You really don't understand. He's gone.

BETH

Well, he may have left, but within forty-eight hours, you'll get a letter from his lawyer. Mark my words.

GREG

It's not like that. He... As much as I tried to just stay in my little corner, let him live his life, he... kept picking at me, teasing me. We were in the kitchen. I was just bending over, feeding the dog, and he said something about how my ass was no longer what it used to be. Thought he was being funny. And I snapped at him. Something bitchy, I barely remember. Something about him staying out all night. Something about him being a cokehound. Something about him humping anyone who looked at him twice. And he slapped me in the face. And I remember thinking, "Oh, no he didn't." But he did. And as I was getting ready to snarl something really nasty, he punched me. Not hard, but enough to knock me off my feet. And as I was falling, I saw her go for him. I guess it called out her latent pit bull tendencies. Or I took her off those meds too quick. I hit my head. Probably on the fifteen thousand dollar granite countertop he had to have. And I was out cold.

GREG (CONTINUED)

When I came to, she'd already chewed through about half of his neck. I could see there was no point in calling an ambulance; she'd pretty much drained him. But very neatly, I must say. There was a little blood on the edges of his wounds. Some on his vicuna sweater. But none on the floor; she'd lapped it all up. His skin matched perfectly the mushroom bisque walls.

BETH

My God. What did you..? How did..? That's so... horrible.

GREG

Well, I couldn't call 911. They'd put her down, I knew they would, and it wasn't her fault. I thought about taking the blame myself, but really, why should I? I mean, they'll blame me eventually, of course, but in the meantime... I suppose I can stall his friends, his business associates for a few weeks, at least. "Oh, he's out of town, didn't he tell you?" They'll get suspicious eventually. And then I'll be... what'll they do? Euthanize me?

(HE laughs)

BETH

But what did you do about...?

GREG

She likes table scraps with her dog food; he spoiled her that way. So every day, I just throw a little in. I mean, he was almost a hundred and eighty pounds. He should last at least 'til the summer.

BETH

You don't mean...

(GREG holds up the bag of dog poop)

GREG

Evidence. In cooking school, they taught us to disarticulate an entire side of beef. Next to that, he was nothing. I cut my finger opening a can of dog food this morning. I heard once that dogs have antiseptic in their saliva. So I tried to get her to lick the blood off. She wouldn't go near it. I guess he was right all along. She always did like him best.

(HE laughs)

But now I've reduced her choices. She has to love me.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

ACT TWO

Scene 3

"PARK CLOSES AT DUSK"

(A patch of grass. JAMES enters, holding a blanket. HE looks out front, getting his bearings. Looks at the patch of grass, looks out front again)

JAMES

This is it!

(HE spreads the blanket on the grass. Straightens it. As HE does, JASON, a mixed-race boy of sixteen enters from the same direction, furiously texting into a cellphone. HE has a picnic basket on his arm. HE crosses the stage and starts to exit)

Jason! Jason, I'm here.

(JASON stops, looks)

This is the spot. Remember? There's the Statue of Liberty.

JASON

Where?

JAMES

(Points out:) There. Well, you can't see it right now. But when the fog lifts, it's right out there. You don't remember this at all? You used to only want to sit where you could see the Statue of Liberty.

JASON

Whatever.

(HE puts the basket down, sits on the blanket, continues to text)

JAMES

I bet your father won't have any trouble finding it. I'll bet he remembers.

(A long pause. JAMES opens the basket)

You also used to like to look for the ferries.

JASON

The fairies?

JAMES

The Staten Island Ferry. Can't see them either.

JASON

Can't see the fairy because of the fag.

JAMES

You may think that hilarious, but I think it just makes you sound like a moron.

(A pause)

Want some juice?

(Silence)

Remember how you would only drink red Juicy Juice. Only Cherry or Strawberry Kiwi or... what was the other one? If it was any other color, you wouldn't touch it. Look. Cherry Juicy Juice.

JASON

Are you trying to make me throw up?

JAMES

Blah, blah, blah. Stop texting. Come on, give the poor girl a life of her own. You've been on that thing for three hours straight.

JASON

Yeah, yeah.

JAMES

No, I mean it. Put it down. Stop.

(A pause)

I said stop!

JASON

I'm finishing a sentence. Jeez.

JAMES

I don't know how you can type that fast. My fingers are so fat I always hit two keys at once. In the future, I guess everyone will have fingers the size of toothpicks.

(JASON closes the phone)

JASON

Okay. So. Entertain me.

JAMES

Want some Juicy Juice?

JASON

If you say "Juicy Juice" one more time, I'll jump over that railing. What else is in there?

JAMES

You've got eyes. Look.

(JASON looks through the basket)

JASON

Can I have a cupcake?

JAMES

Not yet. That's for dessert.

JASON
You're such an old lady.

JAMES
Pour your old lady some of that wine. There's some cups...

(JASON takes out a box of white wine,
unscrews the cap)

JASON
Classy. On New Years Eve, do you have a box of Champagne?

JAMES
I didn't want to pack a corkscrew.

(JASON hands him the wine)

JASON
Hey, can I have some?

JAMES
Some what?

JASON
Some wine, dummy.

JAMES
Of course not. You're not old enough to drink wine.
They'll have me arrested.

JASON
Well, there's a sign on the pier that says "No Alcoholic
Beverages," so you're already breaking the law. Might as
well go the whole hog.

JAMES
Well, I don't suppose...

JASON
Oh, come on.

JAMES
Your father would kill me.

JASON
He's given me beer before.

JAMES
He has not.

JASON
Has too. At your birthday party.

JAMES
That was a special occasion.

JASON
And what's this?

JAMES

It's... oh, why not? Go on. Half a cup, though. Only fill it half.

(JASON makes a mewling sound in imitation of him as HE pours himself some wine)

No sense in waiting for your father; he'll undoubtedly be half an hour late, as usual. No, no, I told myself I wasn't going to start badmouthing him. Forget I said that. Did you bring that thing with you?

JASON

What thing?

JAMES

You know, that thing. That thing you stick your music player into so you can hear it without the headphones.

JASON

(As if to an idiot:) You mean my iPod dock?

JAMES

Yeah, that.

JASON

It's at home.

JAMES

You bring every electronic gadget known to man...

JASON

(Overlapping:) Gadget?

JAMES

...but that you leave home.

JASON

Why?

JAMES

It'd be nice to have some music, is all. Whenever I'm feeling particularly shitty, music usually makes me feel better.

JASON

Ka-ching.

JAMES

What'd I say?

JASON

"Shitty."

JAMES

Oh. Well, put it on my account.

JASON

Why are you feeling... crappy?

JAMES

Oh, just... I don't know. I can't believe you don't remember this spot. You always had to be able to see the Statue of Liberty.

JASON

What can I say? Don't remember.

JAMES

One time it was foggy like this and you actually started to cry. You thought they'd taken it away.

(A long pause)

JASON

What?

JAMES

Nothing. I remember what this place was like before they renovated it, made it a park. When I was a teenager and I first started coming to the city, I used to come down here. It was all abandoned piers and dilapidated warehouses. We'd climb all around in them for hours and hours; you had to be careful 'cause most of the wood was rotten and you might fall through a hole into the river.

JASON

What for?

JAMES

Oh... it was sort of a grown-up version of hide and go seek.

JASON

Sounds pretty lame.

JAMES

Oh, it was anything but.

JASON

Why? What happened when you got caught?

JAMES

Well... you'd get tagged, and... then you'd... (Quickly:) It was a very long time ago; I barely remember.

JASON

You'd come into the city? By yourself?

JAMES

Of course. Every weekend. And for me, it wasn't just forty minutes on New Jersey Transit. I had to take a bus and then a subway.

JASON

Why?

JAMES

Why? 'Cause I loved it here. I used to go to the theatre.

JASON

You'd go to the theatre? On purpose?

JAMES

Sure.

JASON

Boy, you must've had your books knocked down a lot in high school.

JAMES

Well, yeah, I guess I did. And what, you're such a stud no one knocks over your books?

(JASON snorts. A pause)

Do people ever make fun of you? At school?

JASON

What do you mean? What for?

JAMES

Well, because of your father and I.

JASON

In Maplewood, we make fun of the kids with straight parents. Or sex discordant, as we like to say.

JAMES

Well, good. I always assumed with those goddamn suburbanites, they'd look down their nose...

JASON

Ka-ching. That's four. Now you owe me a buck.

JAMES

What, four?

JASON

"Shitty" before, "bitch" when we were at the bank, "goddamnit" in the car, and now "goddamn."

JAMES

(Reaches into his pocket) Here's five bucks. Go fuck yourself.

(JASON gasps and laughs)

JASON

I'm telling my father.

JAMES

You go right ahead. Should I tell him some of the secrets you've told me?

(A pause)

JASON

We're even then.

(A long pause. JASON has taken a Nintendo DS game out of his pocket, starts to play. After a beat:)

So, like, you don't know who my real mother was.

JAMES

Wow. Where did that come from?

JASON

I dunno. Just something I was thinking.

JAMES

Well, um...

JASON

I mean she could be, like, anyone. Right?

JAMES

Well, not anyone.

JASON

Like, it could be her.

(HE points)

JAMES

Who?

JASON

That chick with the poofy dog. She could, like, possibly be my mother.

JAMES

Well, since you're sixteen and she looks to be about twenty-two, I'd say it's unlikely.

JASON

You know what I mean. She could be...

JAMES

What's brought this on?

JASON

Just thinking. Is that okay? Do you think my mother was white and my father was black? Or my father was white? What do you think?

JAMES

I don't know that I ever really thought about it. Could be any combination, really. What do you think?

JASON

I dunno. I think my father was black. I dunno.

JAMES

Why?

(HE shrugs)

Maybe neither was black. Maybe you got your color from... maybe one of them was Dominican. Or Filipino.

JASON

Wouldn't I have Chinese eyes?

JAMES

Not necessarily.

JASON

Hmmm. I guess if my Dad was black, my hair would be curlier.

JAMES

Not necessarily. Recessive genes, it's all a big stew. Do you think about it a lot? Who your parents are?

JASON

I dunno. Not really. And one therapy session per week is enough, I think.

JAMES

Sorry. Want a sandwich?

JASON

Aren't we gonna wait for Dad?

JAMES

Just a snack. We'll save the fried chicken for him. Aren't you hungry?

(HE hands JASON a sandwich, who takes it)

JASON

I just sometimes wonder what she was thinking. When she left me.

JAMES

Well, she probably didn't have much of a choice. Who's that you've been texting all day? Michelle?

JASON

Yeah, as if it's any of your business.

JAMES

Ok, let's say she just texted you that she's pregnant. And it's yours. What would you do?

JASON

Jeez. I don't know.

JAMES

No, the answer is, "It couldn't possibly be mine, because I'm not having sex with Michelle."

JASON

Yeah, like that's any of your business.

JAMES

Well of course it's my business.

JASON

It is so not.

JAMES

Listen, as long as you're living under my roof, it's my business.

(A long pause)

I am so sorry. Forget I ever said that.

JASON

Said what?

JAMES

"As long as you're under my roof." Ugh. I can't believe it. My father used to say that all the time, and I hated his guts for it. So I'm sorry.

JASON

Whatever.

JAMES

You really need to stop saying "whatever." It really sets my teeth on edge.

JASON

Should I give you a list of the things you say that drive me crazy? Things like "teeth on edge"?

JAMES

And it makes you sound stupid. Like you're too lazy-minded to think up anything smarter to say.

JASON

"Pick your brain." I hate that. "A bone to pick." Really annoying.

JAMES

I'm just saying.

JASON

"I'm just saying."

JAMES

So you're imitating me?

JASON

God, no. But isn't "I'm just saying" as big a cop-out as "whatever"?

JAMES

No, not necessarily.

JASON
How's it different?

(A long pause)

JAMES
Well, it's not as hostile, for one thing.

JASON
It's not? It's still a conversation stopper.

JAMES
Not in the same way.

JASON
How's it different?

(A long pause)

JAMES
Oh, whatever.
(A long pause. JASON is fiddling with
the sandwich)
Wait, wait, what are you doing?

JASON
Scraping off this glop you put on.

JAMES
That's chutney mayonnaise. It makes the sandwich.

JASON
It's gross.

JAMES
You have to learn to try new things.

JASON
You know I hate shit on my sandwich.

JAMES
Ka-ching. Now you owe me. If you knew how long it took me
to make that. Even the mayonnaise base is homemade. I
could've just scraped it out of a jar. Do you know how long
it takes to make mayonnaise?

JASON
I'm sure it takes a long time to make glass. But I'm not
gonna eat it.

JAMES
Wise guy.
(A pause)
Come on, I want to talk, we never talk anymore. I asked you
to stop texting.

(JASON pulls his cellphone out of his
pocket)

JASON

This is my cellphone.

(HE holds up the appliance in his hand)

And this is my Nintendo. One cannot text on a Nintendo, dummy.

JAMES

And please, please, please stop calling me "dummy." It's not cute or funny or anything. It's just mean.

JASON

Sorry.

JAMES

That was the most insincere "sorry" I've ever heard.

JASON

Sorry.

(HE laughs)

Jeez, for a second I thought you were crying.

(A long pause)

Are you crying?

(A pause)

(Is it my fault?:) Why are you crying?

JAMES

So. It look like I might be moving back to the city.

JASON

We are? When?

JAMES

No, I am. Soon.

JASON

Huh?

JAMES

Well...

JASON

You're splitting up?

JAMES

Don't jump to conclusions.

JASON

Well, what else could it mean?

JAMES

Don't look at it as a negative.

JASON

Well, you seem to be looking at it that way. I don't get it. You two don't seem ... unhappier than you usually do.

JAMES

Do we seem unhappy?

JASON
No, what I mean is...

JAMES
We tried to keep it private. We didn't want to alarm you.

JASON
Oh, and this isn't alarming?

JAMES
I don't know what's going to happen. Don't you have friends whose parents have gotten back together after a separation?

JASON
(Thinks) No.

JAMES
Well, that doesn't mean anything.

JASON
And do I have any say in where I go?

JAMES
What do you mean? Of course you do. I would never make you choose. You'll stay in New Jersey and finish school. You can... you know, see me on weekends. Holidays... God, I can't believe those words just came out of my throat.

JASON
Well, what if I...? Is my Dad fucking around on you?

JAMES
No. Don't say "fucking."

JASON
Here, you can have the five bucks back. Well, I know it's not you.

JAMES
What, I'm so horrible no one would want to fool around with me?

JASON
No. Shut up. You know what I mean. Well, then why...? Wait a second. How come he gets to keep the house?

JAMES
Well, it's his house. And I'm gonna have to go back to work. I won't be able to stay home all day catering to your every whim.

JASON
What can you do?

JAMES

What do you mean, what can I do? You may find this hard to believe, but the world actually existed before you were born, and I made a living. By myself. Before your father. But I worked in the city, so it just makes sense...

(A long pause)

JASON

Probably none of my business, but I don't think my father has much of an idea how to be... a mother.

JAMES

He'll learn. You'll teach him.

JASON

I don't think I can.

JAMES

Bullshit. You taught me. I didn't know how to be a parent when you came along. You've met my father. What do you think I could possibly have learned from him?

JASON

Was your mother the same way, too?

JAMES

No, no. She... held things together. My father used to call her Elsie.

(A pause)

After the glue.

(A pause)

Elmer the bull. Elsie was his counterpart.

(A pause)

Elmer's Glue.

(A pause)

Oh, forget it. This was back in the days when if something broke, we glued it back together rather than just throw it in the garbage.

(A pause)

Right, I know: Whatever.

JASON

What I meant was, I think my father's too old to learn anything new.

JAMES

I know where you're going with this, but you're going to have to start giving him a little more credit.

JASON

Oh, yeah, like he gives me credit?

JAMES

No, see, this is what I'm trying to avoid. I'm not going to be one of those exes that does nothing but bitch to you about how awful your father is.

Don't you hate him? JASON

No, no, I don't hate him. JAMES

I do. I hate him. JASON

Don't hate him. JAMES

(A long pause)
So I'll be getting a two bedroom apartment, which means you'll have your own room. But don't think that just 'cause you and your father have a fight you can come and hide at my place. And don't think that if I give you a rule, you can break it when you go back to him. Just because your father's got his head up his ass half the time, doesn't mean we're not going to keep in touch about you.

I thought you said... JASON

I know. Forget I said that. Your father's a genius. JAMES

Well, what if I want to come live with you? JASON

Do you? Do you want to live in the city? JAMES

I don't know. I have to think about it. JASON

I don't want to pull you out of school. But when I was your age, if somebody had offered me an apartment in Manhattan, I'd be packing my suitcase before they could inhale to start their next sentence. JAMES

Well, you're not me. JASON

No, I'm not. That's true. (A pause)
You know, if you lived in the city, you could take professional art classes. JAMES

Why would I wanna do that? JASON

Because. You're a good artist. JAMES

JASON
Oh, please. First place in a third grade art show doesn't count.

JAMES
Well, if you'd stuck to it...

JASON
PLEASE.

JAMES
You could get a decent-paying after school job instead of having to mash ice cream at Coldstone Creamery.

JASON
All my friends are at Coldstone.

JAMES
You'd have more money.

JASON
Doing what?

JAMES
Oh...

(A pause)
You could take guitar lessons with a professional musician instead of some slacker with a garage band.

JASON
Yeah, who?

JAMES
What do you mean?

JASON
Like, Eric Clapton's gonna give me guitar lessons?

JAMES
No, I don't know. But somebody better than Squirrel, or whatever his name is. You're good at the guitar; you could be better.

JASON
At Guitar Hero, maybe.

JAMES
Well, what is it you want to do?

JASON
What do you mean?

JAMES
What to you want to be? To do with your life?

JASON
Jeez, I didn't know today was the day I had to decide.

JAMES
No, I'm not saying that...

JASON
Ummm... Fireman?

JAMES
Very funny. I'm just saying. You don't seem to want to explore the talent you have.

JASON
Ummm... Astronaut? You know what I always wanted to know? Where do kids in city high schools play football and stuff? Is there one gigantic football field that they all use? Or do they just decorate a classroom to look like a football field?

JAMES
I'm sure you know this is not really my area of expertise.

JASON
What part of the city are you going to live in?

JAMES
Probably around here somewhere. I like this neighborhood.

JASON
Hard to park.

JAMES
Well, I'm not going to have a car, obviously.

JASON
You're not?

JAMES
Of course not.

JASON
That rules me out.

JAMES
What does that mean?

JASON
Well, why do you think I've been putting up with that snoozefest called "Driver's Ed" for the past six months? I'm getting my learner's permit this summer.

JAMES
And you think your father's gonna take you out to practice? Keep dreamin'.

(A pause)
What would you do if you found out... say, that something had happened to your father?

JASON
Like what?

JAMES

I don't know. What if he had an accident on the way here? What if... you had to live with me? Would you find that so horrible?

JASON

You're twisted.

JAMES

No, what if... your father and I had a fight. Or something. And I got so mad at him I pushed him out the window or something.

JASON

Is that why he's over half an hour late?

(HE laughs)

JAMES

I'm serious.

JASON

You're serious that you pushed my father out the window?

JAMES

No, I'm saying what if something happened that... Okay, let's say something happened to me. What if... I got really sick? Sometimes... A lot of men my age that are gay... well, they're not around anymore. They sometimes die before they're supposed to.

JASON

I don't like this game anymore.

JAMES

What if I was living in New York and I had trouble taking care of myself? 'Cause I was sick, or something?

JASON

Why are you trying to scare me?

JAMES

I don't want to scare you, I'm just wondering.

JASON

Well, you are scaring me, so stop it.

JAMES

Well, maybe I'm scared. Maybe I'm scared that once I move to the city I'll never see you again.

JASON

That's stupid.

JAMES

Maybe. I wasn't there for my brother when he got sick. My own brother, and I couldn't bear to look at him. I was young. Not that that's any excuse. But I was scared. I saw the same thing happening to me if I looked at him too closely... I suddenly got very Catholic again.

JASON

You're Catholic?

JAMES

(Shrugs) It comes and goes. But I thought that if I stared into the face of Saint Jude long enough, put enough money in the collection plate, that would somehow... I spent more time kneeling at the foot of that statue than I did in my brother's hospital room. Stupid, stupid.

(A long pause. JASON's phone rings. HE looks at it)

JASON

It's Dad. He's spent the last half hour looking for a parking space.

JAMES

Tell the cheapskate to park in a lot. We're hungry.

(JASON texts into the phone)

I'm sorry I said that. Don't tell your father.

JASON

Don't tell him we're hungry?

JAMES

No, what I said before. My Dad would always play the guilt card. I don't want to be like that.

(JASON finishes texting. Looks at JAMES. A pause)

JASON

Well, of course if you were sick I'd take care of you.

(A pause)

You've always been there to take care of me. Why wouldn't I be there for you? Dummy.

JAMES

And that's why it doesn't matter who your real parents are. What's important is that it's not me. Or your father, for that matter.

(A pause)

You have the biggest heart of anyone I've ever known. You never would have inherited that from us.

(HE turns away from JASON)

(His voice cloudy:) Goddamnit.

JASON

Ka-ching.

(JAMES looks at him)

Never mind, I'll give you that one free.

(A pause. JAMES looks out front)

So now I've been abandoned by two mothers.

JAMES

That is so unfair. I'm not abandoning you.

JASON

No, I know.

JAMES

And I'm not your mother.

JASON

I know.

(A pause)

Who is?

JAMES

Look, look, look!

(HE points out)

There it is. The fog's lifted. Can you see the statue?

Can you see the torch?

JASON

(Squinting:) Oh, yeah.

(HE turns to JAMES)

And?

BLACKOUT

PARK CLOSES AT DUSK II-3-50

"LOCATION.LOCATION.LOCATION."

Scene 4

"LINE FORMS AT NOON"

(In the dark, a thud. Then:

LUTHER

Goddamnit!

Lights up. The top steps of the
TKTS booth in Duffy Square.

LUTHER, 75 years old, is prone
on the steps. A four-pronged
cane lies nearby, as well as a
filthy baseball cap. EDITH, a
black woman in her 40s, stands
next to him)

EDITH

Oh, shit.

LUTHER

When I said "take my hand" I meant the one without the cane,
you jackass.

EDITH

Think I read minds? Next time, you'll be more specific.

LUTHER

Go get my cap, before it blows away.

(SHE does)

I hope nothing's broken.

EDITH

Believe me, if something were broken you wouldn't be sitting
there just whining like always.

(SHE helps him into a sitting position)

You'll notice no one lifted a finger to help you up.

LUTHER

People don't like to get involved.

EDITH

Yeah, and they can probably smell a miserable old bastard a
mile away.

LUTHER

Oooh, I'm gonna have a bruise the size of an eggplant. I'm
gonna need a lot of massage on that spot, Edith. You're
gonna have to give me one of your extra special long
massages.

EDITH

The pittance I get from MediCare on you don't cover
prostitution. You want something more, you pay for it.

LUTHER

Have a heart, old woman.

EDITH
Calls me old. That's good.

LUTHER
So where are they? Are we early?

EDITH
I said three.

LUTHER
Still cold for this time of year, huh? Glad I brought a jacket.

EDITH
Well, I'm sweating like a pig from dragging you up all those stairs, so don't ask me.

LUTHER
You complain more than any woman I've ever met, Edith.

EDITH
Well, you don't get out much. And you complain more than any woman ever. Better let me check your levels.

(SHE takes a blood sugar monitor out of her purse)

LUTHER
What, now?

EDITH
You're getting awfully cranky. Might be your blood sugar.

LUTHER
So, what, you're gonna give me a shot in the middle of Times Square? Get away from me with that thing; I'm fine. I hope they hurry up and get here. I wanna get to Shoprite before it closes.

EDITH
Oh, relax. You want everything to be over before it even starts. What do you need at Shoprite? I can pick it up in the morning.

LUTHER
No, you can't, because it's a special on peanut butter and the specials end on Sunday at midnight.

EDITH
Well, the first thing I have to say is that we're sure to be home by midnight unless you're planning to take your sons to some titty bar and I don't think they'll have any interest. And the second thing is you certainly don't need any more peanut butter.

LUTHER

It's Buy One, Get One Free. With a limit of four. So I'll buy four and I'll give you the money so you can buy four.

EDITH

Listen to me. If you lived another twenty years, which I'd say is unlikely, you still wouldn't have time to finish the peanut butter you've already got in that pantry.

LUTHER

I like it on crackers.

EDITH

I don't think God is looking down on you and saying, "Oh, I better not take him until he's finished all that peanut butter."

LUTHER

Well then, after I'm gone, you'll get all that peanut butter.

EDITH

My cup runneth over.

LUTHER

I pay you to treat me nice.

EDITH

I've given you my whole day off, haven't I? I can't hate you that much.

LUTHER

Yeah, come on. How many of your other... Patients? Customers? Whaddya call 'em?

EDITH

Clients.

LUTHER

Any of your other clients this adorable?

EDITH

(Grunts) When was the last time you were in the City?

LUTHER

Think I remember? Sometime with my wife, so it's at least, what, seven years?

EDITH

Your wife's been dead ten years now.

LUTHER

Really? Hmmm. Well, then, ten years at least. She dragged me to some show I didn't want to see.

EDITH

Which one?

LUTHER
Think I remember?

EDITH
I'd be nice to see a show.

LUTHER
I don't need to go anymore. They keep bringing back everything I've seen anyway. Now when they get here, I'll do all the talking.

EDITH
No kidding.

LUTHER
Well, I need to let them know where everything is. I've got a list of all the stocks and bank accounts.

EDITH
This was supposed to be a birthday party, not a shareholders meeting.

LUTHER
And I've got a lock-box with lot of cash in the house. And don't think I don't know you've found it with all your snooping. I plan to tell them how much is in it, so don't think you can try anything funny after I'm gone. That's gonna be some job: cleaning out that house once I'm gone.

EDITH
You got a lot of crap, that's for sure.

LUTHER
Crap? Some of that stuff is very valuable. The china. The silver. The crystal. All that shit's worth some money.

EDITH
You should go on E-Bay and try to sell some of it instead of making your kids have to do it all.

LUTHER
Who's Abie?

EDITH
E-Bay. It's a place on the computer where you... sell stuff that... Forget it. Can't teach an old dog.

LUTHER
And don't think I don't know you walked off with my wife's vase.

EDITH
Which one?

LUTHER
The one you've always had your eye on. With the blue roses on it.

EDITH

What would I want with your old junk anyway? I got plenty of vases. It probably met the same fate as that Hummel figurine you said I stole. The one that somebody hid the broken pieces behind the bookshelf like a little boy.

LUTHER

That wasn't my fault. That cleaning lady puts things too close to the edge.

EDITH

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Have you always been like this? Is it always somebody else's fault? No wonder your kids...

LUTHER

Oh, they'll miss me when I'm gone.

EDITH

I guess it's possible. But I'll bet they can't wait to find out.

LUTHER

That's a terrible thing to say.

EDITH

Well it seems like they never seem to miss you, and you're still here. You think it's all about the money, they probably started to think that way too.

LUTHER

It is all about the money.

EDITH

That's what you say.

LUTHER

You'll learn. You're young yet.

EDITH

All I'm saying is, where I come from, we don't decide that we love a man based on what he's worth.

LUTHER

Where you come from a man isn't worth very much, is he?

EDITH

There may be some truth to that. But we find other ways of finding value in someone. For instance, should I stop coming to work because I know I'm not going to get any of that vast fortune you're always talking about?

LUTHER

I'll take care of you.

EDITH

That's very nice, and I know that what you mean by that is there'll be a couple of thousand dollars for me, and I don't sneeze at it. But should I be mad at your sons for getting everything else when they don't come within fifty miles of you and I have to put up with your shit day after day? The way I see it, they probably put up with a whole lot worse. And they couldn't take care of themselves like I can. They couldn't leave.

LUTHER

Yeah, my sons. Three fags and a bum. Didn't take over my business, no families of their own. I'm the end of the line. My good name will die with me.

EDITH

Your good name? James' son will carry on your name.

LUTHER

That half-nigger mongrel that his own mother didn't even want?

EDITH

You watch your mouth, old man. I'm not above leaving you here to find your way back to Huntington alone.

LUTHER

Think I can't do it?

EDITH

Think? I know you can't. Don't think anybody else'd help you, either. Serve you right to just leave you here.

LUTHER

Go on, go. If I'm such a burden to you.

EDITH

That guilt shit may work on your sons. Not on me. And I'll take the inhalers with me; you won't even make it to Penn Station.

LUTHER

What are you waiting for? Go.

(A pause)

EDITH

If I didn't need the money so bad, I surely would.

(A pause)

Apologize.

LUTHER

For what?

EDITH

You know what. What you said.

LUTHER
What'd I say?

EDITH
"Nigger."

LUTHER
Oh, that. Who knew you were so sensitive?
(A pause)
Back in my day, they said lots of worse things.
(A pause)
Well, if I really felt that way about you, I would let you
bathe me. Feed me. Would I?
(A pause)
Oh, Jesus Christ, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

EDITH
Yeah, that felt genuine.
(A pause)
You've got something on your face. Come here.
(SHE takes out a tissue, wipes his face)

LUTHER
This is a dirty city.

EDITH
And no offense to your wife, but it's not like you pumped
out a bunch of purebreds.

LUTHER
You better not disrespect her. She was a saint.

EDITH
Married to you, I expect so.

LUTHER
She saved me, that woman. I was headed for a life of sin
until she came along. And those kids can sure wish they'd
had a better father, but they couldn't have had a better
mother.

(HE starts to cry)

EDITH
Oh, here we go. The waterworks.

LUTHER
That's why you shouldn't feel sorry for them, having me as a
father. They had her for a mother. Whenever I did
something or said something they didn't like, they went
straight to her. And she'd fix it. She's what held us
together.

EDITH
More like kept y'all from killing each other.

LUTHER

She never bounced back after Jason died. Even though they were born ten minutes apart, since Jason came after James, he was always her baby. And I'm sure after he got sick she thought the same thing I did. Why him? When I prayed, if I prayed, it was always the same question: why him? Two other sons that were queer, the other one, God knows what kind of drugs he was on. Why Jason?

EDITH

What was it, cancer?

LUTHER

No, no, it was... the gay thing. You know.

EDITH

That's what cut my brother down. Twenty-eight years old.

LUTHER

Yeah, Jason was twenty-five. I think. Drugs? Is that what did it?

EDITH

Could be. I don't really know.

LUTHER

Well, was he a fairy?

EDITH

My brother was one of those guys'd put his dick in anything that held still long enough. He's just born too late. In 1970, they'da thought he was a swinger. By 1990, he was a danger to humanity.

LUTHER

So how'd he get it?

EDITH

Does that really matter to you? Or to anyone, for that matter?

LUTHER

No, no, don't get all upset. I'm just asking.

EDITH

It mattered to my church, that's for sure. My brother's on his last legs and all I asked was for some prayer to be sent in his direction. You coulda heard a pin drop. And one of the ladies looks me straight in the eye and says the church doesn't condone the lifestyle, or something like that. So I looked at her for a few seconds and then I said, "you all need to stop talking about Jesus so much and just try being a little bit nicer." And I never went back. See, I like to believe that God is on my side. That turned out to be a minority opinion.

LUTHER

Oh, I've had enough of all this talk about minorities. These day, I think I'm the minority.

EDITH

Well, let's hope so.

LUTHER

Hey, I got an idea. When the boys get here, I'm gonna tell them you're my girlfriend. That oughta throw 'em for a loop.

EDITH

You don't mind if I don't play along with your little game?

LUTHER

Awww. Can't you pretend to be my girlfriend?

EDITH

You wouldn't dare ask that if I were a white woman.

LUTHER

Sure I would.

EDITH

Yeah, I guess you would, you're such a tacky old goat.

LUTHER

So play along. You're my girlfriend and I'm gonna leave you all my money. That'll scare the shit out of 'em.

EDITH

Listen, before you get all carried away with this, I should tell you: Barry hasn't returned my calls.

LUTHER

What do you mean? What did you say?

EDITH

Nothing. I just said we wanted to celebrate your birthday and to meet us here at three o'clock.

LUTHER

Well, no wonder. You should've said I wanted to give him some money.

(SHE shrugs. A pause)

So he could still show up.

EDITH

I suppose. But I think that he'd at least confirm.

LUTHER

What about Jason?

EDITH

Jason? You mean James?

LUTHER
Yeah, James.

EDITH
I left a message with his, uh... his friend. And asked him to call me back.

LUTHER
And he didn't?

EDITH
He didn't.

LUTHER
One call you made? You didn't try him again?
(SHE shrugs)
Well, I won't even bother to ask about Greg.

EDITH
The e-mail address I had for him is no longer valid.

(A long pause)

LUTHER
So you dragged me all the way in here from Huntington for nothing? What the hell is the matter with you?

EDITH
It's good for you to get out of the house once in a while. And don't talk to me like I'm your wife. I'm not.

LUTHER
Jesus Christ.

EDITH
Aren't you sick of sitting at home eating defrosted Meals-On-Wheels? We'll have a nice dinner out.

LUTHER
They're perfectly fine.

EDITH
Maybe, but won't it be nice not to have to eat a no-salt Salisbury steak?

LUTHER
What the hell do I care? I can't taste anything anymore.
(A pause)
Let's go somewhere I can get a beer.

EDITH
I don't think so.

LUTHER
What?

EDITH

Because that one beer turns into two beers which turns into a glass of scotch which turns into you being a nastier bastard than usual.

LUTHER

I can take it easy. Isn't Mamma Leone's somewhere around here? They have a bar.

EDITH

Mamma Leone's? Are we gonna jump in your time machine? That place closed twenty years ago.

LUTHER

No. Really?

EDITH

Really.

LUTHER

Well, I don't know this neighborhood anymore. Probably all tourist traps. That used to be the Astor Hotel, I think. Where that big ugly thing is now. There used to be an Automat around here somewhere.

EDITH

Long gone.

LUTHER

Well, no, I wouldn't make you eat at the Automat.

EDITH

Nice of you.

LUTHER

Did you tell them it was my seventy-fifth?

EDITH

I think so, yeah.

LUTHER

Hmmm. Well.

(A long pause)

Down there used to be the recruiting station. For the Army.

EDITH

That's still there, I think.

LUTHER

My friend Barry and me went there back in... when was the Korean War? '54? '55? Somewhere around then. Before I got married. Barry and me used to spend every weekend together. Drinking, carousing, staying out 'til all hours. Don't know how we held down a job. Marijuana, even. That was before you could get it on any street corner, you know. You had to know someone. It was a big deal back then. If my mother had ever found out... My mother was Catholic. Very strict. We had the Virgin Mary on our front lawn. It was Barry's idea for us to enlist. Probably he just thought the two of us could take an extended vacation overseas on the government's dime. Well, I got classified 4-F on account of my busted eardrum. And he got shipped out. His Jeep went over a landmine the second month he was there. I paid for the wake. And I paid for a plot for him so his mother wouldn't have to go all the way to the veteran's cemetery to visit.

(A pause)

The weekend before he left for basic training we got so drunk. Had some marijuana. And then we spent the night together. You know what I mean when I say we spent the night together?

EDITH

Yes.

(A long pause)

LUTHER

I didn't think it really meant anything at the time. Neither one of us had scored that night and we were both raring to go, if you get me. When he said he loved me, I just guessed it was the liquor talking. But then the second week he was in basic, he sent me a letter. Put it all in writing. And I could tell from the way he... put down the words that he wasn't drunk when he wrote it. I was so... scared that someone, anyone would see that letter. But I couldn't throw it out. And then he was dead, and it was all that was left. Well, I had a photo. The two of us at the beach. In our prime.

(A pause)

So I put that letter with the photo and I hid it away. I still have it. I guess the kids will find it once I'm gone and they start rooting through my things. Maybe they'll think their old man wasn't such an asshole after all. Somebody found something in me to love. Once.

EDITH

Yeah. Or they'll be furious that you never told them the truth your whole life.

LUTHER

I couldn't tell them the truth. While their mother was alive.

EDITH

Never too late to start, Papa.

(A long pause)

LUTHER

And then once the kids grew up and Greg told us he was... you know, gay. And then James. And then Jason right after him, and that he was sick, besides. It just seemed to me like... you know that line from the Bible about the sins of the father being visited on the sons. Should I have...? Did I...? Was getting married and having a family just a big mistake that I couldn't fix?

EDITH

That line is about original sin. And there are lots of verses that say the opposite. But you bring that to the church and I'm sure they'll agree with you. Oh, my God, isn't that Barry?

LUTHER

Barry?

EDITH

Your son, Barry. I think I see him.

LUTHER

Oh, my son. Where?

EDITH

Down by that statue. Is that him?

LUTHER

I can't see that far.

EDITH

Looks like him. He's looking the other way. Barry!

LUTHER

What time is it?

EDITH

Quarter past three.

LUTHER

Late, as usual.

EDITH

He's got... it looks like James is with him, too. And there's... three, I think. What does Greg look like?

LUTHER

I haven't seen Greg since his mother's funeral. I don't know that I'd even recognize him. What's he look like?

EDITH

Kind of like a good looking version of you. Hey!

(SHE waves)

LUTHER
No, no, don't wave at 'em!

EDITH
What are you talking about?

LUTHER
Let them find me. You told them where we'd be. We're here.
If they care so much, let them find me.

EDITH
You're crazy. Barry!
(SHE waves)

LUTHER
Stop it! I mean it. They'll find us. And if not, well,
then...

EDITH
I don't believe this.

LUTHER
Sit down. Sit down. Stop drawing attention.
(A pause. EDITH sits)

EDITH
And there's a boy. James must have brought his son with him.
(A long pause)
This is insane.

LUTHER
Stop. They'll find me. They just have to keep looking.
They should've called you and said they'd be here.

EDITH
Well, obviously, they wanted to surprise you.

LUTHER
How do they know we'd be here? Maybe I got sick, died.
They'd never know.

EDITH
They're turning around. They're waiting for the light to
change. The boy is crossing the street. They're going
away.

(A pause. LUTHER jumps up)

LUTHER
Hey, we're here! Look up! Here I am! I'm up here!

(HE waves his arms. EDITH waves)

BLACKOUT

THE PLAY IS OVER.