

GHOST LIGHT

Written by Tony Taccone
Conceived and developed by Jon Moscone and Tony Taccone
January, 2012
© All rights reserved

Character List

Boy: young Jon Moscone, 14, the son of George Moscone, slain Mayor of SF

J: Jon Moscone, 45, a theatre director

Louise: mid-40's, straight, costume designer for Hamlet. Close, longtime friend and colleague of J's

Mister: an African-American spirit guide to the Boy, in the guise of police officer Robert Esu

Prison Guard (PG): 50's, a toxic family ghost dressed as a prison guard, a provocateur in several guises from grandfather to avenging angel

Loverboy: J's fantasy lover, 30's, manly, a defender and protector of Jon but nervous; J's dream projection of Basil, his internet lover

Actor 1: 30's, a male actor in a movie about Harvey Milk, intelligent but cautious

Actor 2: 30's, a male actor in a movie about Harvey Milk, aggressive prima donna, not that bright but a very good actor, good looking

Film Director: 40's, smart, flamboyant, not shy about being gay

Austin: 30's, the set designer for Hamlet, a gay man who is politically engaged

Cast of 8 (Seven men, one woman)

Suggested Doubling (in order of their appearance and progression)

- 1) Boy
- 2) Mister...Robert...Medieval Ghost
- 3) J
- 4) Loverboy...Man in Café.....Actor #2.....
- 5) Prison Guard...Waiter...Ghost of George Moscone
- 6) Lady in Black...Actor #1...Basil...Spandex Ghost
- 7) Voice of the Shrink...Indie film Director...Austin...Waiter at The Blind Spot...Artistic Director

8) Louise....puppeteer for Bunraku puppet

extras required to play cameramen in the film dream, pall bearers at the wake, and puppeteers

Author's note:

This story is based on the real life experience of Jon Moscone, son of Mayor George Moscone, who was famously assassinated along with Supervisor Harvey Milk in 1978 by Dan White, a fellow supervisor. While every scene in the play is imagined, the basis of the story is entirely rooted in historical truth. (For example, Jon was 14 when his father was killed and was in therapy at the time for being fearful that his father would, in fact, be killed.) The various political events that are re-counted in the play (i.e. George's exploits in Sacramento as head of the California State Assembly, his contentious fights as Mayor with San Francisco's various interest groups, his early championing of gay rights, and his mentoring of Harvey Milk) are all factually accurate.

Having said that, in no way, shape, or form is this play a docudrama. I have exercised considerable license with regard to the imaginative expression of Jon's experience, marrying it to any idea, memory, or impulse that wandered into my consciousness during the writing of the play. The characters are not "real" in that sense. And if the play works, it will capture not only Moscone's experience, but in some way describe every person's loss of his or her parents.

There are many apparitions in the play. Some are ghosts, some fantasies, some hallucinations. All should be played completely realistically unless otherwise specified.

PROLOGUE

As the audience enters the theatre:

The Boy is alone onstage, sitting on the floor of his bedroom, half-dressed. He has a little toy in his hands. The remainder of his three-piece herringbone suit lies draped across a chair. He is unaware of the audience. During the course of the pre-show, he watches t.v. programs, circa 1978. The shows are all light in tone.

The house lights go down.

Suddenly, the television shows are cut off. The screen is filled with a logo and we hear a high-pitched tone, followed immediately by "We interrupt this program for a special announcement". Cut to real news footage Diane Fienstein in front of a bank of microphones making the famous statement: "It is my job as President of the Board of Supervisors to make this announcement. Mayor Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk, have been shot and killed. The suspect, is Supervisor Dan White".

Static fills the screen and the sound becomes louder and louder. Blackout.

Scene 1

(The BOY is alone onstage, sitting in a chair, facing front.

He fiddles with a little toy in his hands. He is in the office of a psychiatrist. Off to one side there is a bed, hidden. We never see the psychiatrist, only hear the sound of his voice.)

(silence)

VOICE

You said you were worried that your father would die.

BOY

*(pause, then distracted,
as if he heard something)*

What?

VOICE

Your mother said that you were worried that your father would die.

(pause)

BOY

Well yeah....I don't know...

VOICE

For how long?

BOY

How long?

VOICE

Do you remember when you started to have these fears?

(pause)

BOY

A while....I don't know, since, like....I don't know.

VOICE

Since he was elected Mayor two years ago, or before that?

(pause)

BOY

I think I've always been afraid...I mean, a little I guess.

VOICE
We're all afraid, to some extent, of our parents dying.

BOY
Well, that's good I guess.

VOICE
But you were afraid, specifically, that your father
would be killed.
Was that because he was such a public person?

BOY
um, maybe, I don't know.

VOICE
Are you still feeling sick?

BOY
No.

VOICE
You're not feeling physically sick anymore?

BOY
No, I just said no.

*(from another part of the stage, J wakes up in the bed,
gasping for air)*

J
Ah Ah Ah

VOICE
But you were feeling sick that day?
(silence)

VOICE
Was it a stomach ache or did your head hurt or where was
it?
(J reaches for some pills by his bedside)

VOICE
Are you still taking medication?
(the Boy nods)

VOICE
Are you sleeping okay?
(J wraps his blanket around him, then exits)

BOY
Famous people are more likely to die, right?

VOICE
(understanding what he meant)
Well, no actually. Many people, far too many people are killed.

BOY
But it's different right? It's different for them.

VOICE
Yes it is, for someone like your Dad, someone who has an important job who is very powerful and who has a lot of influence on other people. When people like that are killed, people like your Dad, it certainly affects many more people.

BOY
Like thousands right? Like millions.

VOICE
Maybe, yes.

BOY
So millions of people are remembering my father right now and thinking of him and how they liked him or they didn't, right? Because he was famous and they knew him and saw him on t.v. and so they miss him. Even the ones that didn't like him. They probably miss him most of all, I bet.

VOICE
Maybe. That's an interesting point.

BOY
Because they know him really well, like, better than themselves almost, I bet, right?

VOICE
I don't know. Honestly.
(there is a gentle knocking sound)

BOY
(looking around)
Did you hear something? I thought I heard something.
(pause)

VOICE
How did you feel when your father, when you heard your father was killed?

BOY
Okay.

VOICE
Okay what?

BOY
Okay, I felt okay.

VOICE
You didn't feel sad or lonely or angry or that you missed him?

BOY
I felt sad because my mom was sad.
(pause)

VOICE
And?

BOY
And I didn't feel any different missing him now than before, and I didn't feel lonely because I am.

VOICE
Does it make you feel angry that you are lonely?

BOY
I'm not lonely.

VOICE
I'm sorry, I thought you said you were lonely. *(pause)*
Do you talk to your brother and sisters? Or your Mom?

BOY
You mean about him being... assassinated?

VOICE
Sure, and anything else.
(silence. Then the Boy looks around, as if he hears something... then the knocking)

VOICE
You were sick that day? The day he was killed?
Did you feel responsible in any way for him going to work that day?
(knocking)

BOY
Can you hear that?

(knocking. MISTER enters, looks at the Boy)

VOICE

Can you remember the first time you became afraid of your father being killed?

MISTER

Are you the Mayor's son?

(Boy looks at him, pause)

MISTER

Are you the son of the Mayor?

(pause)

BOY

(to the disembodied voice)

Is it time yet? I think it's time.

Scene 2

(Nighttime. J enters and presses a button on his phone machine.)

(phone beep goes off...)

AUTOMATED MESSAGE VOICE

First message...

(during this, J reacts to the messages while eating, drinking, checking his email, etc...)

RECORDED LOUISE

--Jon, it's Louise. Are you there? Pick up if you're there. Okay, let's pretend you're not there. Listen, I know you're still thinking about the ghost but we need to give the costume shop something to go on very soon. If not, everyone in the entire cast of Hamlet will be wearing costumes that were left over from the Rita Moreno show. Seriously. They've got tons of other shows to build, Jon, so finish getting dressed and put down the coffee or the leftovers or the remote and please call me. I have some ideas for Claudius and Gertrude

*
*
*

(J skips ahead to next message)

ROBOTIC VOICE

Message saved. Next message...

RECORDED VIOLET

--Hi Jon? this is Violet Jubilee from the Castro Lion's Club? We're having a big celebration in the city this Thursday at The Sausage Factory to commemorate Harvey Milk Day? and we wanted to know if you would come and introduce our main speaker. I really apologize for the short notice but the person that we had lined up suddenly dropped out. We're calling the evening We Got Milk! and we'd be really honored if you would join us on this very very VERY special

*
*

(J skips ahead to the next message)

ROBOTIC VOICE

Message erased. Next message.

RECORDED MARVIN

--Hello, Mr. Moscone? This is Marvin Krumpower, vice-president and operational manager of the Energy Food Bank Syndicate here in San Mateo. As you may or may not know we've been in development for a new candy bar that celebrates the memory of your father and we wondered if you might consider giving us an endorsement. We're calling our new candy bar By George, and trust me, this is one helluva candy bar. It's mostly white chocolate

(J hits a button on the message machine)

ROBOTIC VOICE

Message erased.

(J lies down on the bed. After a beat, we hear the sound of his computer telling him that he has a new message. He sits straight up in bed. At the same time, from the same bed, Loverboy sits up right next to him. They make no contact. J excitedly gets up and goes to his computer to check the message. He sees who it's from. Smiles. Turns up the volume on the tv. He picks up a container of left-over Chinese and heads off to the kitchen. LOVERBOY gets up from the bed. He notices that J is missing.)

LOVERBOY

Jon? Are you here?

*
*

(He looks around for J. Turns off the tv. Goes back to the bed. Sits.)

*
*

LOVERBOY

Where did you go?

*
*

(From within the bed, unseen by Loverboy, the Prison Guard appears.)

*
*

*

LOVERBOY
Ahhhhh!

PG
You want to drink that slowly if you can.

LOVERBOY
Jesus!

PG
Looks like you wet all over yourself there son. *

(looks around the room)

LOVERBOY
Who the hell are you? *

PG
And I don't believe I recognize you.

LOVERBOY
Well, no, uh. *

PG
Where is he?

LOVERBOY
There's no one else here.

PG
You're not here illegally are you? *

LOVERBOY
No! We just *

PG
We. That's a Plural pronoun, right?

LOVERBOY
Me, I mean me.

PG
Me only one here.
Me good rent boy. Me no tell where Master is hiding.

LOVERBOY
I told you he's not here!

(PG pulls the covers off the bed. He stares at LOVERBOY, reaches into his pocket)

PG
What's your name?

(pause)

PG
Su nombre. Praenomen.

*

LOVERBOY
Loverboy.

PG
Loverboy? Your name is Loverboy?
(he takes out a flask and drinks)

*

*

LOVERBOY
Look. Mister.

PG
You think you know him, don't you Mister Loverboy?

*

LOVERBOY
I have every right to be here.

*

PG
You've had your flagpole half-way up his blistered ass
but you don't know a fucking thing about him.

LOVERBOY
You're sick.

PG
What does he see in you do you think? Bit of the
beefcake? Bit of the stromo?

LOVERBOY
I think you need to leave.

PG
Or maybe it's your seductive charm as a fabulist. The
fantasy that just keeps on giving.

LOVERBOY
Look Mister whoever-the-homophobic-fuck-you-are, I live
here now! So whatever security clearance you have or I
need to get

PG
How long you two been together? All of a few weeks?
I knew him as a baby. I knew his father as a baby.

LOVERBOY
His father?

PG

I bet you know every detail of the loss event, don't you?
Every fact in his loss event profile.

LOVERBOY

I have no idea what you're talking about.

PG

(pulling his gun)

So where is he? If you don't tell me I'll have to kill you. *(Shouts out front to J)* You hear that, Jonny boy! I know you can hear me! *(laughs, still to J)* You think you can ignore me, don't you? Stick my memory in an unmarked box and put it in the proverbial basement. Well, listen up. I didn't come here because I wanted to. I didn't slip through the back streets of your twisted imagination to be denied an audience with your junior fucking majesty. I came here with orders from on high.

(grabs LOVERBOY, puts gun to his head)

LOVERBOY

Please, I don't know where he is, I told you.

PG

(to J)

I will have to kill Mister Loverboy here if you don't show yourself!

LOVERBOY

This isn't even my house!

PG

(to LOVERBOY)

Well congratulations, you've just been appointed the head of the meet and greet committee. And I will shoot you in the here and now unless you Swear to deliver a message to your un-famous boyfriend from his infamous father.

*

LOVERBOY

His father's been dead for over thirty years!

PG

His father is alive and kicking. And he's coming.
(front to J) To see you!

LOVERBOY

I told you he's gone, he left in the middle of the night.

PG
(to LOVERBOY)

Swear.

LOVERBOY
He left I/told

PG
Swear you'll deliver the message.

LOVERBOY
I swear.

PG
(letting him go)
I'll be watching.

LOVERBOY
So when, when is he coming?

PG
Sorry, that information is privileged.
(a cock crows)

PG
Shit. Gotta blow. And just when we were getting so
close. And the prophet spake:
"Make ready make straight."
Deliver the fucking message, blueballs.

*

(PG disappears)

(pause)

LOVERBOY
(whispering)
Jon. Jon he's gone.

(J enters from another part of the stage on his cell)

LOVERBOY
You can come out now. Jon?

Scene 3

(J re-enters on his cell phone, dressed, drinking coffee, the
tv is on)

J

No no no, it has to be in period. I'm sick of all these post-modern productions of Hamlet with half-assed metaphors about the current whatever-the-fuck political administration ...we'll just have to trust that the audience can think in metaphor, that they can make the connection for themselves. (pause) Yes, I'm still on Zoloft... No no no no no, Louise, I just think putting the Ghost in a medieval suit of armor feels completely not scary to me. The Ghost has to be scary. A puppet? A big puppet? Louise I don't think...Wait, wait a sec.

*

(from watching the tv) Have you seen this show called Paranormal State? Where this group of college kids investigates haunted houses? The people they interview for this thing are all crackers who say stuff like (southern accent) "I hear sounds coming from behind the wallpaper in my bathroom. I think there's a little girl who's trapped inside the wallpaper who's cryin."

*

I AM focusing, I AM. It's research. Okay, okay, calm down. I'm switching the channel to the Golden Girls right now. What's wrong with that? Bea, Rue, and Betty. They're like a laxative to me. It helps me relax is all. You know I'm excitable these days.

*

*

*

(Jon checks his inbox)

You'll be happy to hear that I am now seeing a financial consultant. No, not for my finances for my sex life, sorry. Yes, dating. Well we haven't actually seen each other yet but we are having the most amazing chats online. His name is Basil. (pronounced like the spice) Basil, yes, like the spice. Okay, herb whatever. But get this, his online name is LOVERBOY. It is not scary. I even had a dream about him the other night, that he was like trying to warn me about something or arguing with somebody or I don't know it was weird. No, it's too soon to see him for coffee. In fact, I don't even know what he looks like.

*

*

*

I've forbidden him to send me his picture. Better to imagine the perfection of his enraptured heart than to suffer the reality of his imperfect self. I'm telling you, the secret to modern relationships is never seeing the person you're dating. Louise, you got married in the Paleolithic Age to the last truly decent homo sapien. You know nothing about what's going on out there now. Trust me, it's way easier dreaming about people than seeing them.

No, I'm not distracting myself. Well, yes, you're right I am but fear not, I've come up with a plan to solve our little ghost problem. I'm forcing the students in my acting class to do all the Ghost scenes from Hamlet. I've told them "make it simple. Give me something that I'll believe. Something that feels real."

*

*

*

(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

No, of course not. What do you want me to say, "I do, I do, I do believe in ghosts". *The Boy enters slowly, followed by a large coffin*

Yes, yes I know the deadlines are fast approaching. I'm working on it night and day. *(knocking is heard)*
You're breaking up, Louise. I SAID I'M WORKING ON IT
NIGHT AND DAY. *(line goes dead, he hangs up.)* Fucking ghosts. *

Scene 4

(the knocking stops. MISTER enters)

BOY

Who are you?

MISTER

(listening)

You hear that?

BOY

What?

MISTER

That music.

BOY

(listens)

I don't hear anything.

MISTER

Celestial. Luminescent. Empyrean. A portal to eternity itself.

BOY

I don't hear any music.

MISTER

That's a shame. Not everyone can hear that music.
Makes a body want to circumambulate. *(laughs or smiles as if this is funny)*

BOY

Who are you?

MISTER

I don't mean to sound disingenuous but I'm actually flexible on that point. If you have a favorite name I'm happy to accommodate.

BOY

Please go away.

MISTER

You can call me Robert if you wish. Or Officer Esu. Or maybe just Mister. Mister works too.

BOY

Are you like a crazy cop or something?

*

MISTER

Or something, yes. And I've been sent to offer you a ride. Get you back home so your Dad can get off to the Great Beyond. Universal Traffic Control. We specialize in getting people to where they're supposed to go. Don't you want to go home?

*

*

*

BOY

No.

MISTER

You're sure about that.

BOY

Why would I want to go home?

MISTER

Solace? Reassurance? Communion? Perhaps commingling with others who are grieving will relieve your immeasurable suffering.

BOY

Why do you talk like that?

MISTER

It helps. At certain times it helps immensely.

(pause. MISTER looks at the coffin)

I couldn't feel anything when my father died either. Could not shed a single tear.

BOY

Your father?

MISTER

I just stood there, paralyzed, with him lying in the vast white cavity of that funerary box. Looking for the holes in his heart.

*

*

BOY

There were holes in his heart?

MISTER

Four bullets straight to the chest. Some obvious parallels to your situation, with the profound difference that they never found out who it was that committed the crime. There's some relief in that, I think. In knowing.

BOY

Is that why you're here? Did my mother hire you to bring me home?

*

MISTER

Actually, you called me here.

*

BOY

No I didn't.

MISTER

Of course you did.

BOY

How? How did I call you?

MISTER

You looked at me.

BOY

I've never even seen you before.

MISTER

Not so you'd notice. But within the blink of an eye, within a single shiver of your trembling heart you called me here. To answer the big questions.

BOY

I don't have any/thing

MISTER

(pressing him)

Questions now howling so loud in your head that nothing in the known world can drown them out.

*

BOY
I don't have any questions!

MISTER
Will I ever get to see/my

*

(The Boy moves away)

BOY
Get away from me!

MISTER
Was I not sick/enough

BOY
I said get away from me!

(pause)

MISTER
It's time to get ready for the wake, son.

MISTER
Did you hear me? It's time for the wake. Universal
Traffic Control is on a tight schedule. You have to get
dressed.

(MISTER moves towards the BOY)

MISTER
Have you considered the effect of your intractability on
your father's spirit? By staging this demonstration you
are interfering with ancient laws of spiritual
thermodynamics.
Your father wants to leave this earth and you are firmly
in his way.

BOY
You don't know that. Nobody knows that.

MISTER
Be careful, young man. Those who have not released the
dead are condemned to carry their spirit.
If you interfere with their emanation, they will affix
themselves to you, living off the food of your
bleeding heart.
Until one night, without any warning, you will be
awakened from your dreams by the arrhythmic gasping of
your terrified soul.
Your breath will fail you.
All sleep will desert you. No medicines will help to
relieve your plight.

(MORE)

MISTER (CONT'D)

And this affliction, this marriage to your own suffering will follow you all the days of your life. Do you understand what I'm saying? You will be pursued. You will be hunted. By demons more real than anything you will ever encounter in this or any other universe.

BOY

Is my mother paying you to say these things?

MISTER

And you won't see them coming.

BOY

She must not be paying you very well.

MISTER

Did you hear what I said? You will not see them coming.

BOY

You're like the biggest crackpot who ever lived, Mister.

(pause. J enters from another part of the stage)

MISTER

I'm not playing the Ooga Booga card here, son. I will use physical force to remove you if I have to.

BOY

You don't scare me, Mister.
You don't scare me at all.

MISTER

That's a pity. That's a genuine pity.

Scene 5

J

*(giving notes to an unseen
group of actors)*

I'm sorry, I didn't believe any of that. How many of you believed what just happened in that last scene?

Trust me, in a play like this? you only get to be great when you commit to confronting everything in the universe that's truly terrifying. That's commit as in 150 percent. That's why you signed up for this Masterclass in Acting. To learn how to do that.

(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

Because if you don't do that then you find yourself faking your way through and you resort to doing the Ooga Booga. That scene we just saw was from the Ooga Booga school of acting.

Look, it doesn't matter how weird the situation is, you have to discover the logic of the scene. The truth of how it plays. I mean, what is this scene about? (*with emphasis on each element*) They see something, these men, these Soldiers, it's the middle of the damn night, it's freezing, and they see... "a thing", something so strange they can't even name it, a figure walking along the battlements... he looks like... no... can't be... no... This cannot cannot cannot be real but holy mother of god this is definitely real.

And here's the deal: these soldiers, right? rookies? war vets? more choices to make, these soldiers are terrified but they are trying desperately NOT to show that, they need to control their fear and they do that, actively, by CHOOSING to speak to the Ghost. They are not screaming and falling down and INDICATING their fear. Does anyone in this class know what anyone else is feeling right now? No. People don't go around indicating what they're feeling. Horatio, I understand that you're afraid of the Ghost but you were wincing so hard I actually imagined that you were pissing in your pants. And you, Mr. Ghost, I have no idea what to say to you except do something different this time. God knows I have no idea what a ghost sounds like but that was not speech you were uttering. It sounded like you were gargling with lighter fluid. Allright then, let's move on to the next scene, the last visitation of the Ghost.

*

(*the LADY IN BLACK with a full veil enters slowly*)

J

This is the one where the queen thinks Hamlet is losing his mind. He's talking to Ghosts, for God's sake. She's watching her only son lose his mind right in front of her very eyes. Her heart is breaking. And here's the real deal: she is actively trying to stop that from happening. She tries to control him, to keep him from losing it, to keep her pain at bay. But, by the end of the scene, of course, she fails. "You have cleft my heart in twain". What is that like? On some basic level, everyone in this room knows what that's like. Your heart cleft.

*

*

Okay, let's take it from the Ghost's line "Do not forget. This visitation is to whet thy almost blunted purpose". And remember, terrifying is good. Terrifying is your friend.

Scene 6

(back in J's apartment)

(LADY IN BLACK sits perfectly still. She lights a cigarette and watches a bit of the Golden Girls episode which contains the punchline about "killing the Mayor of San Francisco". She smokes through her veil and otherwise never moves or speaks throughout the scene. LOVERBOY enters, running)

LOVERBOY

Hide! Hide! He's coming!
(LOVERBOY looks around, turns front)
Jon, hide yourself quick! He's coming!

(LOVERBOY thinks about diving into the bed but the LADY IN BLACK is there. The PRISON GUARD enters, fast, and there is a chase scene during the first lines of the scene. The PG ends up pinning LOVERBOY down)

PG

You never gave him the message!

LOVERBOY

I tried! I couldn't!

PG

A simple message. "Your father is fast approaching.
Make ready, make straight".

LOVERBOY

I tried, I swear I tried!
I couldn't get through. He started drinking and shut
down every point of access. He was dead to the world
before I could get to the hippocampus.

PG

You expect me to believe that?

LOVERBOY

I had no chance, I swear!

PG

Did you try the frontal cortex? No.
You stayed in the amygdala. You hid there, trembling,
afraid to make the slightest move lest you burn yourself
and the message into his memory.
(pause)
Didn't you!

LOVERBOY

But I'm a part of /his own

PG
(releasing him)
What's worse is that you triggered the entire neurological system. (indicating the woman) You even called in for back up.

LOVERBOY
I don't even know who that is!

PG
Like hell you don't. She had to be tipped off.

LOVERBOY
I told you. The alcohol. He shut down the system!
There were no receptors!

PG
Ignis Fatuus! He used you! He used you to call up his army of reserves.
(referring to the LADY IN BLACK) Look at her! She only comes out of hibernation when he needs heavy protection.
(PG looks out at the audience)
Stands guard at the temporal lobe while he goes on the lam. (he scrutinizes the audience) Duck and cover. Hiding behind the eyes of his unsuspecting audience. Feeding off their sympathy, the suspension of their very own disbelief.

But I see you, sonny. I see you there. And there. And there. Ooga Booga. (he laughs)
You want the truth? The truth is that time is resting comfortably on my side of the ledger. It always has been. Ever since you were a little boy with only a coffin to carry.

(a cock crows)

PG
Shit. To be continued.

(PG turns to LOVERBOY)

LOVERBOY
Are you going to kill me?

PG
One can only dream.

LOVERBOY
What about delivering the message?

PG

You know what they say, Loverboy. If you want something done right?

LOVERBOY

You don't have to, please/I can

PG

Come on, let's lug the guts out of this here limbic system.

LOVERBOY

Where are we going?

(they grab a hold of the Lady)

PG

Hide her in the brain stem 'til morning.
Come on mama, time to go sleep with the reptiles.

LOVERBOY

(feeling her weight)

Damn!

PG

Yeah.
That's why they call it the motherlode.

(they drag her off)

Scene 7

(a café. J and LOUISE. In a corner, Man 1)

*

J

So this poor guy is standing on a platform about fifteen feet above the stage wearing a costume made out of rock hard paper mache covered in strips of green and gold crepe paper right? Like what was I thinking? THIS is what the Ghost of Christmas Future is supposed to look like? And he's wearing this top-heavy head piece that looks like an oversized light bulb that makes him look like Squidward, you know?

LOUISE

Squidward?

J

You know, Tentacles Squidward. Spongebob's neighbor?

LOUISE

I'm sorry, Jon, I gave up watching cartoons when my youngest weaned himself off of Barney.

J

Well you should turn that around Louise, you really should. Trust me, you would love Spongebob.

LOUISE

I do trust you Jon. On this and other even weightier matters.

J

So anyway this actor? the Ghost of Christmas Future? He's one of these really old guys whose been with ACT since before the first millenium, right? And I've got him up on this rickety platform high above the stage trapped in this costume with the light bulb head that he can't see out of and at the key moment when he's supposed to yell and shout and scare Ebenezer Scrooge out of his horrible self the fog machine is set to go off. And you have to understand that this poor guy has lost his good pipes. For weeks I've been trying to get him to bellow, you know? Belt it out from the diaphragm and really let loose because this is my post-modern phase, right? Where for the first time in human history the Ghost of Christmas Future is going to speak, thereby altering the way Christmas Carol is viewed for generations to come.

LOUISE

They let you get away with this at ACT?

J

They encouraged me! They're so sick of Christmas Carol they would've let me do it in Swedish with a cast of naked elves. So anyway the fog machine goes off and, Oh my god, the old fella starts shouting and yelling in the most terrifying, thrilling voice you have ever heard. Real. Bold. Brilliant. He's somehow channeling his 20 year-old self. Everyone in the audience is completely riveted.

*

LOUISE

Until.

J

The fog machine has broken and instead enveloping him in cool white fog it is raining down hot boiling water on this actor who is now burning up in this death-trap of a costume.

LOUISE

I knew you were going to blame the costume designer.

J

He is screaming for real and it's going on and on and
and then Mrs. Fezziwig, who I'm sure is three sheets to
the wind, runs offstage and pulls the fire alarm!

LOUISE

No way.

J

Complete panic. It's like Tokyo when Godzilla shows up.
A sudden and shocking end to the first preview.

LOUISE

(laughing)
Are you serious?

J

My Tiny Tim was never quite the same after that. He was
so freaked out that every night, at the end of the show
he'd look around and say "God help us, every one".

*
*
*

LOUISE

Why have I never heard this story before? I thought we
had soldiered through post-modernism together?

J

You were giving birth to your youngest while Michel
Foucault and I were destroying the notion of objective
truth by forcing the Ghost of Christmas Future into
Primal Scream Therapy.

LOUISE

I should never have left you alone with Foucault.

J

You want to know the best thing about that show? It was
fourteen years ago and with every passing year the show
gets better and better.

LOUISE

Now THAT is the post-modern truth.

J
It's the best thing about the theatre. Everything is true. Or at least has the capability of being true.

(MAN 1 enters the café, J sees him.)

J
That and the number of good-looking young men.

LOUISE
I thought you were seeing a financial consultant. Parsley, or Fennel, or Saffron or somebody.

J
His name is Basil. And I told you, I'm not "seeing" him. We are proceeding one step at a time. You'll be happy to know that we've moved from emailing to texting.

LOUISE
I suppose among thirteen year olds that could be considered progress.

J
Don't knock it, Louise. Technology is a highly effective prophylactic. I'm way too freaked out about sex these days. The last three guys I tried hooking up with were all sexual vampires masquerading as Ryan Gosling.

(Man 2 joins Man 1)

Besides, I want to see what kinds of abbreviations my Loverboy friend uses in his text messages. You can tell a lot about a person from their abbreviations.

LOUISE
Fascinating. Now. Back to the Ghost at hand. You were about to tell me, some thirty-seven minutes ago, about the students in your acting class. Tell me they blew your mind. They were all brilliant Ghosts and you've figured out how to do it, right?

J
They were indescribably horrible. All of them doing the Booga Booga thing? you know with their neck veins popping out with these fake Vincent Price voices like you know, "Swearrrrrrr, Swearrrrrrrrrrrrr"

LOUISE
Jon I have to interrupt because we really have to get on/ with

J
Can I ask you something first?

LOUISE
You always do this/to me

J
It's important. And it's related.

LOUISE
It had better be related because

J
It's very related. I think you of all people will appreciate the relationship.

LOUISE
It had better be related because you know why? The costume shop manager was actually threatening to not build the show. No shit.

J
I will protect you from the clothes harpies.

LOUISE
Do you swear?

J
I swear.

LOUISE
All right then. So what is it you wish to discuss with me while the Ghost wanders around naked somewhere in that overtaxed brain of yours?

J
Okay.

(pause)

When I...

(pause.)

*

LOUISE
When you what?

MAN 2
What!

*

*

MAN 1
I can't do this!

*

*

(Man 1 leaves the cafe, agitated, followed by Man 2)

*

*

LOUISE

*

(refocusing them)

*

"When I..."

*

When you what?

*

(pause)

J

What do you dream about?

*

LOUISE

What do I dream about? That's what you wanted to ask me?

J

Yeah, you know. Anything.

LOUISE

Jon. I'm a woman living with two teenage boys, a man with a snoring problem, and a sixteen-year-old dog. My sleep life consists of dozing off into a mild stupor that allows me to continue to make lists throughout the night.

Why are we talking about this?

J

Come on. I remember you bragging to me once about a dream where you were wandering through a Victorian mansion and you met some ancient shaman who was speaking in a cryptic language only women could understand and who told you some secret about/where to find

*
*

LOUISE

That was not bragging but okay, I will happily admit that in the course of my lifetime I've had some great and portentous dreams.

J

And do you think there's anything to them?

LOUISE

Of course.

J

Okay but how much useful information do you think is revealed in your dreams? Are we talking true true, or truish, or fake true?

L

Yes.

(pause)

All of the above.

J

But you think that we should listen to our dreams.

LOUISE

I'm not sure we've been given the capacity.
But I'd say yes.

(pause)

J

Okay, listen, well, for a few weeks now, maybe not That long I don't know, it feels, I can't even say, like I'm being watched in my dreams, or stalked or something, like someone has it in for me, and they are going to absolutely maybe rip my head off if I don't do something or say something but I'm not sure what it is I'm supposed to do or even who I am in the story. And the only person offering me any semblance of protection in these dreams is a boyfriend I don't even have. Which is kind of like poetic justice, right? I mean, maybe if I just had some higher quality sex or any sex at all for that matter it might relive me of these nocturnal interruptions and I could get a decent nights sleep instead of well, feeling like I'm living in some fractured fairy tale. My shrink loves that, of course. "why do you keep using words like 'fairy'?" Jesus, this from a guy who I am telling you has got to be the most closeted homosexual since the Victorian era, I mean its really a joke, he's probably one of those really creepy Log Cabin guys and he's telling me not to use the word "fairy"? Plus, he's fat

LOUISE

Jon

J

and plus plus he's a terrible terrible shrink

LOUISE

You should switch to decaf.

*

J

I tell him I'm being hunted by Big Foot and he wants me to start drawing pictures of my dreams. Drawing pictures! If I came in with brain cancer he'd recommend getting a deep tissue foot massage.

LOUISE

Drawing pictures can be a good thing.

J

What you're like siding with him now?

LOUISE

He's trying to help you.

J

The last thing I need is to open up to a closeted, Republican telletubby who's masquerading as a shrink!

LOUISE

Well what about-

J
Next thing you know you'll be wanting me to talk to my mother.

LOUISE
I think talking to you mother could be a good thing.

J
Are you insane?! Are you out of your mind?! Talking to my mother?!

LOUISE
Just a suggestion

J
Well keep your fucking suggestions to yourself!
(pause)

LOUISE
(gathering her things) I will do that. I will do just that.

J
Look, this is wrong and ridiculous and I'm sorry I even brought it up.

LOUISE
It's not ridiculous and I think it's probably related to a whole host of other problems as well.

J
Oh come on for God's sakes. Louise, I'm sorry.

LOUISE
(hands him a little notebook and a pencil) And I'd recommend you start drawing. Immediately.

J
Louise

LOUISE
Let me know when you're ready to talk. Really talk.

(LOUISE exits. J picks his notes off the table. He's angry. He looks out)

Scene 8

J
(giving notes again)
What was that? I mean what the fuck was that?
First of all, I couldn't hear a word.
(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

As in Not A Single Word. You've all gone from Ooga Booga to Mumbo Jumbo which, news flash!, does not translate to the stage. I know this will come as a shock to some of you but you actually have to speak the lines so we can hear them.

Secondly, I have no clue as to who anyone is or what it is they want.

You. Hamlet. You're watching your father, your lifelong hero, this immense figure, your father the King, the warrior, the brilliant politician, you're watching him suffer, being burned alive, everything he stood for being trampled to death, with everyone around you now paralyzed or dumbstruck or completely mind-fucked by this outrageous rape of the body politic while your mother is shuffling your Uncle. In Public. What are you waiting for! Do something, man! You're the Prince, for godsakes.

But you don't. You can't. Do you want to? Yes. Do you want to? No. You know somewhere, somewhere you know that in order to kill your father's murderer you have to kill off a part of yourself. The best part of your deepest self. You have to learn how to hate. Become a villain to kill a villain. You have to learn to hate yourself.

(unconsciously too close to home) You can't move but time moves on. And so the nightmare grows. You try to talk but it doesn't come out right. No one gets it. You drift further and further inside yourself. Your closest companion is silence...forever and ever amen.

Okay, one last time. Into the breach. Horatio, if I see you start to laugh again in the middle of a scene I promise you I will visit you in the middle of the night and do unspeakable things to you. And trust me, you won't see me coming. All right, let's take it again. And remember, no mumbo jumbo. This is not a movie!

(ACTOR 2/MAN 1 enters fast, from a different scene)

J

This is not the set of a movie!

Scene 9

*

(VOICE OFFSTAGE)

And....action!

(On a film set. ACTOR 1/Man 1 has entered first, half-naked, clothes in hand. ACTOR 2/MAN 2 now enters, also half-naked. On his heels is a cameraman shooting the scene.)

*

*

<p> ACTOR 2 So what is it? </p>	<p> * * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 <i>(getting dressed, into a suit, fast but with purpose)</i> I can't do this. </p>	<p> * * </p>
<p> ACTOR 2 You cannot stand there with your zipper unzipped and tell me I don't turn you on. </p>	<p> * * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 I'm not cut out for. It's not who I am. </p>	<p> * * </p>
<p> ACTOR 2 Oh so this is an identity crisis? </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 Call it whatever you want. </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 2 Okay. Brain cancer. Self-inflicted brain cancer from too much thinking. Seen commonly in men of the cowardly variety. </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 I've got to hand it to you. </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 2 I wish you would. I'm not getting much else. </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 I said I was conflicted, not afraid. And NOT about sex. </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 2 Who told you you couldn't be gay? </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 No one. No one ever told me that. I'm not conflicted about being gay! </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 2 You have to break free of all that crap from your past. Harvey Milk taught us that at least. </p>	<p> * </p>
<p> ACTOR 1 YOU'RE invoking Harvey Milk? YOU? Mr. I-don't-do politics-I-just-wanna-do-you! </p>	<p> * </p>

ACTOR 2 *

I'm just saying. DNA is DNA. If you're gay then "be gay".

ACTOR 1 *

I have no problem with being gay. I only have a problem with men.

ACTOR 2 *

The only problem you have with being gay man is that you don't like men.

ACTOR 1 *

Spectacularly, blindingly narcissistic men.

ACTOR 2 *

What you need is a massage. A very very long, deep tissue massage.

ACTOR 1 *

You know the most astonishing thing about you is that you are unburdened by thought. Any thought! No cognition, no deliberation, no evidence of anything that might resemble a brain. You're just a monstrously oversized penis hopping across the landscape, looking for any orifice to empty the contents of your legendary wares. Well I'm sorry Mister Humongo Phallus, but for some of us, life is more complicated than that!

(ACTOR 2 suddenly grabs ACTOR 1 and kisses him) *

ACTOR 1 *

Wait...wait

(ACTOR 1 kisses him harder, longer, ACTOR 2 gives in...it lasts a while, a bit sloppy but effective...it ends)

ACTOR 2 *

Sorry, Harvey wouldn't approve of that

ACTOR 1 *

Harvey is dead....

ACTOR 2 *

Don't bet on it, baby doll, don't bet your sweet love nuts on it.

SOMEONE

(offstage)

CUT!

(scattered applause...the two actors recoil in pain as we hear...)

MICROPHONE VOICE

Okay everyone, that's a wrap on that scene. Actors, check the call sheet. Crew, let's set up for Harvey's flashback, that's Harvey's flashback inside the café.

(the film crew sets up during the rest of the scene)

ACTOR 2

I think you cut my lip.

*

ACTOR 1

That's what you get for using my face for a grinding stone.

*

DIRECTOR

Great work, ladies.

ACTOR 1

This is definitely a workman's comp injury, Martin.
(ACTOR 1 storms off)

*

*

ACTOR 2

*(between gargling and
spitting)*

Marty, you've got to change some of this dialogue.
"Don't bet your sweet love nuts on it?" Who says shit like that?

*

DIRECTOR

Get some dinner and we'll talk

ACTOR 2

My character is too much of an asshole, Marty. The audience is going to hate me. A little bit of an asshole is okay, but who wants to watch a really big asshole?

*

DIRECTOR

You're doing a fantastic job and trust me, the proportion of assholiness you are bringing to the part is perfect.

(Before he can protest further, ACTOR 2 is led off by a the make-up person)

*

J

*(who has entered a bit
earlier perhaps)*

So. Heh.

DIRECTOR

You've been watching the shoot. I'm smitten.

J
So how do you think it's going?

DIRECTOR
*(while a MALE CATERER
brings him a drink...he
checks out the caterer)*
We give praise and thanks to the celluloid gods. We're only a half a day behind schedule, the DP is still talking to me, and my leading man has resisted the urge to put large amounts of benzoylmethyl ecogonine up his nose

J
Congratulations.

DIRECTOR
*(as a CREW PERSON hands
him some papers to sign)*
If we can manage to keep the overages in the mild heart attack range then I can go to the shrinking violets, aka the producers? and pull on their tight titties for another infusion of cash. I spend 80 percent of my time trying to squeeze money out of nouveau riche queens who couldn't tell the difference between Stonewall and Stonehenge. I've become a complete udderyank.

J
Listen, um, I'm not a film director and in no way do I want to presume that I know what I'm talking about.

DIRECTOR
Honey, if any of us knew what we were talking about we'd have bought Cialis when it was at six cents a share.

J
I'm having a little bit of a hard time understanding what's happening.

DIRECTOR
What, with the film? I've just been dishing you the dirt, honey. There's nothing else under the sheets.

J
It's just that I thought the script was going to focus on George a bit more. Actually a lot more. It seems to be almost entirely focused on Harvey Milk.

DIRECTOR
The implication being?

J
Just that we are doing history an injustice if we focus exclusively on Harvey.

DIRECTOR

Ah, history.

(The Camerman returns to film the DIRECTOR, eventually seating the DIRECTOR and J...the DIRECTOR explains)

DIRECTOR

You don't mind do you? Cutaways for the dvd release...you know, "The Making Of"?

J

Look, you asked me to serve as a consultant on this project.

DIRECTOR

CONSOLtant, consOLTant, as in someone tendered an invitation to witness the sordid proceedings in the hope that he might console me for having taken this project on.

J

Can we stop trying to be so flippant here?

DIRECTOR

If you can find me another six or seven million doubloons out there in fairyland I'd be happy to make a six-part miniseries that would give the estimable Mayor Moscone more screen time, but as it is I'll be lucky if I can get thirty extras to shoot the Candlelight Vigil.

J

Look, you've got a movie that's supposed to be an epic story about a signature moment, no check that, a profound period of change in the history of San Francisco.

(J brings out his small notebook. MAKE-UP PERSON applies make-up to the DIRECTOR)

J

Your stated intent was that you were going to quote, "redress the imbalances that have impaired our view of the past; widen the lens of our perspective so that we can see the multiplicity of forces and contradictions that went into the eruption of the most notorious political earthquake in the history of this country; and lift the memory of George Moscone from under the shadow of Harvey Milk and bring him into the light of his true legacy". Unquote. I nearly cried when you said it.

DIRECTOR

I said that? When did I say that?

J

My father has been languishing for over thirty years as an asterisk in the life of Harvey Milk.

DIRECTOR

No honey, your father's doing just fine. It's you who've been languishing. I'd say don't take that personally but that would sound just a teensy bit condescending. (a message is handed to the director) Listen, I'm sorry but I don't have time to indulge this conversation. I thought the film was going to go one way but alas, it was a pipedream. My shrinking cabal of producers is not prepared to liquidate their shrinking portfolios so they can root for a straight hero. So, sorry, but no es po-see-bley. Did you see where my p.a. went? I've still got a couple of roles to fill. *(The lights change. He stands, looks off stage left, looking for the WAITER.)*

*

J

Are you leaving?

DIRECTOR

I don't know, am I?

J

Sorry, I just thought

DIRECTOR

Don't over think sweetheart, it takes all the fun out.

(The DIRECTOR exits. J looks after the DIRECTOR as LOUISE enters from the opposite direction and sits in the other chair. She is carrying a mug of something.)

LOUISE

Who was that guy?

J

I don't know....

LOUISE

You were saying?

J

Where was I?

LOUISE

The latest dream you had about a movie being made about your father that isn't about your father.

J

Oh yeah.

(then triggered by seeing the man in the cafe who looked like the Director in his dream)

And there was this director who's a complete narcissistic queen and who blew me off every time I tried to make my point.

*

LOUISE

I feel your pain.

J

Louise

LOUISE

Finish your story.

J

Okay so I'm getting more and more upset with this weird director and with anyone and no one in particular all at the same time. And they ignore me, all of them, in the dream, because they are so fucking obsessed with Harvey Milk. And I start yelling at them because it's as if HARVEY was the one who stood up to an entire police department whose hiring practices were formed sometime during the Middle Ages and who forced them to employ people whose last names were something other than Kerrigan or Conigliaro. And it's as if it was HARVEY who threw himself under the Yerba Buena bus because he believed that the working class John Does's and flat out poor people who lived in that neighborhood shouldn't be shipped off to Richmond and South Daly City to make room for the W hotel. And I'm right. I can feel that I'm right in this dream. Because you know what's amazing? What's amazing is that the first public figure to fully champion gay rights in this city was, ta da, George Moscone. And he paid for it. Every day of his political life, he paid for it. Without the crap that His Honor the Mayor had to scrape off his own shirt every day for ten years for the pleasure of standing up for gay rights? trust me, without George Moscone? Harvey Milk is still managing a photo shop in the Castro and trying to get people to pick up their dog's shit off the sidewalk! HE should be an asterisk in GEORGE MOSCONE'S bio!

*

*

I think I might be cracking up.

LOUISE

Have you...

J

I hate Harvey Milk. I swear I fucking hate Harvey Milk.

LOUISE
You do not hate Harvey Milk.

J

Of course I don't hate Harvey Milk!

LOUISE

You know what's interesting? During the course of the twenty plus years I have known you, you've mentioned your father a grand total of two times: once when you were upset after you walked into a restaurant in the Castro and saw there was an item on the menu called Killer Twinkies, and the other time when you went through a very brief period of trying to get your mother to date. That's twice in the entire time I've known you.

J

Maybe I was just letting things simmer.

LOUISE

I always had the feeling that you would rather be tortured than talk about him. So what is it you're trying to say?

*

J

You're always telling me that the most disappointing feature of our species is that we're blind to ourselves and too obvious to everyone else. You tell me.

LOUISE

So... maybe now that you're dreaming of taking up arms against the followers of Saint Harvey you have to come to terms with what? the spectacular loss of your spectacular Dad who was loved by everybody in the universe except maybe you?

(pause)

J

I loved my father.

LOUISE

Nobody's saying you didn't love him.

J

You just said exactly that.

LOUISE

What I meant was that's how you feel.

J

But that's not how I feel. And even if it is, or was, or will be I refuse to be tyrannized by any rogue set of feelings that have no business being in my body.

LOUISE

I think you're making yourself sick over all this.

J

Not sick enough, trust me.

LOUISE

So how do you explain barely mentioning him for all this time?

J

What can I tell you? My family has a deep affinity for protracted periods of unbearable silence. Assassination tends to put a damper on table talk. You have no idea.

LOUISE

I'm sorry Jon, I wasn't trying to

J

You're barking up the wrong tree, Doctor Louise. This isn't about my Dad. My Dad and I are fine.

(the WAITER enters, played by the same actor who played the PG. J double takes, stares at the WAITER)

WAITER

Will there be anything else?

(pause)

WAITER

Is there something else I can do for you?

(pause)

LOUISE

(rescues J)

No, I think we're done.

J

(looking around)

Has the other waiter left?

WAITER

I'm sorry?

J

The other waiter, the young man who served us. Has he left?

WAITER
I'm sorry, it's only been me here today.
(the WAITER leaves)

LOUISE
You okay?
(the BOY enters, fast, stands fuming and furious)

J
I'm cracking up. I am definitely cracking up.

Scene 10

(The BOY runs in and turns on the tv. Static. Louder and louder. The Boy puts his hands over his ears. He screams and starts tearing off his clothes. Mister enters, calmly. The static lowers in volume.)

MISTER
Pretty loud, huh.
(the Boy sees him and starts to undress)

What do you think you're doing?

(The Boy throws his shoe at Mister, who remains unflappable)

MISTER
You know your tongue has a function beyond salivating.
Language! Speech!

(the Boy continues throwing his clothing at Mister)

BOY
I'm not talking to you.

MISTER
See? Not so bad.

BOY
I'm not talking to you or anyone else. Ever again.

(the Boy is stripped to his underclothes. He kneels on the floor. He then stands up fast and holds his breath for a long time. He repeats this over and over)

MISTER
You're just making yourself sick.

*

BOY
I want to be sick.

MISTER
Nobody wants to be/ sick.

BOY
I do! I want to!

MISTER
It will never work.

BOY
I wasn't sick enough!

MISTER
That was then.

BOY
It wasn't.

MISTER
That's the thing about time.
You can't go back. You can never go back.

*

BOY
I wasn't sick enough.

MISTER
Your father is gone.

BOY
He is not gone.

MISTER
You never knew him and now he is gone.

BOY
You're a liar!
I did know him.
And I'm not ever leaving.
I'm not ever ever leaving.

MISTER
This will not work!

BOY
JUST GET OUT OF HERE! DID YOU HEAR ME? GET OUT OF
HERE AND LEAVE ME ALONE!

MISTER
(sighs)
If you insist.

(MISTER exits. The Static gets louder. The Boy continues for a little bit, takes one last breath and holds it, then collapses with exhaustion. MISTER re-enters, bringing with him a pail of water, the entire contents of which he now dumps onto the Boy. The Static ends abruptly. He gathers the Boys clothes while the Boy sputters to life. He goes to the Boy, he sits him up)

*

MISTER

You want to cross over? Then we will cross over.
Come on. Time to go. It's getting late.

(MISTER throws the boy over his shoulder)

MISTER

Everyone's waiting.

(they exit)

Scene 11

*

(Table, empty wine bottles. Louise cleans up the wet spot on the floor with a cloth. Offstage in a bedroom, watching the election results on television is Austin, the set designer. Older J is in the kitchen, off stage as well.)

LOUISE

(to J, offstage)

I hope that wasn't an expensive bottle.

J

(from offstage)

Not to worry. Plenty more in the stash.

AUSTIN

(from offstage)

Fremont's gone gay!

LOUISE

You're kidding! The gay hamlet of Fremont? If only my Aunt Doris had lived to see this day!

J

The pizza guy got lost! He'll be here in a few minutes!

LOUISE

(shouting to AUSTIN)

What's the total at now?

AUSTIN

Five and a half million and counting!

J

(entering with another bottle)

You guys are something.

LOUISE
What do you mean? This is a historical moment of the first order. With the added benefit that we get to cleanse ourselves of the stench of Prop 8.

AUSTIN
(from off stage)
Yeah!

LOUISE
This is right up there with freeing the slaves and the passage of the nineteenth amendment. You, of all people, should be wetting your pants.

J
My pants are always wet. Referendum or no referendum. What's the nineteenth one again?

LOUISE
You see, this is why the world is in the mess that it's in. You, a man with your esteemed political pedigree does not know what the nineteenth amendment is.

(AUSTIN enters to refill his glass from the table)

J
I'm sorry, I lost track after the right to keep and bear arms.

LOUISE
Austin will you enlighten this man about the nineteenth amendment?

AUSTIN
(while JON is filling his glass)
Prohibition of alcohol.

LOUISE
Come on Austin, that's the one amendment he would know for sure.

AUSTIN
Women, Jon, think women. Suffering Suffragettes. *(he drinks)*

J
Ah, of course.

LOUISE
One small victory for No Child Left Behind.

AUSTIN
(*reacting to the power of
the drink*)
Jesus, Jon....grappa?

J
I feel it's important to go into this new era of
liberation with as few brain cells as possible.

AUSTIN
I suppose it's good medicine in case we lose. (*he goes
off with his drink to watch the tv results*)

J
It's great you guys are so into this election.

LOUISE
You're not over the moon? You cannot tell me you're not
over the moon.

J
I'm just saying.

LOUISE
Evidently you're not.

J
Even if it passes I give it three months before it's
repealed. Six max.

AUSTIN
(*from off stage*)
Oh my god! They're saying there's a chance Orange
County might go gay! Hasn't happened since Biblical
times!

LOUISE
Orange County was gay in Biblical times?

J
Orange County is not going to go gay!

AUSTIN
Have you been there recently? It's bromance heaven!

LOUISE
They'll have to rename it. Magenta county!

J
(*to LOUISE*)
If Orange County goes gay, I am turning straight.

LOUISE
Ooohh, that doesn't sound good.
Okay Austin! Time to unglue yourself. Jon's
threatening to go straight.

J
(*shouting to Chris*)
Yeah and we're only halfway through my stash of
moderately priced alcohol and we haven't figured out if
the ghost is an evil dwarf with neo-fascist tendencies
or Mother Teresa dressed in Medieval armor.

AUSTIN
(*enters*)
Actually, I will need fewer brain cells to re-enter that
particular conversation.

LOUISE
And to relieve yourself of the burden that your set
designs for Hamlet were due sometime during the last
century.

AUSTIN
Another drink sounds perfect.

J
I've heard that grappa improves the make up of your
brain cells by killing off the bad ones, giving more
room for the good ones to grow.

AUSTIN
(*taking a glass*)
Dicey hypothesis, but it's worth a shot.

LOUISE
(*taking a glass*)
Literally.

AUSTIN
To the passage of a new constitutional amendment
insuring that people of all persuasions, but
specifically gay people are able to enjoy the rights,

LOUISE
(*reminding him*)
Responsibilities

J
(*reminding them*)
And baggage

AUSTIN
the magnificent rights, the formidable responsibilities
and the horrific baggage of marital relations in the
gloriously fucked up state of California.

LOUISE
Hear Hear.
(they drink)

J
I can't believe you guys.

LOUISE
What, so what if it gets repealed? We'll take it to
the Supreme Court and it will be put into law again.

AUSTIN
Only if Scalia dies and is replaced by a human being.
He's a bionic moose, that guy. He'll never die. *

LOUISE
Our case will win eventually.

J
(scoffing)
Wow.

LOUISE
What. What?

J
Nothing, its just....I don't think it even really matters
who's on the Supreme Court.

(pause)

I'm serious, I mean it's all bullshit, all posturing.
(silence)

LOUISE
Fighting for gay rights is bullshit?

J
What are you talking about Louise? "Our case"? You're
not even gay.

LOUISE
And you are! So why am I having to stand up for you?

J
It has nothing to do with gay rights. Yeah sure, we
should all be equal. Woop de do.
(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

Pass laws, have a parade, give speeches, give ourselves big long hugs, and then sit around and complain all day.

LOUISE

So what are you saying? That there is no such thing as change?

J

I've got two words for you: Bill Clinton.
I'm sorry but it's over.

AUSTIN

What's over?

J

The dream of some kind of progressive agenda. Some kind of post sixties fantasy where greed and fear are replaced by love and peace.

AUSTIN

Who said anything about the sixties? I'm just trying to find something to believe in other than frappuccinos, facebook, and the possibility the Mayan Calendar might be correct.

*
*

J

(getting on a roll)

Exactly! There is nothing in this paranormal political wasteland to believe in! None of our so-called old school leaders dare to tell the truth because they all have their hands in the good old cookie jar. And even if they do have a sudden desire to come clean, that grand entity known as The People, The People don't want to hear it! The naked truth is just too depressing or just too fucking scary. And so the masses begin the hunt for some new thing or some new someone to save our desperate asses. And of course we do find someone who's maybe black or maybe a woman or maybe even someone who's almost gay who fits the progressive profile, but when of course they get into office they turn out to be just as reactionary as the Cro-Magnon creep they ran against. And the people of course are shocked. Outraged! Betrayed! Never at a loss for self-delusional hypocrisy. Never short on railing against the Man. But if the people who claim to be politically engaged in this country? and I would include the majority of self-proclaimed progressive activists in this demographic, if these people would take a long cold look at themselves in the mirror? They would be horrified. Made to rip their own eyeballs out of their sockets. I'm telling you. Oedipal Therapy. That's what this country needs. Some major Oedipal Therapy.

LOUISE
(shocked and outraged)

.....

AUSTIN
(trying to have an
argument and not a fight)

Just because the notion of a more just society is over
for you, doesn't mean that a) it's over for everyone
else or that b) it isn't worth fighting for.

J
Fighting? Who's fighting? Do you see anybody
fighting for anything other than more free minutes for
their cell phones.

AUSTIN
There are plenty of people fighting! Look at this
election tonight.

J
We get juiced up for an election and then when it's over
we go back into our virtual cocoons while nursing our
daily dose of Xanax or Paxil

LOUISE
Or grappa

J
Or grappa, fine.
We are all, all of us, the willing agents of our own
distraction, whether it's eating or drinking or fucking
ourselves into oblivion or trying to completely
disappear into some entirely virtual life. And you
know what, people have always been this way.

AUSTIN
Whoa!

LOUISE
And what about the past? Has there ever been a
time, any time, when social change was possible?

J
Little tiny windows.

LOUISE
And when was that?

J
Various times. Beyond short-lived but various.

LOUISE
Well pick one.

J

Why?

LOUISE

Okay, too close to home. What were we talking about tonight?

The reason we're here?

J

Why are we suddenly playing Jeopardy?

*

LOUISE

Dare I say that we were having a design meeting. Or trying to. And we were talking about Elsinore. The state of the court. The state of Denmark.

*

*

*

AUSTIN

And the absence of any set and costume designs whatsoever.

LOUISE

You were making a case for the time of the play being a time of darkness and despair, and that if the court was really that corrupt then Hamlet's father had to be implicated as well, that he might have been something less than the hero his son wants him to be. Which explains why Hamlet is so completely paralyzed.

J

A bit of a stretch

AUSTIN

More than a bit

J

I meant/that

LOUISE

Which not only describes your way into the play but how you're currently feeling about the world. Which makes your insistence on doing this in strict period intensely interesting to me.

J

The audience can draw their own parallels with history.

LOUISE

But it feels like you are having a highly personal conversation with yourself about the collapse of ideology and about the effectiveness of doing anything in the world! This world! Right now! Which is fine! Let's have that conversation instead of endlessly circling around these other issues!

J

I've been having that conversation with you! Where have you been? It's not my job to be reductive/so that

LOUISE

But instead of opening yourself up to the play you became fixated on the ghost. I mean, what kind of father places a curse on his sons life? Right? Well, I might ask you, what kind of son internalizes that curse until he finds himself on the brink of self-implosion?

J

Can we put the brakes on the projection here?

LOUISE

Do you realize that during the entire time we've been talking about this play we've spent literally ninety percent of that time talking about the ghost? And I've been okay, cool, that's his way in. He's got that right, he's directing the damn thing. But we are stuck here. Paralyzed. Dead in the water. The play is four hours long and the ghost is onstage for five minutes and we haven't discussed virtually anything else. And it's HAMLET, for god sake's....

J

If we solve the ghost then we solve the play.

LOUISE

The ghost is there as a vehicle, Jon. A convention to generate fear and motivate the hero to get off his ass and do something. And I don't think we have to do much to get the audience to go there. Hell, half of them probably believe in ghosts and the other half is watching Paranormal State just out of curiosity.

(pause)

LOUISE

The final designs were due weeks ago. And we've got less than nothing. And it's not because we can't figure out this play. It's because something else is going on.

AUSTIN

(leaving)

I'm gonna check on Shasta County. Let me know when the pizza guy gets here.

J

What might that be?

LOUISE

(pause)

Listen, I know you've been having a hard time lately. But you won't talk about it. Not in any real way. And frankly, you're giving in to your own anger. You're clinging to despair like it's the only thing in the universe that's emotionally true.

J

What is this, an intervention?

LOUISE

Who are you right now?

J

I could ask the same thing of you? "Clinging to my own despair"?

LOUISE

"Oedipal therapy"?

(pause)

LOUISE

What's going on with you?
I've never seen you like this.

J

I don't know.

LOUISE

Please.

J

I don't know!

(pause)

(there is a knocking at the door)

J

Perfect timing.

(we hear cheering from the tv and AUSTIN starts shouting)

LOUISE

What's happening?

(she goes to see what's going on in the tv room)

(the knocking gets louder, affecting J...

He collapses, knocking over bottles, etc. LOUISE rushes into the room,)

LOUISE
Jesus. Austin! Austin!

(J takes some big breaths trying to calm himself down, AUSTIN enters)

LOUISE
Call 911! I'll get some water.

(LOUISE goes off to get water.)

PG enters)

J
I know what this is.
I know all too well what this is.

LOUISE
(bringing back the water)
Here you go.

PG
You wanna drink that slow.

LOUISE
Nice and slow.

PG
Water intoxication. Similar to drowning.

AUSTIN
(entering)
The paramedics are on they're way.

J
Did you hear that knocking?

*(LIGHTS UP ON MISTER WITH THE BOY,
FULLY DRESSED IN HIS SUIT)*

J
That knocking. What was that knocking?

AUSTIN
I'll go check. *(he leaves)*

*(the coffin is brought on and placed in a position facing the
BOY)*

(PG kneels close to J.)

PG
"Is not this something more than fantasy."

MISTER
The hour has come.

AUSTIN
(re-enters)
There's no one there.

J
There is! I know it!

LOUISE
(trying to calm him down)
Hey hey hey

PG
"You tremble and look pale."

J
I know there's someone there!

LOUISE
Jon, we're right here. We're all right here.

MISTER
The hour of your great deliverance has come.

LOUISE
Just be still. We're not going.
We're not going anywhere.

MISTER
Make ready the Way. Make straight the Path.

PG
We're not going anywhere.

(The PG and J look at each other. The coffin opens. Music plays. Lights.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT II

Scene 1

(At the wake of George Moscone, before the closed coffin. Standing by the coffin are two men dressed in police uniforms. On the other side of the stage sits the Woman Dressed in Black and the Boy. The Boy leans his head against her shoulder. Off to one side, MISTER. Beautiful music, hypnotic, maybe a cadence)

MISTER

Millions of words
upon words upon words.
The endless parade,
the turn and tumble of the simple phrase.

(Mister speaks into the Boy's ear)

MISTER

I'm so sorry, son.
We're all so sorry for your terrible loss.
I knew your father.
I was with your father.
I was the last person to see your father.
Take care of yourself.
Take care of each other.
Take care of your mother,
Your sisters and brother.

But these words
they will not be held by the air,
They collapse in mid-flight
Before reaching your ears
Leaving you with only the crown of despair.

(the coffin opens. It is empty, but there is an imagined body there. The Boy stands and slowly walks to the casket.)

MISTER

For all your tomorrows
Today is revealed,
no matter how many words of healing are borrowed,
how heartfelt the song of feeling and sorrow,
today is revealed
what cannot be spoken,
what cannot be touched,
what remains beyond the knowledge of love.

(MISTER looks at the Boy)

MISTER

Are you ready son?

(the Boy looks up. He looks at MISTER. He says nothing. He looks at his father.)

MISTER

Let us pray.

(The Boy places his hand near his father's head. The two police officers pick the Boy up gently and place him into the casket. There is no resistance whatsoever.)

MISTER

You angels that move among the dead,
Who guide the flight of the newly departed,
Take this, our son, beneath the earth
That he may see beyond his birth,
That he may hear beyond the strain
Of music lost and then regained,
That he may lose his mortal sight
And wed the ghost that suffers light.

(The MEN back away. The casket closes.)

Scene 2

(Late at night. J sitting alone in a chair. LOUISE enters. During the next she is doing various things to make J more comfortable, i.e preparing tea, getting a blanket for him)

LOUISE

Astonishing. Absolutely astonishing.

J

Did Austin get off okay?

LOUISE

That may have been the first time in medical history
that a paramedic was talked out of administering any
tests.

J

You saw him take my blood pressure.

LOUISE

And that was the end of it! That's like checking for a
brain tumor with a breath-a-lizer.

J

He knew I was fine.

LOUISE

He was relieved, then charmed, then taken aback with your response to his unfortunate question about whether or not you were related to the Moscone Parking Garage.

J

Don't you have to be older than twelve to become a paramedic?

LOUISE

Evidently not. Which would explain the ease with which he bought your amazingly ironic story about being dehydrated.

J

Did Austin make it to his plane on time?

LOUISE

He just sent me a text. The fog was so bad that the cab driver got lost on his way to the airport and he's waiting to get on another flight. But the opera company will get him there, even if he has to travel by mule. The tech rehearsal has evidently ground to a complete halt. The flying rig failed and our Electra is refusing to wear a harness until the tech staff can prove that all 350 pounds of her can land safely on top of the ceramic lotus flower waiting below.

J

And you?

LOUISE

I'm more worried about the chorus of little girls who are supposed to be hiding under the lotus flower.

J

I meant what time are you leaving?

LOUISE

I changed my ticket. I'm not leaving until you show consistent signs of life or you drop dead. Whichever comes first. There was no answer at your therapist's office by the way.

J

He's probably in Big Sur at a finger painting workshop.

LOUISE

I'm willing to wait.

J

I'm told you I'm fine.

J
Really? I thought/you'd be

LOUISE
That was the most brilliant tactic I have ever seen used
to change the subject.

J
It's not changing the subject actually. I just think
I'm not ready to do it.

LOUISE
You've been obsessed with doing Hamlet your whole life.

J
It's a lie.

LOUISE
You committed the entire play to memory in the 8th
grade.

J
It's a lie. I've been lying.

LOUISE
You secretly hate the play, what?

J
In a way, yes. I can't face what it's really about.
(pause) For me. What it's about for me.

LOUISE
The Ghost.

J
"I think it be no other"

LOUISE
The people telling you what to do? In your dreams?

J
"In the same figure like the King that's dead." Sort
of.

(pause)

LOUISE
Your father.

J
His father.

LOUISE
His father.

J

Or your father for that matter. To be honest with you, I really don't know.

(pause)

But I figured out that he's wearing some kind of uniform like he's a security guy or a soldier maybe a prison guard. And the only person that's like him that I can think of was my grandfather. My father's father. Black sheep of the family. In love with the bottle, for which my Grandmother kicked him out of the house when my Dad was like a baby. He was a prison guard at San Quentin. But I never even knew him! So why the hell is this figment of my imagined past stalking me like some deranged messenger during my sleeping hours?

*
*
*

LOUISE

You know we're all supposed to be everyone in our dreams.

J

Who was it that came up with that theory? I mean, what is that? (impersonating two voices) "I'm going to kill me" "Please don't kill me". "I'm going to completely kill me." "Please don't completely kill me". That's got to be the stupidest theory I've ever heard. How is that helpful?

*
*

LOUISE

I think it's a bit more complicated than that.

J

I have come to believe that it's an evolutionary principle of highest order that we forget most of our dreams. We forget them because they're of no real use to us. Just detritus. Like when you run the dishwasher and some excess water comes up in the sink. That's what dreams are.

(pause)

LOUISE

You know sometimes I have a hard time believing that you're intelligent.

J

I was overstating/the case for

LOUISE

I'm serious. You were just saying that whatever has come up in your dreams is forcing you to deal with your own important issues about your very important father. Now you're saying the opposite? Like you don't give shit. In the very next sentence?

J

You were the one saying we didn't have the capacity to interpret our dreams.

LOUISE

I said I wasn't sure.

J

It sounded to me like you were /more than

LOUISE

Look, I don't know how to interpret dreams. It's complicated and treacherous territory. Not the kind of thing you want to leave to amateurs. That doesn't mean you should ignore them, especially if they are invading your conscious life.

J

No one can make sense out of their unconscious.

LOUISE

That's the miracle of it, isn't it?

J

Louise

LOUISE

I'm not asking you to grab a wand and join a coven. I'm just telling you that if we don't respect the power of things we can't see? the things we can't consciously know? they will come back to bite us in the ass and then who knows? You may find yourself engaged in some major Oedipal Therapy.

J

Respect the things we can't see? What does that actually mean?

L

Dreams are not detritus. They're more like fractured messages, strange hieroglyphs, clues to whatever it is that's going on in the great beyond.

J

Well I don't understand any of it.

LOUISE

Now THAT'S a lie.

J

Thanks for the support.

LOUISE

Come on! Stumbling around in a cave without a flashlight is what we do for a living. You, Mr. Director, spend most of your time in the rehearsal hall trying to convince actors to let go of their armor and fall into an invented universe of your own making.

J

I'm in control of that. I'm not in control of this.

LOUISE

You control the uncontrollable. You give a feeling of certainty to a fantastic illusion. And you're good at it, even when you're torturing them. I've seen you do it. And the only way you inspire other people to really let go and wrestle with their demonic angels is if they know you're wrestling with your own. It's a mutual admiration society for willfully demented truth seekers.

J

Can we dispense with this romantic notion of the courageous artist? This idea that we are digging deep into our unconscious to reveal hidden truths about ourselves? I told myself that for years, and you know what I think now? I think the opposite. I was using art to distract myself from the truth rather than confront it.

LOUISE

Maybe you were on occasion. Maybe that's why some of your shows sucked.

J

I don't think my shows sucked.

LOUISE

I wasn't saying that your shows sucked, I was saying that on any given show if you don't push yourself beyond an easy set of choices, don't grapple with the questions raised in any deep way, well, you cheat yourself. And somewhere you know it. You file it away in the suck drawer. We all have a suck drawer. That's why we have to keep pushing ourselves, have a little courage. To stay out of the suck drawer.

(pause)

J

Which shows of mine do you think sucked?

LOUISE

The same ones you did.

(pause)

There's nothing romantic about living with uncertainty. Nothing romantic about probing the unknown. It's scary as shit. You stepped on a land mine, is all. You're hurt. Coraggio!

(pause)

J

You know that my father locked the California State Senate in their chambers one time? 1975, the Neanderthal age of the gays rights movement, and he's using the full force of his heterosexual brass balls to pass a bill legalizing sodomy. Huge controversy. So he's the majority leader right?, and he floats the idea that the bill will never pass, you know, like he doesn't have the votes, and then he casually calls for a vote at a really odd time, and so they take the vote and it's a tie, a dead flat-out tie, and so he locks the Senate with a real key, and then runs and gets a car to rush the Lieutenant Governor down to the capitol to cast the deciding vote, and the thing passes. Chaos at the capitol. Anal sex all over the state. Unfuckingbelievable.

LOUISE

Amazing.

J

The arrogance. The audacity. The clarity. What a gift.

LOUISE

Like father like son.

J

By moonlight maybe.

LOUISE

By every measure of light. DNA is DNA.

(pause)

J

You know the first time I thought I looked like my Dad I was in staring at myself in a mirror in an aerobics class.

Seriously. I'm in this class which, if you ever had any doubts about whether or not you were gay? this class was the place to clear things up.

(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

And I remember Cher was singing If I Could Turn Back Time and I'm doing the steps and doing the steps and just when I feel I'm on the verge of a massive coronary I look up and suddenly I catch myself in the mirror. And something about that moment and who knows, but I suddenly see my father. Not SEE my father but see that, look, there I am, I'm him. And I stop right there, like dead in my tracks, and it must have lasted for a while because the teacher comes over, and maybe she was freaked out that I was in some kind of weird trance because she starts shouting at me, asking me if I'm all right. And...and I just smile. I don't care. The whole class is staring at me and I don't care at all, because I can feel that some enormous weight has been lifted off of me. Right there, I just came into a part of myself.

(pause)

Here today. Gone Tomorrow.

(He sings, half-mockingly)

"If I could turn back time,
If I could find a way..."

(silence.)

You know, I always thought that my mother was the one who let suffering define her life. That she had to nurse it, in private, as a way of protecting whatever was left of her relationship with my father, whatever was left of her. But all the time, it was me doing the protecting.

LOUISE

Of your mother.

J

Well that too.

LOUISE

You did the best you could.

J

Aren't we supposed to get over stuff? Wasn't that the point of all the therapy I submitted myself to?

LOUISE

Tell it to your ghost.

J

Yeah, my newest best friend. You've been replaced, Louise.

LOUISE

Don't you dare.

J
I'm quitting the show.

LOUISE
I don't care.

J
You don't?

LOUISE
I don't care if you quit the show. Just don't quit on me.

(LOUISE leaves. J stays)

Scene 3

(A different part of the stage. Inside the coffin. The Boy alone in the dark. MISTER is there too, but the Boy cannot see him.)

(silence)

BOY
Am I already dead?

(Silence.)

BOY
Have I already died?

MISTER
You slipped within. Crossed over to the other side is all. The vast underbelly of the boundless universe.

BOY
I can't see.

MISTER
Such is the view from these rarified depths.

BOY
It's too dark.

MISTER
You have to look harder.

BOY
I told you there's nothing.

(*pause*)

I want to leave.

MISTER
This is the world. The world you've chosen.

BOY
I didn't choose this.

MISTER
Of course you did.

(*silence*)

Ask me.

BOY
What?

MISTER
Ask me what you want to ask me.

(*pause*)

BOY
I'm going to die, aren't I.

MISTER
In time, yes.

BOY
Will I get to see my father?

(*silence*)

Will I get to see my father?

MISTER
No, you will never see him again.

(*silence*)

BOY
Wait. I think I see something.
A shadow, I think. Of something.

MISTER
That happens sometimes.

BOY
There's something moving. I think I can feel something
moving.

Are you sure? MISTER

Is it him? BOY

Dad! Dad it's me! DAD!

(pause)

It was him! Was it him? I think it was him.

(silence)

It wasn't was it?

It wasn't him.

(silence.

PG enters the scene with J)

BOY

Wait! Why can't I feel anything?

*

MISTER

Listen for the music. Nothing moves within, without the music.

Do you hear that? Listen.

(he exits. The Boy is left alone)

BOY

What happens now?

Scene 4

PG

You have to kill someone.

J

This is not happening.

PG

To prove yourself worthy of being his progeny.

J

This is definitely not happening.

PG

To sanctify his memory. To rectify his legacy. And to rain vengeance on those who have hurt him.

(hands him a piece of paper)

Just some suggestions.

*

J

Kill? As in kill? I can't kill anyone!

PG
Think of it as a test.

J
Quentin Kopp?

PG
That's an easy one. No one will miss that fucking
pinhead.

J
Dianne Feinstein?!

PG
Stumbles into the mayor's office on the back of your
dead father and then runs the table all the way to the
United States Senate.

J
She's a friend of the family for god's sake!

PG
So much the worse for the family.
It's time to wreck some havoc, boy. Send a message to
the slumbering world. WAKE UP! WE WILL NOT FORGET!
MOSCONE RULES!
Here. Take my gun.

J
I cannot/take

PG
Take the damn gun.

(J takes the gun)

PG
Trust me, you're gonna like this gun.

J
I can't

PG
Be careful how you hold that thing, boy, it's loaded!
A Baby Crockett like you could shoot your own ass off.
Here, let me show you. *(He holds J's arms out straight)*
That's it, now, relax your arms. RELAX! Jesus.
There you go. Now when you want to shoot, you just turn
toward your target *(they turn slowly, the gun towards*
the audience). Now, on three, you just pull the
trigger. You ready?

J
I think I'm going to be sick.

PG
I said, are you ready?

J
Ohmygod ohmygod ohmygod ohmygod ohmygod

PG
Shoot goddammit, shoot!

J
I can't.

PG
Close your eyes and think of somebody you hate. Pick one of those actors you're always going on about.

J
(lowers the gun)
I can't. I won't.

PG
Think of it as practice. Like a rehearsal.

J
I'm through with this insanity. *(J discards the gun)*

PG
Is it the gun? .38 Smith and Wesson, same one used by Mister Daniel James White. I thought it would add a touch of motivation.

J
I AM NOT DOING THIS.

PG
It's crossover time, Manskirt! Time to shake loose that tight grip you've got on your short and curlies and make the leap into something called manhood!

J
I don't want any part of what you call being a man.

PG
You're a real piece of Navy cake, aren't you? A regular anal buccaneer.

J
So when did you first realize you were attracted to men?

PG
You look just like your father used to look right now.

J
I thought you said he was coming.

PG

You know I took him on field trip to the gas chamber once, to let him see the long arm of the law at work, take a peek at the death monster you know? and that kid just livered up on me. Spent the rest of his life barking about the injustice of it, running from the sheer truth of revenge.

J

Maybe the gas chamber wasn't the best idea for a field trip.

PG

You two, you and him, two peas in a queer pod. But at least he stood for something.

(the sound of a cock crowing)

PG

Shit.

*

(singing)

*

If I could turn back time...

*

Listen to me. You don't want to fuck this up. If I have to come back, it's your shiny green ass I'll be coming for.

J

You said he would come. When, when is he coming?

PG

Coming? Hell, he's already here.

J

What do you mean, he's already here?

LOVERBOY

(From offstage)

Are you okay in there?

PG disappears

J

(to PG)

Don't leave!

LOVERBOY

(entering)

I'm right here.

J

(to LOVERBOY, a bit disoriented)

He said he would come.

Who said?

LOVERBOY

J
Why would he say that?

LOVERBOY
(about PG)
You got the message?
"Make ready make straight"?
He was here again?

J
What are you talking about?

LOVERBOY
The phobosexual. The crazy psycho sicko security guy.
You said he was here? That maniac almost killed me.

(pause)

J
Is that all you can think about is your own thin skin?
Why are you even here?

LOVERBOY
Why am I? I'm here because you cast me. You thought I
was perfect. *

J
You're supposed to play the part of my fucking boyfriend
and if you can't do that then why are you fucking still
here?

LOVERBOY
What do you mean? I would do anything for you.

J
You're right. I did cast you. And now I cast you out.

LOVERBOY
You can't get rid of me! You need me! *

(Music in the distance)

J
Did you hear that?

LOVERBOY
What?

J
That music, you can't hear it?

LOVERBOY
I don't hear anything.

J
That's a good thing I think right? That I can hear the
music./ How can you not hear it!

LOVERBOY
Come back to bed.

J
Wait. It's gone. It's gone now. Fuck!

LOVERBOY
Come back to bed and let's get some sleep.

J
You think I'm crazy don't you?

LOVERBOY
I can't afford to think you're crazy.

J
Don't fucking be evasive! Just tell me I'm crazy if
you think I'm crazy.

LOVERBOY
I don't think you're crazy!

J
Jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus jesus
(pause)

What happens now?

LOVERBOY
(kisses him lightly)
Let's go back to sleep.

J
Get away from me.

LOVERBOY
Come on, I know what'll make those nightmares go away.

J
Get away from me I said!

LOVERBOY
But you love it when I touch you.

J
You're right. I love being touched. I need to be
actually touched.

LOVERBOY
No person in the whole world can touch you the way

J
Enough! Ignis Fatuus! I banish you. Now and forever.

LOVERBOY
Don't leave me here. Please! I'm your biggest fan!

(J leaves)

LOVERBOY
Who are you kidding, pal? You need my ass to keep you
alive. I'm the best thing you've got going! Oh, shit!

(he disappears into the bed)

Scene 5

*(An upscale café with a bar. Enter ROBERT, played by the
same actor as MISTER, and BASIL, not played by the same actor
who played LOVERBOY)*

BASIL
(looking around)
I don't see him.

ROBERT
Nervous?

BASIL
A little. But it's hard to be too nervous these days.
First dates are set up like ten minute intake
interviews. You don't have to worry about time, money,
or sex. Just, you know, are there any signs here of
any molecular movement.

ROBERT
And this is the watering hole of choice?

BASIL
Voted as the Best Place in the City for a First Date.
It's called The Blind Spot.

ROBERT (LAUGHING)
And the name doesn't alarm you.

BASIL
The Google gods tell us and so here we come. To unplug
from the digital cocoon and try to rub real shoulders in
the intimate confines.

ROBERT

It seems that you guys have already shared a few intimacies on the internet.

BASIL

It's amazing what people are willing to reveal about themselves when they're not talking to a real person. But trust me, what's virtually something often turns out to be virtually nothing.

ROBERT

Alas and alack.

BASIL

Fake is the new real. Especially with photographs. You wouldn't believe what people pretend they look like.

ROBERT

Fake pictures?

BASIL

(points to someone in the audience. They both look out). You see that guy? The (i.e. really old) guy? You would not have believed the picture he posted of himself online. He looked like Antonio Banderas.

ROBERT

Ay Dios Mio.

*

BASIL

Welcome to reality.

ROBERT

So happy I'm a Luddite.

BASIL

I'm going to make a break for the restroom. Be on the lookout.

ROBERT

Don't get lost.

(BASIL exits. ROBERT waits for a bit. He glances at the guy in the audience. Turns away. J enters, sees ROBERT. J freezes. ROBERT sees J and approaches him)

ROBERT

You must be...

J

(taken aback)

I'm sorry?

ROBERT
(*hands shake*)
You must be he.

J
I'm sorry I'm waiting to meet someone.

ROBERT
I've wanted to meet you for a long time.

J
I'm sorry, I'm confused. I was supposed to meet someone here, someone named Basil.

ROBERT
My name's not Basil.

J
It's not?

ROBERT
No, it's Robert.

J
Robert. Not Basil.

ROBERT
Definitely not Basil.

J
There's something really wrong with this picture.

ROBERT
You look exactly like your picture.

J
I'm sorry, I'm really confused. Were we supposed to meet today?

ROBERT
I guess we're all supposed to meet one day.
(*pause. BASIL enters*)

ROBERT
Ah, here's the mystery man himself.

BASIL
(*to J*)
Hi, I'm Basil. (*the British pronunciation*)

J
Ah, Basil (pronouncing it in the British). Of course.
Jon.

BASIL
Sorry to keep you. I was using the facilities. I trust
you met Junior. Ah, Robert, sorry. Robert Junior.

ROBERT
(explaining)
I'm afraid I led him on for a bit.

BASIL
You pretending to be my twin again?

ROBERT
No harm I hope.

J
One never knows, does one.

ROBERT
Well, I'll leave you both to your happily imagined
meeting.
(to J) Robert Esu Junior. It was a pleasure. Truly.

J
Thanks.

(exit ROBERT. They find a bar table and sit at some point)

BASIL
Hey.

J
Hey.
That's quite a friend you've got there.

BASIL
More like a guardian angel.

J
Really.

BASIL
Your basic life saver. On too many occasions to count.
He really wanted to meet you. Sorry if that was
awkward.

J
No, no, it's just...why did he want to meet me?

BASIL
Honestly, I'm a little embarrassed by it. But ever
since you and I have been doing the email thing he's
been all over me about it. His father was a police
officer when your Dad was killed and he was on duty for
the funeral service.

(MORE)

BASIL (CONT'D)

I guess every cop in the state was. But he noticed you, his Dad did, at the funeral, and he told Robert about you. He said, his dad said that you made eye contact with him during the wake, and that it was the strangest thing, maybe because his own father had been killed, but in that one instant of eye contact his Dad felt like he knew, well, a lot. About just, how you were that day. It made a lasting impression on Junior I guess. He was around the same age as you. He even dreamt about you. Ever since then he's always wanted to meet you.

*

(pause)

J

Well then.

BASIL

So, hey. Is this weird or what?

J

I don't know. I mean, yeah, THAT was weird, If I had to rank it I'd give it a six on the weirdness scale, but you know, Basil, the night is young. Give me a few minutes and I'm sure I can reach untold levels of weirdness. A special talent of mine.... Sorry, I didn't get any sleep last night.

BASIL

Oh. No. That's totally great.

(WAITER enters)

WAITER

Whatd'll it be guys?

J

Kettle One, up.

BASIL

Do you have the Hess Chardonnay by any chance?

WAITER

(outing him)

The usual. No problem. (he leaves)

J

So. This is your spot. The Blind Spot.

BASIL

Not really.

J

I see.

(pause)

BASIL

Listen, I'm really happy to finally meet you. In person.
I mean, have you ever done this before?

J

Have I done what before?

BASIL

Email somebody obsessively for six weeks, telling them,
telling essentially a stranger things that you would
normally wait say, three to five years to tell your best
friend, and then arrange to meet them to exchange
introductions?

J

Would you believe me if I said no?

BASIL

(studying him, playing)

Hmmm...not entirely. Maybe. No.

J

Okay. No.

BASIL

I lied. I believe you.

J

I have to warn you, I'm good at that.

BASIL

What, lying or believing?

J

Both.

BASIL

Ah. You go both ways.

(Basil tries to laugh. An awkward silence.)

J

Okay. You're right. This is weird.

BASIL

Yeah, its like we've already had sex but now we have to
meet each other.

So, hi, I'm Basil. Aka Loverboy. It was great having
sex with you.

J
I have to say, Basil feels different from how Loverboy reads.

(pause)

BASIL
I think there's a no win in that statement somewhere.

J
No, no, it's just, I mean, you look really, healthy, and seem...

BASIL
Healthy?

J
No, I'm sorry. I'm really bad with words.

BASIL
You are NOT really bad with words.
That one from two nights ago?
(quoting him)
"for years now I have done this:
measured love by the volume
and velocity of loss, or
the rumor of another's pleasure"

*

J
No. Thanks.

BASIL
Call me crazy, I thought your letters were gorgeous.

J
That's kind of you, really, but what I meant to say was that well, you don't seem like, I don't know, a financial consultant.

BASIL
Ah, yes, the financial consultant disconnect. I get that all the time. People don't think anybody doing finances can be you know, healthy.

J
I mean, I just thought you'd be less...bouncy.

BASIL
Bouncy. Healthy and bouncy.

J
I am fucking horrible. I am,/I don't

BASIL
(trying to save him)
You don't seem like a theatre director to me, I have to say.

J
Really?

BASIL
Really I have no idea. I have absolutely no reference point to know what theatre directors are like.

J
You know the spotted owl? Lives alone, stays up 'til all hours hooting at things in the forest, an endangered species? Perfect point of reference.

(The waiter enters with the drinks)

WAITER
Here we go gentlemen.

BASIL
Start your engines.
(They clink glasses and drink for a moment in awkward silence.)

BASIL
Do you like writing emails, letters?
(pause)

J
Yeah, I love writing letters.

BASIL
Why?
(pause)

J
Truthfully? Because I'm alone.

BASIL
You like being alone.

J
I can control the noise. In my head. The noise of the silence, you know, the silence I wrote to you about.

BASIL
The world went silent, I think you said.

J
Goes silent, I believe, not went, goes.

BASIL
Sorry. If it goes then I assume it went silent at some point. From whenever.

(*silence.*)

J
You know what it is about letters? They're quiet.

BASIL
Meant to be read by moonlight.

J
Just out of curiosity, did you read my letters to your friend Robert?

BASIL
Um, no.

J
Did you let your friend Robert see my letters?

BASIL
Would you believe me if I said no? (*slight pause*)
He did not see or read your letters.
I will admit that in my excitement over meeting you that I shared a few phrases of yours that I found touching or inspiring or funny. That's what friends do.

J
Sharing phrases.

BASIL
(*quoting from the letters*)
"The night at last goes silent." "We love you Dad, We love you Dad." "I fell into the winding sheet of my own despair." Not sure what they meant all the time but they were incredibly moving.

J
I never said that.

BASIL
You don't have to be modest. You said all those/things

J
I never said We love you Dad.

BASIL
It can be confusing trying to remember what you wrote to who.

J
No, it can be confusing for YOU to remember what you wrote to whom.

BASIL
Listen, Jon

J
You went, didn't you?

BASIL
Went where?

(pause. PG enters from another part of the stage. During the following, he looks around, sees no one, and checks his gun)

J
I'm sorry, I think I need to go.

BASIL
Wait, why?

J
I just remembered I have to do something.

BASIL
We just got

*

J
I just remembered that the thing I have to do is that I can't do this. That doing this, this fantasy dating cum personal expose thing is just wrong.

BASIL
If I said something that upset you then

J
First that little episode with your friend/was the

BASIL
He didn't read the/letters

J
And then, to go THERE.
That's the kind of thing you do with your best friend after say, three to five years.

BASIL
I thought you'd be impressed! I thought you would take it as a gesture.

J
Like any good rape victim.

BASIL
The grave site is open to the public, for god's sake! *

J
Right now I feel like I'm going to kill somebody.

BASIL
You're not serious.

WAITER
(re-entering)
How we doing over here?

J
Sorry, Basil. I'm not naturally suited to commit murder but there are occasions when every other alternative seems woefully ineffective.

WAITER
Will another round help?

J
Not for me thanks. But I suspect your friend Loverboy here will need something a lot stronger than Chardonnay. *(he throws money on the table)*
On me.
And by the way, it's We MISS you Dad. Not "love", "miss". If you're going to rob somebody, make sure you get the grammar right!

(Jon leaves. PG hears someone coming, hides in the shadows) *

WAITER
(to BASIL)
"Loverboy?"

BASIL
That man is crazy. Certifiably insane.

Scene 6

(Lights shift)

(J sees PG and runs at him, tackles him, knocks the gun away. They stand off, ready to wrestle, the gun beyond their grasps.)

PG
Well well well, I see that Cinderfella has taken off her gloves.

J
It's time for you to go.

PG
And when did you come to this auspicious conclusion.

J
On a blind date.

PG
Appropriate enough.

(J lunges at PG. They violently wrestle for some time, then separate)

J
(in pain)
I think I've broken something.

PG
Congratulations, there's some bones in that pile of blubber.

J
I think I've broken all my ribs.

PG
(getting the gun)
Get up!

J
Why don't you give me the gun?

PG
I like a man with a sense of humor.

J
Are you going to kill me?

PG
Well, listen to Siggy Freud. You don't even know who you're dealing with.

J
You're nothing but a psychotic hallucination. Some sick projection of a long lost relative. You don't even exist!

PG
The lord works his wondrous if tumultuous ways through an army of his ever-most avenging angels! George, Mister George Joseph, father of George Richard, aka Malachi, spit from the mouth of Yawheh his self.

(MORE)

PG (CONT'D)

But you, sonny, can call me Gramps. At your service on
this holiest of holies.

(MORE)

PG (CONT'D)

Look at me.

(pause)

LOOK AT ME!

(pause. J slowly looks at him)

PG

Ask me.

J

What?

PG

Ask me what you want to ask me!

(pause)

J

You said my father was already here.

PG

He came and went.

You prevented his staying.

J

Me?

PG

You wouldn't act on his behalf.

J

There was nothing I/could

PG

Precisely. Nothing. Your whole life.

Cast yourself in the role of the afflicted boy, the
carrion child, the wounded gamin.

(MORE)

PG (CONT'D)

For years and years you let yourself drift, blunted your purpose, embraced illusion, and discarded the fortune offered you by fate.

J

I've never known anything about anything you're talking about. There is no/truth

PG

Think on how he died! Who he was with! His very last moment.

(voicing an imagined conversation with Dan White) "Come on in Dan, let's talk about this, I can see you're upset, I can see it your eyes. You don't look good. Didn't sleep last night? Hey I understand. I was up too. One of my kids was sick as a dog. The youngest, you know? What is it with the youngest?

Come on back to the inner sanctum, my private office, I'll make you a drink and we'll talk about what happened. I know Dan, I know I know, you're under intense pressure, you quit, you didn't quit, and now well, you want to do the right thing, but it's very complicated, so come on back and we'll talk it out, talk about this like men."

And so they do. They go back inside. Retreat from the glare of the secretaries and the interns, away from the gaggle of press reps and lobbyists, get away from it all... and for what? So as not to humiliate the prodigal son! To protect the assassin from the public glare of shame and embarrassment!

And so he does. He brings his boy Dan to the inner office. Brings him back there to calm him down.

And what did he say? In those 30 odd seconds?

"I realize you're upset, and I'm sympathetic, truly I am, politics is well, maybe it's better you get out now. Raise your family. Make a living. This is not personal. Look at me, Dan. This is not personal. It may be for the best. Get out of this lousy, stinking game. You don't know how many times I wished I had. You don't know how many. Many times. My wife and kids. Hell, my youngest? The one kept me up all of last night? He thinks I'm going to be taken and killed. Seeing a therapist, no shit, right now. How's that for a fact. He's scared that someday someone's really going to shoot me. Can you believe that? Get out of politics, that's what I say. Maybe you shouldn't be doing this, Dan. Maybe neither of us should be doing this, huh? Stay home and be Dads. Sounds good, huh? Who in their right mind would want to do this? I like you Dan. I always have."

(MORE)

PG (CONT'D)

What do you think he was he feeling when the gun came out?

In that one split second.

Longer than a lifetime. That's what they say.

And what they say? What they say is true. One infinitesimally eternal second.

His life flashing.

his every dream and desire filling his minds eye

but now falling past his reach, past his promise,

now suddenly disappearing down the rabbit hole of time.

(PG points the gun towards J. With each ensuing "boom", we hear a loud gunshot)

*
*

PG

The first bullet, boom, straight into the chest,

Immediate hypovolemic chaos,

The second, boom, pulls away from the center, his body hurled back

Straight into the throes of a splenetic hemorrhage.

Now he's down on the floor

The third boom, and the fourth, boom,

nothing but a statement to the back of the head.

And Daniel James White, the wayfaring son now turned

patricide, the child monster let out of its cage.

Mission accomplished but still he wants more.

Takes off on his infamous walk down the hall, that with

the passing of time will have the ironic distinction of

making the other guy, what's his name, marquee famous.

And your father lying there. Lying there forever. In

the forgotten blood of history. Forever.

(pause)

And where are you?

You let him go. Sick on the day. But not sick enough

to keep you home. To keep him home. To take care of

you for the rest of your life. No. You let him go.

Now all you have is the rest of eternity. There at the

wake. Clinging to the silence, the final absence, the

impossible distance you cannot traverse. Your body

shifts into automatic pilot, you drift into space, and

you watch his corpse for some sign of waking. You

watch yourself for some sign of feeling.

(pause)

And does it not come?

J

No.

PG

No it doesn't. You watch all day. All day and all

night.

But does anything come?

J
No it doesn't.

PG
But still you move.

(pause)

You have to move.

(pause)

J
(letting himself go there)
I approach the casket. Just as I get there I look up for a second, wanting to fly away. I stand there looking at his face in death, waiting for some sign, some sign I'm alive, that he's still alive, or simply asleep, and I stand there not knowing what I should do. I notice some skin at the back of his head, something's come loose, and I try to put it back in it's rightful place, but it's stuck, it won't go, and I fumble with my fingers, touching his head, and I want to jump in, just jump in the casket, because maybe then I'll feel, maybe then I'll feel something.

(pause. J breaks down)

PG
But you don't.
You fed on his death but refused to grieve.

PG
(referring to J's tears)
Too late for that now. Now it's too late.

(PG takes out his gun)

Make ready. Make straight.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green/ pastures.

J
I will not be destroyed.

PG
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the/paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

J
I absolutely refuse. I refuse to be destroyed by the
likes of you.

PG
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death;
I will fear no evil:

J
You! Someone's discarded idea of a grandfather,/with
your toxic stench

PG
For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff/they
comfort me

J
and your grab bag of bad threats and reactionary
insults,

PG
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
enemies:

J
I see who you are.

PG
thou anointest/my head with oil

J
Filled with the cowardice of my own blood. /Now I see.

PG
My cup runneth over.

J
I take back the might of my fathers name

PG
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me/ all the days
of my life.

J
I take back the right to act in my name.

PG
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

J
I am the son of my father!

(pause. J walks straight at PG who has finished loading the gun and is pointing the weapon at him.)

PG

You know what they say about the people in your dreams.

(J calmly takes the gun from PG).

J

I know what they say. And what they say is true.

(J shoots PG. Once. PG staggers back, then falls forward, into the arms of J)

PG

Congratulations.

(PG kisses J on the mouth, hard)

PG

How does it feel to kiss yourself goodbye?

(PG dies.)

J

I can live with that.

SCENE 7

(Two voices we don't see: J's, and the monitor for the auditions who is announcing the performers)

J'S OFFSTAGE VOICE

Next! Next please!

(An actor in a medieval suit of armor enters. The armor is painted all white. The visor is down. He has a hard time walking but arrives at a spot on the stage. He likes to gesticulate.)

MONITOR

This is Reggie Van Husen the third.

MEDIEVAL GHOST

It's Van Huuusen.

MONITOR

Sorry. This is Reggie van Huusen the third.

MEDIEVAL GHOST

Should I start?

MONITOR

Yes. You may begin.

MEDIEVAL GHOST

(in a tremulous voice)

My hour is almost come
When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

(on "render up" the MEDIEVAL GHOST throws up his hands violently, causing him to slip and crash to the ground. A stagehand comes out and helps him up)

MEDIEVAL GHOST

I'm sorry, I can't see a goddamn thing in this piece of shit. This thing is a death trap. I want to speak with the Equity deputy!... *(he leaves the stage)*

J OFFSTAGE VOICE

Next!

MONITOR

This is Milos.

*

(An actor in a spandex outfit comes on. He is wearing a white mask and white gloves. He physically acts out every single word as he speaks)

SPANDEX GHOST

Pity me not,
But lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold

J OFFSTAGE VOICE

Thank you! Next!

SPANDEX GHOST

I prepared the scene with the queen as well.

J OFFSTAGE VOICE

That won't be necessary. Next!

(SPANDEX GHOST slouches off.)

MONITOR

This is Alexi and Rachel and Sasha B. from the All the World's a Puppet Collective

(A large puppet version of the Ghost with a large cauliflower ear and perhaps a pike running through it enters.)

The PUPPET GHOST is manipulated by Bunraku-type puppeteers who also speak the lines.)

*

PUPPET GHOST

List, list, O list!
I am thy father's spirit
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night.

*

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Great!

*

*

PUPPETEER

Really?

*

*

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Yeah, that was really great.

*

*

PUPPETEER

Do you need to see anything else?

*

*

OFFSTAGE VOICE

No no, you guys really nailed it.

*

*

PUPPETEER

Okay!

*

*

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Thanks so much.

*

*

(the Puppeteers exit)

*

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Who let that fucking puppet in here? This is turning
into my worst nightmare!
Is there anybody left out there? Next!.... Is that
the last of them then?

(the GHOST OF GEORGE MOSCONE slowly walks onstage dressed in a grey suit. He is played by the same actor who played the PG but he is clearly not the same character. He is composed, at peace, magnetic. He looks out at the audience.)

MONITOR

This is George Richard Moscone.

(music)

(The GHOST OF GM lip syncs Tony Bennett's classic version of I Left My Heart in San Francisco.)

(drawn by the song, J enters from a different location from where we heard his offstage voice. In his hand is a script for Hamlet. He is slowly drawn towards his father's ghost, who stops lip syncing when he senses the presence of his son.

GM walks towards Jon, never looking at him. When he arrives, he gently places his hand on his son. Moments pass. The Ghost of George Moscone leaves, walking slowly off just as the song ends. J is left alone onstage.

The lights shift.

SCENE 8

J

I am thy father's spirit.
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.

(the ARTISTIC DIRECTOR walks on stage, listening to J's reading)

J

But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.
List, list, O list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love----

(He closes the book)

J

Or something like that. It just came to me, last week, in the middle of the night, actually it's probably been building for quite some time, like maybe thirty-five years or so, you know, I'm a slow learner I guess, but then last week I had this dream, really weird, funny in parts if you like torturing directors, but it just came to me how to do it you know, how to do the Ghost scene, because it's about well, me...not me in a narcissistic kind of way as in ME, but about me as in all of us, every single one of us, and I don't know why I didn't think of it before, well I do know why, but it was too obvious for me to get my head around, what with Harold Bloom on one end with his "immensity of consciousness" and my own traumatic personal history on the other, it just took me forever to arrive at the utter simplicity of it, the heart of it, the thing that would crack open Hamlet's head, crack open the play. The vulnerability of his father. And the impossibility of that.

So yeah, I am really excited.

AD

Congratulations.

J
For a while there I thought I might have to, I don't know

AD
I know you've been wrestling with that one.

J
I knew you'd see that.

AD
The reading was beautiful, really.

J
Thanks, thanks.

AD
And I completely get where you're going.

J
Great

AD
But as it turns out, I have some bad news.
(pause)

J
Bad news?

AD
Yeah, some really bad news.

Scene 9

(A bare stage. J joins Louise who is carrying two shopping bags.)

J
So then he starts crying. Crying about the fact that he has to let go of half the people in the marketing department and one in development. And I get it, of course, nobody likes to lay anybody off and we're in a recession or a depression or a repression or whatever. But crying? The guy has just told me that he's canceling Hamlet and then he's asking me for sympathy because the marketing intern is now running the department.

LOUISE
He likes to cry. It's not the worst thing in the world. At least he cares about something.

J
Crying at that moment was nothing but a not-so-subtle
form of manipulation.
(*looks over across the stage*)
Jesus, what are they doing over there?

LOUISE
What else did he say?

J
He wants us to do Midsummer.

LOUISE
Original.

J
Not now but at some point. With a cast of seven.

LOUISE
Seven actors in Midsummer Night's Dream?!

J
"Showcase the skills of the cast. Theatre of
transformation..."

LOUISE
Why seven?

J
Because he couldn't say any number less than that and
not feel that I might have a melt down in his office.

LOUISE
What did you say?

J
I punted. Said I had to speak with my designers.

LOUISE
We are nothing if not a useful excuse for the director
to postpone decisions.

J
Basically I told him that Midsummer was not happening
for me. In fact, I told him that serious consideration
should be given to a twenty year moratorium on all
productions of Midsummer, As You Like It, and Two Gents.

LOUISE
You left out Comedy of Errors?

J
I told him that if I couldn't do Hamlet then I wanted to
do one of the Greeks.
The Greeks are speaking to me right now.

LOUISE
And you had just done your reading of the Ghost scene?

J
I was dropped in. I had no idea if it was any good, but
I completely believed it.

LOUISE
(looking over)
They're leaving.

J
Praise the lord.
(LOUISE picks up the bags and they head to center stage.)

LOUISE
How long has it been since you've been here?

J
Three years.

LOUISE
Really?

J
In dog years.

(LOUISE kneels down and begins to unpack the bags. They are full of fresh flowers, two thermoses of water, a pair of scissors, and two small copper vases. She spends time cutting the flowers, arranging them, and filling the vases with water)

LOUISE
Look at all the flowers here already.

J
My mom says that whenever she comes there are always new
flowers.

LOUISE
Well then.

J
(looking at the inscription of the stone on the ground)
Would you look at that. He was right.

J
That's the problem. They're men.

LOUISE
You have a point.

(silence)

J
(looking out)
I don't think my father would have picked this spot for himself.

LOUISE
What do you think about when you think of him?
(pause)

J
Sergeant Bilko. He loved to stay up late and watch Sergeant Bilko.

LOUISE
A Bilko man. A sign of good character.

J
And his sideburns. Like bushels of sagebrush his sideburns.
You could get lost in that man's eyelashes and sideburns.

LOUISE
I think every man in the entire country had a hair fetish at that time.
But he was some looker, your Dad.

J
He was consumed with being a man. He reeked of it. A real cock of the roost.

LOUISE
Goes with the political territory.

J
Goes with the cock of the roost territory. He was too confident. It freaked me out.

LOUISE
You were fourteen. What do you know when you're fourteen?

J
I knew he was too cocky. Too big. He'd just walk into a room and fill it up.
(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

I think that's why he loved the opera. Those divas probably really spoke to him.

LOUISE

Did he sing arias around the house like all good Italian Dads?

J

He talked. Talked like he was singing. Speeches like arias. He could make words like "downtrodden" and "citizenship" sound positively poetic.

LOUISE

Now THAT takes some skill.

J

He'd talk about civil rights and homelessness and the death penalty like other Dads might talk about trying to find the right weed killer for the lawn.

LOUISE

Hence your aversion to all things political.

J

Hence my feeling that when he died that world died with him. For me. That world of political bravura and leaders who cared about something other than their wealthy constituencies or their double lives or their future careers as lobbyists for some drug company making pills that give you an erection but which have the unfortunate side effect of giving you cancer. That world of real political leadership died. And I know I know, the world only spins forward as Rabbi Kushner told us from the mountaintop, but you know what? for me? the world spins backwards and sideways as well as forward. All at the same time. It's all I can do every day not to fall off.

(silence)

J

I had a dream about him last night. Maybe because I knew we were coming here today.

LOUISE

No more nightmares I hope.

J

No, no more nightmares.

(pause. Using the next as a diversion)

J
What do holy men dream about, do you think? What does
the Dalai Lama dream about?

LOUISE
I have no idea. Maybe he doesn't dream at all.

J
See, now that is not true!

LOUISE
You don't know that!

J
Of course he dreams. He's just a little guy like the
rest of us.
I bet you he dreams of things you would never expect.

LOUISE
Happily, I have complete faith that he is not like the
rest of us.

J
I bet he dreams of getting free house seats for The Book
of Mormon on Broadway.

LOUISE
(*laughing*)
Oh, really.

J
You see the only difference between me and the Dalai
Lama? is that in his dream he gets the tickets and goes
and has a great time at the show. In my dream, I get
the tickets but I lose them, and I spend the entire
night trying to find the tickets, and then I find them
at the last minute, go to the show, but the tickets are
for the night before.

(*pause*)

And my mother is with me.

(*pause*)

That is the difference between me and the Dalai Lama.

LOUISE
Happily, I fervently believe that that is not the
difference between you and the Dalai Lama.

J
Yeah, well, you're probably right. He probably wants
tickets for Spiderman.

(*silence*)

In this dream last night?

(MORE)

J (CONT'D)

I was standing on a shore somewhere, and my whole family was there, I think. And my Dad was out at sea in some boat, and I could barely see him but I knew it was him and I knew he was there. And everyone was wading out to try to reach him, to maybe pull him back to shore or be with him or maybe they were just trying to get close to him.

But I didn't move. I couldn't. Or maybe I could but I didn't want to. I just stood there, not moving. Not letting the water reach my toes.

(pause)

LOUISE

(she looks out. She looks at J. Conscious of the double meaning)

Well, you're about to get wet now.

J

Yeah, I suppose I am.

LOUISE

Those clouds are coming in pretty fast.

(she stands to admire her work)

It looks nice, doesn't it?

J

Yes, it does.

(the GHOST OF GEORGE MOSCONE enters. He looks out. J and LOUISE do not notice him)

LOUISE

(gathers her things)

Your mother said he liked irises.

J

You called my mom?

LOUISE

She said irises or lilies. So I got both.

J

Well then.

*(silence. The Boy enters from the opposite side of the stage. * Again, J and LOUISE do not notice him)*

LOUISE

I'll leave you alone. See you at the car.

J

I won't be long.

LOUISE

Take your time.

(LOUISE exits. Pause. J takes out a small piece of paper from one of his pockets. He kneels. Pause. He looks out. Then down at his paper again. Pause. He places his hand on the grave of his father. At the moment his hand hits the earth we hear music...ie. Brian Eno's Spider and I. The BOY and the GHOST OF GEORGE MOSCONE look at eachother. GEORGE goes to the BOY. He straightens his tie, slaps him on the cheek. He opens his arms as an invitation to dance. The Boy walks to him. The Father places the Boys hands in the proper position. They waltz to the music. J is whispering to the earth at the grave site, reading what he wrote on the paper. It is a kind of prayer or an offering. GM slips off, leaving the BOY dancing by himself. J stands up, looks out, and leaves. The BOY stays dancing by himself. The music continues as the lights go out.)

*
*
*
*
*

END OF PLAY