

White Gays

A full-length play

By Jim Dalglish

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Characters

Rex - White man, early 70s. His authority is natural. He is a compassionate and patient man with a subtle sense of humor. He is the unspoken alpha of the group.

Alexander - White man, early 30s. Perpetually young. A bit of a rascal. The love of Rex's life.

Avery - (They, Their, Them) White person in their mid 20s. Attractive. Knows they are right. About everything. But there is a hurt inside that they try hard to hide.

Benjamin - White man, 60. Bright, witty, excessively expressive. Good-hearted underneath a lot of florid busyness.

Oscar - White man, mid 60s. Retired hairdresser. Quieter than his husband, Benjamin. A good listener who will be there when you need a shoulder to cry on.

Jake - White man, 60. College friend of Benjamin. Playwright who can't hold back from saying what he thinks. He believes this will make the world a better place. That remains to be seen.

Henry - White man, late 50s. Forgiving husband of Jake. Magazine editor whose placid surface hides his deep reserves of talent and compassion.

Sinclair - White man, mid 30s. Very talented singer and dancer who performs as Claire Sinclair, The Toast of the Saugus Iron Works.

Klaus - White man, late 60s. Friend to all the men in the group, but also a bit of a mystery. He has highly superior memory (Hyperthymesia). It's a blessing as well as a curse.

Setting

South End Boston - Rex's beautifully furnished brownstone that occupies a prominent place on a square in Boston's South End. .

February 1, 2020 - A few weeks before all hell broke loose with COVID.

Blurb

Every year Rex throws a party for his closest friends in the South

End townhouse he has lived for 40 years. The annual party marks a special anniversary, but this year there is something important he has to tell them that may change the course of their lives. Invited at the last minute is a young street kid named Avery who sees Rex and his friends for what they are - White Gays. But what the hell is that supposed to mean? This fast-paced comedy/drama doesn't pull its punches. Neither do any of the guests at the party.

ACT 1

(The weak rays of a winter sunset break through the bay window of the top floor of a victorian row house situated on a lovely square in Boston's South End. Rex and Alexander are illuminated as they gaze out the window to the square below.)

REX

All that work and then its over.

ALEXANDER

Every year you say that.

REX

Every year it's true.

(Alexander sees something that disturbs him on the square below.)

ALEXANDER

Hey, hey, hey! Be careful, buddy!

REX

He's got them.

ALEXANDER

Those lanterns are valuable antiques!

REX

They are shitty little plexiglass and tin bobbles we hot-glued together after watching a Martha Steward Christmas special 34 years ago.

ALEXANDER

Crafted with love and care.

REX

And cursing.

ALEXANDER

So much better than that hideous snow globe the breeders across the square trot out every year. Don't get me started on the creche!

REX

We don't say that anymore.

ALEXANDER

Creche?

REX

Breeders.

ALEXANDER

But it's okay to have a life-sized mannequins of Mary and Joseph the color of snow bunnies?

REX

We live in complicated times.

ALEXANDER

Why aren't you down there helping?

REX

I'm an old man.

ALEXANDER

You still got it.

REX

What I got has gone.

ALEXANDER

Not from where I'm standing.

REX

I look better from behind.

ALEXANDER

You always have. Same kid you hired to put them up?

REX

Yep.

ALEXANDER

You do have a type.

REX

Young man who answers an ad on Task Rabbit?

ALEXANDER

You didn't look at his profile photo first?

REX

Beautiful young men need work too.

ALEXANDER

He's looking up. Fuck me.

REX

I'd like to see that.

ALEXANDER

Could melt the South Pole, that smile.

REX

An ice shelf at the very least.

ALEXANDER

Old lech.

REX

There is nothing lecherous about appreciating beauty.

ALEXANDER

That's the very definition of lecherous.

REX

Beauty does not have to be sexual.

ALEXANDER

Then why are you pitching a tent?

REX

My cock appreciates beauty too. He's always adored you.

ALEXANDER

I could never tell if it was you or your cock that liked me the most.

REX

A tie.

ALEXANDER

Even now, Rex?

REX

Yes, Alex. The last lantern. And that is that. The last time.

ALEXANDER

You sure about this?

REX

No. But it's too late now.

ALEXANDER

One hell of a secret.

REX

One hell of a decision.

ALEXANDER

How do you think they will take it?

(Rex Shrugs.)

What will you do with the lanterns?

REX

Goodwill.

ALEXANDER

Don't you dare!

REX

Precious Historical Objects?

ALEXANDER

You start whittling away at your past and what will you have left?

REX

Memories?

ALEXANDER

That's enough?

(Rex reaches out and stops.)

REX

It has been.

(With his hand stopped a few inches from Alexander's cheek, they can feel the warmth of each other.)

Rex closes his eyes and treasures the feeling.

Rex's phone beeps. He presses a button. We hear a buzz from the hallway. By the time he looks back up, Alexander is gone.

We hear a knock at the door followed by it opening. AVERY walks in carrying a string of very elaborate homemade holiday decorations. They are unwieldy. He wears a winter jacket that has seen better days. He is in his mid twenties.)

AVERY

I put the ladder in the closet by the door.

REX

Thanks.

(Gesturing to the string of lights he holds:)

AVERY

Where do you want...

REX

This box here.

AVERY

Could you...?

REX

Oh, yeah... Give them to me. You can throw your coat on the chair... Could you coil them as I take the bulbs out...

AVERY

Okay...

REX

Just let them fall naturally.

AVERY

A few of them were flashing. I think some of the wires have been frayed.

Probably **REX**

Even so, they were the best thing out there. **AVERY**

You didn't like the laser show on the fountain? **REX**

Who the fuck thought...? **AVERY**

The celebrity chef who gutted the brownstone on the corner. **REX**

Figures. **AVERY**

Take the kitsch out of Christmas and what would you have? **REX**

Maybe it's time for a re-think. **AVERY**

The Square? **REX**

The holiday. **AVERY**

Oh. **REX**

Something more inclusive... **AVERY**

Who is being excluded exactly? **REX**

There's a lock on the gate. **AVERY**

(Avery hands Rex a key.)

REX

You can still enjoy it from outside the wrought iron fence.

AVERY

What exactly are you celebrating?

REX

Me personally?

AVERY

Okay.

REX

Maybe it's a childhood memory... of love and the comfort of family gatherings... the warm light of a lantern on a cold and dark winter evening... The beauty of snow falling on an evergreen tree... maybe it's my way of sharing that feeling... my way of overcoming the loneliness of winter with a community of strangers. Don't you think we all need that?

AVERY

It's the holidays you don't celebrate.

REX

That would mean something new in the square... what... every other day?

AVERY

I think you know what I'm saying.

REX

Do I?

AVERY

Have you ever thought about the land and considered the traditions of the people who lived here before the White people...

REX

No one lived here...

AVERY

Honoring the indigenous people who are the true caretakers of ...

REX

Back then this whole square was underwater. Maybe we should just dump a ton of oyster shells in the fountain and call it a day.

AVERY

I like that.

REX

You know... I think I do too.

AVERY

You're not taking me seriously.

REX

You look out on this square and you notice the townhouses that are going for a million plus and you see... The oppression of unenlightened capitalism.

AVERY

There's enlightened capitalism?

REX

I think there is.

AVERY

With Trump in office?

REX

Hopefully just a detour through hell before we return on our journey to enlightenment...

AVERY

Do you think maybe you might be out of touch with reality?

REX

It's not like I haven't seen this kind of shit happen before. Forward movement followed by horrible reversals. Back and forth over 70 years.

AVERY

You're 70?

REX

I hope that's a compliment.

AVERY

Still... the entire fucking holiday... It reeks of the oppression of the privileged white elite. Why not for once honor the poor people who lived here before it was gentrified and basically destroyed by...

REX

Gay men?

AVERY

Honor the people who lived here before.

REX

Follow me...

(Rex opens a door and turns on a light. It reveals a staircase that leads up. He hands Avery a heavy flannel lumberjack-type jacket hanging from a hook and leads him up the stairs. Rex is in a little pain as he ascends.)

AVERY

You going to be okay?

REX

Knees aren't what they used to be.

(Rex opens a door. This puts them on a deck at the top of the townhouse that is little more than a 10 foot by 10 foot grate. It is covered with snow and ice.)

Be careful. There is a little ice up here.

(Rex gestures out to the neighborhood that surrounds the townhouse. He points out the various features as he tells his story.)

Let me introduce you to my neighborhood.

A lot of people confuse it with South Boston. Which is a huge mistake. South Boston is way over there and represents a completely different opportunity for young impressionable people to reduce a place where people live, laugh, work, and love into strata of oppression and gentrification.

Don't confuse the two...

AVERY

Okay.

REX

This... what you see before you... is the South End.

AVERY

The largest collection of intact Victorian row houses in the country

REX

You read the plaque on Columbus Ave. That's the only thing most people know. (Pointing:) That's Washington Avenue. It marks the thin isthmus that once was the land that connected Boston proper with the mainland. The Massachusett people called the area Shawmut - a place of clear water.

AVERY

Clear water?

REX

Back then it probably was... But all this was a tidal flat.

These streets and buildings, and parks were built from soil from the tops of three hills in Boston that were leveled in the 1800s and fill is from land hauled in from Needham. The homes were built on timber pilings pounded into the landfill. The homes were once 8 feet or so higher, but the land was like a sponge and most have sunk back down to just above sea level. If the pilings were to dry out, they'd rot and the entire neighborhood would collapse.

Over there... in the alley behind those row houses... is where I had my first encounter with a man. I was 17 and had taken the train up with my friends to look at colleges.... That's what I told my parents anyway. I was on my own and had walked through Northeastern and kept on heading south. I became aware that a man was following me. Older than me by a few decades... I didn't know what to do... what the fuck did he want? I thought I would lose him if I turned into an alley and stood behind a dumpster... It didn't work. He walked up. Before I knew it, he had gotten down on his knees, unzipped my jeans and gently drew me out. My first sexual experience of any kind. After I came in his mouth... maybe all of 30 seconds after he had started. He stood... ran his hand through my hair, kissed me on the forehead and whispered: "Beauty demands appreciation."

These sections over here were the first to be built... for Boston Brahmins who ran out of room in Beacon hill. But the Back Bay was being built at roughly the same time, so when they left for tonier digs over there, the working classes who served them stayed here, cutting up some of the brownstones and transforming them into apartments and rooming houses...

My first boyfriend lived in the garden apartment of that brownstone over there... with his wife and newborn son. His wife was lovely. And knew. He was the best cook. They moved to the suburbs. Because they needed more room and it made things simpler. I'm the godfather of their youngest child. I get a Christmas card every year with a photo. Every time I open that card, I feel it here.

(He pats his chest.)

REX (CONT'D)

Around the corner is the oldest synagogue in Massachusetts, but you wouldn't know it because it's now the African Methodist Zion Church. If you look closely you will see the star of david in the stain glass above the door. It was built by German jews who came to the city in the early 1800s. They arrived about the same time as the Italians, who built their own church right over there. And the cathedral over there was built for Irish immigrants who came to Boston during the potato famine. That was enough to push the Brahmins completely out and they were replaced by Black Americans during the great migration, as well as Puerto Rican and Chinese immigrants. The entire South End was a like a glorious patchwork quilt. But with the squares constantly moving and changing color.

On the top floor that that brownstone lived a man who saved my life... I was living in the basement here when it used to be an old tenement. Shared bathroom and no kitchen. This was years before I was able to buy it. I had come out to my family and they didn't take it well. This is where I had ended up.

One night I climbed up here... on the old decaying wooden stairs I replaced long ago. I had been fired from my job - you could do that back then. Fire teachers you suspected were gay. I came up here because I was down to about \$25 in my savings and I didn't see a path forward. I guess I thought this would be a good place for it to end.

But I heard disco music in the distance. I looked over and saw flashing lights and a bunch of men dancing with their shirts off - sweating all over each other and they danced and embraced and kissed and danced. And he saw me standing here and he waved and gestured for me to join them. And instead of jumping headlong into the pavement below, I took a chance and jumped into a new life. He was pretty much the life of the South End Gay community and he took me under his wing and showed me how I could be out and proud and live with dignity. He lived there at the top of that beautiful brownstone until one day he got sick. He was gone within a week. No one knew what he died of. At his funeral... that's when I first heard the rumors of what was going to hit my new-found community. He lived there. With that beautiful balcony. Sometimes all it takes is just one man to make a difference.

Over there is villa Victoria. In the 70s Boston threatened urban renewal to the streets where many of the Puerto Rican community lived. They organized and took on city hall and won. They turned an old factory into a community center. That's where we threw huge dance parties... I can look at that place and close my eyes and still feel the beat... bam bam bam bam.

In the 80s, when they had covered the train tracks over there and connected the South End to Bay Village and the Back Bay, gay men discovered the brownstones and began purchasing old, run-down tenements and converting them into more livable spaces. I had finally found a way to support myself - a graduate degree that led to a position teaching at Simmons. I had been disowned by my family. So I created a new family here.

REX (CONT'D)

We worked our asses off to carve a little space in Boston where we could live in peace. An island away from the bigotry and violence we grew up with. Make it beautiful so we could share it and take pride in it.

See that little plaque in the side of the fence in the square down there... that's where in 1986, the love of my life got down on a knee and asked me to be his for life. That's where I became a man... when I realized that I had the responsibility... the honor... to care for someone I loved. That's why I had the plaque made.

If you looked over this whole neighborhood... without knowing any of that... without knowing that wherever you go you are walking across the strata of layers and layers of the generations of lives and peoples... If you don't see that... it's easy to say things that you hear and that sound easy and true.

But the truth has many layers of meaning. The truth is complicated.

We need to learn to respect that...

(Rex's words have captivated Avery. He stands next to Rex and looks up into his eyes. They have a moment of connection. Rex smiles. Avery's breathing is shallow.)

AVERY

The last time you hired me...

REX

Yeah?

AVERY

When we were standing outside after you turned the lights on. You had a thermos of something warm. You gave me some. Was there anything in it?

REX

Cider.

AVERY

It made me feel... I don't know... kind of... inside...

REX

Just warmed apple juice - nothing more.

AVERY

I feel it a little when I think about that night. It's weird.

(Rex smiles again.)

REX

I wouldn't worry too much about that feeling. Just cherish it when it happens.

AVERY

Cold.

REX

Yes.

AVERY

The box of lights?

REX

I'll be right down.

*(Avery walks down the steps and enters the apartment.
Rex stays up on the porch for a few moments. Then
returns to the apartment. He has problems with his knees
as he descends the stairs.)*

AVERY

What you said... about people moving in and suffering and getting kicked out and people exploiting them with high rents and poor living conditions... It's the working definition of the ways that the White Hegemony in Boston is so oppressive.

REX

I agree.

AVERY

And yet you still live here.

REX

And yet you still are white.

AVERY

I'm trying to overcome that.

REX

Let me know how that goes.

AVERY

Okay.

What's your next step?
REX

Empathy.
AVERY

For everyone?
REX

Those who deserve it.
AVERY

And those who don't?
REX

They'll be fine.
AVERY

Don't let it destroy you.
REX

Is that possible?
AVERY

Like trying to fill a Black hole.
REX

So we shouldn't care about...
AVERY

Not at the expense of your own self worth.
REX

You think that will happen?
AVERY

Do you feel ashamed about who you are? Your gender. Your ethnicity. Who you love. How you earn your living?
REX

Yes.
AVERY

REX

It's already begun.

AVERY

Bullshit.

REX

In order for some other to feel pride is it necessary for you to feel shame?

AVERY

You're re-directing.

REX

I do that. As a teacher I was paid to.

AVERY

You're doing it again.

REX

I call it looking at things from multiple perspectives.

AVERY

I do that. But I know my perspective is tainted by my position of privilege.

REX

If your perspective is tainted, why should I listen to you?

AVERY

You want me to put these back in the storage room in the basement?

REX

How about you just put it down the hall in the room on the right.

(Avery exits carrying the box.)

AVERY (o.s.)

Your back any better?

REX

Not something that will get any better I'm afraid.

AVERY (o.s.)

You never know.

REX

Sometimes you do. Please close the door when you come back out.

(Avery returns.)

AVERY

A lot of empty boxes back there

REX

A lot to pack.

AVERY

You need help?

REX

I've hired a moving company. I do need I help putting things in boxes, though. You interested?

AVERY

When would I start?

REX

Tomorrow?

AVERY

How long do you think?

REX

A few days.

AVERY

How about we not use Task Rabbit.

REX

You keep the commission?

AVERY

Yeah...

REX

Venmo?

AVERY

It'll work.

REX

You're hired.

(Rex takes out his phone and opens the app. Avery holds his phone up and Rex captures the QR code.)

AVERY

Since we aren't using the rabbit... maybe we start with a deposit?

REX

How much?

AVERY

500?

REX

Okay.

AVERY

Really?

REX

Done.

(Rex puts his phone away.)

AVERY

Thanks. Anything else?

REX

Could you flip the switch...

(Avery flips the light switch. This somehow transforms the entire apartment into a spectacular Winter wonderland with decorations that only a gay man could pull off.)

AVERY

Jesus Christ.

REX

You like it?

AVERY

You did all this yourself?

REX

Nearly killed me. Taking it down is your first job tomorrow morning.

AVERY

That's probably 6 hours alone.

REX

If you're quick.

(Avery is impressed, but doesn't know what to say.)

AVERY

Dinner party?

REX

Celebrating a birthday. A bit of a tradition.

AVERY

You get a caterer? I could help.

REX

You do enough of these things over the years, you pretty much have it down.

(Avery crosses to a large specially lit oil painting of Alexander.)

That's the birthday boy.

AVERY

He's cool with you showing a painting of him ummm...

REX

Nude?

AVERY

Yeah

REX

He posed. I painted.

AVERY

Impressive.

REX

The painting... or his endowment...

Ummm... Both? **AVERY**

Do you find him attractive? **REX**

I don't like being lookist. **AVERY**

Really? **REX**

Maybe I don't think beauty demands appreciation. **AVERY**

(Rex Laughs. Avery is embarrassed.)
You think I'm funny?

Are you hungry? You're welcome to join us. **REX**

I don't eat anything that has... **AVERY**

Whatever it is, I'm sure I'll have it covered. **REX**

Sounds like a special occasion. **AVERY**

You'll make it all the more special. **REX**

I'm not exactly... **AVERY**

You can take a shower. **REX**

I'm not really dressed for it... **AVERY**

You can borrow something. **REX**

AVERY

You think it'd fit?

REX

Leave yours in the hallway and I'll wash them.

AVERY

You don't have to...

REX

Yes I do. Trust me.

AVERY

It's been a while since I've been to the laundromat.

REX

Use the bath in the master bedroom.

AVERY

Primary.

REX

What?

AVERY

Primary bedroom. I try to avoid gendered and oppressive language.

REX

That must be exhausting.

AVERY

Not when you realize what's at stake.

REX

What's at stake?

AVERY

The continued marginalization of historically underrepresented populations.

REX

You think I'm oppressing people?

AVERY

Your language is. I don't think you would want that. Maybe you are unaware. Sometimes I make mistakes too.

REX

I'm a forgiving man. One of the boys is vegan. That okay?

AVERY

Yes.

(Avery stands in the middle of the floor... not knowing what to say.)

Ummm...

(They look at each other again. Another moment of connection.)

(Avery breaks it by exiting down the hall. Rex picks up Avery's dirty winter coat. Alexander reappears.)

ALEXANDER

Are you insane? They will eat him alive.

REX

I'm not so sure about that.

ALEXANDER

Bennie and Jake are conversational terrorists. And Klaus?

REX

The kid is armed. He'll be fine.

(Referring to the coat in Rex's hands.)

ALEXANDER

What are you going to do with that?

REX

Burn it?

ALEXANDER

500 bucks? He's going to take off.

REX

Where would he go?

(Rex hangs Avery's coat in the closet.)

ALEXANDER

Another one? You have a week left in this town... Don't you just want to enjoy it instead of worrying about...

REX

It won't be a worry.

ALEXANDER

It's always a worry! And I saw the way he looked at you.

REX

He's been living in the lumber room since December. He rigged the door when he took the lights out of storage. He doesn't think I know.

ALEXANDER

Little bitch.

REX

He's been sneaking down the alley every night it's below freezing to let himself in. There's a ratty sleeping bag and a few blankets he stuffs behind some boxes when he leaves in the morning.

(Alexander sings the following from a song from West Side Story:

ALEXANDER

A boy like that... Who'd kill your brother!

ALEXANDER & REX

Forget that boy and find another!

REX

Show-tune queen.

ALEXANDER

A boy who looks like that should have no problem...

REX

You being lookist?

ALEXANDER

He's probably looting your medicine cabinet right now... like the one before last. Do you have any of the pain medication for your back left?

REX

I'm straight-edge, baby.

ALEXANDER

Didn't used to be.

REX

You weren't exactly Mother Teresa.

(They both smile at the memory and sigh.)

ALEXANDER

One last hurrah. Does it hurt?

REX

Yes.

ALEXANDER

Then why?

REX

It is what is left for me.

ALEXANDER

You mean what's next?

REX

Okay...

ALEXANDER

Have you told anyone?

REX

No.

ALEXANDER

Oh, boy...

(Ding sounds on Rex's phone.)

You ready for this?

REX

No.

*(Rex touches his phone screen.**We hear a buzz from the hallway as Alexander disappears through a wall.**Rex opens the door and Benjamin enters. Grandly. As though he were a famous actor making a grand entrance to applause in a play. With no grandness, his husband Oscar follows carrying a wrapped gift in the shape of a rectangular painting.)***BENJAMIN**

Thank you thank you thank you thank you.

(Benjamin drops his winter coat on the floor. He gives a florid bow and looks forward as though to an invisible audience.)

God that feels good.

REX

That's quite the ensemble.

BENJAMIN

Just a little something I picked up in the City.

REX

Cleveland?

BENJAMIN

I hate what you've done to your hair, sweetie!

REX

Blame your husband for retiring.

OSCAR

It looks fine, Rex.

BENJAMIN

Come here.

(They embrace.)

You!

You!
REX

Where's my drink?
BENJAMIN

Over there someplace.
REX

(Rex embraces Oscar.

Oscar hands Rex the rectangular wrapped gift.)

Where the fuck is Jake?
BENJAMIN

Probably circling the square looking for parking.
REX

(Rex begins to carefully tear the wrapping off the package. It's a pain.)

A new encaustic?

(Rex looks closely at the painting and is surprised.)

Jesus Fuck!

I call it "Still Life with Dildo."
OSCAR

It's perfect.
REX

Brings back so many cherished memories...
BENJAMIN

Your favorite one?
REX

I little thank you for helping me through my transition.
OSCAR

Honestly, Oscar. You make it sound more like a sex change than retirement. Are you trying to tell me something?
BENJAMIN

Would it make a difference?
OSCAR

We'll make it all work out.
BENJAMIN

Haven't we always?
OSCAR

(Benjamin takes in the apartment and sighs. Grandly.)

Back here where it all started.
BENJAMIN

Home.
OSCAR

Thank you, Rex. We needed this.
BENJAMIN

I'll take them...
REX

(Rex takes their coats and heads to a room down the hall.)

How are things in Wayland?
REX (v.o.)

White.
OSCAR

Straight.
BENJAMIN

Boring.
OSCAR

BENJAMIN
Have you ever owned a house... like one on two acres with something called a lawn that you have to sprinkle poison over three times a summer. And don't get me started on our snowplow...

(Rex reenters.)

Not yet.
REX

OSCAR

Don't.

BENJAMIN

What you have here... It's perfect.

(Oscar sees something outside the window on the street below.)

OSCAR

Is that Jake and Henry's Mazda?

BENJAMIN

This should be good...

OSCAR

Oh no...

BENJAMIN

He's going for it.

OSCAR

Oh, no...

REX

no...

BENJAMIN

no...

OSCAR

One can only imagine what is going on in that car right now...

BENJAMIN

Poor Henry.

(The sound of a metallic crush from the street below. Car alarm sounds. Rex takes out his phone and speed dials.)

REX

Jake!... I forgot to tell you that one of my spots is open in the alley. Help yourself. You okay? Deep breaths... See you in a few.

BENJAMIN

How has Henry been able to deal with that for 30 years.

REX

I think I know.

(Car alarm continues to sound.)

BENJAMIN

Jesus Christ... what a fucking racket! Alexa play something fabulous.

ALEXA (v.o.)

Playing selections from “Fabulous Disaster” by Exodus.

(Alexa plays Toxic Waltz by Exodus. It’s excruciating.)

BENJAMIN

Alexa stop!

(Headbanger music stops.)

OSCAR

Alexa play something gay and fabulous.

ALEXA (v.o.)

Hmmm. I don’t know that.

(Car horn stops. They all breathe a sigh of relief.)

BENJAMIN

This place... All I have to do is step through that door and it all...

REX

Happy times.

OSCAR

The best.

(They all walk up to the painting of Alexander.

There is a moment of silence in honor of the subject of the painting.

The moment is broken by Rex’s phone ding. He presses the screen. We hear the back door buzz and open.)

REX

Have you seen Klaus lately?

OSCAR

He said he'd be coming.

BENJAMIN

I hope he's in a good mood.

(Referring to the Benjamin's drink:)

REX

What you got there?

BENJAMIN

Skinny Bitch.

OSCAR

Do you have any...?

REX

Candy dish.

OSCAR

You're the best.

(Oscar takes a pot gummy and eats it. Rex opens the door and Jake enters followed by Henry)

HENRY

Hey!

REX

Hey, Hen!

(As Jake takes off his coat he sniffs the air.)

JAKE

What is that smell?

(He sees Benjamin.)

Oh... it's you.

BENJAMIN

Deliveries to the rear.

JAKE

Your rear? I think that's what I was smelling.

BENJAMIN

I always find your...

(Benjamin points to Jake's clothes.)

...so amusing. Did you just come from a Cosplay convention?

JAKE

It's called personal style.

BENJAMIN

No ...

OSCAR

Nah ah.

BENJAMIN

Oh, sweetie.

(Benjamin gives a sympathetic sigh. Then hugs Jake.)

JAKE

Bitch

BENJAMIN

Cunt

(Air kisses.)

BENJAMIN & JAKE

Kiss kiss kiss kiss kiss.

HENRY

I'm glad we got that out of the way.

OSCAR

They must teach a course at Brown in dramatic entrances.

REX

I'll take them, Hen.

HENRY

Thanks

(After a quick kiss from Henry, Rex takes the winter coats and crosses down the hall offstage.)

BENJAMIN

Has he been nice to you?

HENRY

The best. What are you doing?

BENJAMIN

Checking for bruises.

(They kiss.)

HENRY

It's so good to see you.

JAKE

Benjy?

BENJAMIN

Yes, dear?

JAKE

My drink?

(Benjamin has already made Jake a drink. He hands it to him. Oscar holds out the candy dish to Henry. He takes a gummy.)

JAKE

Thank you!

BENJAMIN

It's called a Tired bitch.

(Jake drinks.)

JAKE

Perfection!

(Rex returns to the room.)

HENRY

How are you doing?

Any travel plans for the winter? **JAKE**

I have something coming up. **REX**

Really? **JAKE**

Where? **HENRY**

I'll let you all hear about it at dinner. **REX**

Intriguing. **JAKE**

How are things in Quincy? **REX**

Yes. **JAKE**

(Pause. People wait, but Jake doesn't elaborate.)

Okay. **REX**

The table is amazing, Rex. I don't know how you do it. **HENRY**

Alex would have loved this... **JAKE**

(Henry takes a photo with his phone.)

Jake? Want to help me in the kitchen? **REX**

Sure. **JAKE**

(Rex and Jake exit into the kitchen.)

OSCAR

What's up?

HENRY

Jake's kind of down on the whole Boston Metro Area these days.

BENJAMIN

What's he done now?

HENRY

It's a theatre thing.

OSCAR

His latest play was fantastic.

HENRY

Something he posted on Facebook.

OSCAR

Why does he keep...?

BENJAMIN

Because he's Jake.

OSCAR

His job at the software company still solid?

HENRY

Yes.

OSCAR

The magazine is amazing. You've really turned it around.

HENRY

Thanks.

BENJAMIN

What is it... the last glossy rag left in Boston?

HENRY

Probably.

(Rex and Jake re-enter. They carry cheese platters that they place on the coffee table. Rex points to each of the cheeses to explain where they are from.)

REX

The Camembert de Normandie is from France. The gorgonzola is from Lombardy. The paneer is from Bangladesh. The Feta is from Greece. The cheddar from Dublin and the limburger... well that should be obvious. I suggest eating them in clockwise order starting at high noon.

JAKE

Nine o'clock is a wowzer!

REX

Eleven o'clock is a little amuse bouche I concocted.

(Henry walks over to the portrait of Alex and gazes at it.)

JAKE

Enjoying retirement?

OSCAR

Getting a lot of painting done.

JAKE

(To Benjamin:) When are *you* going to call it quits?

BENJAMIN

You have to remember that I was born much later than you.

JAKE

By 10 months.

BENJAMIN

They were very long months.

JAKE

Who are you fucking these days... besides your long-suffering boyfriend, of course.

BENJAMIN

I don't fuck. I make love.

JAKE

I'm waiting.

BENJAMIN

The entire BC Rugby team.

JAKE

Chess team was pre-occupied?

BENJAMIN

They asked about you, Jake, but because of your don't ask don't tell policy I told them my lips are sealed.

JAKE

So kind of you.

BENJAMIN

I never say no to love.

JAKE

Lamour Lamour Lamour.

HENRY

Do you two ever let up?

(Rex's phone beeps. He presses a button and we hear the door buzzer. Benjamin shows Jake and Henry a photo on his phone.)

BENJAMIN

His name is Kurt... Sophomore.

HENRY

He's lovely.

BENJAMIN

Oscar adores him too.

OSCAR

He's a nice guy.

HENRY

Will he be joining us tonight?

OSCAR

He has to study for an exam.

(Rex opens the door and Sinclair enters. He is carrying a wig on a form, two suit bags and a large makeup kit.)

Hello! It's little old me!
SINCLAIR

There she is!
REX

Hey, Daddy.
SINCLAIR

Hey, Baby.
REX

*(Sinclair crosses to the men and kisses their cheeks with a
"Hey Daddy" to each.)*

REX
Your sudden death dance off last week was a triumph.

SINCLAIR
Two more to go. Pray that after tonight I get through to the finals.

BENJAMIN
What's this week's challenge?

SINCLAIR
Melanie.

BENJAMIN
Dear god!

SINCLAIR
Right?!

REX
Sinclair, why don't you go and hang your stuff up...

*(Sinclair has already begun to cross down the hallway to
the primary bedroom.)*

SINCLAIR
Can I use your..?

REX
Whatever you need....

SINCLAIR (O.S.)

I'll need to put on my foundation so it can dry...

BENJAMIN

This cheese smells like ass...

OSCAR

Heaven.

(Sinclair re-enters.)

SINCLAIR

Ummm... there's a naked man going through your underwear drawer.

JAKE

Description?

SINCLAIR

Early 20s. Impressive.

REX

He'll be joining us tonight. Go ahead and get yourself set up. It'll be cool.

JAKE

Old dog.

REX

He helped me take down the holiday lights. I asked him to dinner.

JAKE

Another...

OSCAR

...Stephen?

BENJAMIN

Should I be worried?

JAKE

That would require you to think about someone other than yourself.

BENJAMIN

Whew!

HENRY

What exactly happened to Stephen, Rex?

REX

He kind of disappeared a few months back.

HENRY

Have you tried to....

REX

Yes.

HENRY

Facebook?

REX

Gone.

BENJAMIN

Twitter?

REX

Vanished.

HENRY

He ghosted you?

REX

Apparently.

JAKE

The little ungrateful son of a bitch. If I ever get my hands on him.

OSCAR

I doubt that will happen.

(Avery enters from the hallway. He looks fresh and clean and wears nice clothes that are a little too big for him. They all turn to him. He extends his hand to Henry.)

AVERY

Hi. Avery. They. Them. Their.

HENRY

Henry. He. Him. His.

(Each shakes Avery's hand as they introduce themselves.)

OSCAR

Oscar.

JAKE

Jake. You. Your. Yours. But I prefer that you just point.

BENJAMIN

Benjamin. And baby boy, you can use whatever pronoun you want.

AVERY

You know that's disrespectful. Right?

BENJAMIN

I'm not going to be offended if you misgender me.

AVERY

When you say your pronoun you are signaling your support of those who are from marginalized gender communities.

OSCAR

What if I don't want to tell you my gender?

JAKE

You should see the shit Henry has to put up with at the magazine.

HENRY

Not shit, dear heart. It's important for people to be presented the way that matches their identity. Especially when people in the news go through a transition. Which has happened almost every issue lately.

BENJAMIN

Wait... Okay... So if we are going to destroy the English language...

AVERY

It's not...

BENJAMIN

Hear me out... Grammatically, when you use the plural *them* in that way, it's impossible to determine if you're referring to a single person or several people. Jake, help me out here.

JAKE

Okay... Here goes... You're at the scene of a crime and you ask what happened...

BENJAMIN

He took out his AK47 and shot them, officer. They are lying on the school room floor bleeding profusely.

JAKE

How many ambulances should you send? One or a dozen?

BENJAMIN

What is to be done?

JAKE

Do tell us, Benjy!

BENJAMIN

If you insist on changing the English language to accommodate pronouns, Why not just fix the subject verb agreement.

JAKE

Ahhh... By George I think I've got it! *The evil man took out his AK47 and shot them, officer. They is lying on the school room floor bleeding profusely.*

BENJAMIN

Only one ambulance is needed.

JAKE

Simple fix!

BENJAMIN

Can you imagine the chaos in Germany?

JAKE

Or any other gendered language.

(They launch into their next routine - with German accents:)

BENJAMIN

Guten Morgen, Wolfgang er ihn ihm.

JAKE

Schones Morgan, Friedrich sie irh.

BENJAMIN

Der hut er hat drei Ecken, Friedrich!

JAKE

Wolfie! How dare you misgender mein hut!

AVERY

Trans women are being slaughtered in the streets.

HENRY

Our last cover story was about that.

OSCAR

We all have friends and family members who have transitioned.

JAKE

And we are supportive as hell!

BENJAMIN

Anyone tries to take away my nephew's rights, will have to deal with me.

JAKE

And me.

HENRY

And me.

(They raise their glasses.)

BENJAMIN

To the transgender community!

JAKE

We have your backs!

AVERY

Then you understand how important pronouns are.

OSCAR

Making people proclaim their genders is only going to piss them off and do more damage to the cause.

BENJAMIN

It's like spreading shit frosting over a chocolate cake and demanding everyone eat a slice.

JAKE

Gosh, I miss intelligent conversation.

AVERY

Is that what you call it?

BENJAMIN

You are funny.

AVERY

I don't mean to be.

BENJAMIN

That makes you twice as hysterical.

JAKE

We play a little rough, somethings.

BENJAMIN

Any friend of Rex is a friend of ours.

OSCAR

Stephen?

BENJAMIN

You hurt him and you'll have us to deal with.

HENRY

You can't imagine the level of sarcastic bitchery these two can deploy.

BENJAMIN

We will hurt your feelings!

AVERY

Rex invited me to dinner. That's all.

JAKE

Thanks for sharing your pronouns.

BENJAMIN

We'll try hard to get them right.

JAKE

It's great that you stand up for your non-binary comrades.

HENRY

Brave.

(Sinclair enters and crosses to the cheese plate. He is half-dressed and carries a battery-powered hand fan to dry the makeup on his face.)

JAKE

It took me years to be comfortable with my masculinity.

BENJAMIN

I can't imagine why. It's not like masculinity ever gets a bad rap.

SINCLAIR

Everyone loves your masculinity, Daddy.

JAKE

Then I realized I could be masculine on my own terms the way I define it and be proud of it.

(Sinclair pops a slice of cheese in his mouth and exits.)

Sorry I was an asshole before. Nice to meet you, Avery. Jake. He. Him. His.

AVERY

You think I have chosen my gender identity out of shame?

JAKE

You tell me?

(Benjamin uses his phone to connect Rex's sound system and plays a very strange, discordant, modern orchestral piece.)

OSCAR

Not this again!

(Jake and Benjamin adopt strange poses that look like out of something Martha Graham would choreograph. They begin to dance a wild and bizarre dance. It is so extreme, it is funny. Oscar and Henry have seen it before many times, but still get a kick out of it. Dialog continues under the dance. They spend a lot of time doing strange lifts and writhing on the floor.)

AVERY

What's going on?

HENRY

They met during a course in modern dance at Brown.

OSCAR

They took it as a lark.

HENRY

They noticed each other when they couldn't stop giggling at what the choreographers were asking them to do.

JAKE

Ballet is the celebration of weightlessness!

BENJAMIN

Modern dance luxuriates in gravity!

AVERY

It is kinda funny. In a stupid way.

OSCAR

Those two have a lot of stupid ways.

AVERY

Are they always so....?

OSCAR

Yes.

HENRY

Especially if they haven't seen each other in a while.

AVERY

Oh... they aren't...?

HENRY

Oh, God no.

OSCAR

Could you imagine?

HENRY

I've been with Jake for 35 years. And...

OSCAR

Benjy for 30.

HENRY

Every year we look forward to this party....

OSCAR

We all met for the first time here in the South End.

HENRY

This is like coming home.

OSCAR

They are actually two of the most decent people you will ever meet.

HENRY

I know sometimes it doesn't look like it.

AVERY

How much longer will they...?

HENRY

They'll settle down soon.

(Rex re-enters with some food for the table and uses his phone to turn off the music. This causes Jake and Benjamin to freeze in a ridiculous pose.)

REX

Before you two clowns break something...

BENJAMIN

We suffer so for our art.

JAKE

Don't we just?

HENRY

How's it going at work, Benjy?

BENJAMIN

We're tracking a new Novel Coronavirus coming out of China.

JAKE

Awesome! I'm sure we have nothing to worry about.

OSCAR

Not with Trump at the wheel.

JAKE

Fucking asshole.

(Opening a window and yelling out to the street below:)

OSCAR

FUCK TRUMP!!!

BENJAMIN

Are you working on anything new?

JAKE

I sent a new full-length to a theater in Somerville. They freaked out that I had a hispanic character in it.

AVERY

So what you are saying is you decided to use cultural appropriation to exploit an historically underrepresented people?

JAKE

Golly. I don't think that's what I'm saying. Did any of you hear me say that?

AVERY

Why don't you let them speak for themselves.

JAKE

Because I am a playwright. And playwrights create worlds their characters inhabit. As much of humanity as the playwright chooses to explore the ideas he is working with to tell his story.

AVERY

From your view point.

JAKE

Should I only be allowed to create characters who are 60-year-old gay white men?

AVERY

What makes you think you are qualified to write about the experiences of an hispanic man?

JAKE

Because I am intelligent.

Yeah. **OSCAR**

He is kinda. **BENJAMIN**

And creative. **JAKE**

Gotta give him that. **HENRY**

And empathetic. **JAKE**

More aware of his own feelings... **BENJAMIN**

... but I've seen him try real hard... **OSCAR**

JAKE
Because I do my research. Good playwrights are cultural anthropologists who work their asses off to realize their characters fully. Do you think that because I have a dick, I should not be allowed to write female characters? Should I get rid of the 80 year old woman in the play too? If you see it that way than every great playwright in the history of humankind is a cultural appropriator.

REX
I read the draft you sent me. God, if that character isn't Jesus Eduardo.

What was your first clue? **JAKE**

His name was Jesus. **REX**

It is a perfect name. **JAKE**

You captured him perfectly. **REX**

I guess that's not enough. **JAKE**

BENJAMIN

Your last play at the BCA was actually good.

JAKE

Actually?

BENJAMIN

I can't help it. When I'm with you I'm on auto bitch.

REX

It was a great production, Jakie.

OSCAR

It ripped me in two.

BENJAMIN

What have you done on Facebook? Your long suffering husband mentioned something...

JAKE

...Stupid. Something stupid that I regret.

BENJAMIN

Of course.

(Pause.)

We're waiting.

JAKE

I submitted a play to a local theatre whose mission is to support local playwrights. A theatre founded and run by women.

BENJAMIN

Ummm...

JAKE

They said it was an open submission...

OSCAR

Oh, no...

JAKE

They didn't say anything about a theme they were looking for or who they were focusing on. They charged a submission fee. Which I was cool with.

REX

I don't think I want to hear this.

JAKE

They gave all eight slots to women.

BENJAMIN

So you went on Facebook and...

JAKE

.... suggested that maybe they should not be so penis phobic in their selection of plays next year.

OSCAR

Oh, no.

BENJAMIN

I'm sure you attached the link to the season announcement and included the word penis in your post?

JAKE

It was like a bomb going off.

(Henry makes an explosion sound.)

BENJAMIN

Canceled!

OSCAR

You'll never get another play produced in this town.

JAKE

I wouldn't have anyway. Honestly. In Boston right now they aren't producing plays written by white men - gay or otherwise.

REX

Without gay white men would you even have theatre?

HENRY

I guess we'll find out.

JAKE

It was a moment of ridiculous insanity. And it kills me because you all know that I support minorities in the arts. I want their plays to get produced and I want them to be produced well.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I bend over backwards to help them. The money I donate to inner city theaters. The playwriting classes I teach. But does that mean that I have to give up writing plays just because I am white?

AVERY

Probably.

(They all turn to stare at Avery.)

If you are willing to give up your money and time for those who are less privileged. Why not give up your playwriting?

JAKE

Because it is my life. It's who I am.

REX

Does it have to be a zero sum gain?

AVERY

Maybe ask the people who have been on the other side of the equation for a few millennia.

JAKE

You want me to just dry up and blow away?

AVERY

You were born on third base. You'll be just fine.

JAKE

I said something stupid. Have you ever done that? Said something you later regret?

(Avery doesn't answer.)

Because if you had, you might have realized how easy it is for a whole gaggle of anonymous self-righteous harpies to destroy your life. All you need is a Twitter, Facebook, or Trick Tok account and the desire to show off how woke you are to impress people you pretend are your friends. But if you ever had to look at someone and tell it to their face....

AVERY

...I am telling you to your face.

JAKE

Okay... Let's just say I was born on third base. Do I have to stay on third base, or do I get to run home when everyone else born to less privilege catches up? Since you are the expert, do you know when that point will be?

(Sinclair re-enters wearing a very fancy frock. It is unzipped.)

SINCLAIR

I'll tell you, Daddy.

JAKE

Thanks, baby boy.

SINCLAIR

Always so dramatic. Can you zip me up?

AVERY

I'm playing the world's smallest violin for you.

JAKE

Something tells me that's not the only small thing you're playing with.

SINCLAIR

Be nice, Daddy.

(Sinclair exits back down the hall.)

AVERY

Going back to the penis thing? Worked so well for you last time.

(Rex enters from the kitchen.)

OSCAR

Besides playing with small things, what else do you do? Professionally?

AVERY

Is what I tell you going to inform the conclusions you make about me?

OSCAR

Yes?

HENRY

Yeah.

BENJAMIN

Me too.

AVERY

At least you're honest about your bigotries.

BENJAMIN

I'm going with recent college grad.

JAKE

With a degree in something with the word "studies" in it. Am I right?

REX

Avery, can you help me in the kitchen?

(Avery exits into the kitchen.)

Could you stir that sauce slowly?

AVERY (O.S.)

Sure

REX

You guys...

JAKE

What?!

REX

He's just a kid.

OSCAR

If that's the next generation, god help us.

REX

Has anyone talked to Klaus?

OSCAR

Yes.

REX

Is he coming?

BENJAMIN

It's not like he could have forgotten.

OSCAR

We had coffee together last week. He'll be here, Rex.

REX

You sure?

He needs us... **OSCAR**

We all need each other... **JAKE**

That's why we are here... **HENRY**

(Rex exits into the kitchen. Sinclair enters holding a pair of extremely high heels.)

What do you think? **SINCLAIR**

With that dress? **OSCAR**

Tell me you like them! I only brought two other pairs and they are both Black. **SINCLAIR**

They are perfect, baby. **OSCAR**

When is your show? **JAKE**

Drag time or time time? **SINCLAIR**

Time time? **JAKE**

9:30 **SINCLAIR**

You better... **JAKE**

Drag time? **OSCAR**

10:30 **SINCLAIR**

(Henry hands Sinclair a drink. Sinclair looks at the drink with trepidation. Henry holds out a straw.)

Thanks, Daddy Hen.

OSCAR

Okay... so the gauntlet....

SINCLAIR

Yes, daddy?

OSCAR

Last week. Claire was fucking awesome!

BENJAMIN

Making you dance to save your life was ridiculous!

OSCAR

Wendy Walburger.

SINCLAIR

Okay... I think I know where this is going...

OSCAR

She's a woman! And she's made it to the top 4!

SINCLAIR

Well... some of the girls identify as women too!

OSCAR

It's a drag show.

BENJAMIN

She has real tits... ..

SINCLAIR

Some of the boys have real tits too... ..

OSCAR

and a vagina.

JAKE

What?

OSCAR

Back in my day...

BENJAMIN

Just after the Prussian War.

OSCAR

When I was Miss Marblehead 1982.

BENJAMIN

God were you a sight!

OSCAR

I mean... it's drag... Under the wig... and sequins... they are men. That's the point.

BENJAMIN

It's the very definition.

SINCLAIR

I hear ya. And yeah... I get it. And it's weird. But she identifies as a drag queen so...

JAKE

What the fuck?

SINCLAIR

When she puts a wig on she transitions from Brenda Streckman to Wendy Walburger. First cousin of Mark Walburg and head cheerleader from Dorchester High...

OSCAR

She got the highest score last week.

SINCLAIR

Bitch can kick and do a backflip into the splits wearing 6-inch platforms.

OSCAR

Gotta give her that.

SINCLAIR

She was a gymnast who competed in college.

JAKE

What the fuck!

SINCLAIR

Let's just say I'm not really a dancer and that was the focus of last week's challenge. I'm lucky I nailed the dance for my life.

JAKE

Why is everything suddenly identity politics?

SINCLAIR

I just try to be nice backstage and avoid the politics and focus on connecting with the audience. I mean... I'm not the prettiest girl out there. And my singing...

HENRY

Claire is disarmingly funny and extremely charming.

SINCLAIR

What can I say? If I win an award, that's great. But you can't think about that.

OSCAR

But she's a woman.

SINCLAIR

Imagine you have a child who was born a little boy and when he was 16 she decided she was a girl... What would you do?

OSCAR

Love her unconditionally.

SINCLAIR

And if she wanted to compete in say... women's swimming... and they didn't let her?

OSCAR

There'd be hell to pay.

(They all realize the point and cede the argument to Sinclair. Oscar smiles and throws up his hands in surrender.)

I'll clap politely for her tonight. But I'm voting for you.

SINCLAIR

Vote twice! I'll need it!

(He kisses Oscar, getting a little lipstick on his cheek.)

Can you help me beat up my wig?

OSCAR

I'd love to.

(Oscar and Sinclair exit. Avery re-enters from the kitchen carrying something on a platter. He places it on the table. Benjamin crosses to him.)

BENJAMIN

I fear we may have gotten off on the wrong foot.

JAKE

You mean the foot I see sticking out of your mouth?

BENJAMIN

So mean!

HENRY

Guys...

BENJAMIN

I hope you don't think we are one of *them*.

AVERY

One of what?

HENRY

Guys... can we skip this one?

JAKE

One of THEM!

AVERY

Who?

HENRY

This is one of their favorite routines.

JAKE

Which should we start with?

BENJAMIN

A-Gays!

(They launch:)

JAKE

How is your place in Palm Springs?

BENJAMIN

My Neutra home?

JAKE

Can you believe Roger Smyth Wellington Smyth Wollaston?

BENJAMIN

Bought a house north of Vista Chino!

JAKE

The wind!

BENJAMIN

He'll need a six-man crew with shovels to keep the sand off his deck.

JAKE

How many pool boys does he have now?

BENJAMIN

Only 2.

JAKE

Friends don't let friends buy 4 million dollar homes above Vista Chino!

BENJAMIN

It's just not done.

JAKE

Bzzzzzz....

(Jake mimes looking at a phone.)

It's your mother!

(He hands the "phone" to Benjamin.)

BENJAMIN

MOMMY!!!!!!

JAKE

God we are fabulous.

BENJAMIN

Who would not want to be us?

We are special boys! **JAKE**

Sooooo Special! **BENJAMIN**

Special Special Special! **JAKE**

Eurotrash! **OSCAR**

How was St. Barts? **BENJAMIN**

The bastards are letting just anyone in. **JAKE**

AirBnB! **BENJAMIN**

Ruins a place for the people who deserve to be there. **JAKE**

Could you imagine what would happen to Ptown if they were to let the wrong people in? **BENJAMIN**

God, we are fabulous. **JAKE**

Who would not want to be us? **BENJAMIN**

Circuit Queens! **HENRY**

Don't eat that shrimp! **BENJAMIN**

Please take this away! **JAKE**

You bring the party favors? **BENJAMIN**

JAKE

You bring the water and lollies?

BENJAMIN

Is everyone looking at us?

JAKE

Why wouldn't they?

BENJAMIN

I mean... this is what we have to offer.

JAKE

We are marginally attractive men...

BENJAMIN

Supported by daddies...

JAKE

Or our ONLY FANS accounts...

BENJAMIN

Or clients...

JAKE

We have used surgery, steroids, and cosmetics to maximize our looks to the point that...

BENJAMIN

... you think we must be hot as hell because you see the effort.

JAKE

It's not what you were born with that counts

BENJAMIN

It's what you have worked hard for.

JAKE

And timed for maximum effect for the circuit party in Berlin

BENJAMIN

Toronto

BENJAMIN

Atlanta.

JAKE

Wait! You've lost your shred!

BENJAMIN

What?!

JAKE

Your 8 pack has turned into a 6 pack!

BENJAMIN

It was that fucking shrimp!

JAKE

Throw up!

BENJAMIN

Now take more G before the recovery party!

JAKE

God, we are beautiful.

BENJAMIN

Who would not want to be us!

OSCAR

Boston Gays!

BENJAMIN

The worst!

JAKE

The Boston Cruise!

(Jake and Benjamin stand apart and look at each other with disdain.)

AVERY

Aren't they technically...?

HENRY

They always see themselves as the exception.

(They slowly walk past each other, make eye contact and increase their expressions of disdain.)

The pass a few steps and then turn out and look back with even more disdain. They pretend to unzip and pull their penises out and start making gestures like they are masturbating. They build in intensity until they pretend to orgasm with the following words:)

BENJAMIN & JAKE

I HATE YOU!!!!

HENRY

That's actually pretty accurate.

OSCAR

You don't know what cruising is. Do you?

BENJAMIN

iPhones have killed an art form!

JAKE

Do Gen Zers have sex?

BENJAMIN

Do they?

(They all look to Avery.)

AVERY

Asking that is a form of sexual imposition.

BENJAMIN

Heavens!

JAKE

So we would be assaulting you right now by asking you to enlighten us about your generation's sexual practices?

AVERY

Questions like that are micro-aggressions.

HENRY

You should see his macro aggressions.

AVERY

I think I have.

JAKE

You don't have to answer.

AVERY

You should never ask.

JAKE

Is this some kind of sacred subject or something?

AVERY

It would be like me asking you how many different sexual partners you have had in your life.

OSCAR

Oh, god.

HENRY

You should not have gone there.

OSCAR

Didn't they do this that time...?

HENRY

Yes.

(Jake takes out his phone and accesses the calculator app.)

JAKE

Benjy?

BENJAMIN

Jake?

JAKE

What counts as sex? Oral?

BENJAMIN

Of course!

JAKE

Quick handjob in the sauna?

BENJAMIN

Yes

JAKE

Kissing with hands on cock over clothes

BENJAMIN

No!

JAKE

Group scenes?

BENJAMIN

Over four count as 3.

JAKE

Ohhh... this is tough. Let's say 3 a week. On average.

BENJAMIN

No repeats.

JAKE

Okay... 2.

BENJAMIN

Make it 1 because you've really slowed down over the last ten years.

HENRY

Still... it's spread over 4 decades.

JAKE

2,120 men... And a few women.

BENJAMIN

What?

JAKE

Girl cunt can be delicious!

AVERY

(To Henry:) And you are okay with that?

JAKE

Hen is probably around 1,700.

AVERY

How long have you been together?

31 years. **HENRY**

And you're married. **AVERY**

We believe in fidelity **JAKE**

Not Monogamy **HENRY**

You treat sex like it's a joke. **AVERY**

Do we though? **JAKE**

Sex can be humorous, but not a joke. **BENJAMIN**

It's repulsive. **AVERY**

Maybe you're doing it wrong? **JAKE**

You sound like my parents when I was 14. **HENRY**

Hank Senior and the Velvet Hammer. **JAKE**

You all treat it like a joke. **AVERY**

Oh, I assure you back then... when I was 14... it was anything but a joke. **HENRY**

Go ahead, honey. **JAKE**

HENRY

My dad found a Playgirl magazine under my bed and that was pretty much the end of my childhood.

JAKE

This was a few years before PFLAG got going and the Trevor Project hadn't started yet...

HENRY

...and all the other crises centers and hotlines that you enjoy today? Even if these resources had been available, how would I have found out about them? You see... this was a time before the Internet and computers and cell phones and the bizarre kinds of privacy and lack of it that young people enjoy today.

Back then, your mother could listen in on your phone calls from an extension in her bedroom without you knowing and she could eavesdrop on all the things you would tell your best girl pal about your feelings and your crushes and your fears and your anxieties.

Imagine that your father gave you a jackknife and told you to go into the woods behind your back yard and cut off a willow branch about 4 feet long and bring it back to him. And when you did he had you bend over and say "I am not a faggot" and strike you until you said it butch enough to convince him.

In my early teens, my parents would tell the neighbors we were going on a family vacation and then go to Europe and I would be sent to a summer camp for special boys and girls who needed to correct our ways. Did you know that back then it was common for parents of gay boys to send them to professional therapists who would hook them up to electrodes, show them photos and shock them every time a cock was shown?

Imagine this boy lived in a town in the Mid West and had never heard of the Gay Pride parades that a few extremely brave men from a generation before had organized.

Imagine that you could be fired from our job, harassed, arrested, and thrown in prison if you were caught with another man in your bed.

Imagine that every time you took a look inside your soul, all you found was fear, shame, anxiety, and loneliness. That you were a freak who would never find another boy like you and if you did, he would have the same horrible self-loathing and shame. Imagine how many times you thought that it would be for the best for you and your family if you were to just not exist. Imagine having absolutely nowhere to turn - no family members, no student groups, no help centers, no hotlines.

What do you think it would take to overcome that, Avery?

I want you to take another look at these two goofballs. And they are goofballs.

JAKE

Fair enough.

BENJAMIN

Guilty as charged.

HENRY

That's what they faced. Something that you and your generation has largely been spared mostly because of them and other gay men like them. Through their bravery and courage, they invented a new way to live. A way to bond as gay men and live with pride. Pride in themselves and their friends and their communities. They decided that no one was ever going to make them feel ashamed of the way they expressed their sexuality with other men.

BENJAMIN

Slut shaming is so 80s.

HENRY

And they did this openly and as out loud as they could, so that little by little things would change enough for you to come here tonight and be as self-righteous as you want with your pronouns.

Every generation thinks they invented sex. But my generation invented a way for gay men to be proud of sex. So try not to tell us how we should be allowed to express our sexuality.

AVERY

Look where it got you.

HENRY

What's that supposed to mean?

AVERY

AIDS. You proud of that?

(This infuriates Jake, Benjamin, and Oscar.)

JAKE

You little half-assed twit.

(Henry stops Jake from throttling Avery.)

HENRY

Let's just end this first lesson right here. How about you let that sink in and then maybe later we will give you little tour of another hell you've been spared. We cool, bro?

AVERY

Thanks. This has been very educational. Maybe not the way you intended. A few moments ago, when you asked me to look at you... And I'm using the plural pronoun. You know what I actually saw?

BENJAMIN

I have a feeling we may not like this.

AVERY

White Gays.

(They are all brought up short by Avery's accusation.)

JAKE

What the fuck is that supposed to mean?

BENJAMIN

What are white gays?

AVERY

Gay men who use their white privilege to step over the backs of people of color and the trans community to get ahead and then slam the door shut behind.

HENRY

How do we do that exactly?

BENJAMIN

Maybe give us an example?

AVERY

Okay. Buy up property in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Tart it up and then flip it so that the people who call it their home can no longer afford to live there. Kinda like what happened here in the South End or maybe P'town. Any of you have a summer home in the dunes?

(Oscar enters from the hallway in emcee mode.)

OSCAR

And now... direct from her triumphant headlining act at the Boom Boom Room of the Saugus Iron Works... The chanteuse who put the sin in Sinclair, Claire Sinclair!

(Sinclair enters in .)

SINCLAIR

You know.... Sometimes there are moments in our lives where you think that things can't get any worse. Maybe your dry cleaner loses your best frock. The one you spent three weeks drafting by hand... Your roommate kicks your ass to the gutter when she decides she's allergic to hairspray. Maybe a fascist ignoramus is elected to the presidency of the United States. You think that things couldn't get any worse. But there is hope. How do I know this? I have suffered setbacks myself. Yes.. Me...Claire Sinclair. Before I became the internationally known superstar you see before you today, when I was just a little boy... a little boy with a dream... I had a song.

(Sinclair uses his phone to launch a track on Rex's stereo. It's an extended intro to Melanie's hit song "Look What They've Done to My Song, Ma." He talks over the intro.)

A song that I felt was truly my own... a song that only I could sing. But things aren't easy for little boys who are different... who have a song they want to sing... in a way that it has never been sung before. No... things weren't easy for that little boy...

(Sinclair launches into the lyrics to "Look What They've Done to My Song, Ma." He is a very effective and talented performer. He sings the lyrics, but in a way that is completely unique. He starts the song as though it were a torch song, but builds the drama exponentially by changing the lyrics to disparage the people who have ruined his song. By the end of the song he has changed the lyrics to "look what I've done with my song!" and ends it on a triumphant note. The song he sings may also be a mashup of other Melanie hits. The point of his version of the song is the survival and triumph over adversity.)

Sinclair ends his song on a triumphant note and the men applaud heartily, whistling and shouting their praise.)

SINCLAIR

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

JAKE

BRAVA!

SINCLAIR

Thanks, Daddies! You are all the best!

(Sinclair looks at his phone and gets excited.)

That's my Uber... I gotta fly!

What about dinner?
REX

I'll miss the first set.
SINCLAIR

Baby...
JAKE

Rex! Can I leave my...
SINCLAIR

Yes!
REX

I made a mess! Sorry!
SINCLAIR

I have something special for you, but it can wait til tomorrow.
REX

I like the sound of that, daddy!
SINCLAIR

Break a leg!
JAKE

(Henry pops a cheese cube in Sinclair's mouth.)

Beat that Windy Wallbanger Bitch!
BENJAMIN

We'll be there by the second set.
OSCAR

Don't forget to vote!
SINCLAIR

Three times!
OSCAR

LOVE!
SINCLAIR

(After a lot of air kisses, Sinclair exits with his makeup box and one of the garment bags.)

REX

Dinner is served!

(Rex walks over the the light switch and makes another adjustment. The lights over and on the table create a spectacular effect. Everyone says "Ooooooo." They all begin to cross to the table.)

BENJAMIN

Now... You know I can't have...

REX

Gluten

BENJAMIN

...Or...

REX

...Meat...

BENJAMIN

...Or...

REX

...Sugar. Benjy and Avery should use the gold platters. The rest will use of the silver.

JAKE

Place cards, Fancy!

(The rest are so preoccupied with the food on the table, they don't notice that Klaus has entered the apartment.)

HENRY

It's as amazing as ever, Rex.

(As Henry takes photos of the table and his friends, Klaus opens the closet door. He sees Avery's coat and notices there are no hangers left. He crosses down the hall and exits with his overcoat.)

The men stand behind their assigned chairs. There are three extra chairs.

Avery is about to sit on one of the three - it is on its own on one side of the table, as though it were a special place of honor.)

HENRY

No!

(Everyone is alarmed. They freeze. As they stare at Avery.)

REX

That's a special place, Avery. Come sit over here in Sinclair's spot.

(Avery stands back up and crosses to the chair next to Rex. The men reach over the table settings for their filled wine glasses. They all raise their glasses and face the empty seat where Avery was about to sit.

There is a moment of silence as Alexander appears and crosses to the empty seat. He sits and faces his friends. The only one to see him is Rex.

They raise their glasses.)

To Alexander.

HENRY

The best friend a man could ever have.

BENJAMIN

The kindest.

OSCAR

The most loyal.

JAKE

The most mischievous.

REX

Happy birthday to the love of my life.

They drink their wine.

Klaus re-enters without his coat. He stands in the doorway silently.

Alexander senses his presence and turns quickly toward him.

All the men look to the doorway and see Klaus.)

OSCAR

Klaus!

(The men seem to be surprised and a little disturbed by Klaus. He looks very white and a little frail. His clothes are big on him.)

JAKE

Hey, bro!

REX

You came!

OSCAR

Of course he came!

KLAUS

Sinclair let me in on his way out.

(Oscar crosses to Klaus and reaches for his shoulder. He leans in and kisses Klaus's cheek.)

OSCAR

You're looking great!

KLAUS

Bullshit, Ollie.

REX

We are just sitting down. Come join us.

KLAUS

Have you told everyone already?

REX

Told them?

Am I the last to know?
KLAUS

What's going on?
JAKE

The boxes in your guest room.
KLAUS

It's time, Rex.
ALEXANDER

You have something to tell us?
KLAUS

Be brave, baby.
ALEXANDER

I've sold the brownstone.
REX

What?
BENJAMIN

Where are you going?
JAKE

Palm Springs.
REX

(They all express surprise and in some cases horror.

Blackout.)

END OF ACT 1.

ACT 2

(All the men are gathered at the dinner table. Empty - or nearly empty plates - indicate that the dinner is drawing to a close. It's about an hour after the close of Act 1. There is a slightly sad note in the air as the conversation continues.)

REX

So... they made an offer. I countered with something I didn't think they would go for, but that was important to me to ensure the integrity of this townhouse and the home I have created here... and much to my surprise, they swallowed it.

OSCAR

And you used the money for...

REX

Palm Springs... Well... some of it anyway.

BENJAMIN

Why didn't you tell us?

JAKE

Because you would have made a scene.

REX

I'm telling you now.

OSCAR

Tell us about the new place.

BENJAMIN

Probably just another old motel converted into a luxury condo...

JAKE

Where did you get that?

BENJAMIN

Does it come with it's own sling?

JAKE

Again... where are you getting that, Benjy?

OSCAR

A 30 year-old Damron guide?

BENJAMIN

Clothing optional pool with Sunday brunch orgies

HENRY

(Nodding:) 30-year-old Damron guide.

REX

I think you would like it Benjy. There are two guest bedrooms and four bathrooms.

(They all perk up.)

JAKE

I hear Neutra week can be fun.

BENJAMIN

If you're into all that mid-century crap.

HENRY

(To Avery;) There are two kinds of gays - antique and mid-century modern.

BENJAMIN

I'm not bringing my own sling.

OSCAR

You haven't been in a sling since...

BENJAMIN

Hush, darling.

JAKE

If you take up golf or pickle ball...

BENJAMIN

...We will hunt you down and drag you to Betty Ford!

REX

I'm thinking of painting again.

BENJAMIN

What a coincidence... I'm thinking of sitting again!

HENRY

Why Palm Springs?

REX

What... I should go to Florida?

(They all are aghast.)

HENRY

Why not downsize here... closer to home?

REX

I feel that the West is what's next for me.

JAKE

Next?

BENJAMIN

I like *now*. Why can't we just keep *now*?

REX

I think I've done Boston. And staying here in this place has become kind of hard for me.

OSCAR

Four floors?

REX

I'm getting to an age where I need an easier next.

BENJAMIN

Rex, You don't look a day older than...

OSCAR

That's a sentence that never ends well, honey.

HENRY

We will miss you, friend.

REX

Hen... I'm not disappearing.

HENRY

It won't be the same.

REX

Think about the last two years. We've seen each other only about a half-dozen times.

OSCAR

It's about more than that.

BENJAMIN

It's knowing you are here.

KLAUS

This place... Here... It runs deep... You leaving... it's like ripping something out of my...

REX

Can you help me, Klaus?

KLAUS

How?

REX

Can you help us see what can be exciting about what's next?

KLAUS

I don't think I can do that.

REX

But there's always something to...

KLAUS

Maybe there isn't...

(Benjamin crosses from the table to the couch. He is having a panic attack. Oscar follows him.)

HENRY

(To Avery:) Benjy's a little high strung.

OSCAR

Hold my hand.

HENRY

Do I need to get a paper bag?

OSCAR

He'll be fine. We just need a minute.

JAKE

Is this something you wanted to do or is it something you felt you had to do?

(Rex can't answer.)

That's what I was afraid of.

KLAUS

You created this from nothing. You love it here.

JAKE

It's more than just a place you have lived for 40 years.

BENJAMIN

It's our home.

OSCAR

And *our* place, Benjy?

BENJAMIN

Please, that's a ranch house on a cul de sac in a nondescript suburb next to a mall.

OSCAR

It's our home...

BENJAMIN

It's where we *live*... this place... this is where we became who we are... This place is us. Most people say they are where they went to school... or where they grew up... or what they do for a living. That's what defines most people. But we aren't most people, Oscar. This... this is our life... this is us.

JAKE

(To Henry:) You are my life.

BENJAMIN

You know what I'm saying, Jake.

KLAUS

October 30, 1983...

BENJAMIN

The day I met the love of my life...

KLAUS

Here

HENRY

Rex's halloween party when Oscar was dressed as Miss Marblehead...

BENJAMIN

And Jake wore that hideous striped vermilion polyester sweater with the fuchsia diagonal stripe. I've wanted to ask you for years... was it some kind of abstract halloween costume or did you actually think you looked good?

KLAUS

Oscar was on a date with Rex...

REX

Until I saw him look at you, Benjy.

JAKE

You were also dating Alex as I recall.

BENJAMIN

Alex had to work that night.

REX

It was pre-approved.

KLAUS

June 12th, 1979.

REX

The day I met you, Klaus?

KLAUS

You remembered?

REX

Of course.

KLAUS

The phone lines... Do they still have telephone cruise lines?

JAKE

They can't...

KLAUS

I came over... you were still rehabbing the apartment on the bottom floor.

REX

Sawdust everywhere

KLAUS

You were completely out of my league.

REX

Nonsense.

KLAUS

I was so afraid to say something stupid.

REX

You accused me of being a pornstar.

KLAUS

I thought I was giving you a compliment.

REX

Thank God we got the sex out of the way quick.

KLAUS

That doesn't make me sound so desirable...

REX

We both knew there was something else going on that was more important.

KLAUS

Sometimes sex can destroy that.

REX

I'm glad it didn't.

KLAUS

I love you, brother.

REX

I love you too.

KLAUS

Can we... later on... can we talk?

REX

Of course.

OSCAR

Give us another date, Klaus

KLAUS

November 9, 1986...

(The men begin to move to the living room. Alex enters and stands not too far from his painting. He observes the men.)

A week after we all went to Fenway Health to get tested... We came here so we could be together when we each made the call.

OSCAR

Negative

BENJAMIN

Negative

KLAUS

Negative

REX

Negative

HENRY

Positive

ALEXANDER

Positive

HENRY

I was so careful.

JAKE

I know, Hen. The most careful of us all.

ALEXANDER

It's all right, Hen. We are going to be okay.

HENRY

He was there for me.

ALEXANDER

Look at it this way. We don't have to worry about it anymore... Right? You and me... We got this bro!

KLAUS

March 12, 1991.

(No one knows.)

Alex's first bought of pneumonia.

ALEXANDER

But not the last.

KLAUS

May 8, 1992

(No one knows.)

KLAUS

The day I lost the sight in my left eye?

(Klaus nods.)

ALEXANDER

You have another one that's perfectly fine. Keep up with the Foscarnet and you will be fine.

JAKE

Remember that summer when we all got the house in Ptown?

HENRY

The mosquito cottage.

OSCAR

The beach at Herring Cove....

REX

We didn't want Alex to miss out on the fun.

JAKE

Remember watching all those muscle boys play volleyball.

BENJAMIN

The expression on their faces when we drilled Alex's IV pole into the sand so he wouldn't miss his afternoon infusion.

ALEXANDER

How dare we ruin their summer!

KLAUS

December 20th, 1993.

REX

Our trip to Puerto Escondido for Christmas!

ALEXANDER

My last rebound.

KLAUS

October 12, 1995.

(No one can bring themselves to answer. This is a very sad memory.

Benjy stands up from the couch and crosses a short distance away.

Alex crosses to the couch and lies down.)

The day Rex and I brought Alex here from the hospital.

REX

The day we brought him home.

JAKE

Where did you get the morphine, Rex?

(Benjamin clears his throat.)

KLAUS

The bed was here and the infusion pump was on his left...

HENRY

He was 108 pounds...

KLAUS

You weren't much heavier, Hen.

OSCAR

I came over to do his hair. Afterward. When he looked into the mirror I handed to him... There was a little bit of shock. Then I saw the fear. I took the mirror away and he took a deep breath as he could and he looked up to me and he smiled.

ALEXANDER

I saw you put a lock of my hair in your pocket.

HENRY

I came over to make sure his porta cath was clean.

JAKE

I looked just like yours, Hen, but on the left.

HENRY

When I saw him I thought this will be me... in a few months... a few weeks.

JAKE

I knew it wouldn't.

REX

He didn't respond to the medicine like you, Hen.

HENRY

Same doctor. Same experimental drugs.

ALEXANDER

You went on to be a poster boy for Roche. And I became a statistic.

REX

He hadn't been able to get out of the bed for five days.

OSCAR

We talked in the kitchen.

REX

I wouldn't have been able to get through it without all of you here.

KLAUS

I remember every minute of that day. It plays over and over in my mind. It wasn't beautiful. It wasn't transcendent.

JAKE

No fucking angel blasted through the ceiling... None of us released a balloon and watched it magically fly up into the heavens... It was ugly and unnecessary and horrible.

KLAUS

One minute he was there... just a little glimmer of what he once was... a glimpse of what he might have become... the next... he was gone. All of it so meaningless...

REX

It meant something, Klaus.

KLAUS

What?

REX

When he was the most frightened of what would come next...

KLAUS

Oblivion...

REX

He wasn't with his family who rejected him... Not the company that fired him when he tried to go on disability... He was with the men who loved him... In the place where he felt the most at home.

HENRY

It meant the world to Alex...

BENJAMIN

If it didn't mean something... why are we all here now?

JAKE

He's still with us, Klaus. Don't you feel it?

ALEXANDER

Don't push it, Rex... They'll think you're nuts.

(Rex uses his phone to play "The Sunshine After the Rain" a disco hit by BERRi - the 1994 Eurodance version.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m_wdAD2dIDw)

JAKE

Dear God.

REX

Assume your positions!

(Rex rouses the Benjamin, Oscar, Klaus, Henry, and Jake to stand up and face in one direction.)

AVERY

What's going on?

HENRY

Alex's gift for our wedding. He got the whole church to stand and...

It was magical. **BENJAMIN**

You had to be there. **HENRY**

He's about to! **BENJAMIN**

(Alex gets up from the couch and takes his place in front of the men. He leads them in the choreographed hand and arm movements to the song. The gestures are simple, but beautiful. They illustrate the words of the song.

“I want to see the sunshine after the rain I want to see
bluebirds flying over the mountains again
oh where is the silver lining shining at the rainbow's
end.”

The song/dance builds in volume and all the men - with the exception of Avery - find it cathartic. It ends with a cheer.)

Wooo hooo! **OSCAR**

Palm Springs here we come! **BENJAMIN**

Just a week at a time, I can't handle more. **REX**

Do you *have* to wear a thong? **BENJAMIN**

(They all collapse into chairs with smiles on their faces.

What's with the dates... **AVERY**

Klaus has HSAM... **HENRY**

BENJAMIN

Hugely superior autobiographic memory.

HENRY

Highly, Benjy. Not hugely.

BENJAMIN

Like Marilu Henner.

(Avery looks at Benjamin with a blank face.)

The actor from Taxi?

(Still no understanding from Avery.)

JAKE

Dear god.

HENRY

It's rare.

JAKE

He can remember everything that has ever happened to him...

KLAUS

Since about 6.

HENRY

Just say a date and he will rewind and replay his memory...

AVERY

August 21, 1998.

KLAUS

It was a wam and sunny friday. I got up at 7:30 and got coffee at... But I'm guessing you have something else in mind. Your birthday? I didn't experience that though. It's just a guess. Am I right?

(Avery takes out his phone and does a quick search.)

AVERY

January 5, 2018.

KLAUS

I lost that day

AVERY

So you aren't infallible.

KLAUS

It was my second round of chemo and I had a bad reaction. I woke up the next day in a hospital room. Hen was reading aloud one of the stories in his magazine he thought I would enjoy... and Rex was holding my hand. I only remember what I experience... what I read or hear or see.

AVERY

It was the day Christa Leigh Steele-Knudslie, a transgender activist living in Massachusetts, was murdered by her husband.

HENRY

We had interviewed her for a story just a few months before. We were all devastated.

(Avery finds another date on his phone.)

AVERY

August 12, 2016.

KLAUS

That's the date that the Advocate covered the murder of a trans woman in Ohio. I'm not as good at remembering words I've read, but I'll try...

Rae'Lynn Thomas, 28, was shot and then beaten by her mother's ex-boyfriend in their Columbus home Wednesday. After firing at her twice, James Allen Byrd -- who was nearly a foot taller and 100 pounds heavier than the petite Thomas -- proceeded to beat her with any heavy object handy. Renee Thomas says the last thing she heard was her daughter begging for her life, saying, "Mom, please please don't leave me. Mom, I'm dying."

AVERY

June 12, 2016.

KLAUS

Pulse... Orlando... I watched the coverage on the NewsHour... 49 people dead and more than 50 wounded.

AVERY

90% of the victims were Hispanic. I guess all that work you did to help your gay brothers didn't really make it to the BIPOC or trans people who really needed it.

KLAUS

My turn. June 14, 2015.

(Avery does not respond.)

That's the first time I remember seeing you. Boston gay pride. Your hair was shorter than it is now. You were with a group of people wearing Black Lives Matter t-shirts. When your group got up to where I was standing at the corner of Boylston and Charles, you sat on the pavement in front of the review stand and refused to move – basically stalling the parade for what... 11 minutes?

AVERY

The number of trans women who were slaughtered that year.

KLAUS

People thought the parade was over and they started to leave. Some were worried that there was an incident and they felt unsafe.

AVERY

Maybe like people of color feel unsafe, Boston Gay Pride discriminates against BIPOC, women, trans, and poor people and at the intersection of that is trans women of color.

JAKE

So you shut the parade down?

AVERY

Black lives, trans lives, and women's lives Matter.

BENJAMIN

You know that we agree with that. Right?

OSCAR

Everyone in that parade agrees with that.

KLAUS

Why did you find it necessary to shit on the people who are your most trusted advocates?

JAKE

Was it just easier and safer to get attention there instead of going to some other place that could have mattered?

OSCAR

Like a Trump rally?

BENJAMIN

Or a cross burning?

AVERY

We demand more diversity on the Boston Pride board of directors.

REX

That sounds fair.

OSCAR

So you shut the parade down? That was your only option?

BENJAMIN

To piss off the people who would most support your causes?

AVERY

The parade is Bullshit. It's not about celebrating LGBTQ+ pride. It's about corporate greed.

OSCAR

This again...

HENRY

The companies who marched were there to celebrate their gay employees and the changes they have made to their employment policies.

JAKE

That's kind of important. Right?

BENJAMIN

Gay people need jobs and protection from...

AVERY

And Black people?

BENJAMIN

Of course!

REX

We have always supported people of color.

KLAUS

The movement our generation started has saved countless lives and I refuse to let anyone shit on all we have accomplished.

AVERY

For white people. Boston Gay Pride is an enemy to the Trans and BIPOC communities. It is corrupt and needs to be shut down.

KLAUS

And replaced with what?

OSCAR

Something you and your friends will run?

JAKE

Your generation is really good at complaining. But actually getting the work done? Not so much.

HENRY

The first time I met Rex. Late October in 1989. It was here in this room. I saw an ad in Bay Windows to help organize a march on the State House to demand passage of the Mass Gay Civil Rights Bill. We were here to paint posters and plan. And you know... it never occurred to us to protest at a women's shelter, or some minority organization, or to shut down a Boston Gay Pride parade. We decided to go where we would have the biggest impact. The State House. Where the bill was under debate. Some of the people I met that day had worked on this for 15 years. And we did it. They passed the law that guaranteed someone could not fire your lily white ass for being gay. You have a worthy cause, Avery. Tell us. What's your plan?

(Avery does not answer.)

KLAUS

Last Tuesday at 9am you ordered a steamed apple juice grande, a bacon, gouda, and egg sandwich, and a blueberry scone at the Starbucks on Tremont Street. It cost \$13.34. You tried to use a card, but it didn't go through. Not the second time. Not the third time either. You reached into your pockets but only came up with some coins. I gave you a twenty. You kept the change and hustled out without a word of thanks.

The visa card. I didn't have time to catch the numbers, but I did see the name. Monica Stevens. I'm guessing your mother? Am I right, Michael?

(Avery does not answer.)

Michael Stevens... the name on the drivers license I saw when you returned the card to your wallet.

This Thursday.

That's the last time I saw you before tonight. I was walking along Shawmut. There you were. Huge overstuffed backpack over your shoulders. You turned the corner headed into the alley right behind here. I was worried. You looked cold and hungry. I walked along the square to the other side, but you never came out. Who are you, Michael?

(Avery does not answer.)

JAKE

Remember when you were critical of me for creating characters from what I have researched and observed?

BENJAMIN

And from your brilliance.

JAKE

Benjy, help me!

BENJAMIN

Ooooo... this will be fun.

JAKE

Let's invent Micheal Stevens.

BENJAMIN

Did he grow up in Massachusetts or....

JAKE

No one but a Masshole would be so righteous, arrogant, and officious.

BENJAMIN

He's not working class.

JAKE

Or raised within Boston proper or Cambridge.

BENJAMIN

Could be Beacon Hill.

JAKE

He's too colorless for that.

BENJAMIN

Agreed.

JAKE

Not the North or South Shore either. He's nailed every R and he's failed to utter a single "wicked."

BENJAMIN

He speaks the Massachusetts equivalent of Received Pronunciation.

JAKE

His Sentence structure is complex and arch.

Western suburb. **BENJAMIN**

A wealthy one. **JAKE**

With a good high school. **BENJAMIN**

That has a competitive debate team. **JAKE**

Wellesley. **BENJAMIN**

I'm guessing Weston. **JAKE**

Mom and dad are professionals. **BENJAMIN**

Dad's in finance. **JAKE**

Mom's a lawyer. **BENJAMIN**

Was a lawyer... Dad was a good provider and she needed to take care of Junior. **JAKE**

That's how things are done in Weston. **BENJAMIN**

I'm thinking maybe a certain ivy league school... **JAKE**

Definitely not MIT - he's no fun. **BENJAMIN**

God... is there anyone more *no fun* than a Harvard Undergrad? **JAKE**

You took your LSAT and did really really really well. **BENJAMIN**

JAKE

Dad and mom were so proud.

BENJAMIN

And you were accepted everywhere you applied... because... well, of course!

JAKE

But you didn't start your degree. Did you?

BENJAMIN

No. Because you didn't want to support the patriarchy and betray all your friends who have not had your advantages.

JAKE

Mom and dad didn't plan on that.

BENJAMIN

So they cut you off.

JAKE

Your degree was a bit esoteric.

BENJAMIN

The aforementioned major with the word *studies* in it.

JAKE

So you're hacking and side hacking the gig economy for a little cash.

BENJAMIN

But it not much and it's inconsistent.

JAKE

The last time you were home in Weston...

BENJAMIN

...Probably Thanksgiving...

JAKE

...you trotted out your new name and pronouns.

BENJAMIN

Wasn't a happy scene.

JAKE

Parents never understand, Benjy.

BENJAMIN

They don't realize how the patriarchy, white guilt, and incredible amounts of unearned self-regard can get in the way of gainful employment.

JAKE

You stuffed all the clothes you could fit in a backpack and got your Lilly White ass out of there.

BENJAMIN

Pausing just long enough at the console table next to the back door to snatch mommy's card from her purse.

JAKE

After a few weeks mommy canceled the card to lure you back home.

BENJAMIN

Unsubsidized rent in Boston's a bitch.

JAKE

You had to say goodbye to the apartment Mommy and Daddy got for you.

BENJAMIN

He surfed a few sofas until his friends got bored with his extreme level of wokeness.

JAKE

So woke, he is a complete insomniac.

BENJAMIN

Homeless!

JAKE

What's little Michael to do?

BENJAMIN

His phone is still working. I'm guessing the gay cruise apps.

JAKE

Daddy Hunt?

BENJAMIN

My favorite!

JAKE

And here he is tonight.

BENJAMIN

Wearing the shirt I got Rex for his birthday last year.

JAKE

Camped out in the guest room.

BENJAMIN

Taking advantage of our kind-hearted friend with a soft touch for boys in need.

JAKE

Whew!

BENJAMIN

That was fun!

JAKE & BENJAMIN

Yeah!!!!

(They clap. Avery is not amused.)

JAKE

That's why you're here. Right?

AVERY

Okay, Boomers!

(Jake and Benjamin are not amused.)

JAKE

Okay, Boomers?

BENJAMIN

That's all you got?

JAKE

I guess that what passes for wit for kids his age.

BENJAMIN

What a dreary little generation.

JAKE

Very disappointing.

BENJAMIN

We're disappointed in you, Michael.

JAKE

Maybe its time to come clean and go home to Weston.

AVERY

I'm still trying to figure it out what to do with my life. Okay? But what I do know is the last thing I want to do is become you! And I'm using the plural pronoun.

BENJAMIN

Ouch.

AVERY

How much did you sell it for, Rex? This place?

REX

4.2.

OSCAR

Jesus Fuck.

AVERY

(To Rex:) White Gay.

REX

The worst.

BENJAMIN

(To Avery:) I'm beginning to not like you.

KLAUS

4.2 for the whole building?

REX

I donated the garden apartment to the Boston Housing Authority. They are obliged by the agreement to use it for subsidized housing.

KLAUS

I bet that brought the valuation down a little.

REX

It certainly did.

HENRY

That was generous of you, Rex.

For a White Gay.
REX

(Avery crosses down the hall and exits into Rex's bedroom.)

That was fun.
BENJAMIN

Guys...
REX

Okay... We got carried away.
JAKE

We couldn't help it!
BENJAMIN

We're assholes.
JAKE

I know... Come to the table. It's time for dessert.
REX

(They all cross to the tables to their assigned spots.)
Dessert is served.

(The plates are empty.)

I don't get it.
BENJAMIN

It's under your plates.
REX

(They each remove an envelope from under the plates in front of them. They are personally addressed. They open the envelopes. Each contains a check.)

Holy shit!
OSCAR

Jesus Christ!
BENJAMIN

Rex... **HENRY**

Oh my fucking god! **JAKE**

You can't do this. **HENRY**

Yes. I can. **REX**

I... **OSCAR**

You all receive the same amount. **REX**

From the sale of the condo? **KLAUS**

I kept enough for the new place. My retirement was generous. So... **REX**

I can't accept this. **BENJAMIN**

This was your home too, Benjy. You said so tonight. **REX**

But I didn't mean for you to.... **BENJAMIN**

Of course you didn't. **REX**

(Benjamin reaches for Sinclair's plate.)
What are you doing?

Checking for Sinclair. **BENJAMIN**

He has one too... **REX**

OSCAR

Can you image the number of wigs and frocks that boy will buy?

JAKE

Jesus Christ...

BENJAMIN

I... I...

REX

You don't know what to say?!

OSCAR

That's a first!

HENRY

What do you want us to do with the money, Rex?

REX

That's your choice.

HENRY

We don't need... I mean... We're fine...

JAKE

This is blowing my mind...

REX

New home? New wardrobe. Trip around the world? Down payment on a new place in Ptown?

BENJAMIN

Jesus... wow...

(Avery returns from the bedroom. He wears his old clothes. He stands by the entryway and observes.)

HENRY

The Trevor Project. I'm going to give it to the Trevor Project.

REX

That's a good cause, Hen.

HENRY

I keep thinking how much easier it would have been for me if it had been around when I was a kid. They need this money. All of it. What about you, Jake?

JAKE

Ummmm... How about the Mass Transgender Political Coalition. In honor of my niece Aria.

HENRY

Or nephew. Aria goes back and forth a lot.

JAKE

And that's okay. We love them whatever they decide... or don't decide. Benjy?

BENJAMIN

How about a new scholarship for lgbtq+ kids from historically underrepresented populations.

JAKE

Don't give it to Brown. The bastards don't need it.

BENJAMIN

UMass Boston. Alex's alma mater. I'll named the scholarship after him. You have an idea, Oscar?

OSCAR

I think I'll give it to Good Shepherd.

BENJAMIN

He's been giving free haircuts as part of their palliative care.

OSCAR

They are good people and they could really use the money. Klaus?

(Klaus is overcome with emotion.)

REX

You don't have to decide now... Take your time.

(Rex sees Avery open the closet door and remove his winter coat.)

REX

Avery, come and join us.

AVERY

I'm gonna head out.

REX

You sure?

AVERY

Yes.

(Rex crosses to Avery.)

REX

Thanks for joining us. I'll see you tomorrow when you come back to help with the boxes.

AVERY

I've returned the deposit.

REX

You didn't have to do that.

AVERY

I didn't want to be a hypocrite.

REX

You wouldn't have been. I would have made you earn that money. Trust me.

(Awkward pause.)

AVERY

Your friends are...

(Awkward pause.)

REX

Yes they are.

AVERY

Bye.

(Jake crosses to Avery and Rex. Henry follows.)

JAKE

Avery... Hold on. I said some kind of asshole things to you tonight. I'm sorry about that. If you need help getting up on your feet... We've all been there.

BENJAMIN

Jake's on his 14th career!

JAKE

He's not exaggerating. If you need help, reach out.

(He hands Avery a business card.)

It's a business card.

BENJAMIN

People used to give them out in the olden days.

HENRY

The magazine needs good writers. You ever want to try your hand at reporting, let me know. My contact info is on our website.

REX

You going to be okay?

AVERY

Yes.

REX

Goodbye, Avery.

(Avery exits.)

BENJAMIN

Jesus H Christ.

OSCAR

This is what we've come to... That's the future?

BENJAMIN

It's soooo dismal.

JAKE

The poor boy has no sense of humor. Even back when we were getting bashed to within an inch of lives we still managed to have fun.

HENRY

Poor little guy.

JAKE

My heart would go out to him, but I'm not sure what he'd do with it.

OSCAR

Jesus! Look at the time...

BENJAMIN

Sinclair!

OSCAR

We gotta move, queens! The first round starts in 15 minutes!

(They all rush to get their stuff together.)

JAKE

Hen, help with the coats...

(Henry exits to the guest bedroom to get the coats.)

OSCAR

Melanie! I mean... Have these queens never heard of Donna Summer!

BENJAMIN

Hometown girl!

JAKE

Rex... You coming?

REX

Cheer for me, guys... It's been a big day. Remind Sinclair to come by tomorrow for his stuff. And don't tell him about the check. I want it to be a surprise.

(They suddenly feel the weight of leaving Rex's home for the last time.

They stop what they are doing and move to the center of the room.

They look around and remember. Oscar takes a small glass chochke and places it in his pocket. Henry crosses to the portrait of Alex. Jake places his hand on Henry's shoulder.

Alex appears.)

HENRY

So long, my friend.

ALEX

See? I told you we would be okay.

(Benjamin crosses to Rex. He hugs him.)

BENJAMIN

It's you, Rex.

OSCAR

All of it.

(Oscar hugs Rex.)

JAKE

The maker of all things possible.

(Jake hugs Rex.)

HENRY

And impossible

(Henry hugs Rex.)

They step back and look at Rex. None of them knows what to say next or how to leave.)

REX

You're going to be late.

OSCAR

Sinclair!

(They cross to the door, putting their coats on. Jake notices that Klaus has stayed behind.)

JAKE

Klaus?

KLAUS

I'll meet you there.

(They exit out the door, but we can still hear them.)

JAKE

We talking my car?

BENJAMIN

Are you nuts?

OSCAR

Uber!

(We hear them join in a chorus of "Sunshine after the rain". It fades as they cross down the steps and exit the townhouse.)

KLAUS

There's something I need to tell you.

REX

It's come back?

KLAUS

Yes.

REX

How bad.

KLAUS

Bad.

REX

Oscar knows?

KLAUS

The only one.

REX

How much time do we have?

KLAUS

Month or two.

REX

My friend.

KLAUS

And then it will be over. There will be nothing left...

REX

That's not true.

KLAUS

It is, Rex. You get this kind of news and that's what you think about.

REX

You have given us all so much...

KLAUS

You spend a lot of time thinking about your life. And mine? My legacy? Nothing special. No husband to remember me. No children... no one to carry on my name. Benjy and Oscar have Kurt. Jake has his plays. Hen has his magazine. All I ever did was write code. It just ends here. With me. I will be alone and it will end. All that shit I remember... the history of us... It will be gone.

REX

Look at me... You will not be alone. We will be there for you. You've got to know that.

KLAUS

I can't ask you all to...

REX

Klaus. We've got this. Okay? We've got this. Look at me? Okay?

KLAUS

Was it a test?

REX

What?

KLAUS

The checks?

REX

No. I knew they wouldn't let me down.

KLAUS

I should give the money back. You could put it to better use.

REX

I had this idea when I wrote your check. About what you could do with it?

KLAUS

Yeah?

REX

The Gay History Project. I have a friend who runs it. They make recordings of personal accounts of the history of this puritanical old place. You would be a gold mine to them, Klaus. Throw a little money at them and they will give you whatever resources you need. The world needs to remember what happened here. For the Averys out there.

KLAUS

I would never have enough time to...

REX

Highlights, Klaus. We need a highlight reel from you. Okay? Your greatest hits. And record it. That way when I am lonely, I'll be able to download your stories and hear your voice. And you will be there... with me.

KLAUS

I like that.

REX

Right?

KLAUS

You'll be in Palm Springs...

REX

A hop skip and a jump.

KLAUS

I'm not going to be all that mobile...

REX

We'll make it work.

KLAUS

My friend.

REX

My friend. We got this.

(They share a warm hug.)

Sinclair!

KLAUS

I gotta run!

REX
Vote for me!

KLAUS
Twice!

(Klaus exits.

Alex crosses up to Rex.)

ALEXANDER
Tonight... Holy shit.

REX
It didn't go exactly as I expected.

ALEXANDER
Better?

REX
In certain ways.

ALEXANDER
Painful.

REX
Yes.

(Alexander begins something that is difficult for him to say.)

ALEXANDER
After tonight...

REX
Yes.

ALEXANDER
There's something important I have to say.

REX
Okay.

ALEXANDER
Palm Springs.

What about it. **REX**

I'm staying here, Rex. **ALEXANDER**

What? **REX**

I'm not going with you. **ALEXANDER**

You have to come with me. **REX**

I can't. **ALEXANDER**

That's absurd. **REX**

So you want to talk about absurd? How many years have I been haunting you in this place? **ALEXANDER**

You're not haunting... **REX**

Ummm... **ALEXANDER**

I need you. That's why you are here. **REX**

Here's the thing. I can't be your *next*, Rex. I've been too long in your *now* and I need to return to your *before*. I think you know that. **ALEXANDER**

I need you. **REX**

You need to let go and I need to let you do it. **ALEXANDER**

That's impossible. I've given you my heart. **REX**

ALEXANDER

I've had it for too long. It was selfish of me.

REX

No.

ALEXANDER

So I've decided...

REX

No.

ALEXANDER

To give it back. I should have done it the moment before I died. I was going to, so you would know that you would be free. I should have told you with my last breath. But at that point your heart was the only thing I had. I couldn't give it back.

REX

You're the only thing that has kept me going.

ALEXANDER

You know that's not true, Rex.

REX

I'm nothing without you. You are the most amazing man I have ever met.

ALEXANDER

Yes. Of course. But think about what's going to be next. It's so exciting.

REX

Don't.

ALEXANDER

It time for me to return your gift...

(Alex places his hands on his chest. Then he reaches out and places them on Rex's chest. Rex closes his eyes.

As he stands there with his eyes closed, Alex disappears and Avery enters from the back hallway.)

AVERY

Am I interrupting?

REX

Ummm... no.

I haven't been honest with you. AVERY

No? REX

For the last few weeks I've been... AVERY

...living in my lumber room downstairs? REX

You knew. AVERY

Since the day after I hired you to put the Christmas decorations up. REX

And you didn't throw me out. AVERY

You needed my help. I was going to offer more, but I figured... REX

... that I wouldn't accept it? AVERY

I didn't want to damage your pride. Were the boys right tonight?... about you?? REX

I'm from Lincoln not Weston. Dad is a doctor. AVERY

The rest? REX

(Avery won't admit it.)

All those digs you got into Jake and Benjy... god, they had a good time with you.

They did? AVERY

That's how they play. REX

AVERY

Weird.

REX

You know... everything you said. Here tonight. You were right.

AVERY

Yeah?

REX

And also completely wrong.

AVERY

The truth is the truth.

REX

And facts are facts?

AVERY

Yes.

REX

When you ignore the context of the facts, you misrepresent the truth.

AVERY

You're getting all semiotic on me.

REX

You pare people down to little stick figures of either good or bad. When you begin to see context... You'll begin to see real people... their hopes and fears and their struggles and efforts to do the right thing... their history of pain and failures and triumphs. The little things and the big things... their generosity... their potential.

AVERY

The world is fucked up.

REX

Right now you use your truths to destroy. Which is easy to do. It's so much harder to create. To make the world a better place. In order to do that, you have to know the context of what you say so that people will see themselves in your truths and help you build something better.

AVERY

Deep.

REX

You are standing on the shoulders of the men you met her tonight, whether you like it or not. And you should honor that. And you should do that now, because they won't be around all that much longer.

AVERY

There is nothing out there for me right now. My student loans...

REX

My turn to play the world's smallest violin.

AVERY

You don't know what my generation is facing.

REX

Hmmm... getting bashed in the streets, disowned by our families, fired from our jobs, dealing with a deadly infectious disease? Don't you think it's time for you start to *make* something. I can see it. It's in you. Something magnificent.

AVERY

How?

REX

You still have Jake's business card?

AVERY

You think there is any way he would...?

REX

Yes. So would Hen. Benjy? Not so sure. But I can talk to him. They can help you. I'll help you get the ball rolling. I still have a week left in town.

AVERY

You'd do that?

REX

Yes.

AVERY

Why?

REX

I guess that's part of what's next for me.

AVERY

I've packed everything up. I'll get out of your hair.

REX

Tomorrow?

AVERY

You sure?

REX

I'm sure.

AVERY

Okay.

REX

It's cold out there.

AVERY

Yeah.

REX

Under all those boxes in the guest room is a bed.

AVERY

Yeah?

REX

Better than a sleeping on the concrete floor of the lumber room.

(Pause.)

AVERY

Thanks

REX

You're welcome.

(Avery finds himself crossing to Rex. They look into each other's eyes. Avery leans forward and places his cheek on Rex's chest. Rex places his arms around Avery in a paternal embrace.)

As the lights fade, Alex's painting remains brightly lit for a few moments.

Black out.

End of play.)