

*All Men*  
A Play in Two Acts  
By John Fisher

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Characters:

Fr. Thomas, Late-Forties

Fr. Lawrence, Forties

Fr. Martin, Forties

Mitchell, Forties

Janet, Mitchell's Sister, Late-Thirties

Harry Paullin, Fifties (This character is never seen, only heard. He speaks from the back of the house, as if he were a member of Fr. Thomas's congregation and was speaking from the back of the church.)

Time: 2012

Place: A Catholic Church in San Francisco

The set represents different areas of the action, laid out so that the characters can cross from one area to another without complicated changes of scenery. Thus the action can remain fluid and steady. The locations are Fr. Thomas's Office, Thomas and Mitchell's Living Room, Fr. Thomas's Pulpit, Fr. Lawrence's Room, and a Hospital Corridor.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(FATHER THOMAS and FATHER MARTIN sit on opposite sides of THOMAS' desk in his office. THOMAS has been ranting.)

THOMAS

When are you talking to the parents?

MARTIN

Four o'clock.

THOMAS

Ugh, this is so difficult. Why do priests make this difficult? How many times have we been through this in the last ten years?

MARTIN

Last twenty years, last thirty years?

THOMAS

Doesn't he read the newspapers? Doesn't he go on the Internet? You'd think he had no idea of the scrutiny, the paranoia in which we all live. Jesus.

MARTIN

He'll be here in five minutes.

THOMAS

Yes, I know when he'll be here. I'm aware of that. (This is not just snappy, it's vicious, and seems uncalled for.)

MARTIN

I'm just saying-

THOMAS

I know precisely what you're saying, Martin. Thank you.

(Pause.)

THOMAS  
Do you believe the parents?

MARTIN  
I do, Thomas, yes.

THOMAS  
What about the boy? Jeremy? Do you believe Jeremy?

MARTIN  
Yes, actually, I do.

THOMAS  
What a mess.

(Pause.)

THOMAS  
You haven't told anyone.

MARTIN  
You mean, James Farallon?

THOMAS  
No, I don't mean James Farallon, I don't mean anyone in particular, I mean anyone.

MARTIN  
No, Thomas, I've told no one.

THOMAS  
Ok, please don't refer to me by name. I do hear what you're saying. I don't need it emphasized to me with my name. I am with you on this, okay? I mean, that's condescending and ridiculous.

MARTIN  
Ok.

THOMAS

The corrections, the weird emphasis. You don't have to make a decision on this one. I do. Ok?

MARTIN

Yes.

(Pause.)

THOMAS

Well, there's only one decision to make. Tell James Farallon and go straight to the police.

MARTIN

And the Bishop.

THOMAS

Yes, of course. I can arrange a lunch. Oh, hell, not a lunch. I can go by and see him. When are you talking to the parents again?

MARTIN (Impatient)

Four o'clock.

THOMAS

Goddammit. Martin. Goddammit. Spare me your impatience. I know you've told me ten times. I know. But I need reminding. I can't always remember.

MARTIN

Yes, fine, I'm sorry.

THOMAS

When this is over. When we're through this and beyond the next phase of this fucking ordeal, you and I are going to have a long talk about your compartment. Do you understand? In a word, I'm sick of it. Sick. Ok?

MARTIN

Yes, yes...

THOMAS

And don't give me your impatience. It doesn't interest me. When it's over, we're going to have a discussion. This is not our only project, you and I.

(Knock. They straighten themselves.)

THOMAS

Come in.

(FATHER LAWRENCE enters, very proper.)

THOMAS

Sit down. (LAWRENCE sits.) How are you?

LAWRENCE

Ok. I've been sick. Headaches, a lot of anxiety.

THOMAS

I can imagine. Sleeping?

LAWRENCE

No.

THOMAS

Well, don't start taking pills. They don't help in the end. When you're tired enough you'll go to sleep.

LAWRENCE

Thank you, that's very helpful.

THOMAS (Offended)

It *is* helpful. You're welcome. You should thank me. (Pause.) We're calling James Farallon this morning. Bring him in on this. And I'll be telling the Bishop this afternoon. (LAWRENCE bursts into tears.) What did you expect? What did you really expect? Did you think we might... not say anything? Is that why you've been up all night praying and wringing your hands? It's ridiculous. Did you really think that? I don't understand you. I don't understand any of you. Were we supposed to buy you out of this? Pay off the parents, pay off the attorneys? Hush it up? Send you to Arkansas? When do you think you're living? 1982? You know, you know how this is

handled now. You know. It is part of your vocational training. You knew how this would be handled. Am I villain? Is that what this is about? I'm a villain?

(MARTIN gives him "take it easy" gesture. THOMAS calms down.)

THOMAS

I brought you into this, Lawrence, and naturally I feel agitated, responsible somehow.

LAWRENCE

You're not.

THOMAS

I know I'm not. I do know that. But I feel, nevertheless, that I encouraged you in your vocation, in your coming into the fold. I thought, I thought at the time, it was a good move for you. I can't believe how fucked up this situation is. (LAWRENCE bursts into tears again.) That boy says he loves you. He did say that. You should know that you were right, he did say you were in love. (LAWRENCE smiles.) It is just pitiful these things. Pitiful. I can't even express sympathy for you, understanding. I was shocked when he told me that. He sat right there and cried and said he loved you. Of all things on God's earth that is one that astonished me the most. (Pause.) Still it isn't right. And you know it isn't. He's ten. He is entitled to innocence. And whatever his feelings... the sex, the intimacy matters. It's outrageous, Lawrence. Outrageous. (Pause.) All of your duties are suspended. You are not to leave the seminary. No shopping, no visits to friends, nothing. Stay in your room and do not leave the complex. Do you understand?

LAWRENCE

Yes.

THOMAS

James Farallon will tell us next steps.

LAWRENCE

Next steps?

THOMAS

He'll tell us about going to the police and negotiating a surrender.  
(LAWRENCE cries.) Jesus. (More crying.) Yes, you should cry. You should be crying. You should be very upset by this. (Pause. THOMAS reaches out and takes LAWRENCE's hand. LAWRENCE clings to it, weeping.) Ok. That's enough. You've made it over this hurdle. You'll take it one day at a time. God sends us these trials that we may come to know ourselves and grow. He does. Ok. There now. (LAWRENCE start to leave, MARTIN escorting him.) Lawrence. You come to me or Martin whenever you need anything. You call us or come see us. As well as Dr. Klein and Father Tellis. You come see us. Ok?

THOMAS

Yes.

(MARTIN and LAWRENCE leave. THOMAS takes a deep breath and lets it out. He looks at his schedule and crosses something out. He sits for a second, then checks his I-Phone. MARTIN re-enters.)

THOMAS

Sit down.

(MARTIN sits.)

THOMAS

I'll call Farallon, then the Bishop. I'll move quickly on this. Florianna can handle the press. It'll be fine. Horrific but fine. Christ knows we've been through it before.

MARTIN

Yes.

(THOMAS regards MARTIN a second, just stares, trying to decide if it's the moment to say what he has to say. He decides it is.)

THOMAS

I'm sending you on leave. To reflect. And dry out. I'm sick of your condescension, your bitterness, your attitude. You've resented me for two years now and I can't believe, I cannot believe I've put up with it this long.

So it's over. I wanted to get through this. To at least get it launched and then... well, today's the day. We've started. I'm sending you away.

MARTIN  
Ok.

THOMAS  
The thing that's pissed me off most about it is that so many of your decisions, your comments, have been motivated by nothing more than rage, jealousy, rage... and rage.

MARTIN  
They haven't. It's... it's the booze, that's all.

THOMAS  
Rage that I've gotten ahead with my life and you've... you've spun your drunken wheels.

MARTIN  
That's not the reason... please.

THOMAS  
Well that's how it's manifested itself. My God, that I could be the spiritual and administrative head of this parish and you could be such a fucking sop to my every effort. It's ridiculous. Ridiculous how long I've put up with it. Are you drunk now?

MARTIN  
No.

THOMAS  
Have you been drinking this morning? (MARTIN nods.) Then you're drunk. After all the ultimatums, the write-ups. The tirades, the days ruined telling you to stop.

MARTIN  
I can't.

THOMAS

Then go off and deal with it on your own. I've got too much going on. No time for this. None. That's all.

MARTIN

What about...

THOMAS

Yes, of course, finish the play. I know how important that is to you.

MARTIN

And to the kids.

THOMAS

No, to you Martin. Those kids are your marionettes. They obey you because you breath hellfire into them but they complain, to me, and their parents. It's not Broadway, Martin, it never has been. My God, I'd say it was the booze again but you've always been... frustrated, trying to prove something.

MARTIN

I'm a perfectionist.

THOMAS

You're a hedge better, an opportunist, Martin. You've always wanted another life, a life in the theatre, and you've bullied your job as drama teacher into a possible launch pad. At least you tried to. Now you're just a drunk.

(MARTIN exits. THOMAS reflects not a second, just stands and crosses to the pulpit where he talks to us – he is delivering his homily.)

## Scene 2

THOMAS (Concluding his daily announcements)

And don't miss our Easter Musicale this Friday night. It's a fundraiser to send the youth at risk to Rome this summer. Father Martin has directed again this year so you should expect the usual spectacle. I've seen rehearsals, it's very Gaga. With a little Boy George thrown in for nostalgia. Well, a number of you have asked about the loss of St. Basil's. Why did it our lovely Parish church downtown need to be sold? And I don't think it's

out of turn to address that subject straight on, in my homily. I don't. St. Basil's is being sold to offset extraordinary costs in this year's diocesan budget. (He takes a breath and looks directly at the congregation.) It's being sold to pay settlements, out of court settlements. Children have, historically, been molested in this parish, yes molested. And our beloved St. Basil's is the only holding valuable enough to liquidate and in one fell swoop pay off our debts to society. A society we have failed. Yes, we do have a larger purpose, a larger responsibility, beyond that to ourselves and that to our church, our God. And that responsibility is to society, to the people around us, to the children given to our care and the parents who trust in us. And selling the beautiful church basilica of St. Basil's will not restore that trust, how could it? But it will perhaps serve as a kind of atonement, a kind of apology. Apology is a manner of giving up of oneself, a surrendering of vanity to the greater need. So this very vain edifice, and it is gorgeous indeed, will be sacrificed to a greater need, a need of responsibility. In the coming months you will hear many rationalizations given for this sale, this shedding of worldly goods. But I think you should hear, from me, that it is for this reason, and this reason only, that it is happening. We have sinned. And this, this is our atonement. Let us pray.

HARRY (A voice, from the back of the house)

Excuse me, Father. Excuse me. I know this is out of line, out of form, but so is discussing financial matters in a weekday homily so I think I can take this step.

THOMAS

Very well. You have a question?

HARRY

No, a comment. Do you believe all these kids and their accusations? Aren't they just bullies trying to extort money?

THOMAS

No, no they are not. I absolutely believe them.

HARRY

Well, while we're expressing opinions, and you seem to have a lot of them, a lot for a shepherd... anyway, my opinion is that while some of these accusations are true many are not. I know children, I know how they lie.

THOMAS

That is an outrageous statement, Harry.

HARRY

Is it? I have two sons. I know what I'm talking about.

(Pause.)

THOMAS

Thank you, Mr. Paullin. Anyone else?

HARRY

St. Basil's is ours. It belongs to us. People hate Catholics. That's why we're losing it.

THOMAS

No, that is not why we're losing it, that is emphatically not why we're losing it.

HARRY

It is. I didn't molest any children.

THOMAS

No, but this diocese lied about it when we heard that our priests did. We covered up.

HARRY

We protected our friends, our flock.

THOMAS

The children were part of our flock.

HARRY

And since when is cover-up a crime? It's only a cover-up if someone is actually convicted. None of these priests was actually convicted.

THOMAS

Because we paid off the parents.

HARRY

I know one of those boys. Simmons? That kid has lied to my face, to my face. And his father doesn't work, he contributes nothing to this Parish. Why are we spending millions to buy him and his drunk father off? Why?

(Pause.)

THOMAS

Let us pray.

(Blackout.)

### Scene 3

(We hear religious music and THOMAS crosses to MITCHELL in the living room area. MITCHELL is removing his tie after a long day at work.)

MITCHELL

She's ninety this year. She's had a good life.

THOMAS

Wow. I'm just stunned.

MITCHELL

It's not a surprise to me. She couldn't live forever.

THOMAS

We should go see her. Right now.

MITCHELL

No, we spoke today. I'm going over tomorrow. It's fine. Janet can be with her tonight. Janet likes to castigate her for being a bad mother. Mom enjoys it because she thinks Janet's right. Let them have that special codependent time together. Can you come tomorrow?

THOMAS

Not really. No.

MITCHELL

It's fine.

THOMAS

I have to see the Bishop and then probably the attorneys and maybe even a delegation from the congregation – my honesty is not popular right now. Jesus, this would happen now.

MITCHELL

It seems to be happening constantly.

THOMAS

Not lately. But, yes, you're right, this one's bad and it's depressing how well I know how to deal with it.

MITCHELL (Handing him a drink)

Here.

THOMAS

Such babies. How does it happen? How on earth do they let themselves do it?

MITCHELL

They're not like you and me. They haven't figured it out. They think it's all right so long as they don't get caught.

THOMAS

My God, in this society if you follow every single goddammed law to the letter you're still in trouble all the time. Why do they think they're so special that they can break a big one?

MITCHELL

Because they are so special. That's how they feel. Don't we all feel we're special, that we're entitled?

THOMAS

It's emotion. It's lust and craving, it's insatiable. We're just lucky, lucky we weren't cursed with anything that bad. There but for the grace...

MITCHELL

You're one to talk.

THOMAS

Well, no one's harmed by you and me, not on the terrestrial plane. (Sips.) I'm coming tomorrow. I'm just coming. Your mother has always supported us and for that I'm grateful. I want to be there, show her how I appreciate it, appreciate her. Give her love while I still can. These things ruined my time with her ten years ago, there's no reason they have to now. I'll call the bishop right now, reschedule. (Dials.) It'll be fine. If I've been through it before I should act like it. (Into phone) Hello Franklin, how are you? Sorry to call during the dinner hour. Sorry, the cocktail hour. (He laughs.) About tomorrow, can we reschedule? Maybe a tea or cocktail later in the day? Something's come up. Oh, just some ministry work, nothing dire, but pressing, you know how it is. Yes, I'll come by around six, shall I? Excellent. Yes, I did spoke to them today. You've already heard? Yes. Ok, well, we can have a jaw about that too, as you say. I said... Yes, let's talk about that also, about my congregation. Ok. Thank you so much. Good night. (Hangs up) You don't get away with anything in this life, do you? Oh, well... Nice man. Glad he's my Bishop.

MITCHELL

So you'll drive over with me?

THOMAS

Yes, I can stay till four.

MITCHELL

It's fine. If I want to stay Janet can drive me back.

THOMAS

Great. I'm glad. I want to see Marilyn. It's been too long. How was school?

MITCHELL

Great, when I get through the tuition protest and the Occupy campsite and the Darfur-Sit-In I'm sufficiently guilt ridden to fall for any excuse about why they haven't done the reading and never understood the first draft was due Monday, not after the break. [abl to fac ehte other scabs for a few hours of guilt every day.]

THOMAS

Public education means dealing with the public.

MITCHELL  
And their faddish politics.

THOMAS  
Thank you for that nice dinner.

MITCHELL  
My pleasure.

THOMAS  
It was delicious as always. I always love the food you make for me.

MITCHELL  
Sweet boy.

THOMAS  
Handsome young man.

(They kiss affectionately and touch.)

#### Scene 4

(MARTIN sits with LAWRENCE in his room.)

MARTIN  
I don't think that's going to get you what you want.

LAWRENCE  
What do I want?

MARTIN  
I'm not sure, but that's not going to help.

LAWRENCE  
How dare he be so sanctimonious? How dare he? Gay as coots him and that husband of his.

MARTIN  
They are completely different things and you know that.

LAWRENCE

It's hateful. (Pause.) I don't want Farallon. I want a different attorney.

MARTIN

I'll talk to Farallon.

LAWRENCE

I don't want Farallon to have anything to do with it. My family has money. I want to go outside the diocese for my legal representation.

MARTIN

Your family has no money.

LAWRENCE

I can get loans.

MARTIN

You can't. The kind of attorney you can get will do it on spec, for the publicity. It won't help you. They'll only take the case to get in the paper.

LAWRENCE

Farallon won't help me. He'll only protect the diocese.

MARTIN

This idea you have, about Thomas, it's a bad one.

LAWRENCE

Aren't you fed up with him? Don't you want revenge?

MARTIN

I do not want revenge. I want to get into a program and feel better. That's all I want.

LAWRENCE

Have you heard from Jeremy?

MARTIN

Thomas.

LAWRENCE  
Have you?

MARTIN  
The parents came in again.

LAWRENCE  
What did they tell you?

MARTIN  
They're not going to cooperate with Farallon. They want to go to the police separately-

LAWRENCE  
About Jeremy.

MARTIN  
Lawrence.

LAWRENCE  
Tel me. If you know something, tell me.

MARTIN  
He's living with his grandmother. Somehow kids at school know something so they've decided to move him away. They're probably going to move also. That mother is angry. Very angry.

LAWRENCE  
She doesn't give a shit about that kid.

MARTIN  
And you do?

LAWRENCE  
Her dignity's been insulted. The bitch. (Silence.) Why do you take it?

MARTIN  
I don't know. I've thought of throwing in the towel, going to New York, living with friends, doing something else.

LAWRENCE

You should. The reason you drink is you're sick of it. Sick of the lies, the politics, the abuse.

MARTIN

That happens in any profession.

LAWRENCE

Yes but you have a vocation, a calling, other than this.

MARTIN

Well...

LAWRENCE

I know I've fucked up, I know that. I'm not stupid. And I know... I know Jeremy is... I know he was always too young. I know that. I get it. I do. Ok?

MARTIN

Ok.

LAWRENCE

But I'm your friend, nevertheless. Always have been. And I can give you advice. No matter how screwed up I am. I can see you. I can see how you live. It's not worth it. My problem, my problem is insurmountable. I get that. Or insurmountable by me. But yours, yours is yours to solve. You'll probably always drink, maybe even too much. But you could do something you love, or at least like more, than all this. That little fire in you, in your chest, that's burning for something other than God now. For acting, or writing, or teaching, or maybe a combination of the three. Remember a vocation comes from people, from humans, as much as from God. You're lucky. You've been called to other things. You can do them. It's never too late. Well, for some people it is. It really is. But for you. He's right, you need to stop. But you also need to keep moving.

## Scene 5

(Shift to THOMAS, MITCHELL and JANET, Mitchell's sister, in a hospital reception area.)

THOMAS

So, wow, she wasn't...

JANET

No, but she knows. She knows who you are, she's just...

THOMAS

Thanks for saying that.

JANET

I'm not just saying that. She does know.

THOMAS

Thanks. (Pause.) We should...

MITCHELL

Well, I need to talk to Janet.

THOMAS

Oh, ok.

JANET

I'll drive him home. Promise.

THOMAS

Ok. Well... Oh, I didn't ask.

JANET

They're fine. Doing really well. Dennis has stopped being such a prick, taken some responsibility, lightened the load, so things are good.

THOMAS

Well, you'll give them my love. Tell Deborah I can't wait for her next play.

JANET

Ok.

THOMAS

And Denny, well, I always love seeing him.

JANET  
Whatever he is or does.

THOMAS  
Well.

MITCHELL  
Janet.

JANET  
Yes, I'll pass it along. They love seeing you. Denny especially.

THOMAS  
Good. Give him a big kiss.

JANET  
I shall.

THOMAS  
Sorry, got to run. Love you. (He kisses MITCHELL, squeezes JANET's hand and exits. MITCHELL pulls out his checkbook.)

MITCHELL  
You don't need to lie to him.

JANET  
About what? Dennis? Tell him Dennis is still a pothead and still a deadbeat and still an ass. I know how much sympathy he has for those kind of situations. People like that.

MITCHELL  
Why should he have any sympathy for Dennis?

JANET  
I mean for me. His lifestyle is so perfect.

MITCHELL  
What does that mean?

JANET

I just find your lifestyle very amusing.

MITCHELL

Give me a break, Janet.

JANET

You give me a break.

MITCHELL

You're the one asking for money. I don't think you should be saying anything about my lifestyle.

JANET

You don't have kids. You don't understand.

MITCHELL

I've been with Thomas for twenty years. I do understand. It's why I'm helping you.

JANET

The money those guys cost, it's why I can't afford a swank condo and trips to Europe.

MITCHELL

Janet.

JANET

Ok, sorry. Three this time.

MITCHELL

Three!

JANET

Yes, three. Otherwise I'd just be coming back and asking for more in a month. This should do through the end of the school year.

MITCHELL

So we're setting up a pattern here.

JANET

No, we're not. End of the school year I'll be able to take on more editing and that should solve the cash flow problem permanently.

MITCHELL

What happens at the end of the school year?

JANET

You know what happens.

MITCHELL

So you're blaming mom.

JANET

I'm not blaming anyone. Yes, ok, if she and Dad had saved and set aside she wouldn't need care from me and I'd be able to work more. They fucked up.

MITCHELL (Handing her check, which he has written during the above)  
Here.

JANET

Thank you. How is he?

MITCHELL

Good. Dealing with another priest scandal.

JANET

Oh, my God.

MITCHELL

Look, don't get started.

JANET

Are they covering up, are they protecting someone?

MITCHELL

No, of course not.

JANET

Because they used to.

MITCHELL

Yes, Janet, ok? Yes.

JANET

You don't have kids.

MITCHELL

You keep saying that like I have to be reminded I don't have kids, like I keep forgetting I'm childless.

JANET

It's just a lot for them to hear about.

MITCHELL

Look-

JANET

Their uncle lives with a man who's a Catholic Priest whose diocese has one of the worst reputations for-

MITCHELL

His diocese does not have one of the worst-

JANET

Has a reputation-

MITCHELL

Janet.

JANET

They can't even get their brains around the first part of that sentence, that their uncle lives-

MITCHELL

No, you can't get your brain around-

JANET

I can get my brain around it-

MITCHELL

Why don't you just throw in gay, they have to deal-

JANET

Oh please.

MITCHELL

Why don't you back way up and throw in-

JANET

Mitch. Dammit. I can get my brain around it. I can. Denny might be gay, ok?  
He might just be.

MITCHELL

Did he tell you that?

JANET

He didn't have to.

MITCHELL

You found some porn, he said something?

JANET

He loves *Glee*. It's his favorite show.

MITCHELL

Oh, honestly.

JANET

Mitchell. You just get a sense. Ok? I know that's a cliché but you do.

MITCHELL

All right.

(Pause.)

JANET

I worry about you.

MITCHELL

What about Thomas, you ever worry about him?

JANET

Yes, of course. You know I do. He loves you. I've always known that. You two are... you're a team. I get that. Obviously, that's not what I'm talking about. But he's become... harder, hardened, over the years. Like a rock.

MITCHELL

It's his job.

JANET

Yes, I know. But he... He seems more sure of himself as the years pass, not less.

MITCHELL

You think all Priests should live in perpetual doubt, like in a movie.

JANET

A gay priest? A gay priest in this day and age. I think there should be some doubt.

MITCHELL

Ok.

JANET

Can you support him? If it comes to that.

MITCHELL

Can I support him?

JANET

If he needs to leave his ministry.

MITCHELL

I can't believe this. My sister, who just took, not borrowed, we know she didn't borrow, my sister who just took three thousand dollars off me, wants to know if I can support my husband if he suddenly quits his job. Right now? Right now? No. I'm already supporting one family. No, right now I could not support two.

(JANET just stomps off.)

MITCHELL

How am I supposed to get home?

Scene 6

(MITCHELL throws up his hands and walks to the living room where THOMAS already sits, drink in hand.)

MITCHELL

One hundred dollars for a cab from Marin.

THOMAS

What happened with Janet?

MITCHELL

Don't ask. Cabbie told me you have to pay both directions. I don't even know if that's a scam. He said it and I took it on faith (Sips his drink.)  
How's the Bishop?

THOMAS

Furious. Furious to have been left out of the loop when I told him as soon as I could. Wanted to know why I cancelled the lunch. When I told him why he kept saying "Who's mother? Who's?" Like he'd never heard your name before. He's of course furious about what's happened but he's taking it out on me. Understandable.

MITCHELL

Not at all. It's not understandable.

THOMAS

No, it's not.

MITCHELL

Your whole life seems to be taken up with damage control. When do you have time for ministry, for the things you love?

THOMAS  
There's still time.

MITCHELL  
You get in trouble for taking an afternoon off when you work seven days a week.

THOMAS  
Anyone with my salary works seven days a week.

MITCHELL  
But your work is clean up.

THOMAS  
I'm well compensated.

MITCHELL  
Is garbage collection your calling? Is that what your inner voice is calling you to?

THOMAS  
How much did she hit you up for?

MITCHELL  
That's beside the point.

THOMAS  
Is it? If I worked for Ford or Honda these things could happen. I'd have no way of predicting them, anticipating them, they'd just need to be dealt with.

MITCHELL  
Those are car companies. Cars are not a systemically challenged commodity.

THOMAS  
Only because the industry is so young. And environmentalists would disagree with you. Vociferously. Also people concerned about foreign workers, exploitation of natural resources-

MITCHELL

Yes and I'm saying more and more you're an environmentalist working for Ford Motor company.

THOMAS

You agree with every tenet of higher education?

MITCHELL

No, but I see it as a necessary industry that is open to all and liberal in conscience.

THOMAS

And out to make a buck. In my life time public education has gone from being a right to a privilege. Students can't get into the public universities. Some of them cost as much as the private ones, it's all become about money, money, money.

MITCHELL

Then I can leave my university and go to another, there is at least variety of thought in higher education.

THOMAS

Our ministry does help people, we've discussed this, we do help people more than we harm them. It's not tit for tat – one suicide saved, one little boy raped.

MITCHELL

Yes, I know.

THOMAS

Do you really want me, so you can go to a cocktail party, to come out of the closet to every Bishop I meet.

MITCHELL

You wouldn't be able to go to the cocktail party. And they know anyway. And I get invited to most of the parties anyway.

THOMAS

So what's the problem?

MITCHELL

I know we all live with hypocrisy, I know that.

THOMAS

That is such a tired word, such a callously judgmental and superior-

MITCHELL

Fine, I'll use your words: tension, challenges, contradictions.

THOMAS

Yes, yes, yes

MITCHELL

But at some point, at some point, don't you think it's important.

THOMAS

Like I'm the prime minister of some African nation, at some point I need to admit I'm a crook, a thief of international aid?

MITCHELL

No.

THOMAS

Then I don't get what you're saying. So much of what you object to in our teachings are things I never say, never, never hear in our diocese.

MITCHELL

But they are said. Somewhere in this city.

THOMAS

It's a gradation. If people can accept our ministry with all its cant and archaica, if people can accept our help and grow, they can quickly reach a place where they can shed the cant, the tired notions.

MITCHELL

Do they really?

THOMAS

Yes, a lot of them never even come to the church. We don't proselytize.

MITCHELL

Not obnoxiously, not overtly.

THOMAS

All right.

MITCHELL

Well, people become too enamored with you, with your abilities, I don't see how they couldn't drift into your church.

THOMAS

That does not happen much, very rarely.

MITCHELL

Or drift back. That happens a lot.

THOMAS

Yes, I'll admit that. We do have people return.

MITCHELL

Like Lawrence.

THOMAS

Ok.

MITCHELL

Why do you never want to talk about him?

THOMAS

Because I know how you feel.

MITCHELL

I mean, no come on, he had left the church, he had left it.

THOMAS

Yes.

MITCHELL

And you, because you were his friend, and he saw how happy you were...

THOMAS  
That's not how it happened.

MITCHELL  
It had something to do with it.

THOMAS  
Something, not much.

MITCHELL  
But something.

THOMAS  
He is his own person.

MITCHELL  
And before he came back, before he entered the seminary, he was one of the most insatiable queens I'd ever met.

THOMAS  
Which makes sense, he was fighting his calling, his vocation.

MITCHELL  
Which he's found again.

(Pause.)

THOMAS  
That's not true.

MITCHELL  
You mean there were never any little boys before.

THOMAS  
I really don't think so.

MITCHELL  
You don't know.

THOMAS  
I doubt it.

MITCHELL  
Why? It's not something that just happens. It's not something that starts at thirty-five.

THOMAS  
It just doesn't make sense.

MITCHELL  
Why not?

THOMAS  
Because he didn't have access. Where would he find them? He wasn't a teacher, he wasn't in child services. You have to have access to them to act.

(Pause. Silence.)

THOMAS  
Oh, come on, that's ridiculous.

MITCHELL  
What is?

THOMAS  
Let's stop talking about this.

MITCHELL  
Frankly. I never even thought of it till this moment.

THOMAS  
People are not that Machiavellian.

MITCHELL  
No, but it resides in the back of their mind, in there somewhere.

THOMAS  
He had a calling.

MITCHELL

He had a little light. Maybe he had other little lights.

THOMAS

That's ridiculous.

Scene 7

(We see LAWRENCE talking out, as if towards someone.)

LAWRENCE

I don't deny what they say I've done. I don't admit it because I do not accept how it is characterized in the affidavit but I do not deny it. I called you here today to talk not about me but about my accuser. I thought that might be of interest to you. Is it? You have press connections, that's why I contacted you. Press connections you want to cultivate. Is something about my accuser of interest? Very well. He's gay. When I say that I don't mean that he has a homosexual identity which he represses, I mean he partakes of homosexual acts, he is actively gay. He has a husband. Of long standing. They live together, own property together. It should be easy to substantiate. I can give you names of people to approach for confirmation. Most will hang up on you but one or two might talk. He's cold and judgmental and not liked by all his acquaintances. I will give you the names. You'll have to do the foot work. Your fee? Don't try to hustle me. I know this is worth more than a fee. See what you can come up with then we'll discuss not a free but whether or not a fee is necessary. And who will pay it.

Scene 8

(Cross to THOMAS in his pulpit, talking to his congregation.)

THOMAS

Well, yesterday we had a discussion, a kind of spontaneous discussion which I thought, though heated, was constructive. Apparently not, as I learned, within two hours of that discussion, that someone, some one, had called the Bishop to complain. Needless to say the Bishop was furious. Furious that there was no avenue of approach to me in this Parish, that those of you who needed someone to talk to about me could not come to me or to someone else in the Parish itself. Is that the case? Is there really no one here you can talk to?

(The same voice responds, from the back.)

HARRY

If you're referring to my phone call to the Bishop it was for another matter. The matter of your homily just came up.

THOMAS

That's not how the Bishop characterized it.

HARRY

The fact is many of us contribute greatly to this parish, many of us tithe. And right now it seems like we're tithing to a law firm not to the Parish.

THOMAS

But you see that is the very reason for the sale of St. Basil's, so that the law firm, as you put it, will receive its compensation from the diocese, not from you.

HARRY

Seems a technicality.

THOMAS

Maybe, but it's an important technicality.

HARRY

Father, we know you struggle with many pressures, we know you do. But at some point we need to see where this is all headed. At what point does the self-scouring end and the ministry resume?

THOMAS

Right now, our ministry is our acceptance, our recognition that some in our midst have done wrong.

HARRY

What about our work in Africa? What about our work with the poor? Do those things just get put on hold?

THOMAS

Not on hold, they get dialed back a bit.

HARRY

You can't dial back charity.

THOMAS

Sometimes you have to, to recognize faith. Please understand that's the way African charities work is that one NGO dials back and another, for whatever reason, inevitably, takes up the slack. Somehow the balance of charity to Africa is maintained.

HARRY

But not by us.

THOMAS

But that's just vanity. That we are the principal charity to this town or that one. We are in Africa to help. Those people will be helped. Just less by us this year, more by others.

HARRY

I'm not in this Parish to abase myself. I'm here to help people.

THOMAS

Part of all holy work is self-abasement. How can we help others if we are vain of ourselves?

HARRY

I find that an unsatisfactory answer, father. And I'll be frank. I will talk to the Bishop about this. He is a personal friend and I think that is my right.

THOMAS

Of course it is. (Pause.) Let us pray.

### Scene 9

(Music and THOMAS crosses to his office where MARTIN already sits.)

THOMAS

Yes, but this is not a time you're supposed to be embarking on major changes in your life.

MARTIN

Actually, it's exactly what I'm supposed to be doing. I've wasted too much time on this life, now I need the next.

THOMAS

The next?

MARTIN

I have ambitions, I am like you. You're not the only one who is ambitious. There are large things I want to do. And now, with this humiliation, I have the opportunity to do them.

THOMAS

Things like that, career changes, are approached slowly. You're not in a position to do this.

MARTIN (Changing the subject)

He's going after you. Right now. He's contacted an attorney, young guy, just out of USF Law. Jerry Hofsis. They talk every day on the phone and they're going to go after you as an impeachable source.

THOMAS

I'm not a source. I never even gave testimony.

MARTIN

They're trying to get your name out there as the one who's initiated his branding. It's why you were in the paper this morning. His attorney did that. He moves quick.

THOMAS

Why didn't you tell me?

MARTIN

I want a leave. It's been given to other people, especially people in my circumstances, but that's not why I want it. I have friends I want to visit and I want some time to contemplate my vocation. A year.

THOMAS

I tell you this is not a good move.

MARTIN

Maybe not for you. For me it is. You had me under your thumb for a while there, castigating me like a Saint. I'll no longer be your whipping boy.

THOMAS

No, I was yours for a while and I took it because I was your friend and I knew where it was coming from. Yes, you were surly and subverting for a long time and I sucked it up because I knew what you were struggling with. This is a dumb move and you know it.

MARTIN

I want a change. If only for a few months. I want to breath fresh air.

THOMAS

I think this is a foolish move. And not one you'd take on your own.

MARTIN

Never mind who's inspired me. It's the move I need to take.

THOMAS

Fine.

### Scene 10

(Cross to MITCHELL and JANET in the hospital corridor.)

MITCHELL

You talked to him?

JANET

Of course.

MITCHELL

Why of course?

JANET

Why of course? Because, as much as I love Thomas I don't respect him and I don't like how he makes you live.

MITCHELL

You don't like how he makes me live? Who asked you? Who asked you for your opinion?

JANET

Jerry Hofsiss.

MITCHELL

Do you know what Lawrence McCane did? Do you?

JANET

Yes, and I hope he rots in hell, in Catholic hell, or at least a high security Federal penitentiary, for it. But this is an add-on, something else. Bringing Thomas down won't stop McCane from rotting.

MITCHELL

Bringing him down?

JANET

You and Thomas think that people who are downtrodden, who are struggling, have no opinions, have no power, they have no say. We do, we're still strong, we still think, we still react. This is my reaction.

MITCHELL

Now that you've cashed my check.

JANET

I'm actually trying to help you.

MITCHELL

I don't need help.

JANET

Yes, you do.

Scene 11

(Cross to THOMAS in the pulpit.)

THOMAS  
Let us pray.

HARRY (From the back)  
Excuse me father.

THOMAS  
Yes, Harry?

HARRY  
I think we should talk about today's events.

THOMAS  
Events? There have been no events today.

HARRY  
I mean the press coverage you received.

THOMAS  
Ok.

HARRY  
What do you want to say about it?

THOMAS  
Me? I want to say nothing about it. An errant priest has placed his trust in an unscrupulous lawyer and what you saw today is a slandering of me and this parish in an effort to cloud the event. It has no bearing on that event. No judge or parent or responsible adult will see it as anything other than what it is. A slander meant to confuse.

HARRY  
So it's true?

THOMAS  
It might be true but it is irrelevant, it is casting stones.

HARRY  
You are a Canaanite.

THOMAS

I live in a loving household, yes. Is that what you mean?

HARRY

Setting aside the kind of household in which you live, are you, as a celibate, supposed to live in any kind of household?

THOMAS

I am, and this is supported by papal doctrine, I am supposed to have feelings of my own such that I may minister to the questions of those confused by their feelings.

HARRY

But are you, as a celibate, supposed to act on those feelings?

THOMAS

Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.

HARRY

It's already cast.

THOMAS

If you ask if I live in sin I say yes, like all in this church.

HARRY

But is it pardonable or unpardonable sin? Do you really seek, in your heart, to seek pardon by ridding yourself of this sin?

THOMAS

May I ask you a question?

HARRY

If it's about my sin, my business practices, then you know the answer.

THOMAS

They too are written about in the paper. And ignored by all in this parish.

HARRY

But I am not the shepherd of this flock, you are.

THOMAS

I won't quibble with you, Mr. Paulin. I have lived with love in my life all my life. That love has many manifestations. One of them was written about today.

HARRY

So you admit to breaking your vows.

THOMAS

I do.

(Pause.)

HARRY

When you pray today will you ask to be pardoned of that sin?

THOMAS

I will ask for understanding and guidance.

HARRY

The Bible and the church itself are quite clear on the route you must take. I have always supported you, Father Thomas. And I admit, gossip that I am, that I have always known. Who amongst us who wants to, doesn't? But now it is a matter of public record and those of us who have hitherto lived quietly with contradiction, with tension, now will have to live publically with hypocrisy, in the eyes of our friends and family. I don't deny your right to lead us in prayer, but it remains an open question for all of us. A question many of us feel, no many of us know, must be answered. And soon.

THOMAS

Thank you. Let us pray.

(Blackout.)

End of Act One

ACT TWO

Scene 1

(Lights up on THOMAS and MITCHELL in their living room.)

THOMAS

Harry Paullin is a rich boy who inherited his father's logging empire in Chile and feels bad about it so he's become a major parishioner in my parish.

MITCHELL

The Bishop has larger fish to fry.

THOMAS

No, actually he doesn't. Harry Paullin has friends in the Vatican.

MITCHELL

Oh, come on.

THOMAS

He does.

MITCHELL

The Bishop is bucking for Pope?

THOMAS

Cardinal would do nicely.

MITCHELL

He's a paper pusher, he's not a Cardinal, he barely has a brain.

THOMAS

Brainless paper pushers are very popular right now. He delegates very well.

MITCHELL

So call up Harry Paullin and take him out for a drink.

THOMAS

He wouldn't understand any of this.

MITCHELL

If he's in big finance he would, he definitely would. Gay men are the growth market in investment, believe me he knows plenty of them and knows how to work with them.

THOMAS

No.

MITCHELL

Why do you think he has these outbursts in your church? Because he doesn't have access to you. Give him access.

THOMAS

No.

MITCHELL

Why not?

THOMAS

He's a bully. I hate him. He only understands winning.

MITCHELL

So let him win. Give him a little something. Give him your ear at least.

THOMAS

No.

MITCHELL

You're going to have to bend a bit on this one.

THOMAS

Not to Harry Paullin.

MITCHELL

Sounds like he's the very one who wants you to bend.

THOMAS

He's just mean. He denied domestic partner rights to his employees, he does business with every backward company in the Fortune 500, his social policies are Victorian, I hate him.

MITCHELL  
Hate?

THOMAS  
I strongly disapprove of him.

MITCHELL  
Those precepts are no different from those of this church.

THOMAS  
Maybe in Iowa not here.

MITCHELL  
Yes, here. (Pause.) I think... I think your employment position has become untenable.

THOMAS  
Oh, not this again.

MITCHELL  
No, this finally, absolutely.

(Pause.)

THOMAS  
Where would I go? What would we do?

MITCHELL  
You could go anywhere. You could do anything.

THOMAS  
You mean social work? Non-profits? I'd make half the money, a fraction without all the cars, the flights, the four-star hotels. It'd be a mess. I'm trying to be honest. They are hard things to give up.

MITCHELL  
Well...

THOMAS  
Well what?

MITCHELL  
This was fun for a while but I'm sick of the lying and the furtiveness of it.  
It's sickening.

THOMAS  
Oh, come on.

MITCHELL  
No, really. Now I'm advising you how to work with people who don't know  
I exist and if they did would hate me.

THOMAS  
They wouldn't hate you.

MITCHELL  
They'd hate the threat I represent. To the cars, the flights, the four star  
hotels. I'm tired of it. It's not how most men live, not now. It's absurd.

THOMAS  
That's your sister talking.

MITCHELL  
Yeah, well... I am sorry for that.

THOMAS  
Why are you sorry?

MITCHELL  
She's my sister. And she has a big trap.

THOMAS  
No, that's my fault not yours. I've never included her, never let her feel part  
of me, of what I do. I sensed her disapproval and I shied from it, felt I  
shouldn't have to defend myself.

MITCHELL  
You shouldn't.

THOMAS

Not to myself. I felt that's what her disapproval was making me do, defend it to myself. And I couldn't.

MITCHELL

Will all this help Lawrence at all?

THOMAS

No. It will give him a day's respite. And then... But he's lucky. Soon he'll be out of it. Finished. I wish it was that simple, for me.

MITCHELL

He committed a crime, Thomas.

THOMAS

Yes. He did. As have I?

MITCHELL

No, only in the eyes of your church, not in the eyes of the progressive world.

THOMAS

There has always been tension, contradiction-

MITCHELL

Hypocrisy.

THOMAS

Of thought.

MITCHELL

Of action.

THOMAS

No, but I do feel, within what is accepted as normative in an age, what is accepted as accepted which is what homosexuality is now in the secular world, that there is an historically accepted, albeit subverted, cosseted-

MITCHELL

Closeted.

THOMAS

There is an historically accepted tension that resides in the lives of the clergy that must reside there, that must be a part, to keep the church... modern.

MITCHELL

That was a complicated thought.

THOMAS

I'm serious.

MITCHELL

That's what's so sad about it.

THOMAS

And I think it makes the lives of the ministers exciting. And there needs to be excitement. (MITCHELL raises his hand.) Yes, sustained, but the excitement Lawrence sought, partook of, is not acceptable, it's not socially viable.

MITCHELL (Sarcastic)

Maybe it will be one day, maybe like homosexuality it just needs to wait for it's time, maybe we're uptight.

THOMAS

I really don't think so. The Greeks tried it and no other culture has validated it since. It's really not a viable sexuality in my view. And it refutes the mandates of the church which are to serve, to help. It's taking payment for love. Children don't understand that.

MITCHELL

Sex is payment for love?

THOMAS

In a way, yes. But it's copayment, it's reciprocal. I agree with that.

MITCHELL

Then why can't children partake of that?

THOMAS

Children are our charges. Our responsibilities. Their love, their growth is payment enough, satisfaction enough.

MITCHELL

You should have been a father.

THOMAS

It's not an impossibility.

Scene 2

(THOMAS and MITCHELL cross to join JANET in hospital corridor. She is crying.)

MITCHELL

Hi.

JANET

Hi. You should go right in.

MITCHELL

Why aren't...

JANET

I've had enough. Even at this point, even under all those drugs, she started in on me, her final words... I just couldn't take it. It's all right, I'll be there, I won't miss it. Just go in.

(MITCHELL exits. JANET and THOMAS are left alone.)

THOMAS

Is this really it?

JANET

Yes.

THOMAS

I'm sorry.

JANET

Thank you. She does love you, you know.

THOMAS

I know that.

JANET

And she was always happy that Mitch found you. She was always happy for you both.

THOMAS

I know that.

JANET

She actually never showed me and Doug that much support. Never quite got around to blessing our union.

THOMAS

She could be tough.

JANET

Unbending. Ruthless. It would have helped Doug to know she liked him, to have her like him.

(He holds her hand. She withdraws it and moves away.)

JANET

Mitch thinks I hate her but I always loved her, always liked her. That's why I always wanted her support. Which is probably why I never got it. Are you angry at me?

THOMAS

No.

JANET

Why not?

THOMAS

That attorney called everyone we knew. Everyone. If it hadn't been you it would have been someone else.

JANET  
But it was me.

THOMAS  
I've always known how you felt.

JANET  
And it's never how you feel, in your soul?

THOMAS  
This isn't the time, Janet. You're upset, you've been upset, I understand that.

JANET  
When is the time, when am I not upset, when in my adult life have I not been angry?

THOMAS  
Some things are best not talked about. If we can understand each other's motives, each other's pressures, we can forgive what each of us does, without talking. Some times talking just confuses. Unnecessarily.

JANET  
This always happens. I can't argue with you. Too smart. You're too smart.

THOMAS  
I'm not too smart.

JANET  
You are.

THOMAS  
I just protect myself. I have learned how to do that.

JANET  
I know my brother. I do.

THOMAS  
It's been a long time since you've lived with your brother.

JANET  
Nevertheless...

THOMAS  
Nevertheless nothing.

JANET  
Don't talk to me like that.

THOMAS  
Janet.

JANET  
I know my brother. I do. Don't dodge the comment. I don't care about the circumstances. Don't shut me out.

THOMAS (Slowly)  
I've know you a long time and I love you so I know I can say this to you, that it's not the end of our knowing each other, that we will speak again. But you are way out of line. You have been for a long time.

JANET  
Because I'm a divorcee, because I'm a loser.

THOMAS  
Because life is unpardonably complex and changing and lived day to day and the compromises and abomination of which you speak are not solved or even addressed because you and I have an argument in a hospital corridor. They are all things I have thought about daily, my entire adult life, and if I'm here still dealing with them, still negotiating them, then it's because I have dealt with them every day of my adult life. Your observations, your judgments, your prescriptions are insulting and mean and speak to a dfficiency in your life, your manner, not in mine. You should know that. You should think about that.

(JANET runs into the hospital room, crying. THOMAS is left alone.)

### Scene 3

(Cross to MARTIN and LAWRENCE talking in LAWRENCE's area.)

MARTIN  
It was childish.

LAWRENCE  
You knew I was going to do it.

MARTIN  
I thought, I stupidly thought you would listen to reason.

LAWRENCE  
It was nice to see it in print, to see him brought low.

MARTIN  
He has more fortitude than that. It affected him almost not at all. (Pause.)  
You've always been so wrapped up in your own shit that you never noticed people, never really got to know them. That has been one of your unpardonable sins. Your selfishness, your insensitivity to how you really affect people. The people you try to destroy are oblivious, the one's you actually destroy you never meant to.

LAWRENCE  
He's oblivious.

MARTIN  
No. He has many assailants. That's what happens with these things. It gives people who hate an opportunity, people like you. So his response is abrupt, gruff. But in himself, he is himself. This act of yours, unlike your other acts, it was... at least it was more governable. I didn't have to happen. You made it happen. In that way, it was just cruel.

(Pause.)

LAWRENCE  
They said it's prison, definitely. Even if I cop a plea.

MARTIN  
What did you expect?

LAWRENCE

Father Connelly got to go to Ireland. Father Delbany went to a hospital. He wrote a book after it.

MARTIN

That was years ago. My God, you really didn't realize what was happening to you. You've been living day to day, haven't you? Scheming and plotting and never accepting where it all will lead. Do you know what you've done?

LAWRENCE

No.

MARTIN

You are a child. It makes sense. It all makes sense. You never grew up.

LAWRENCE

I can't go to prison.

MARTIN

Don't be melodramatic.

LAWRENCE

Is there anything you can do to help me?

MARTIN

Me? Now you're asking? If you'd asked years ago, yes, I could help you, but you've always been so smug in your little secrets, like a seven year old.

LAWRENCE

Where will you go?

MARTIN

I don't know. I thought New York but I don't know now. Life seems unutterably complicated. New York terrifies me.

LAWRENCE

You have friends there.

MARTIN

Old friends. People I haven't seen in years. Acquaintances.

LAWRENCE  
Should I kill myself?

MARTIN  
Just stop it.

LAWRENCE  
I don't want to be alone tonight.

MARTIN  
When are you... Do you even know when you're to be remanded to custody?

LAWRENCE  
Yes. It was supposed to be this morning. But there was a technicality. Ferris actually did do something for me. He brought up a technicality.

MARTIN  
So it's tomorrow?

LAWRENCE  
I don't know. No one said. When the technicality's ironed out.

MARTIN  
Of course I'll stay here tonight. Of course.

#### Scene 4

(To THOMAS and MITCHELL's living room.)

THOMAS  
I heard the way I spoke, I recorded my voice and played it back, how I spoke to Janet. It's not how I've felt, or what I've done over the years, especially the last few years, it's how I spoke to Janet, how I speak to most people now – Lawrence and Martin, like a leader, like a I could be a Bishop, like I could even be a Cardinal, like I could even, if it was dangled in front of me, be Pope. I could figure out how to be that. I could. And I could deny you, I could drive you away as a way of eliminating you from my life as an impediment to ambition. I could actually do that and make myself feel that it

was your fault, that you had hardened to the point where you had changed and that I no longer love this changed person and therefore I could live without him. And I could then even convince myself that the years with you were sin. And imagine what a jackpot that would be for my career. Twenty-five years in sin, rejected, reborn, if I sought pardon, if I claimed those years as pardonable sin and sought absolution it could be given. And then I might just truly be a pope for a new generation, the generation that can live a full life, a life to middle-age as a gay man, then renounce it all and become, holy, die holy. I had a vision of that man, the man I could become, the man I am becoming. And it horrified me.

MITCHELL

You would never do that.

THOMAS

I don't know. I mean, I might try it. And if it didn't succeed, I could certainly blame all the people who held me back, who fostered by sin, who gave me an alternative view of Grace.

MITCHELL

You had an argument with my screwed up sister, don't be melodramatic.

THOMAS

No, I had an argument with a relative who is in need. I lecture you, I lecture everyone about ministry, of ministering to those in need and the best I can do for your sister, a women who struggles and actually has the temerity to ask for help, all over the place. And the best I could do for her was not yell at her when she was so desperate for connection, for someone to listen, that she talked to a newspaper. I was gracious and accepting and absolutely judgmental of her. It was despicable. I should say it felt despicable.

## Scene 5

(To LAWRENCE, late at night, talking on the telephone.)

LAWRENCE

There was a month, one month, when I lived with Daddy at Lake Begoda. Mom wasn't well, depressed, just broke up with Carl and was drinking a lot so I was sent to live with Daddy. Aunt Marion didn't know any better. Mom was too out of it to even comment. And it was a glorious month. He was so

tender, so understanding. He lived with Jacob then. They were so loving, like I hadn't seen him be since he left Mom. To be himself. But Jacob wasn't always there. And we had our secrets. Our games. Daddy and I. God, how he loved me. He did. And when Mom came out of it, when she woke up, she had only questions for me, millions of questions. But I knew then to keep secrets. To keep my mouth shut. She knew anyway. It was Jacob who said I had to leave. He loved me also, but differently. As an adult. He's the one who really ended it. He was so jealous. Or maybe he wasn't, maybe he was just trying to help me, in his stupid conventional way, I don't know. So it was back to live with Mom. Drunk, screwed up, crazy Mom. But there was a month, one glorious month. (He listens.) I'm sorry. Oh, you have a family. How nice for you. Yes, I'll let you go. Thanks for getting me in the newspaper. I wish there'd been a picture. Bye.

### Scene 6

(To THOMAS and LAWRENCE in Thomas's Office. They both wear black armbands.)

THOMAS

I want you to know how bad I feel.

MARTIN

Thank you.

THOMAS

He was my friend of course but you two were close, at the end, much closer than he and I had ever been.

MARTIN

The irony is it solves so many of our problems, except yours.

THOMAS

Well, my problem was my problem long before he came on the scene. Were there any relatives?

MARTIN

A mother. They hadn't spoken in forever. She was very upset. Blames herself.

THOMAS  
What about that attorney?

MARTIN  
You didn't read his statement?

THOMAS  
No, I don't read newspapers these days. He blames me?

MARTIN  
Oh, yes, it was all your fault. Here was someone who needed ministry and you couldn't even bend an ear. Now he's not only questioning your right to preach but your calling. Says you were called to dictate, not administer compassion.

THOMAS  
He must be Catholic. He keeps nailing it on the head.

MARTIN  
He's wrong.

THOMAS  
Is he? (Pause.) You remained his friend when I couldn't even look at him.

MARTIN  
It's all right, he was my friend. I was probably as close as he ever got to having a friend.

THOMAS  
Yes, he was always strange. Even when I knew him in college. Very remote. I think I mistook that for the remoteness of grace. Something. I haven't always been the best judge of character.

MARTIN  
You have actually. Maybe a bit too much emphasis on judge but you have.

THOMAS  
Not in his case.

MARTIN

I actually think he was capable of a lot more damage out there than in here. You were trying to help him.

THOMAS

Yes, this whole thing of vocation is so complicated. We're all called, even people in the secular world are called to vocations: electrician, politician, pilot, librarian, veterinarian. What does it mean. a calling? How is someone actually called to be a veterinarian? What an odd thing. And what a human thing to make that our sole calling, to listen to only one calling. It's like only answering the phone once a day. Imagine what a twisted view of things we would have if we did that.

MARTIN

I think I will still take my time, go to New York.

THOMAS

Test the waters?

MARTIN

Yes. No expectations.

THOMAS

Stay in touch. I guess... I guess the ultimate failing, my ultimate failing was always more concern for the diocese, for myself, even more concern for Lawrence than for the child. I've never spoken to the child, never even met the parents, know nothing about them except what I've heard.

MARTIN

That was all done under legal council.

THOMAS

Yes, we now listen to council rather than to our vocation. So even a vocation, a call can be ignored, when we want to. Not answered, not picked up. It strikes me now as extraordinary arrogance, negligence unto cruelty. Like walking down the street and ignoring all the outstretched hands. What's brought us to this place?

MARTIN

Thank you for your patience, your understanding.

THOMAS  
Small change I fear.

Scene 7

(Music. THOMAS crosses to his pulpit and speaks to his congregation.)

THOMAS

I have always led you because I believe as you do in our redeemer, in our shepherd Christ our Lord. And I have always believed in your right to believe, your need to believe, in a time of criticism for what you believe. We are, all of us, Catholics. Most of us were born Catholics and all of us have become Catholics by God's grace. To deny our Catholicism because it is unfashionable would be like denying our race, our gender, our politics even, dare I say, our God given sexuality, because they are deemed unfashionable. Why should we? Why should anyone, including ourselves, ask that of us? So I have led you. And you have a right to believe and to be led in your belief. The question then is: "Am I the best to lead at this time, this time of, hopefully, moving forward? Who shall lead you?" I have liked it, indeed enjoyed it as the core pleasure of this job, meeting you, knowing you, and watching you grow, both as people and as believers, indeed taking pride in having helped you grow as both. But you have a right, you have a right to believe. A friend of mine is a theatre director, he directs plays. And he used to direct at high schools hoping one day he would be discovered, discovered by a big producer who would whisk him off to New York and make him famous. So he worked hard on those high school plays, in some cases he worked too hard, he drove the students and the faculty of the school crazy with his perfectionism, his obsessive, at times abusive perfectionism. And he was frustrated because he could never make a high school play so good he would impress a professional when they did come, when he badgered them into coming, the perfection for which he strove. They only saw a high school musical, very good, but not a transcendent masterpiece. He was trying to put a round peg into a square hole, and thereby make the hole square. It was impossible and worse than impossible it made people frustrated, it made students cry and administrators angry. He became hated and he hated himself. He had to make a change. So I must make a change. Because you have a right, you have the right to put on your high school musicals, to enjoy yourselves, to feel satisfaction, to be proud of yourselves and your shepherd. You have that right. And I, blessed that I am, have the ability to give it to

you. By doing the simplest thing, a thing only I can do, by stepping down. I have talked of vanity and I am guilty of it. I thought if I kept this job long enough the job would one day change to suit me, the strictures would loosen, the tension would slacken and all would be ok. It almost happened, in this little corner of Christendom, and you were all, gloriously, tolerant. But as a lover, and a man in love, I should have the pride that seeks not tolerance, which is all I ever sought from you, but acceptance. And I recognize that you cannot, must not, given your belief, give that acceptance. And that to keep asking or to keep waiting for it is unfair to you. Let us pray.

(Blackout. Music.)

### Scene 8

(Lights back up on THOMAS now dressed in a suit, standing at his pulpit. He seems relaxed, slightly transformed. He speaks to the congregation.)

THOMAS

Well, I admit I was shocked to be asked back here today to cover for Father Michaels as he undergoes emergency gall bladder surgery. I am still in holy orders, but, well, let me put it this way, I am still in sin.

HARRY (From the back)

Aren't we all?

THOMAS (Smiles)

Yes, indeed, we are. I will say I live happier now and I never thought that was possible. I thought happiness was something that was fought for and I was lucky to win it. Now I just experience it. And that's something new. Anyway, not enough time to prepare a proper homily for you so... let us pray.

HARRY

Father.

THOMAS

Yes?

HARRY

I have something to say, and I think I speak for all... and those I don't can mind their own business.

THOMAS

Ok.

HARRY

We do miss you. Our current shepherd is very dry, very boring. Frankly I snooze through the homily. He's by the book.

THOMAS

Yes, I think they were worried about you. They sent you a scholar. Felt you'd had too much of a secular guy in me.

HARRY

Yes, well, it's certainly turned the Eucharist into the main event.

THOMAS

Does he ask after you? Ask how you are?

HARRY

Yes, yes of course. But he seems truly holier than any of us. I think having a gay priest made you more in touch with all of us and our day-to-day challenges.

THOMAS

Yes, well, I certainly know what it's like to argue over who gets the bathroom first.

HARRY

Anyway, just thought it should be said, "We miss you."

THOMAS

Yes, well, change is bittersweet. I miss all of you. Even these dialogues which got longer and longer. Even, may God forgive me, the tension. I love all of you. And I guess, well... I thought to set you free but maybe I've turned that into wanting to be away from you, into... I don't know, freedom from your rebuke which I only felt once, and then only briefly. May I return to you, as a parishioner?

(THOMAS really asks this of the real audience, he really asks, until he gets a real response.)

HARRY (Summing up the response)  
Yes, yes, of course.

THOMAS  
Thank you. Let us pray.

End of Act Two

End of Play