

To Sleep and Dream
©John Fisher

To Sleep and Dream
A Play by John Fisher

Characters:

PAUL, 50 years old, successful attorney

EVERETT, 21, JIM's friend

JIM, 21, PAUL'S son

DIANE, mid-thirties, an attorney in PAUL's law firm

Setting:

The back patio of PAUL's house in Ross, a suburb of San Francisco.

Time:

The 1980s.

ACT ONE

1. PAUL, EVERETT

(The back patio of a house in Ross, California, a small town in Marin County. Visible are a brick patio, an ivy covered retaining wall and a hillside that rises up from the top of the wall into the flies, disappearing into shadow. Patio furniture consists of two round patio tables with chairs. There are plants on the tables. As time passes in these scenes and night comes on, we will hear crickets. Act One is set on Memorial Day, 1985. The scenes begin and end with piano music, an original composition, wistful in nature, but suggesting a faint hope.)

(PAUL, fifty years old, wearing a dark suit and tie, stands with EVERETT, 21, wearing a sweater and slacks. They both hold cocktails, which they sip. It is a warm summer's evening.)

EVERETT

It's so beautiful out here.

PAUL

Yes, it is. We cut this property out of the woods. The hillside we have to keep planted or it will come right down and crush the house. I worry about it all disappearing one night, in a great flood, all sliding down one night and carrying us off to kingdom come in a tidal wave of mud.

(They laugh.)

EVERETT (Looking up hillside)

The Redwood trees are spectacular.

PAUL

Yes. These are all second growth. The whole hillside was logged in the... well, a long time ago.

EVERETT

Is it always this pretty outside?

PAUL

This time of year.

EVERETT (Referring to his cocktail.)

This is good.

PAUL

Well, you guys are adults now, you and Jim. You should have a drink. How's your dad?

EVERETT

He's good. Still doing the real estate thing.

PAUL

Yes, good for him. Real estate in Marin is booming.

EVERETT

Not according to him.

PAUL

Really?

EVERETT

He says it's a bust. They build a new development but nobody wants to move in. "A lot of building and no buying," that's what he says. You built this place right?

PAUL

Yes, Jim's mom wanted her own house. I liked the house in Mill Valley but she always thought it was too small. Also, she didn't like the schools. Thought Jim and his brother weren't learning anything in Mill Valley, just hippy-dippy stuff like the names of Indian tribes.

EVERETT

No?

PAUL

We went skiing with our friends the Thomlinsons. And Paul Jr., that's our oldest, you know Paul?

EVERETT

Yes.

PAUL

He was skiing with one of their kids, he was about six. They both were. And the Thomlison kid, she could read, she was already reading. And all Paul could do was say names like Chautauqua and Maidu. That's what they were teaching him in Mill Valley – stoner stuff. Well, Darlene threw a tantrum over that one. You've never heard such a donnybrook. She was afraid the kids would grow up reading smoke signals.

EVERETT

And now Paul's a physicist. Guess you made the right choice.

PAUL
Yep, I guess we did.

(Pause.)

PAUL
Your Dad still go up to the Grove?

EVERETT
Sure, you don't see him up there?

PAUL
Well. We're in different camps. It's been a while.

EVERETT
Yeah, he loves the Grove. Course we don't have these woods like you guys, he has to go up there to get the Redwood trees.

PAUL
And Elms. We have Dutch Elms, Oaks, everything.

EVERETT
A real California hillside. How's your law firm doing?

PAUL
Good. We're busy. I don't think I've ever been so busy in my life. You interested in law?

EVERETT
I am actually. I've been thinking of going to law school. Now that I'm graduating.

PAUL
Really?

EVERETT
Yes. Funny huh?

PAUL
Not so funny. Can't throw a stick in Ross without hitting four attorneys. What kind of law would you like to practice?

EVERETT
Civil.

PAUL
All the money's in criminal.

EVERETT

You've done pretty well for yourself.

PAUL

That's true. But in criminal law you get all those rich drunks pulled over on DUIs.

EVERETT

And all the other stuff rich drunks do.

PAUL

Precisely. There's good money in that.

EVERETT

Still, I'd like to go into civil law. Maybe even insurance law, like your firm.

PAUL

Really? That's not something kids usually aspire to, not at your age.

EVERETT

I've been looking around at the options, just sort of poking around, nothing serious. The cases are more interesting in insurance law.

PAUL

Christ, it seems like the most boring thing in the world to me.

EVERETT

No, not at all. Who's liable, who pays out, who has to cover it? The agreements are so complex. And the victim doesn't lose in the end because it really is just a matter of which insurance company has to pay, the victim's going to get compensated regardless.

PAUL

Well it's not always that simple, but you're right, it can be pretty interesting.

EVERETT

I know it's premature, I mean I know people don't usually clerk or anything till they're actually in law school. But would you be interested in me interning for your firm, during the summer, just to get... well, a look at things.

PAUL

Maybe.

(PAUL is reluctant. This is our first clear sign that this is not a good idea, as will become apparent.)

EVERETT

I mean I really would be interested. Just to see it up close.

PAUL

It's a lot of work.

EVERETT

I figured.

PAUL

And I really don't handle all that. Jack Baker my partner does.

EVERETT

Oh, ok.

PAUL

Does Jim know you're asking... well asking me for an internship?

EVERETT

I don't know. Probably. He's my best friend. I might have mentioned it to him.

PAUL

Well, as I say, Jack Baker handles all that.

EVERETT

Sure, thank you.

(Pause. EVERETT seems disappointed.)

PAUL

But if you'd like, you could come to the city one day and we could all have lunch, just sort of get to know one another. Jack's a good guy, you'd like him.

EVERETT

Is he here tonight?

PAUL

No, tonight's just you guys and few friends from the office. Jack's away. He's on his honeymoon.

EVERETT

Honeymoon?

PAUL

Yeah, third honeymoon. No fourth. My God, is it his fifth? No, I'm thinking of someone else.

(They laugh.)

PAUL

Anyway, when he gets back from his honeymoon with the current Mrs. Baker we'll all have lunch.

EVERETT

That would be great, Mr. Lewis. Thank you.

PAUL

Paul.

EVERETT

Paul.

2. JIM, EVERETT, PAUL

(JIM enters from left, which is where the house is located. All entrances and exits will be from down left. JIM is also 21 and wears a sweater. He does not hold a drink.)

JIM

Hey.

PAUL

Hey, how are you? Come here.

JIM

No.

PAUL (With mock authority)

Come here right now.

(JIM rolls his eyes and crosses to PAUL. PAUL pulls JIM towards him to kiss him but JIM ducks his head such that PAUL can only kiss his hair. It is an awkward kiss, but good natured – something they're used to.)

JIM (Pulling away)

Come on, you're embarrassing me.

PAUL (To EVERETT)

He always makes me kiss him like that. Just to show he really doesn't want the kiss.

JIM

I want the kiss... just not in front of my friend.

PAUL

I used to kiss him in bed in the morning when I left for work. He made me find him in the covers, like a treasure hunt.

JIM (Embarrassed)

Come on...

PAUL

Oh, such a bug guy... all embarrassed.

(They laugh.)

PAUL (To EVERETT)

Your Dad doesn't kiss you?

EVERETT

On the cheek. Kind of a brush kiss, like this.

(He demonstrates with his open palm, grazing past the face.)

PAUL

Oh, yeah, I know that kind of kiss. (To JIM) Would you prefer we did that?

JIM

No.

PAUL

Here, let's try it.

JIM

Dad...

PAUL

What?

JIM

This is so...

PAUL

What?

JIM

Gay.

(They all laugh.)

JIM
I feel like a homo.

PAUL
Oh, ok, sorry. Can't have that.

JIM
Homosexuality always begins as a joke or as fooling around, then you're suddenly gay and you don't even know how it happened.

PAUL
With your father?

JIM
Parents are gateways to gay. All deviant sexuality is a highway to homosexuality.

PAUL
Well I guess I shouldn't have had sex with you when you were growing up.

EVERETT (Laughing)
Ewww...

PAUL
I mean, I had no idea pedophilia would make you gay.

EVERETT
Yuck. You two certainly have the same sense of humor.

JIM
That's what happens when you've been lovers for so many years. You begin to think alike.

EVERETT
Eww.... Gross.

(They all laugh.)

PAUL
Well, I'm going inside. Can I get you another one, Everett?

EVERETT
No, thank you.

PAUL
How about you, Jim?

JIM
No.

PAUL
You're not drinking?

JIM
No, I don't want to fit in.

(They laugh.)

EVERETT (Handing PAUL his glass)
Actually, I think I will have another one, Paul. If that's ok.

PAUL
Of course.

JIM
Paul? Who's Paul? He's Mr. Lewis to you.

EVERETT
He said I could call him Paul.

JIM
What's going on here?

EVERETT
We're all adults.

JIM (To PAUL)
Paul? We're lovers and I have to call you Dad?

PAUL
Or Daddy.

JIM (In a raunchy southern accent)
Big Daddy. Daddy Dear. Daddy O'Mine.

(They laugh.)

PAUL
I had a friend growing up. His father made him call him Governor.

JIM
Governor?

PAUL

Yes, Governor. "I'll check with the Governor." That's what he'd say if I ever asked him if he could do something.

JIM (In Southern accent)

You want me to call you governor?

PAUL

No, just Sir.

JIM

All right, Sir. Yessir! On the double sir! Ten hut, sir!

(They laugh.)

JIM

How about Massa? Would you like me to call you Massa? Yessah, Massah Paul.

EVERETT

Oooo... Ouch.

PAUL (Wincing)

Son.

JIM

What?

PAUL (Good naturedly to EVERETT)

I'm trying to teach him about taking a joke too far.

JIM

Ugh. I got that all through high school. I hated it. Always getting in trouble for taking a joke too far... I don't even know what that means.

PAUL

Obviously.

JIM (Gayly)

Listen, I like to suck cock and swallow, that's my business. So long as I floss why should anyone else care?

EVERETT

Oooo... Ouch.

PAUL (Serious)

Yes, well, jokes about gay stuff are fine, but racial bigotry never goes over, really son.

JIM (Sarcastic)

Really?

(Conversations in this family often take this turn, from humor to argument. JIM and PAUL are so used to it that they don't even see it coming. And when it does they glide effortlessly from comradery to hostility, as they do here.)

PAUL

No, take my word for it.

JIM

They don't make Massa jokes at the Bohemian Grove? Come on.

PAUL

They don't.

JIM

Bullshit.

PAUL

Jim.

JIM

Bull. Shit.

EVERETT

Jim.

JIM

What?

EVERETT

Relax.

JIM

Don't tell me to relax.

PAUL

Well... I think this is where I go inside and see if your mother's ready for dinner.

JIM

You mean see if she's drunk enough?

(Awkward pause.)

PAUL
I'll be right back.

(PAUL exits.)

3. EVERETT, JIM

(JIM's emotions, as we shall see, are volatile, more those of an adolescent than a man of 21. But this volatility arises from a spirit of hope and near fantasy, hope that can be crushed suddenly and fantasy that can be revealed as pipe dream in the blink of an eye. He is therefore on the roller coaster of each interaction, a live wire, both touchingly vulnerable and ever ready for a counterattack. EVERETT is much more the "young adult" we both admire and mildly fear.)

EVERETT
Jesus, Jim.

JIM
What?

EVERETT
Maybe you *should* get drunk. It couldn't be worse than the way you're behaving right now.

JIM
What are you, my gay father?

EVERETT
No, I'm your friend. And you're making it very awkward for me.

JIM
You were laughing enough at first.

EVERETT
Well, there's a limit.

JIM
There's that word again, that idea – "too far," "too far."

EVERETT
Yeah, well, it's true. People's feelings get hurt.

JIM
What, are you black?

EVERETT

No, but I don't like to be around that kind of talk. Nobody does.

JIM

It was a joke.

EVERETT

It wasn't funny.

JIM

I thought it was hysterical. Otherwise I wouldn't have said it.

EVERETT

Look, you're one of the funniest people I know. Really.

JIM

Ok.

EVERETT

But sometimes...

JIM

Well, part of being funny is not always seeing the "sometimes."

EVERETT

It's like a gag reflex, you should just feel it.

JIM

Yeah, I do have a gag reflex. I know when something's funny and that was funny.

EVERETT

Oh, cause you say it is?

JIM

Yeah.

EVERETT

Come on.

JIM

Who cares? We're all friends.

EVERETT

Your father was incredibly uncomfortable.

JIM
Who gives a shit? He's an asshole.

EVERETT
He's not.

JIM
He is. You don't know him.

EVERETT
I do know him.

JIM
He's a jerk.

EVERETT
We were just talking and he's actually a good guy.

JIM
Really? Is that your... determination?

EVERETT
It is.

JIM (Moving away)
Great.

EVERETT
What?

JIM
Nothing, Never mind.

EVERETT
What?

JIM
Why is it everyone loves my parents and hates me, why is that?

EVERETT
What are you talking about?

JIM
Nothing. Forget it.

EVERETT
Jesus, Jim.

JIM
I bring people over here and they all say the same thing. "What's your problem, your parents are great."

EVERETT
They are. They're very nice people.

JIM
They're not, Everett. They're not.

EVERETT
Oh, are they like Zombies? The minute your friends leave they turn into blood suckers or something?

JIM
No, they're not that obvious. They're soul suckers. They suck out your spirit, slowly but surely.

EVERETT
Don't be so dramatic.

JIM
That's the other thing I always have to listen to: "Don't be so dramatic." I'm a drama major, that's my vocation: drama. Like my father's an attorney. His vocation is screwing people over.

EVERETT
Your father's a very nice man. And he says he's going to help me out, maybe get me an internship.

JIM (Shocked)
He said that?

EVERETT
Yeah.

JIM
He offered you an internship?

EVERETT
He said he's going to take me out to lunch with his partner, so we can all get to know each other.

JIM
Shit.

EVERETT
What's the big deal?

JIM
I didn't ask you over here so you could become my Dad's best friend.

EVERETT
I'm not your Dad's... Jesus.

JIM
Or so you could wangle a summer job.

EVERETT
I didn't wangle... He asked me about my interests. I told him, and he... it was his idea.

JIM
It was?

EVERETT
Yes.

JIM
Never mind.

(JIM moves away. He looks like he's about to cry. Pause.)

EVERETT
Look...

JIM
Forget it... I don't want to talk about it.

EVERETT
Ok.

(Pause.)

JIM
I also told him I like your house. Is that all right?

EVERETT
Yes, that's all right.

(Pause.)

EVERETT

Jim.

JIM

Look, just... shut up about it.

EVERETT

Ok. Can I say one thing?

JIM

No.

EVERETT

Please.

JIM

Ok, what?

EVERETT

I'll tell him I can't come to lunch, I'll tell him I'm busy.

JIM

Really?

EVERETT

Yeah, sure.

JIM

Why would you do that?

EVERETT

Because your friendship is more important to me than some summer job. It is.

JIM

Really?

EVERETT

Of course.

JIM

Ok. Thanks.

4. PAUL, JIM, EVERETT

(PAUL enters holding a cocktail for EVERETT and a fresh one for himself. PAUL, unlike the two young men, believes in the power of social grace and charm. He tries to take the middle road, keep things on an even keel. The fact that he can lose his temper arises from his sense of losing control. With the loss of control he knows that secrets can be revealed and his own failings dwelt upon. He has many failings, of which he is always aware, secretly, but they reside near the surface of his psyche. His attempts at advice, at fathering, he can't avoid but they often lead him into the dangerous territory he fears.)

PAUL (Handing drink to EVERETT)
Here ya go, Gin Gibson over ice.

EVERETT
Thank you, Governor.

PAUL (Amused)
Oh Christ, not this again.

JIM (To EVRETT)
Just call him lover, he likes that.

PAUL
It always starts as a joke.

(They laugh.)

EVERETT
I'd better go inside and say hello to Mrs. Lewis. Or should I call her the Governess?

(PAUL laughs.)

PAUL
No, call her Mrs. Lewis. She likes that.

(EVERETT exits.)

4A. PAUL, JIM

PAUL
I like your friend. He's grown up a lot.

JIM (With a sarcastic English accent)
Yes, Everett is ripping.

PAUL
What's that supposed to mean?

JIM
It means his ripping. The only person at this pow-wow I can talk to. (Pointing inside)
Where'd you find that collection of stiff's?

PAUL
Jesus, you kids. You mope around here all the time saying how bored you are, then we have guests over and you don't like the guests.

JIM
This is a party?

PAUL
Yes, it's party.

JIM (Referring to his suit)
You look like you're going to a funeral.

PAUL
They're from my firm, Jim.

JIM
Can't you wear an ascot or something? You're supposed to be a country squire.

PAUL
Country squire?

JIM
I had no idea it was dress uniform tonight.

JIM
Do you ever stop complaining?

PAUL
Do you ever stop acting like a fucking asshole?

JIM
Now you listen to me-

PAUL
No!

JIM
Keep your damn voice down.

PAUL
Fuck off.

JIM
People didn't drive all the way from the City to listen to some brat screaming like a little girl-

JIM
Leave me alone.

PAUL
Your mother spent all day getting ready for this-

JIM
Since when do you even give a shit about my mother-

PAUL
What's that supposed to mean-

JIM
Oh, have another martini why don't you – get hammered!

PAUL
God dammit-

5. EVERETT, PAUL, JIM

(EVERETT re-enters with a bottle.)

JIM
Hey.

EVERETT
Thought I'd freshen your glass, Paul.

PAUL
Thank you.

EVERETT (Sensing tension)
Everything all right out here?

JIM
No, but complaining is a sign of character.

PAUL
My son has a lot of character.

(They laugh. EVERETT hands PAUL back his glass.)

EVERETT
Sorry for interrupting.

(EVERETT exits.)

6. PAUL, JIM

PAUL
Incredible.

JIM
Yeah, it is.

PAUL
That's how you treat my associates?

JIM
When they behave like dickwads, yes.

PAUL
Who do you like?

JIM
Not you.

(Pause. They both deliberately calm down.)

PAUL
So what's your plan?

JIM
My plan?

PAUL
Now that you're graduating?

JIM
I don't know.

PAUL
You going to keep living in your apartment?

JIM
As opposed to what, move back here?

PAUL
Are you going to get a job?

JIM
Are you going to help me get one?

PAUL
How am I supposed to do that?

JIM
You came and saw my last play. Do you remember your response?

PAUL
No.

JIM
You said you talked to your friend and he said I should get a screen test.

PAUL
Ok.

JIM
So, can you help me get a screen text?

PAUL
I don't know anybody in that field.

JIM
What about your friend?

PAUL
What friend?

JIM
The one who said that.

PAUL
I don't remember who that was.

JIM
Jack somebody.

PAUL
Jack?

JIM
Yeah. Jack. All your friends are named Jack.

PAUL
Well, I don't know how to get you a screen test or whatever it is.

JIM
You don't?

PAUL
No.

JIM
You know nobody in entertainment?

PAUL
No.

JIM
Nobody?

PAUL
No.

JIM
So how am I supposed to get a screen test?

PAUL
I don't know.

JIM
I thought you were going to help me.

PAUL
I don't know anybody.

JIM
If I moved to LA you're telling me you know nobody in LA.

PAUL
I don't.

JIM
That's bullshit.

PAUL
It's not bullshit.

JIM
It is. You walk around here like the cock of the walk and you can't do shit. Nothing.

PAUL
Now you listen to me...

JIM
What, you're worried I'm going to fuck up your staff party.

PAUL
Boy oh boy, you are really...

JIM
What?

PAUL
One day you're really going to regret how you talk to me, you're really going to regret it.

JIM
Oh, yeah, when's that going to be?

PAUL
One day you'll look back and really think this was just stupid.

JIM
What does that even mean?

PAUL
You are just a boor.

JIM
A bore? You think I'm boring?

PAUL
Not a bore, a boor. You're behavior is boorish.

JIM
I don't even know what that means.

PAUL
You want to be a writer, look it up.

JIM
I don't want to be a writer, I want to be an actor.

PAUL
Ok, so what?

JIM (Calmly)
So I need your help. It's like anything. It's all about connections. I have none, you have millions.

PAUL
I don't.

JIM
That's bullshit.

7. DIANE, PAUL, JIM

(DIANE enters. She is in her early-thirties, smart, confident and very pretty, not to mention dressed to show herself off.)

DIANE
Hi.

PAUL
Hello.

DIANE
I feel like I'm intruding.

JIM
You are but that's ok. Just a friendly family argument.

DIANE (Amused)
Yeah?

(DIANE comes from a very different background than that of the other characters. She learned the ropes early as she has always lived in a fiercely competitive world. It's taught her to be tough but also not to take anything too seriously. She has nothing to hide but a touching vulnerability. She likes people for who they are not

who they pretend to be. As a matter of fact the greater the pretense in a person the more likely it is she will not like that person. To say she glows is a simple way of describing her, but she does, with many things, the most important of which is good will.)

JIM

Oh, in polite society you step outside to argue. But you always shout loud enough so people know you're arguing. (Extending his hand) I'm Jim.

(She laughs, takes his hand.)

DIANE

Diane. It's beautiful out here.

JIM

Yeah, I weeded the entire hillside for the party this morning. Now you can see the dirt.

PAUL (Good natured)

You didn't weed the hillside.

JIM

I did. It was selective weeding. I realized some of them were so large they were holding up the hillside so I left them alone. I only got the little ones. Survival of the fittest.

DIANE

Wow, I wish I had a gardener like you.

JIM

Big stud to trim your hedge and stare at you dressing through the plate glass window?

PAUL

Jim.

(She laughs.)

JIM

Maybe you could invite him in some time for some selective fertilizing.

DIANE

Are you drunk?

JIM

No. I don't drink. But I grew up with drunks so I can imitate the behavior.

DIANE

Ho-ho, you should work at the law firm, you're naughty enough.

JIM

Plenty of sexy-talk downtown?

DIANE

Yeah, but the disappointing thing is it's all talk, no action. (This last to PAUL.)

PAUL (Embarrassed)

You guys.

JIM

Are we embarrassing you, Daddy Dear?

PAUL

Yes, actually.

JIM

My dad's post sex.

DIANE

Post sex? Is there such a thing?

PAUL

Hey, I'm the authority figure here, you're making me squeamish.

JIM

Squeamish?

DIANE

Is that a legal term?

JIM (Gayly)

Squeamish? Squeamish? It sounds like the name of a gay Russian.

DIANE (Looking at JIM, having figured something out)

Oh, ok.

JIM

What?

DIANE

I was confused.

JIM
About what?

DIANE
You're the actor. I was laughing because I thought you were pretty funny for a physicist, but now I get it. You're the actor. Well that makes sense.

JIM
Frustrated actor.

DIANE
You're frustrated?

JIM
Sexually. Not as an actor. My father has big plans for me as actor. Sexually he sees me as Squeamish.

(She laughs.)

JIM
Dad, where have you been hiding this little vixen? She's so... lively for an attorney. Is she any good? She must be a horrible litigator. (To DIANE) You barely passed the Bar, right?

DIANE
Wrong.

PAUL
First in her class at Harvard.

JIM
Wow. I bet you always come first.

DIANE
All right. That's enough now. You're going to bowl me over.

JIM
I'd love to take you bowling, I'd show you my pins.

(She laughs.)

DIANE
Are you a horn dog?

JIM

No, I'm a horn cat, I'm gentle and sensitive and like to be stroked.

PAUL

Jim.

JIM

She's laughing, Dad. Didn't you raise me to amuse the guests?

PAUL (Not angry)

She's an associate, Jim.

JIM

Is your husband here tonight?

DIANE

I'm single.

JIM

Single? That's my favorite word. You like hockey?

DIANE

No.

JIM

Neither do I. We were made for each other. What's your sign?

DIANE

Pisces.

JIM

I meant your road sign. Stop? Go? Proceed with Caution?

DIANE

Curvy Road Ahead.

JIM

Daddy Dear! We must make a contribution to the Harvard Alumni Association for the excellence of its Associates.

DIANE

Ok, enough young man. I think you're just doing this to get your father's goat.

JIM

Mmmmm... I love it when you use animal expressions from the forties. Here's one – "Hey squirrel, wanna twirl?" (He grabs her and humming "Don't Sit Under the Apple

Tree” gives her a dance spin. She laughs and laughs.) What’s that scent you’re wearing?

DIANE
You like it?

JIM
It’s slightly slutty with just a touch of motherhood. Like the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene having lesbian sex.

(She laughs.)

PAUL (To DIANE)
I can’t believe you’re falling for this little wise acre.

DIANE
He’s funny.

JIM
She’s a smart cookie, Dad, She gets irony, wit and inflection.

DIANE
I’d say you were more smutty than witty.

JIM
Can I borrow your panties for the night, not to sniff but to wear?

DIANE
Ok , basta.

JIM
She speaks Italian! Ha-cha-cha!

(He grabs her and buries his face in her neck. She screams. They are all laughing.)

DIANE
My goodness, let me catch my breath.

JIM
No, catch my breath, baby.

DIANE
Whoah... Down Fiddo, down.

JIM
Ok, enough. I gotta keep reminding myself, “I’m gay. I’m gay. Down fruitcake, down.”

(Pause while she smiles.)

JIM

Ok, Dad? Did I stop in time?

PAUL (To JIM)

I think you've found your audience.

(She stops laughing and looks about her.)

DIANE

Mmmmm. You have such a beautiful home, you two. You're lucky.

JIM

Dear Old Dad, he built us a gorgeous family manse. It's for old what's her name.

DIANE

Old what's her name?

JIM

That's what he calls my mom. Like he can't remember her name.

PAUL

It's a family joke. I call her the present Mrs. Lewis. All my friends have been married two or three times, that's how they call their wives so I just do it as a joke.

JIM

"The present Mrs. Lewis," "the current Mrs. Lewis," "your mother," like she's one of a stable of ex-wives and we're a bunch of little bastards running all over the place.

DIANE

Do you always let him talk this way in front of you?

JIM

He used to clam up around guests. If I let him be a smart ass at least he talks.

DIANE

He sounds like you.

JIM

Except funnier.

DIANE

Except funnier.

JIM

So say, cookie, how's about I take you upstairs and show you the playroom.

PAUL

Jim.

JIM

Woops. I just went too far. Flirting's fine but overt references to coitus or penetration are too far.

PAUL (Gently impatient)

Ok...

JIM

What?

PAUL

Just...

DIANE (To PAUL)

Oh, please, it's fine. It's refreshing to meet someone who can be obnoxious without being drunk.

JIM

You see, Daddy. I'm obnoxious, I'm not inappropriate.

DIANE

I came out because Mrs. Lewis seemed to need some help. I said I'd get you, one of you.

PAUL

Oh, I'll go.

JIM

I can go. She probably needs to mix drinks.

PAUL

Since when do you know how to mix drinks?

JIM

Around here? (Showing proportions with fingers) Liquor. (A lot.) Mix. (A little.) It's easy.

(She laughs.)

JIM

Hey, I can mix with drunks, I should be able to mix drinks.

(She laughs.)

JIM

You're laughing way too much at my jokes. They're not that funny. Are you hammered yourself?

DIANE

Hammered?

JIM

Tight? Snookered? Blotto? Embarrassed?

DIANE

You're such a little actor.

JIM

That's right. You like actors?

DIANE

I'm always very careful around actors.

JIM

You know some? Can you help me out? My career's stalled.

DIANE

Probably. Yeah, I could put you in touch with some people.

JIM

Ooooo... Dad, listen, she knows people, you're off the hook.

DIANE

Oh, were you going to put him in touch with Charlton Heston?

JIM

Charlton Heston?

DIANE

Paul knows Charlton Heston, from the Grove, don't you?

JIM

You know Charlton Heston, Daddy? Damn.

PAUL (Defensive)
Yes, I do.

JIM (Mock impressed)
Damn.

(Pause.)

DIANE
Did I say something wrong? Woops. Maybe I am a little blotto.

JIM
No, you're good. It's my Dad. He's the one who's fucked up.

(JIM exits.)

8. PAUL, DIANE

PAUL (Angry)
Jim! Jim! (To DIANE) Sorry about that.

DIANE
No, it's... sorry if I said something...

PAUL
No, it's fine. Kid drives me crazy.

DIANE
Wow.

PAUL
Yeah, life with an adolescent.

DIANE
He's... well, he's not really an adolescent.

(He looks at her.)

PAUL
No, he's not.

(Pause.)

DIANE
He'll be ok.

PAUL
You think so? I don't.

DIANE
Sure. I have a brother like that. He loves drama.

(PAUL smiles at her.)

PAUL
Ok. I won't worry about it. I'm good at that. As my wife always tells me.

(She looks about, tries to change the subject.)

DIANE
This big beautiful house, all this property. I have a feeling you have a wife who adores you.

PAUL
Well...

DIANE
Well what?

PAUL
Maybe a long time ago she did.

DIANE
Get outta here. I bet she's still crazy about you.

PAUL
Very secretly.

DIANE
And I have a feeling you adore her, to build her all this. It's like a palace.

PAUL
At the rate you're going you'll have it all one day, very soon.

DIANE
Maybe. But to have some guy come along and build it for you. Isn't that what we all dream about?

PAUL
I bet there've been plenty of guys that offered you this.

DIANE

Not that many. At least not that many I let get far enough to offer it. Actually none.

PAUL

Wasn't there a boyfriend, in college?

DIANE

Oh, yeah. But he was my boyfriend. Mine. Just like me. A shark. Is that what you called me after the Keeler Case? A shark?

PAUL

Respectfully.

(They laugh.)

DIANE

He was like me, a barracuda, a torpedo, an ICBM. Anyway, he had a lot to prove. Mostly with my friends.

PAUL

You're kidding?

DIANE

No. That's ok. They weren't really my fiends. We were all in it together, all us little piranhas. We all had a lot to prove. Kinda sad to get this far in life and not have any friends. You have friends?

PAUL

Yeah.

DIANE

I don't. I don't stay in touch. Too busy. Too... not wanting to know how other people are doing, in case they're doing better than me. You ever feel that? Like you're hiding from other people's success.

(She seems suddenly too intimate but, in fact, she feels the need to expose herself. Having felt PAUL's humiliation at his son, she wants to let him know she has her own limitations.)

PAUL

At some point you realize it's all a balance. In every life. There's no such thing as complete success or complete failure. I'm just waiting to realize it.

(She smiles.)

DIANE
Hmmm. You have a very nice family.

PAUL
I don't.

DIANE
You do. They were nice to me, that's all I care about.

PAUL
Well...

DIANE
Darleen asked me all about Boston and Massachusetts, she seemed genuinely interested.

PAUL
Yeah, well, there're problems in Massachusetts. She thinks a lot about it.

DIANE
What kind of problems?

PAUL
Nothing. Boring... family stuff. Her son. Her other son.

DIANE
The physicist?

PAUL
The physicist.

DIANE
She's like a first lady. And so pretty.

PAUL
Everyone tells her she looks like Nancy Reagan.

DIANE
She could do worse.

PAUL
She hates Nancy Reagan.

DIANE
Most powerful woman on the planet.

PAUL
Do I look like Ronald Reagan?

DIANE
No, you're more like Walter Cronkite.

PAUL (Offended)
Thanks!

(They laugh.)

DIANE
I liked Jim.

PAUL
Yeah, he's a firecracker.

DIANE
My brother has his sense of humor.

PAUL
Does your brother hate your father?

DIANE
Oh, come on.

PAUL
We were arguing when you came out.

DIANE
No kidding.

PAUL
He hates me.

DIANE
Kids argue with their fathers.

PAUL
He's getting a little old for it.

DIANE
He'll argue with you his whole life. He loves you.

PAUL
No he doesn't it.

DIANE

He does. More than that he likes you. It's written all over his face.

PAUL

He resents me.

DIANE

I don't think so.

PAUL

Oh, yes he does.

DIANE

Why?

PAUL

I don't trust him.

DIANE

He doesn't think that.

PAUL

He does think that. Because it's true. The worst part about it is I don't trust him and it's not his fault.

DIANE

Is that why you won't help him?

PAUL

Can you imagine if I introduced him to Charlton Heston? Within a minute he'd be asking him about his toupee and accusing him of being gay.

DIANE

Well, maybe Mr. Heston would be amused. I was.

PAUL

It would be embarrassing.

DIANE

If Charlton Heston has kids I'm sure he's heard it all before.

PAUL

I've been there too many times with that kid.

DIANE
Have none of your friends ever liked him?

PAUL
Henry Kissinger.

DIANE
Henry Kissinger!

PAUL
Yeah. To this day he quotes him. Comes up to me every time I see him and says, "Paul, how's that kid of yours? Do you remember what he said to me?"

DIANE
What did he say to him?

PAUL
"Does the Secretary of State get to sit on the president's lap and take dictation?"

DIANE
Ok, so you see, he amused Henry Kissinger.

PAUL
For every one of those guys there's four people who to this day say to me: "Hey Paul, how's that little smart ass kid of yours? I don't believe in beating children but I almost punched him in the nose last time I saw him."

DIANE
You hang out with some pretty macho guys. Aren't Bohemians like sensitive and touchy feely?

PAUL
These are weekend Bohemians. They don't start being Van Goghs till cocktail hour on Friday night.

DIANE
They need girl friends, to relieve some tension.

PAUL
I bet they all have girl friends. Believe me. Girl friends, two or three wives, alimony.

DIANE (A change of tone, to something more intimate)
What about your girl friend?

PAUL
Umm...

DIANE
Yeah, you can tell me.

PAUL
There isn't one.

DIANE
Now that's a shame.

PAUL
Counselor.

DIANE
Yes, your honor?

PAUL
You're making me nervous.

DIANE
Oh, now, I heard you were a liberal judge. Is that true?

PAUL
It's not false.

DIANE
Your honor, please direct the witness to answer the question. Yes or no.

PAUL
I plead the fifth commandment.

DIANE
Hmm... I find Mosaic Law even sexier than torts.

PAUL (Amused but trying to break the mood)
Ok...

DIANE
What?

PAUL
This... isn't exactly my field of expertise. I don't usually argue things in superior court.

DIANE
Hmmm... I'm not really superior, more like circuit court. Of appeals.

(He laughs.)

DIANE
Are we reaching a settlement?

PAUL
Look.

DIANE
What?

PAUL
With all due respect.

DIANE
Uh-oh. This sounds bad.

PAUL
Well. I could never actually do anything. Not with someone my son's age.

DIANE
I am not your son's age.

PAUL
Well closer to his age than mine.

DIANE
Is that even true?

PAUL
Let's see... ummm... yeah, yeah, it is.

(They laugh.)

PAUL
You should talk to him. He's a good kid. He could use a mother's influence.

DIANE
Oh, so now I'm old enough to be his mother.

PAUL
No, but you have experience. He needs a sentimental education.

DIANE
Hmmm. I think maybe you do.

PAUL
Oh, no. I'm on the other side of sentiment. I'm post sentiment.

DIANE
Well, maybe I need a cynical education.

PAUL (Kindly)
I think you're very attractive.

DIANE
Uh-huh.

PAUL
And I'm very drunk.

DIANE
Well...

PAUL
What?

DIANE
Tomorrow I'll still be attractive and you'll be sober.

PAUL
That's a very good point. (Pause.) And I should go inside.

DIANE
So we'll call this an adjournment.

PAUL
A case closed.

DIANE
Remember, I'm a shark. I always get my dinner.

PAUL
Ok, an indefinite adjournment.

(Lights fade on them.)

ACT TWO

9. JIM, EVERETT

(JIM is outside looking up at the hillside. He is in kakis and shirt sleeves. It is the evening of Fourth of July – the weather is hotter. EVERETT comes out with a drink. JIM looks at him.)

JIM (To himself)
Shit.

EVERETT
Hey, your mom said you were out here. You ok?

(Silence from JIM.)

EVERETT
Jim, you gotta talk to me.

JIM
No, I don't.

EVERETT
You do.

JIM
No. I don't. We're not speaking to each other. You know what that means? It means we're not talking.

EVERETT
That's ridiculous.

JIM
What are you doing here?

EVERETT
Your father invited me.

JIM
Last time you were over I invited you. And the last time you were over you said you weren't going to take the internship.

EVERETT
I offered not to take it. It was an offer. You weren't supposed to take me up on it.

JIM

What? What does that...

EVERETT

You were supposed to say, "That's ok, take the internship. I was just being hysterical."

JIM

I can't believe you're working for him, all these weeks and nobody ever told me.

EVERETT

We barely see each other at work.

JIM

But nobody even mentioned it. What is this, a conspiracy?

EVERETT

I told... I asked him not to say anything.

JIM

You asked him not to say anything?

EVERETT

Yes, I told him how it would affect you.

JIM

And he listened to you?

EVERETT

He said he wasn't sure he could do that, not tell you.

JIM

Well he didn't, so I guess you succeeded.

EVERETT

Succeeded at what?

JIM

Driving a wedge between me and my father.

EVERETT

Oh, come on.

JIM

I can't even believe you did that.

EVERETT
Sorry.

JIM
Don't say you're sorry like that.

EVERETT
Like what?

JIM
Like you're not.

EVERETT
All right, I'm not. Why should I be?

JIM
I can't believe this.

EVERETT
You don't control people, you can't control what we do.

[JIM
You don't get it, do you? You've always... refused to get it.

EVERETT
Get what?

10. PAUL, JIM, EVERETT

(JIM is about to speak, to blurt it out but PAUL enters in a summer suit, holding a cocktail.)

PAUL
Hey guys. Happy Fourth.

EVERETT
Hey, Paul.

PAUL
How's it going, Jim?

JIM
Fine.

EVERETT
We were just catching up.

JIM
No, we weren't.

EVERETT
I wanted to tell you it turns out I know someone in TV. A guy my brother roomed with in college, he's now a lead PA on a series. He says if you're ever in LA to look him up. I can give you his number if you want it.

JIM (Sarcastic)
That's all right. My father's going to help me out. He knows Charlton Heston.

EVERETT
And David Jannsen. He was in the office a few weeks ago. Nice guy.

(JIM looks at PAUL.)

EVERETT
He didn't tell you that?

JIM
No.

EVERETT
Anyway, my friend is no Charlton Heston but he's a good guy. He'll set you up.

JIM
Why don't you shove your friend and Charlton Heston up your ass.

PAUL
Jim.

(JIM goes inside.)

11. EVERETT, PAUL

EVERETT
I'm sorry about that, Paul. He's frustrated.

(PAUL just stares at him. Pause.)

EVERETT
It certainly is a pleasure working in the office, Paul.

PAUL
Is it?

EVERETT
Yes, I'm learning a lot.

PAUL
I'm glad to hear that.

(Pause.)

EVERETT
Can I freshen your drink, sir?

PAUL
No, I'm fine. Thank you.

12. DIANE, EVERETT, PAUL

(DIANE enters, dressed for summer, less professional than previously but still smart, in fact even lovelier than before. Summer definitely agrees with her. She holds a glass of wine.)

DIANE
Hello.

EVERETT
Hello. Happy Fourth.

DIANE
Happy Fourth to you.

(Pause.)

EVERETT
Do you live in Marin, Miss Morani?

DIANE
I don't. I live in Berkeley. Are you going inside?

EVERETT
Yes.

DIANE
Can you take this in for me? I'm finished with it.

(He takes it.)

DIANE
Thank you.

(EVERETT enters the house.)

12A. DIANE, PAUL

DIANE
I hate that kid. He's a weasel.

PAUL
How are you?

DIANE
Very well. You look nice out here on your patio in your poplin suit.

PAUL
And you look beautiful in your dress.

DIANE
And we're still flirting and nobody's getting any nookie.

PAUL
I told you, I'm sex a maniac. I'd wear you out.

DIANE
Oh, baby, honey, bring it on.

PAUL
Did you say hi to Jim?

DIANE
I tried to. Not too talkative tonight.

PAUL
Yeah, he's pissed off about something.

DIANE
What?

PAUL
Everything. I don't know.

DIANE
Have you talked to him?

PAUL
He doesn't want to talk.

DIANE
Have you tried?

(PAUL looks up the hillside, changing the subject.)

PAUL
I have to have this hillside shored up again. It's slipping.

DIANE
Slipping?

PAUL
The mud. We did this planting, to hold up the hillside. But we planted the wrong trees. They're all dying, well most of them. And when they die the hillside comes down. (He makes a rumbling sound and demonstrates with his hands the hillside collapsing.) Squish. Squash? Squish-squash.

DIANE
It all sounds pregnant with significance.

PAUL
Yes.

DIANE
I tried to set Paul up with my actor friend. It didn't work out.

PAUL
Yes, I've told him, even the people who can help can't always help.

DIANE
Jim never called him. My friend never heard from him.

PAUL
Oh. Well... that figures actually.

DIANE
It surprised me.

PAUL
It doesn't surprise me.

DIANE
I thought he'd be right on top of it.

PAUL
He should be. But he's... well, he's deeply suspicious. Of anyone helping him.

DIANE
Why's that?

PAUL
People let him down.

DIANE
People?

PAUL
His friend.

DIANE
He should have seen that one coming.

PAUL
He never sees it coming. He's... so hopeful. Little dreamer.

DIANE
You wanna tell me about it?

PAUL
No.

(Pause.)

PAUL
Yes.

(Pause.)

PAUL
He's a screwed up kid.

DIANE
Like most kids are screwed up.

PAUL
Yeah, but I know why. I know what happened.

DIANE
So tell me.

PAUL
Long boring story.

DIANE
So bore me.

(He smiles.)

PAUL
It is eminently... undramatic, unexciting.

DIANE
You're talking to an attorney. I listen to a lot of dull testimony.

PAUL
But this is your weekend.

DIANE
And I find it all fascinating. Life is better than drama because it's so real.

PAUL
Drama is tragic, life is squalid.

DIANE
A little squalor's good for a person. It humanizes them.

PAUL
I'm plenty human, that's for sure. As my wife constantly reminds me.

DIANE
You don't actually know what happened with Jim. You were just being dramatic.

PAUL
I know exactly what happened.

(She smiles at him, wanting to hear. PAUL relaxes into it. It's a story he's thought of often, even told to his wife, or tried to, but she is no longer sympathetic. So it has the cathartic feel of first time confession, of discovery. It doesn't help him with the problem – talking about it – but it does allow him to get close to another human, which he desperately needs right now.)

PAUL
His brother, Paul Jr., you haven't met him... what a kid. So smart, so fucking smart. God that kid, I loved him, loved him. We used to talk about everything: engineering, math, ecology, evolution. He devoured books, devoured them. We'd drive around,

I'd take them out to dinner, take them out to breakfast, a ballgame, whatever... We just sat in the car and we talked and talked and talked and talked and talked. And Jim... who was smaller, he sat in the back seat and he just listened, he loved it. He was like our audience. We were the performers and he watched us. Maybe that's when he got interested in theater, just watching people talk. It was amazing, Paul and I. I was so proud of him. We'd talk about anything. And when he found out I was a lawyer he wanted to talk about law. He wanted to talk about torts and jurisprudence and the judiciary and the Supreme Court, everything. He followed Nixon, every step of Watergate: the hearings, Sirica... all those crazy characters: E. Howard Hunt, G. Gordon Liddy. He loved it, he loved the complexity of it, he loved the trials and the battles over evidence, everything, we talked about all of it. You know when he was eight, when he was eight years old, maybe nine, I'm not quite sure, he designed a house, he actually designed a house, he did blueprints. I mean it wasn't on blueprint paper but it was, it was beautiful, gorgeously designed, everything. He had a scale for it and he thought of access and he thought of a garage and bathrooms and closet space and views. It was gorgeous. And... as he got older, he and I argued. We started disagreeing about stuff, I mean it wasn't, you know, it wasn't that he was right or I was right, or he was wrong or I was wrong, it was, you know, the conversations became disagreements. And he stopped learning from me and started teaching me. And he actually had the ability to pick something up enough to sort of talk to me and explain something to me. But, you know, a lot of his ideas were sort of hair-brained and I'd call him on it: "That's stupid, that's ridiculous, come on! That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard!" I used to say that to him, like that, like joking. And he, you know, he took it at first, cause he wanted to learn, and then he realized that a lot of the time I was wrong. I was just, you know, getting defensive about what he knew, what I knew, the fact that I was the father, he was the son, I don't know. He... He sort of picked up that I was blowing steam out of my ass... And then he started to resent it. He started saying back to me, "No, *that's* the stupidest thing I've ever heard" and "No, you don't know what you're talking about." He had this gesture, he'd go like this to me. (Makes dismissive gesture with his arm.) Turn his back. And I'd say, "Don't do that to me. Don't walk away from me." And more and more our conversations about science and industry and physics, whatever, turned into arguments. And I think I started to resent him. The joy of being a father somehow changed for me, I... I don't know, I just didn't enjoy talking to him anymore because, he actually seemed to know more than I did. And he didn't listen to me. I don't know, he just didn't, we didn't hear each other any more. And the whole time Jim was still sitting there watching us, as an audience. He covered his ears once we were arguing so much. I thought it was fun, I actually thought we were having fun, that's the way our family was, we argued. But then it got ugly. We didn't know when to stop. We went too far. I don't know, we said things to each other like "You're stupid, you're an idiot, you always..." I don't know... "You always act like you're in court;" "You always act like you're in the classroom;" "You treat me like I'm the teacher you hate;" "You treat me like I'm the witness who won't roll over and give the evidence you want." And Jim was listening the whole time. You know eventually, Paul and I just stopped talking. By then I think Jim... Oh God, this is the worst part. I think by then I... God, I so want to blame him, even now. And it was not

his fault. By then I don't think I was going to trust Jim, no matter what he did. Because my first son, my boy, my big boy, Paul, had turned on me. Of course he hadn't. But that's what I thought at the time. I felt betrayed. I felt like my experience to introduce the world to somebody had been taken away from me because this fucking kid wouldn't listen. He had to win and the fact that he actually, a lot of the time, knew more than I did, and was actually more analytical than I was just made it worse. It pissed me off. And the day I cut myself off from Paul, the day I just stopped talking to him cause I got sick of it was the day I also threw Jim into the bargain. And I said to myself, I said to myself, and I remember saying it to myself, I remember it was right here in this backyard, I said, "I'm not going to let another one of these kids get under me. They're not going to get in under my radar. Not again." And from that moment, from that second forward, I had my defenses up with my boys. God, those kids, they were gorgeous.

DIANE

They're still gorgeous.

PAUL

Well, they were.... I loved them. I mean Paul was smart but Jim, Jim was fucking creative. He was a true Bohemian. He was what I aspired to every weekend at that fucking club, going up to the goddam Grove three weeks a year, I mean he really was the real thing and whereas I gave Paul the chance, I mean whereas we had a few good years to at least understand each other, he could at least tell himself that at one point I respected him. And I admired his intelligence. Jim, Christ, I never even gave Jim a chance. All those plays he acted in, all that theatre he did, all the things he wrote, and I was never going to give him a chance. I let his mother do that. We went and saw him, he was in *Guys and Dolls* and he played Nathan Detroit and he was fucking hysterical. You should have seen him onstage. He knew, I don't know like Jack Benny or Jimmy Cagney or something... he knew how to spin the line to land the joke. The audience ate it up. Yeah it was a bunch of parents and friends and high school students, who cares, the audience ate it up. And his mother and I went backstage, I was so fucking proud of him. We'd taken our friends from down the road, they loved it, they looooved it. These are people I'd been to Broadway shows with and half the time, you know we'd had too many drinks at dinner, we'd... the men were half asleep, the ladies would spend the whole night nudging us, "Wake up! You're snoring!" We didn't snore that night. For two hours, everybody had the time of their life, and my son was at the center of it. And we went back stage, oh his mother, she was beaming, this is when I was most proud of her, this is when, all the love, all the crap that kinda floated away over the years... This is when it all came back. I just stood there and I watched her, I was the audience and I watched her, she was just... you'd think, I don't know, you'd think she'd given birth to Rex Harrison or Richard Burton or, I don't know... Charlton Heston!... somebody... she was beaming, she was so proud, she blushed. And I stood there and all I could say was, "Good work." Even then. He'd made my friends happy, my fucking friends who I've always given more time and attention to than my kids, he actually made them happy and all I could say was, "Good work." You know, later I felt really bad about that. I decided I

should really tell him, you know, how great he was, what a good job he'd done and it was, it was all wrong, it was right out here on this patio and I came out and I said, "That was a really, really good show last night, I was really impressed with you." And you know he, it was wrong, he was in a different... you know he was thinking differently, he was... he was standing there looking at me like, "Why this now, you know, why are you talking to me now?" And, oh Jesus, immediately I was like, "Why did you say anything" and, you know... "Here, here they go again, here your kids go again, they're going to start getting on your case about something" and, I don't know, I tried to make a joke, I said to him, I said, "Boy there's an awful lotta hugging and kissing backstage." And he said, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "Well, all you boys hugging each other and kissing each other." Boy, he just looked at me like, "You don't get it, do you?" It was one of the few times he actually looked at me like his brother, like Paul. He looked at me like, "You don't get it, do you? We're not attorneys, we're actors, actors hug each other, actors kiss each other, actors sometimes go to bed with each other, sometimes they're both men that go to bed with each other. You don't get it, do you?" That's the look he gave me. "If you were a real Bohemian you'd get it but you don't get it." He didn't even have to say it, it's like we both knew. It's like we both remembered all those times in the car, when Paul had yelled at me and told me I was stupid, that my ideas were idiotic, and given me that gesture (he makes it.) It's like all he had to do was look at me to remind me that my kids actually did know more about certain things than I did. All it took was a look. We didn't have to have all those stupid technical arguments that his brother and I had had.

DIANE

What's your relationship with Paul Jr.?

PAUL

Not good. Oh, I've tried to clean up that mess but it's... it's over. You know, he and I, at least I feel like we stepped into the ring together and made our own decisions about each other. We went from worship and love and respect... God I loved that kid, I couldn't believe I'd created this thing, I really couldn't, I could not believe it. And then we hated each other. But... we duked it out.

DIANE

So?

PAUL

Ah... we still duke it out. But... we're gentle with each other. We avoid a lot. We avoid so much I sometimes wonder why we have a relationship, you know what I mean? Yeah, it's fine. It's fine. It's fine. We have a decent relationship. But Jim, we never even had one, we never even got going. Agh, the way we argue, it's like brothers, it's stupid. Stupid shit, doesn't matter. God, I never thought I would miss what I had, even the arguments, what I had with Paul, but when I think of my relationship with Jim, I miss all of it. I miss the fact that I never even let myself get that far with him.

DIANE

Well, people are capable of only so much. We're so critical of ourselves because we never... you know, we wanna be like supermen, ubermensch as Nietzsche said, but we can't be super enough. We should just be mensch. We should just be mensches, right? They love you. You know they love you.

PAUL

They love me because I gave them money. Cause I paid for school. Because I kept the wolf away from the door.

DIANE

No, they love you. They wouldn't come around if they didn't love you.

PAUL

Well, the only reason I see his older brother is because I go back there, to Boston where he teaches... The wife and I, we go back there and see him. He'd never come out here. The moment that we stop, that'll be the end of that. The only reason Jim sees me is he has to. There are so few people in his life that love him. I'm not even sure he knows what love is. I just... I hope he finds something.

(Pause.)

DIANE

Boy.

PAUL

Yeah, sorry.

DIANE

No, that's ok... I came out here to seduce the boss and I got an earful.

PAUL

The boss is an old married man.

DIANE

I guess I'll have to try some other time when you're in a better mood.

PAUL

God, he got so fucked over by his friend.

DIANE

And you had nothing to do with that?

PAUL

No. Me? That kid's a go-getter, I respect that

DIANE
You gave him a job.

PAUL
No.

DIANE
Really?

PAUL
What?

DIANE
You didn't have something to do with that?

PAUL
I had nothing to do with that.

DIANE
No?

PAUL
That kid was going to get a job...

DIANE
And you gave it to him.

PAUL
Oh, come on.

DIANE
No, you did. You gave it to him.

PAUL
Look, I move in a small circle. A kid like that, who I respect, admire, I've known him since he was small, he needs a job, something easy I could do, I do it. It's not a bad thing.

DIANE
Would you do it for Jim?

PAUL
Jim's different.

DIANE
How's Jim different?

PAUL
Jim's different.

DIANE
How's he different?

PAUL
He'd embarrass me. If I got him a job, he'd embarrass me. That's a fact. That's the business world. You can't have your kids going off and embarrassing you.

DIANE
Hey, he embarrassed me. With my bud the actor. That's what friends are for, right? To be embarrassed.

(The defenses are going up with PAUL. He can let them down for a moment, as he has here, but they are ever renewable and he always lets logic lead him back in to the defensive, as he is doing now.)

PAUL
This is different.

DIANE
Isn't that your job? To let yourself be embarrassed? I mean, if you really want to make it up with him?

PAUL
No. No. No

DIANE
You hired his friend. I think that kid is embarrassing.

PAUL
Everett?

DIANE
Everett. I even hate his name. What a creep.

PAUL
He's harmless.

DIANE
He invited me out for a drink. A drink.

PAUL
Did you go?

DIANE
Hell no. I didn't. I wouldn't.

PAUL
Good.

DIANE
Good? Would that make you jealous?

PAUL
You don't give up, do you?

DIANE
I think you think I'm the kinda person who has a lot of boyfriends. I'm not.

PAUL
It wouldn't make any difference to me if you did.

DIANE
Yes, it would. I'd lose my purity. That's what you like about me.

PAUL
Hey, I'm a big boy. I know we're not... virgins out here.

DIANE
Oh, but you are. You're so sad. So helpless. So young. You don't have moves. I love that about you. Everett? He's twenty-one, he already has moves. God spare me men and their moves.

PAUL
Well, you don't have to worry about me and my moves. I haven't got any, you're right.

DIANE
How did you get this far with so little confidence?

PAUL (Holding drink)
Hey, confidence in a glass. I discovered the cocktail early.

DIANE
I bet you did.

PAUL
Do you really find me sad?

DIANE
That's all right. I like it.

PAUL
You do?

DIANE
Sure.

PAUL
I do like you.

DIANE
Yeah?

PAUL
A lot.

DIANE
Ok.

PAUL
Its just the... you know, the sex thing. I can't get past the morality of the sex thing.

DIANE
Yes, sex is very moral.

PAUL
I mean the immorality. You know what I mean.

DIANE
Listen, I was raised Catholic and I've had to work past all that stuff. What are you?
Methodist? Presbyterian?

PAUL
Episcopalian.

DIANE
Oh, that's easy! Episcopalians are all set up for adultery. It's practically why that
religion was invented.

PAUL (Amused)
Oh, really?

DIANE
Think about it? Henry VIII and his fifteen wives.

PAUL
I think there were six.

DIANE
And nine girl friends.

PAUL
Ninety.

DIANE
Do you think he referred to them as the present Mrs. Tudor?

PAUL
My first wife Catherine of Aragon.

DIANE
My second wife whom I beheaded.

PAUL
My daughter Elizabeth by my first marriage.

(They laugh. They are looking at one another, one might say “melting.”)

ACT THREE

13. JIM, EVERETT

(It is early fall – Veteran’s Day. There are leaves on the patio, a few. JIM stands with a pink drink in his hand, sipping it. EVERETT enters holding a cocktail. They both wear sweaters.)

EVERETT

Thank God, you’ve started drinking.

JIM

It’s a Shirley Temple.

EVERETT

You need to sweep up these leaves.

JIM

That’s not so important. Leaves are cosmetic. Unlike weeds. Weeds kill the big plants and when the big plants die the hillside collapses.

EVERETT

Ooooo... significance. Everything full of meaning.

JIM

Hey, that’s my training. Drama. Can’t help it.

EVERETT

You sound like your Dad.

JIM (Offended)

No, I don’t.

EVERETT

Yeah, you do.

(The energy changes here to the old confrontation matrix we’ve seen between them)

JIM

Ok, how’s the world of real estate?

EVERETT

Really good.

JIM
Better working for your dad than mine?

EVERETT
I work for Marin Realty if that's what you mean.

JIM
Marin Realty which your dad runs.

EVERETT
Ok.

JIM
And owns.

EVERETT
You still working at the toy store?

JIM
No. I quit. I'm quitting. I'm moving to New York.

EVERETT
Really?

JIM
Yeah.

EVERETT
When?

JIM
Tomorrow as a matter of fact.

EVERETT
Wow.

JIM
Yeah. Big wow.

(Pause.)

EVERETT
Well. Great. Good for you.

JIM
I'll be working at the toy store there. They have branches all over the world.

EVERETT
Neat.

JIM
Yeah, it is neat.

EVERETT
So you're finally taking the big leap.

JIM
What's that mean?

EVERETT
Going to be an actor.

JIM (Cold)
Why are you here?

EVERETT
I wanted to see you.

JIM
I mean, why are you suddenly here, right now? I haven't seen you in like...

EVERETT
I heard you were leaving.

JIM
Oh, so you knew. You heard?

EVERETT
My father told me. Someone must have told him.

JIM (Snooty English)
Well, it's a private party actually, old boy. End of summer celebration. Just for members of the firm and immediate family. So piss off!

EVERETT
I'm crashing. I wasn't invited but I came anyway. That's how I was raised. Seize the opportunity.

JIM
What do you want?

EVERETT

I don't want anything.

JIM

I don't have any money. I'm moving to New York to work in a toy store; it's not like I can afford to buy a house in Corte Madera that's sinking into a mud flat.

EVERETT

Jesus.

JIM

I mean, that is what happens when you build houses on tidal basins. Why don't you just drop them in the Bay? They'd probably float long enough to sell and then you wouldn't have to waste all that money building dykes.

EVERETT

Why are you so fucking hostile?

JIM

Am a hostile? I thought I was just snide. Great. I'm getting better, I'm advancing. Soon I might achieve rage.

EVERETT

Are you still pissed that I took a job from your father?

JIM

No, I'm still pissed that you twisted my father's arm into giving you a job, tried to swear him to secrecy knowing I'd find out anyway, and all because you wanted to get at me somehow, make me feel low, something...

EVERETT

Shit. Is that what you think?

JIM

No, it's not what I *think*, it's what I *know*. You're an asshole.

EVERETT

You can't talk to me like that.

JIM

Wait a minute... umm... I just did. I just did talk to you like that. So I guess... yes... I guess you're wrong.

EVERETT

You are really...

JIM

What? A asshole? An ass? Go ahead. I've heard it all before. There's nothing new you can call me.

EVERETT

You'll never make it as an actor.

JIM

No, but I can make it as a toy store clerk. That's why I'm going to New York, to work in a toy store.

EVERETT

You secretly want to make it as an actor.

JIM

No, I openly want to make it as an actor but I'm going to be a toy store clerk. That's ok, I like listening to that song they play all day: "Welcome to our world, welcome to our world, welcome to our world of toys..."

EVERETT

What's the matter with you?

JIM

Nothing. I'm consistent. I instill the same reaction in everybody. "What's the matter with you?" Everybody says that now. I've leveled off.

EVERETT

You've gone from being pathetic to annoying.

JIM

No, I was always pathetic and annoying, now I'm grating.

EVERETT

What do you even care what I do, why do you even care? That's what I don't get. I was looking for a job... I thought I wanted to go into the legal profession, I thought I'd just get some exposure, what the fuck do you care what I do?

JIM

I care because... you know why I care.

EVERETT

No, I don't.

JIM

You know exactly why I care.

EVERETT
What? I don't. I really don't.

JIM
You need me to tell you?

EVERETT
Yeah, why don't you tell me?

JIM (Sarcastic)
Oh, ok. All right, let's play this game. I'm an artist, artists are honest, let's be honest. I can, you can't – that's one thing I have on you. Because I like you. That's why I care. I like you.

EVERETT
All right?

JIM
No, I like you a lot. I've always liked you. I have feelings for you. (Very sarcastic, but it's the truth) I feel close to you, I admire you, I think you're great.

EVERETT
Ok?

JIM
Soooo.... You never knew that?

EVERETT
No.

JIM
That's bullshit. You're exactly like my father. You know exactly how much I love you and because of that... it's like you've got me on a hook. It's like you can play with me. You don't like me but you know that I love you, so that means you can do things to me.

EVERETT
That is so not what's happening.

JIM
It's not? Come on. I've been through it with my parents. I know when I'm going through it with somebody else.

EVERETT
Well, it's just not how I saw it.

JIM

It's not "how I see it," it's how it is.

EVERETT

Well, that's not what happened.

JIM

It is what happened. You have no interest in the legal profession, you just thought it'd be kinda cool to work in my father's office. But more than that you knew it would really get me, you knew it would really bug me. And that just made it all the more appealing... A three-month internship that would really piss me off. It'd show me exactly where I am. See because in spite of the fact that you didn't really like me, I got a bigger house than you do and my parents have more money than you do and that just kinda pisses you off.

EVERETT

Well... I think you've got a very complicated view of the world.

JIM

Yeah? All these years.... I've been crazy about you. I thought you were the light of my life. I thought you were great. And you never like once invited me over to your house?

EVERETT

We don't invite anyone over to our house.

JIM

No, no, you never invite anybody over to your house. I used to have to like come over. I used to have to call up and talk to you for half an hour until you said, "Would you like to come over?"

EVERETT

Come on... what am I? The White House? You need a formal invitation to come over?

JIM

Yeah, that's how I was raised. You don't go over to somebody's house unless you get a formal invitation.

EVERETT

This is so weird. I mean, this is what you've been so wrapped up in, this complicated, weird manners thing.

JIM

No. I think that's what you've been wrapped up in. You just saw a little rich kid, richer than you, and you knew that he liked you, and I think you thought that things were kind of boring, and you thought you'd have some fun.

EVERETT

That's just very perverse and strange and...

JIM

Yeah, ok, yeah, it's perverse and strange and it is, at least partially, true. It is, at least partially, a fact. You know I adore my father. Still. I think he's the greatest thing in the world and I'd tell him that in a second, I'd tell him that right now if he walked out here. I'd say, "Dad, I adore you." I'd say that to him. But it doesn't make any difference; it doesn't change peoples' behavior. And then I did it again, with you. You came here, you arrived suddenly in my seventh grade year, and I adored you. I thought you were the greatest thing in the world. I thought you were handsome, I thought you were funny. I thought you were well built. I didn't even know that I could think somebody was well built. I didn't know what "well built" meant, it was like a joke, it was like something off of TV. "Oh, he's well built." I didn't even know any of those things. And you arrived and you changed everything. I was in a bad place. I know that's really dramatic but I was. After fifth grade, my life was kinda screwed up. Nobody liked me. I don't know why. I wasn't good in sports, I was too sarcastic, and... I had this high sense of myself. A rich kid. We're not, really. The Lewises? We're not that rich. But my parents just acted like we were. That made us seem rich, their acting. And they loved that. They loved people looking up to them because everyone thought they were rich, because they acted rich. But me? It just made me a sarcastic hard to please snob. By the time I was in seventh grade I was like getting weird. I was talking to myself more than I was talking to other people. I was hiding from people I was so afraid they'd be mean to me, say mean things to me. People used to say mean things to me and I'd say sarcastic things back and they'd threaten me. It was like I could be provoked, but I couldn't respond. I felt helpless. And then you showed up and you were actually nice to me. You didn't know, you didn't have any idea what my history was. You didn't know I'd committed the bad crimes, the crimes of sarcasm, bitterness, the unpatriotic crimes, the traitor... you didn't know I was the town traitor. And you actually were kind to me. And I made the mistake of being bowled over, of thinking you were the greatest thing since shit. And then all of sudden I was baggage. I've been baggage for years, just sort of trundling along, following you about. Well, in a way I thought that was over, when we went to college, I just kind of thought it was over, finally. And college was great. Away from you, on my own terms, discovering I liked to create, making friends. But it ended. And here I am, with one ability... I guess I should be grateful. I mean, looking back at it, I guess I wouldn't have known I was gay if it weren't for you and being gay has sort of let me love things, other than my family which I don't trust. It's let me believe that there can be trust in love. And then after college, when we started hanging out again, I thought maybe things had changed. But they haven't. We're back here, back in Ross, hanging out, me worshipping you, again. You trying to figure out how you can best me.

EVERETT

That's not what I've done.

JIM
It is.

EVERETT
It's not.

JIM (Almost desperate)
It is. That's how I have to see it. For me, it is. That's exactly what you've done. That's how I have to see it. I have to have a cosmology. I have to have a way of seeing the world. That's my way of seeing it. I gotta get out of here. I gotta go. There's too much here. They built too much, my parents. They made too much of a set. For their act, their money act. The play has begun to feel real.

(JIM is desperate here, almost frantic. His gut determination that he has to leave is constantly bombarded by feelings of unsureness, by second thoughts. So he has to constantly convince himself: this is not the place for him, not if he is ever to be free. And in this feeling of desperation he has lost his rage at EVERETT and shifted to a selfish but necessary self-regard.)

EVERETT
Oooo... So dramatic.

JIM
I know it's corny but... it's too easy. It's too much me. When I go to New York, it just sort of scares me, it kind of frightens me. I'm sort of at a loss. It kind of knocks me out of me. I mean, I meet people and I'm just another person. I'm anonymous. I almost don't have a personality. I feel like I disappear. And that feels horrible. I mean I feel like my sarcasm, my snideness, I feel like that's me. But by the same token, I feel like it's burying me too early. I mean, when I'm forty, I can give up and be snide but I feel like, here, being snide, it's not about that. It's about big houses and building something and being ambitious and not letting your personality take over. I wanna go to New York, I wanna be at the heart of it with Liza and Frank Sinatra, I wanna disappear with a bunch of other people who are disappearing, trying to leave something behind. I don't know. I'm really scared. I'm scared leaving tomorrow.

EVERETT
Well, I'm jealous.

JIM
You're jealous?

EVERETT
Yeah. Sounds exciting.

JIM
Yeah. That's one way of putting it.

EVERETT
Well it's kind of what I wanted to do. When I got out of college I wanted to come back here and do something in the City. (Still trying to convince JIM, still trying to convince himself) Which is why I took the job, which is why I, you know, thought I could get a foot in in San Francisco. At least I won't be in the suburbs still where I grew up. That's why I took the job, that's why I took the job.

JIM (Not believing him)
Yeah, right.

EVERETT
No.

JIM
You took it-

EVERETT
Ok, all right, I talked to your father because-

JIM
Because what?

EVERETT
Because he's a cool guy. I see what you've always liked in him. It's what I've always wanted to be. It's what I wanted to be around.

JIM
And.

EVERETT
And, you know, I have been jealous of you. You're a pipsqueak, you're soft, you're weak. I didn't like that. I don't like that you got to walk through life being funny and saying funny things and being snide and sarcastic and you always had this like security blanket. I had to work at that Deli down the street, the fucking Deli, on the weekends while you...

JIM
Sat around being bored.

EVERETT
Yeah, sat around your big house being bored. That sounds like heaven.

JIM

Is that why you didn't become like my best friend, and stay my best friend?

EVERETT

I guess, I don't know. At first I thought you were the funniest thing in the world but...

JIM

But what?

EVERETT

Then I saw the effect you had on people, I saw it hanging out with you. It sort of, I don't know, made people feel like...

JIM

What?

EVERETT

Made people feel like they were inferior, they were stupid.

JIM

Inferior? Stupid? No, that's not how they acted. They treated me like I was jerk.

EVERETT

Yeah, because they felt inferior and stupid.

JIM (Arguing)

Well, they, they always acted like they had the answers, the key. I hated that. I hate growing up with people who had clichés for solutions, homilies, set ways of thinking that got them through. They were so boring.

EVERETT

So they *were* inferior and stupid.

JIM

By choice. They chose to be inferior. They all wanted to laugh at my snideness, I could tell, I could tell they did. But they chose, they chose to be offended. I could see that process, I could see that development of degeneration flash across their faces.

(Pause. JIM has realized something, he's finally heard something EVERETT said.)

JIM

I made people feel inferior?

EVERETT

Yeah, you do.

JIM
How?

EVERETT
Just your way of seeing things. Nobody sees shit that way. They wish they did, because it's kind of like cool and hip but it's also negative. We're told not to think that way.

JIM
Yeah, well it's the only way I've got of seeing things.

EVERETT
You really gay?

JIM
Yes, I'm really gay.

EVERETT
How do you even know that?

JIM
I know it.

EVERETT
How, I mean like... do you have AIDS?

JIM
You know, that is something I would say, it's so obnoxious and rude.

EVERETT
All right, well how do you know you're gay?

JIM
I don't know... well, I do know. There's a guy that I knew in college and... you know, I don't want to go into it, it's just complicated and embarrassing...

EVERETT
No, no, tell me.

JIM
I'm not going to tell you, I'm not going to tell you. I don't trust you. I know. (Sarcastic) I have experience. Not a lot. I'm not like Mr. Whatever who's had sex with, you know, everybody on the planet but... I know. I just know. And...

EVERETT
So you're going to New York to be gay?

JIM

No, I'm not going to New York to be gay. I'm going to New York because that's where I feel comfortable. I want to act but I also want to just be. I want to stop worrying about everything all the time and just worry about, I don't know, survival, worry about getting through the day, I don't know.

EVERETT

I'm sorry about the internship.

JIM

Look, you don't have to apologize.

EVERETT

No, I felt like a schmuck doing it.

JIM

Yeah, but you did it anyway. I mean that's just kind of you, right? You're a schmuck, ok? You did it anyway. So just own it.

EVERETT

All right, I own it. I'm still sorry I did it. I can own something and be sorry.

JIM

Ok, fine, it's like repentance, you're going to keep doing it but you'll beg forgiveness and then do it again.

EVERETT

You know what? Fine. I'm not sorry. You're a dweeb and I feel perfectly glad that I did it.

JIM

Great. That's not news to me but I can see you feel good saying it so – good for you. A millisecond of honesty.

EVERETT (Annoyed)

God, your brain.

JIM

Yeah, my brain, *my brain*. I'm very proud of it. I've spent a lot of time on it and I'm very proud. (With a corny Southern accent) Right proud!

(Pause.)

JIM

So you'll be selling real estate?

EVERETT

Yeah. It's fine. (He knows it's not.)

JIM

What do you want to be doing?

EVERETT

You see, I'm not like you. I haven't had these things I want to do.

JIM

Nothing?

EVERETT

Nothing that I got enough affirmation for doing it that I want to keep doing it. You know, I just never had that stuff.

JIM

So what do you want?

EVERETT

I don't know. A big house, a car, I don't know. A wife, girl friend, all that stuff.

JIM

Yeah, well, you're right to hang out with my father.

EVERETT

Well, I'm glad I saw you tonight.

JIM

Yeah, it's a night for confessions. You see I'm on a mission tonight. To come out. It's the new thing. Coming out. It was on the cover of *Time Magazine*. Or *Newsweek*. Maybe it was *Penthouse*. Anyway, everyone's supposed to come out.

EVERETT

Of what?

JIM

The closet.

EVERETT

What closet?

JIM

Never mind. Anyway, I'm telling my parents I'm a fruiter before I split for the Big Apple. I already told my mother.

EVERETT
What did she say?

JIM
She didn't bat an eye. She said, "Well, don't tell your father. He's having a rough time at the office right now."

EVERETT (Laughing)
What does that even mean?

JIM
I'm not sure. Maybe she wants to tell him she's a lesbian but is holding off till after tax time.

(EVERETT laughs.)

14. PAUL, JIM, EVERETT

(PAUL enters holding cocktail. He wears a blue blazer, slacks.)

PAUL
Hello you two. Are you talking again?

JIM
Yes, we've aired our differences and decided to agree to disagree. In other words, we hate each other.

PAUL
Good. Some of my best friends are people I hate.

JIM
I don't doubt it.

PAUL (To Everett)
How's your Dad?

EVERETT
Good. He moved out last week. I'm now the man of the house.

JIM
I'm so sorry.

EVERETT
It's ok. My parents stopped speaking to each other years ago.

JIM
You two miss working together?

PAUL
Not so much.

EVERETT
No.

(They all laugh.)

JIM
Will you excuse us, Everett old bean? I have some bombs to drop.

EVERETT
It was good to see you, Mr. Lewis.

PAUL
You too Everett.

EVERETT
And thank you for letting me come over, for letting me crash your Memorial Day shindig.

JIM
That's fine. Darleen doesn't like drop-ins but I don't mind them.

EVERETT
I'd love to have lunch sometime. Discuss some propositions we have for growth.

JIM
For Corte Madera?

EVERETT
Yes, as a matter of fact.

JIM
Oh, Daddy, you should do it. Get in on the ground floor. While it's still dry.

PAUL
Ok, Everett, let's have lunch. Soon.

EVERETT
Ok. (To JIM) I'll see you.

JIM
Yeah. Sometime.

EVERETT
Ok.

(EVERETT exits. Awkward pause.)

15. JIM, PAUL

JIM
I saw you backstage the other night. After my play.

PAUL
Yes, sorry. I get so tongue tied after one of your shows.

JIM (Sympathetically)
That's ok.

PAUL
Is it?

JIM
Yes.

PAUL
I enjoyed the show, your performance.

JIM
Thanks.

PAUL
It was really spectacular.

JIM
Thanks.

PAUL
Reminded me of when we saw you as Nathan Detroit, years ago.

(Pause.)

PAUL
There was an awful lot of hugging.

JIM
When?

PAUL
When we came backstage the other night.

JIM
Hugging?

PAUL
Men hugging each other and kissing.

JIM
Dad.

PAUL
Pretty funny all those guys hugging and kissing.

JIM
Don't you hug and kiss the other attorneys after a case?

PAUL
No.

JIM
Oh, come on, a good case, a case where you've had a real slam dunk, don't you hug and kiss on the lips, squeeze each others butts, just to celebrate?

(PAUL is laughing.)

JIM
You know I'm gay don't you?

PAUL
Of course.

JIM
I mean really.

PAUL
Sure. I've been gay my whole life. Your mother's a, what are they called? Trannies?
She's a tranny.

JIM
Chicks with dicks?

PAUL
Yeah, she's a chick with a dick.

JIM
I'm serious. I'm gay.

PAUL
Ok.

(Pause.)

JIM
Well, that shut you up.

PAUL
Don't be ridiculous.

JIM
It did, it shut you up.

PAUL
I mean, don't be ridiculous you're not gay.

JIM
I am. It's not ridiculous. Half the world is gay, why shouldn't I be?

PAUL
Half the world isn't gay.

JIM
It is. Think about it. You have two sons, one of them should be gay.

PAUL
Half the world is not gay.

JIM
Well I am.

(Pause.)

PAUL
Well...

JIM
Well what?

PAUL
Don't tell your mother.

JIM
All right. I promise. I won't.

PAUL (Bitter)
Is this your coming up?

JIM
Coming up?

PAUL
Are you coming up to me?

JIM
You mean coming out?

PAUL
You know...

JIM
What?

PAUL
There's only one reason you've ever done anything and that's to get back at us. To get back at me and your mother.

JIM
Oh, really?

PAUL
Yes, really.

PAUL
So I'm gay to get back at you.

PAUL
Yes, you do these awful things to yourself and announce them to the world to make fun of us, to make fun of me.

JIM
It's amazing. You really are my father. That's exactly how I see the world, as some massive conspiracy contrived against me.

PAUL

I don't know what you're talking about. Is this why you're moving to New York? To be gay?

JIM

Dad, you don't have to move to New York to be gay. It's not like going to Detroit to work in the car industry. I can be gay in my own backyard. As a matter of fact, that's what I'm doing right now.

(Pause.)

PAUL

It's just spiteful.

JIM

Well, I guess this sort of ruins my plan.

PAUL

What was that?

JIM

I was going to ask you if you knew any gay people in New York. You know, like contacts who could set me up, get me laid, that sort of thing.

PAUL

That's not funny.

JIM

No, but it was an attempt at levity. Levity doesn't need to be funny, it just needs to lighten the mood.

16. DIANE, JIM, PAUL

(DIANE enters. They look at her and turn away from each other, not wanting to argue in front of her. She looks, as always, lovely.)

DIANE

Hi, this always seems to be my cue to enter.

JIM

I'm gay.

DIANE

Yeah, I figured.

JIM

You see, Dad. It's not news to anyone, you're just clueless.

PAUL

Look...

JIM

What?

PAUL

I came out here...

JIM

What? What?

PAUL

I actually didn't come out here to argue.

JIM

And yet we argued. We always exceed our expectations!

PAUL

I came out to say I want to help you, when you get to Manhattan.

DIANE

Oh, I'll leave you two alone.

PAUL

No, I'd like you to hear this.

DIANE (Surprised)

Oh, ok.

PAUL

I'd like to help you with some contacts. People in the theatre industry. Well, at least they know people who know people.

JIM (Also surprised)

Oh.

PAUL (Handing him an envelope)

I've collected some names. Over the last few weeks. I contacted them. They know you're coming. Here are some numbers.

JIM (Not knowing how to respond)

Thanks.

PAUL

In spite of what you've said to me, I do want to help you.

JIM

Oh, well thanks. That's very big of you.

PAUL

Look, why can't you just take the names and be grateful.

JIM

I am actually. I'm very grateful. But... Well... As Miss Morani will tell you, I'm not so good on the follow through. She tried to set me up. I just... embarrassed her. Right?

DIANE

You didn't embarrass me. It was all fine.

JIM (Realizing something else about himself)

Ok, well, embarrassed myself. I think... Maybe I'm not as ambitious as I thought I was... or I think I should be... whatever. (Handing PAUL back the names) Here. You hang onto these.

PAUL

OK.

JIM

Sorry.

PAUL

Don't be sorry.

JIM

I wish. I do wish I could be somebody that people could meet. And not scare. Oh, well.

(Awkward pause. JIM goes inside.)

17. DIANE, PAUL

PAUL

Jim.

DIANE

That was a nice gesture.

PAUL
Yeah, it didn't work. Stupid kid. Fuck!

(He walks away from her, collects himself and turns around.)

DIANE
Hey. Can I back up and come out again later?

PAUL
Yes, please do.

DIANE
When the mood has changed?

PAUL (Smiling)
Ok.

(She exits. He stands looking out for a second and she re-enters, much sooner than he thought, which amuses him.)

PAUL (Acting like he's surprised to see her)
Hello!

DIANE
Hello, Mr. Lewis. How are you?

PAUL
I'm good, counselor, how are you?

DIANE (Playfully)
I'm fine, how was your case in court, on Monday?

PAUL
Very good, very good actually. I don't think we're going to have to go to trial.

DIANE
Oh, so you're moving towards settlement.

PAUL
Yes, I am.

DIANE
Well that will be good news for the firm.

PAUL
And how are your cases going?

DIANE
They're going all right.

(They laugh.)

PAUL
You look... umm... very beautiful tonight.

DIANE
Thank you.

PAUL
Very beautiful.

DIANE
Thank you. I dressed specially for this evening.

PAUL
Oh, did you?

DIANE
Yes, I did.

(They laugh.)

PAUL
You crack me up.

DIANE
Are you going to spend the rest of your life flirting, just flirting outrageously?

PAUL
I don't flirt outrageously.

DIANE
You flirt pretty strong.

PAUL
Yeah?

DIANE
Yeah.

PAUL
Well, it's good to see you outside the office.

DIANE
To see me outside the office?

PAUL
I mean to see you outside the office, again.

DIANE (Very direct, almost accusatory)
Yes, I thought it would be nice to have a change of atmosphere after all these months.

PAUL (Awkward)
So what's going on?

DIANE
Not much.

PAUL
What about that guy you were seeing?

DIANE
Oh, him? I just brought him into the picture to make you jealous.

PAUL
Oh, really?

DIANE
Yeah, really.

PAUL
You're not interested in him?

DIANE
No, he's just someone I knew a while ago and sort of came back into the picture.

PAUL
Yeah, how much into the picture?

DIANE
He came all the way into the picture and if you're asking if I slept with him the answer's yes and it's none of your goddamn business. (Her tone has changed in the middle of this line, from casual to attack.)

PAUL (Almost petulant)
So why did you tell me about it?

DIANE
Like I said I wanted to make you jealous.

PAUL
You don't give up do you?

DIANE (With alarming frankness)
No, I don't. Once a guy fucks me, I never give up.

(Pause.)

PAUL
Look...

DIANE (Aggressive)
Look what?

PAUL
That was a mistake.

DIANE
A mistake? Twenty-three times a mistake? I mean, I'm counting our get-togethers not the individual... ummm, what's Jim's word? Penetrations?

(We get a sense here, for the first time, of her comportment in court, when she has someone in the witness stand. She is no nonsense, unsentimental, direct, witty and ruthless. Her behavior should be admirable, not bitchy.)

PAUL
Ok.

DIANE
Yeah? Is it ok?

PAUL
I uh...

DIANE
You what? You what?

PAUL
I kinda knew we'd be having this conversation.

DIANE
Yeah, I did too.

PAUL
Of course you did.

DIANE
Yeah, because I came and made it happen. Right? Cause it wasn't happening, cause all of the sudden you weren't like really meeting my eye in the office and you weren't returning my phone calls and it kinda like, you know....

PAUL
Yeah, all right, all right, all right.... It kinda...

DIANE
Yeah.

PAUL
It kinda...

DIANE (Prompting him, a sarcastic sound)
E... E... E... [This is the "i" sound of "it" – mocking how he is having trouble saying it.]

PAUL
Yeah

DIANE
It kinda like...

PAUL
Uh-huh...

DIANE
It kinda like drifted away.

PAUL
Yeah.

(Pause.)

DIANE
So what?

PAUL
I can't really afford this.

DIANE
Afford this? Whatdya mean? Emotionally? Spiritually? Fiscally?

PAUL
Fiscally.

DIANE
You can't afford what? Hotel rooms? That's ok. I can figure that out. I got an American Express card, they just made me Gold.

PAUL (Referring to the unseen house)
No, I mean I can't... (Sigh) You know this is all sort of like scenery, it's like a set, it doesn't really exist. This... what you're looking at. It doesn't really exist, it's all kinda borrowed money, it's all kinda credit, that's what built this. And the whole idea of something beyond it.

DIANE
Beyond what?

PAUL
Beyond it. I mean I can't...

DIANE
You can't what?

PAUL
I couldn't... I could never...

DIANE
What?

PAUL
I couldn't support two lives. I can't start again. I can't... I can't afford it. It's about money. I think you're great. I really... You know I think you're great. Come on.

DIANE (Emotional)
This isn't, you know... this isn't about you thinking I'm great. It's...

PAUL
Ok... Ok... all right, all right, all right. I'm sorry. (Pause.) If we decided to go the whole hog and I had to get a divorce and support all this... I couldn't. I couldn't support Darleen. I couldn't... you know. I couldn't support that lifestyle and the lifestyle with you.

DIANE
Wait. I mean, what are we even talking about? Did I ever say I needed a lifestyle with you?

PAUL
Well, it seemed like...

DIANE
Did I say that?

PAUL
So what, you would just go on this way...

DIANE
No, no, wait. I mean even if like, that had happened, which is just kind of arrogant on your part to think it would, but even if it had happened... I mean, I am self-employed, I do make my own money, you know-

PAUL
Yeah but.

DIANE
Yeah but what?

PAUL
What? I'm going to let you support me?

DIANE
Oh, so this is like a what? A macho thing? This is like a, you know, "I'm not going to let some woman support me" thing?

PAUL
No, it's just I have enormous financial obligations that...

DIANE
That what?

PAUL
That I'm not exactly meeting right now and...

DIANE
And... and what?

PAUL
And, you know, I'm just...

DIANE
Is that the reason that I came into the picture? Because you're feeling financially insecure and you need some comfort and something to shake up your life and make you feel like you're not just a kinda fiscal screw-up?

PAUL
No, I-

DIANE
No?

PAUL
No.

DIANE
So, what's... What happened?

PAUL
I, I, uh...

DIANE
What? I mean what? Is this like power? Like uh... You had to prove yourself and once you did you were kind of done? You wanted to wipe the smirk off my face? You don't really like lady attorneys. So you hire one and then fuck her and then fuck her over – I mean is that it, is that what's going on? You know it felt... Not just gross. I mean it felt gross, but it felt really high school. And by that I mean it felt like something you didn't get to do in high school. And you were always kinda like regretting that. Or maybe it was something that other people did to you in high school. And you always wanted to like get your own back. That's what it felt like. It didn't really feel like what was going on between us, which felt like you really liked me. I mean, that felt like honest. That felt honest. You seemed truly happy to be around me. You were really... that was the best part of it. You were really cute. You were just nice and cute. And you... you were always like smiling and squeezing my hand and just kissing me, you know, like on the ear and like here (indicating her lower neck.) And with you know like excitement though it wasn't here like mewww (superficial kiss,) it was here like mmmm (loving kiss.) It was like, there was like excitement in it. And um... and then all of sudden it's like this... this veneer went up, this kinda, this kinda control thing... and it was like you took on a role and you were determined to get through it, you know, even though you weren't really enjoying it, you weren't really like enjoying playing the role. You know what it felt like? It felt like a case where you know, you knew the defendant was guilty but you were going to win it anyway. Yeah, that's what it was, it was a case where you know, you were going to do anything to make it happen, even if it meant like, you know, fixing it. Like paying off, bribing the judge. I can't tell you how many times I looked at you and I thought, here's a guy who if he could just get over himself and stop it with the control shit could really have a good time. And of course there'd be consequences, yeah sure, there would be consequences. Of course. But you weren't gonna let that happen.

PAUL

Look I should never have started anything, I know that-

DIANE

No, no. no... you know what? Starting it is one thing. I mean that's not what we're talking about. Yeah, I mean, ok maybe you shouldn't have started it if you'd known this about yourself, but the thing is I think you did know it about yourself but you started it anyway. In other words, you shouldn't have started it if you knew this shit about yourself and I think the role you're playing is that you discovered this about yourself so you had to stop it. But, in fact, I think - and you've said I'm intuitive, you've said I can read a jury, I can read a judge, I can read a witness - ok, well here's what I read. I read that you could see the whole thing mapped out before it even started and that's the journey you wanted to take. And you took it. Now let me ask you a question. Is this part of the journey, my little confrontation scene, is this part of the journey?

PAUL

Yeah.

DIANE

So how was this evening supposed to go? I mean, it started with all sorts of flirting, how was it supposed to play out? You prepared your case, what was the discernable outcome? Come on. You can tell me. Let's see if I facilitate your confession, sweat it out of you. How was this evening supposed to end?

PAUL

Look, I think we've said enough.

DIANE

Your honor, please direct the witness to answer the question. What did you expect from this evening?

PAUL

That we would get back together.

DIANE

But.

PAUL

But there would be no danger of it becoming anything bigger.

DIANE

And.

PAUL

And you'd recognize that I could turn it on or off at will.

DIANE
So.

PAUL
So I'd have control.

DIANE
Good. You get a biscuit.

(Pause. She got what she wanted, she has proven her point. And like anyone in control of her life, even in the moments that are new to her, she is able to assess the damage, ingest the lesson, and move on. That quick. She is calm now.)

DIANE
Well, that's all right. I mean, I mean it really is all right. It's ok. As far as I'm concerned it's ok. It's absolutely ok. (She sighs.) You got a... you've got a beautiful home. You know, I've always loved this house. It's just... I think it's gorgeous. It's interesting, this beautiful house... houses mean so much to us, don't they? They represent so many things but I... I think, in a way, they're like all beauty, they're ephemeral, they're more like ideas, they're ideas that we don't actually, completely grasp. We don't. We can't solidify them and of course they can be torn down, and that's what's... that's what's kinda great about them, that's what's great about all beauty. It either isn't lasting or can be destroyed and so we have to like... we have to love it while it's there. But at the same time – I mean, that's a cliché – but the... ok, here's... here's the second part of that, of the cliché. We have to realize that they don't really mean anything. They don't really exist. And that's... I mean that's the great thing about them, that they're completely ephemeral, they're like dust, there isn't an absolute. Nothing, really, to feel bad about. Right?

17A. DIANE, PAUL, JIM

(JIM enters and looks at the two of them. DIANE looks at him.)

JIM
Interrupting?

DIANE
Yes, as a matter of fact. (She looks at PAUL and smiles.) Actually, we're finished.

(She exits smiling. PAUL crosses away, looks up the hillside, takes a deep breath and turns to face JIM.)

18. PAUL, JIM

PAUL
Well.

JIM
Well.

PAUL
When do you leave?

JIM
Tomorrow morning. Mom's driving me down to the bus. The Airporter Bus to SFO to Manhattan.

PAUL
Sounds exciting.

JIM
I'm excited. I think it will be great fun. I can't wait to get to New York. It's all falling apart: muggers everywhere, rapists, the city's crumbling.

PAUL
Yeah, it's a pretty screwed up place.

JIM
Perfect for me, right?

PAUL
That's not what I...

JIM
No, it's what I meant.

PAUL
What do you wanna do there?

JIM
I don't know. I'm going to work in the toy store. And I'll live with my friend in Brooklyn.

PAUL
This guy you're living with... Jerry?

JIM
Just somebody I know from college.

PAUL
Is it um...

JIM
No, it's not anybody like that.

PAUL
Oh.

JIM
I mean, he's gay but we're not involved.

PAUL
Ok.

JIM
I mean, I know that all gay men sleep with all other gay men so naturally you think-

PAUL
I don't think anything.

JIM
No, no, I know the stereotype. That we're all alike... that gay sex isn't about one other person, it's about every other gay guy.

PAUL
Ok. Come on. I know about gay people.

JIM
Oh, you do.

PAUL
Yeah, we happen to have a gay attorney in the office.

JIM
Oh, really?

PAUL
Yes.

JIM
Oh, what's he like? Does he wear hotpants? Does he uh... does he scream and camp and make jokes?

PAUL
No, he's a very nice, sober man who works hard and I respect that.

JIM
You surprise me.

PAUL
Really? That I hired a gay guy?

JIM
Yeah.

PAUL
Well, he was first in his class at Yale Law so...

JIM
Oh, ok, well that makes sense. Maybe you can take on some gay insurance cases, there must be gay insurance cases like... a gay guy gets squished by a falling bridge and who has to pay? The gay insurance company or the straight insurance company? That sounds like an interesting case.

PAUL
I guess.

JIM
So what about that little vixen that you uh... you uh... you were out here um... talking so quietly with for so long?

PAUL
Come on.

JIM
No, what about her?

PAUL
What about her?

JIM
She's a hot number.

PAUL
Gimme a break.

JIM
No, come on, you're always so dissatisfied with Mom. Why don't you take her under your wing? Why don't you, you know, have something on the side?

PAUL
Come on.

JIM
No, really. I mean, you know, you're a... you're not... you're not a bad looking guy.
You could get a piece. Maybe she'd uh... run off with you, maybe you'd be happier.
Hey, it's a time to sort of break out.

PAUL
No, listen, it's not funny.

JIM
It's very funny to me.

PAUL
Yeah, I bet it is.

JIM
What's that supposed to mean?

PAUL
You really shouldn't talk about women that way.

JIM
Oh, is this more parental advice? Have I gone too far?

PAUL
No, it's just...

JIM
What?

PAUL
It's regular advice. You take a joke too far.

JIM
You saying they don't talk about women this way at the Grove?

PAUL
Yes, they do. But with pleasure, with excitement, you do it...

JIM
I do it...

PAUL
You do it with rage, anger. It's condescending.

JIM
Ok.

(He actually hears this and sees that it's true. In other words, he takes the advice.)

PAUL (Trying to lighten the mood)
Anyway...

JIM (Gently)
She's attractive.

PAUL
She's not my type.

JIM
Oh, she's not your type?

PAUL
No.

JIM (Playfully)
You saying there's no interest there?

PAUL
I... I... I'm saying...

JIM (Suddenly figuring it out)
Have you been involved?

PAUL
Look, I just...

JIM
No, tell me, you can tell me. We're buddies. Hey, I'm out of here. I'm gone. You can tell me.

PAUL
Look....

JIM
What? Tell me. We're being honest. I told you about myself today. I'm making a big change. Tell me about yourself. Maybe you can make a big change.

PAUL
I'll take the fifth.

JIM
The fifth?

PAUL
Yeah.

JIM
All right.

(Pause.)

PAUL
I'll miss you.

JIM
Yeah, nice of you to say that.

PAUL
No, I will.

JIM
Yeah, is that in the Bohemian Grove parenting handbook or something?

PAUL
No, I will miss you.

JIM
Oh, yeah? Well, I won't miss this place.

PAUL
It's your house.

JIM
I know. It didn't work for me. I didn't like it.

PAUL
You didn't like any of it?

JIM
The lazy part of me liked it. I was never happy here. I'm excited to go. I'm scared. I know I'm going to be upset. I know I'm going to want to come home.

PAUL
Well don't.

JIM

You don't want me here?

PAUL

I think you're right. I don't think it's a good place for you. I think this is a good decision of yours. And I think it's going to be tough.

JIM

I love you.

PAUL

Yeah, I know you do.

JIM

Do you love me?

PAUL

I think so. You know, when you were little, like when you were a little kid, I thought you were pretty boring. You know, like little kids are boring. I didn't get you at all. And then when you got older, I don't know, I was too wrapped up in my own stuff. But lately, I don't know, you're kind of the size of an adult and you kind of do some adult things now and then...

JIM

So, you're beginning to love me?

PAUL

I don't know. I don't know what I'm doing. I don't know what... I don't know. Of course I love you. You're my son. How could I not love you? Come on.

JIM

No, you come on, you can tell me.

PAUL

I just wish... well, I just wish you were happier.

JIM

Yeah, I do too.

PAUL

I mean, can't you be happy about something?

JIM

Like what?

PAUL

I don't know, can't you... I don't know... aren't there things that make you happy?

JIM

Sure, there are things that make me happy. I like being onstage, I like watching old movies.

PAUL

That's it?

JIM

It's something.

PAUL

Well, I can't claim that I've tried very hard to make you happy. But... I had a great time in college and I had a great time after it. I had a great time building this house. I was so proud of it. And I didn't know what kinda mopping around and being unhappy was until I was probably forty-two. That's how far I got.

JIM

Yeah, well... maybe it'll all happen in reverse for me. Maybe at forty-two I'll suddenly snap out of it.

PAUL

When you're there, in New York... Don't worry so much about the rules.

JIM

Is this advice?

PAUL (Mock stern)

Yeah, it's advice. Listen to me and shut up, asshole. Don't get too wrapped up in the rules. I mean, don't break the law. But all these like rules we raised you with, the good manners, that stuff... Don't worry about it too much. Worry about yourself. And if somebody's not nice to you, strike 'em off the list. There's no reason they should stay on it. Don't do anybody any favors. Ok?

JIM (Sarcastic, but friendly)

You know what advice you gave to me? Once.

PAUL

What?

JIM

Don't sleep with little girls. You said don't sleep with little girls.

PAUL
Yeah, all right, I remember that.

JIM
Which just goes to show how completely out of tune you were with me both as a sexual being and as a person.

PAUL
Hey, it's not bad advice. A lot of my friends-

JIM
I really don't want to hear about your yucky friends.

PAUL
Ok. Ok.

JIM
Ok?

PAUL
Ok. Yeah. Just...

JIM
What?

PAUL
Don't sleep with little boys.

JIM
Oh, my God!

PAUL
I'm just...

JIM
Yeah, ok, fine.

PAUL
I'm-

JIM
Yes!

(They both laugh.)

JIM
Ok?

PAUL
Ok. Ok

JIM
Ok

(Blackout.)

End of Play