

All Together Altogether

Four Plays about a Family

By

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All Together Now

For Nancy and Phil

CHARACTERS

PAUL HENDERSON: Late thirties, gay, college professor, in good shape.
ADAM CONNOLLY: Mid-thirties, Paul’s partner; strong, with a dry wit.
FOX ENGSTROM: Fifteen, well-built, smart and polite.
JIM HENDERSON: Mid-sixties; Paul’s father.
DOROTHY HENDERSON: Mid-sixties; Paul’s mother.
JULIE ENGSTROM: Late thirties; Fox’s mother.

PLACE and TIME

A home in suburban Miami, present day. Saturday morning of Labor Day weekend.

All Together Now was first presented as part of the PLAYte series produced by New Theatre of Miami at Mina’s Mediterraneo in Miami, Florida, on December 16, 2015. It was directed by Steven A. Chambers and Erik J. Rodriguez with the following cast:

Paul.....Kenneth Averett-Clark
Adam.....Carlos Alayeto
Fox.....Jonathan Mitzenmacher
Jim.....Joel Kolker
Dorothy..... Joanne Marsic
Julie.....Nicole Quintana

All Together Now was first presented in a full production by The Playgroup LLC at the Willow Theatre in Boca Raton, Florida, on March 2, 2018. It was directed by Joyce Sweeney; scene design by Tom Andrew; stage managed by Robin Paulive. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

Paul.....Richard Weinstock
Adam.....Patrick Sheehan
Fox.....Eytan Deray
Jim.....David Ehrlich
Dorothy.....Brenda Aulbach
Julie.....Fran Friedman

All Together Now

Act One

Scene 1

The scene is the living room of the home of PAUL HENDERSON and ADAM CONNOLLY. It is a comfortable place in suburban Miami. It is open and airy. The furnishings are a mixture of antique and contemporary furniture, tastefully done but not extravagant. Upstage right is the kitchen area, open to the rest of the room, with a breakfast table nearby. Upstage left is a dining area with a table and chairs for four. Downstage right is a comfortable couch, chairs, and coffee table. Downstage left is a reading area with bookshelves and a small desk with a laptop computer. Off stage right is an exit to the rest of the rooms of the house; the front entry hall is stage left. The back wall has a large sliding glass doors and sidelights leading out to a patio and garden area visible to the audience. It is lush with plants and hanging orchids.

At rise, it is morning on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend. PAUL and ADAM are in the kitchen going over a shopping list. PAUL is in his late thirties, in good shape and has an easy-going manner. He is wearing a t-shirt, boxers, and no shoes. ADAM is five years younger than PAUL. He is strong, almost military in his bearing, but has a dry wit and makes a nice contrast to PAUL's sometimes rash behavior. He is wearing jeans, a polo shirt and sneakers.

PAUL (*reviewing the list*): Okay, we've got the salad, steak, and potatoes. That leaves us with a choice of asparagus or artichokes.

ADAM: Artichokes. Asparagus means hollandaise and that's a pain to make. And it makes your pee stink. With artichokes, you just steam 'em and dip 'em in butter.

PAUL: Right. And there's the cheese for appetizers. They like brie, but what do you think?

ADAM: I'll decide when I get there.

PAUL (*writing*): Okay. Don't forget the crackers. And then there's the dessert.

ADAM: German chocolate cake. Already ordered.

PAUL: My favorite. Thank you.

ADAM: Well, yeah, you asked for it.

PAUL: Are you sure you want to do all of this? It's just a birthday party.

ADAM: Well, we could do it at Chuck E. Cheese and have the clown sing "Happy Birthday."

PAUL: Only if that's the last thing you want to do in this life.

ADAM: How about if the clown is a stripper?

PAUL: A clown stripper? That's creepy. And what's the rush? It's not until tomorrow night.

ADAM: I want to get all of the shopping out of the way before your folks get here. Y'know, we could have had a big party; invited all of our friends and stuff. You only turn forty once. But this is what you said you wanted: just a quiet dinner at home.

PAUL: It's enough that my parents are coming to town to join in the festivities. When you turn forty, we can do all of that.

ADAM: We have five years to plan it, then.

PAUL: Right. Okay. How are we set for booze?

ADAM: That depends on what they want to drink.

PAUL: Scotch.

ADAM: That's it?

PAUL: Yep. Just scotch.

ADAM: Any special scotch?

PAUL: Any scotch is fine as long as it's The Macallan. You remember the last time they were here. That's all they'll drink.

ADAM: Expensive tastes.

PAUL: Dad always says "life's too short to drink cheap booze."

ADAM: What about the wine for dinner?

PAUL: Forget about it. Nothing you choose would be right, or if it is, we can't afford it. I'll just send Dad to the liquor store and let him graze. For him it's like a visit with old friends.

ADAM: When are they getting here?

PAUL: Who knows? Mom just said, "We'll see you on Saturday." You know their routine. They got in last night and went straight to the hotel. They'll linger over breakfast and then come over when they're ready. They're on their own timetable, and they assume everyone else is on it, too.

ADAM: Do we need to tidy up any more?

PAUL: I vacuumed and dusted yesterday, and besides, Mom will rearrange everything anyway. Just leave it.

ADAM (*sarcastically*): You're really looking forward to having them here.

PAUL: Over the moon. Can't you tell?

ADAM: They only come down once a year. We can put up with it.

PAUL: Yeah, but what if they decide to retire here? (*Sigh*) It's just a couple of days.

ADAM: Y'know, it's not too late to just grab our stuff and head down to Key West to that little B & B on Fleming Street with the clothing-optional pool and a nice quiet room all to ourselves. Leave a note on the door for your folks – "Have a nice time, see you Tuesday."

PAUL: That would be nice, wouldn't it?

ADAM: When was the last time we did that?

PAUL: Been a while, hasn't it?

ADAM: At least a year, if not more. So, whaddaya say?

PAUL: If I said yes, who'd open up the gym?

ADAM: I could call Jason. He needs the hours. Oh, wait... damn, he's in Orlando this weekend.

PAUL: I have a faculty meeting first thing Tuesday morning and you have your VA appointments all next week and....

ADAM: I get the point.

PAUL: We'll go.

ADAM: It'd be nice if we could just go right now.

PAUL: Next weekend. I promise. I'll call that B&B first thing on Monday.

ADAM: I'm gonna hold you to that. *(He gets ready to go; grabs the list and car keys, then goes to PAUL and gives him a quick peck on the cheek.)* By the way, I do have a present for you.

PAUL *(returning the kiss)*: Looking forward to it.

(They hug, and then ADAM starts to leave. As he does, the doorbell rings.)

PAUL: Oh, crap, they're here. Damn, their timing is terrific. You let them in and I'll go put on some clothes.

(PAUL runs off Right to the bedroom. ADAM goes to the front door and opens it. Standing there is FOX. He is a tall, well-built, good-looking young man in jeans and a t-shirt that are a little too small for him, dusty cowboy boots, and a baseball cap. He is carrying a worn knapsack, and he looks a little travel-weary, but he grins broadly when he sees ADAM.)

FOX: Hi! I'm looking for Paul Henderson.

ADAM: Well, you're in luck. We have one in stock.

FOX: Are you...?

ADAM: No, I'm his partner, Adam Connolly.

FOX: Oh, okay. I'm Fox.

(FOX offers his hand and they shake.)

ADAM: Nice to meet you, Fox. Is Paul expecting you?

FOX: Um, no.

ADAM: Are you one of his students?

FOX: Uh, no. I'm sorry to just show up like this. I would have called but I didn't have his number....

ADAM: So, Fox, what are you...

FOX: This is a nice place. Did you guys build it?

ADAM: No, we bought it pretty much as is ten years ago. Made a few improvements; added the garden.

FOX (*looking out to the garden*): Wow, that's really beautiful.

ADAM: Thanks. (*Looks towards bedroom to see where PAUL is.*) Can I get you something? Coffee?

FOX: Naw, I'm good. I had a Starbucks at the airport.

ADAM: You just got here?

FOX: Yeah.

ADAM: From where?

FOX: Santa Fe. I would have been here last night but there were thunderstorms and my flight was delayed getting out of Dallas.

ADAM: You came all the way from Santa Fe?

FOX: Well, I'm supposed to be going to New York.

ADAM: I think you made a wrong turn somewhere. This is Miami.

FOX: Yeah, I know.

ADAM: So you came all the way here to meet Paul?

FOX: Sounds crazy, doesn't it?

ADAM: Well, he's kind of gotten used to the fan mail and the Twitter followers and the interviews, but I don't think he's ever had one show up at the door. Not a lot of World War II history buffs are teenage groupies.

FOX: Oh, I'm not. I mean, I've heard about the book and I saw the miniseries, but I'm not here because of that.

ADAM: Oh. Well....

PAUL (*offstage*): Be right out!

FOX: That's him?

ADAM: Yeah.

(*FOX looks offstage with a sense of apprehension and expectation. PAUL re-enters, wearing slacks, a nice shirt, and loafers.*)

PAUL: Hi, sorry, I was getting dressed and.... (*He sees FOX and stops.*) Uh, hello.

FOX (*nervously*): Hello.

PAUL: Hello. (*To ADAM*): When you said you were getting me a present, I was thinking more along the lines of a book or a watch or something. You got me a cowboy?

ADAM: No, he showed up all by himself.

PAUL: Oh.

(*FOX is staring at PAUL. PAUL gets rather uncomfortable.*)

PAUL: Can I help you?

FOX (*deadpan*): I'm Fox.

PAUL: Nice to meet you...Fox.

(*More silence and PAUL looks to ADAM for guidance. ADAM shrugs.*)

PAUL: Do I know you? Are you in one of my classes?

FOX: No.

PAUL: Well, then...?

(*He pauses a beat waiting for an answer, but FOX is still staring.*)

ADAM: He says he came all the way from Santa Fe to meet you.

PAUL: Oh, really? I used to live in Santa Fe.

(*Finally FOX snaps to. He goes to his knapsack and pulls out a bulky and rather worn manila envelope. He holds it for a moment, and then looks at PAUL.*)

FOX: You remember Julie Engstrom?

PAUL: Julie Engstrom? Yeah... sure. She and I were friends out there; I lived next door to her in a little duplex on Galisteo Street. She and her partner, um....

FOX: Denise.

PAUL: Right, Denise. Julie had just finished med school and was doing a residency at the hospital there. I was teaching at the prep school. We used to hang out together and share meals and if we got really adventurous, we'd rent a movie. So how do you know Julie?

FOX: She's my mom.

PAUL (*a little taken aback*): Oh. I didn't know she had any kids.

FOX: She does.

PAUL: Really? (*Getting a little concerned*) So you came all the way here just to meet me?

FOX: Yeah.

PAUL: Okay... Why?

(*FOX takes deep breath, looks around the room, and then gazes at PAUL.*)

FOX: I'm your kid.

ADAM: What?

PAUL (*softly*): What?

FOX (*pulling a piece of paper out of the envelope*): Yeah. (*He is getting his courage back*) You remember, don'tcha? Mom and Denise wanted to have a kid and they asked you if you would be the donor and you said yes and so you did and then....

ADAM: Holy...

PAUL (*stunned*): My God. But we signed all sorts of documents terminating all parental rights and obligations. We got a really good lawyer to make sure that it was all set. Cost a small fortune. (*FOX pulls out a sheaf of documents and wordlessly hands them to PAUL.*) Right. But it didn't happen. We went to the clinic three times and we went through all the motions but each time they said that they didn't implant. And we had a good cry, and then I got the job here and moved away. The last I heard from Julie was that she was working at a clinic on an Indian reservation. So how can I...? How can you...?

FOX: They froze a batch. The last one. After you left, they decided to try one more time.

PAUL: How old are you?

FOX: Fifteen. I'll be sixteen next March.

ADAM: You're big for your age.

FOX (*modestly*): Yeah, I kinda shot up over the last couple of years.

PAUL (*doing the math in his head*): I moved here in May.... But how does she know....?

FOX: You were the only donor.

PAUL: It was supposed to be anonymous. The records were to be sealed. There were no records kept of my name or anything like that. I went to the clinic, I did my thing, I left. There were no names, just numbers. It was all very sterile.

ADAM: So to speak.

PAUL: So how did you find me?

FOX: Well, I always knew that I was an IVF baby. When I was five and asked Mom where babies come from and why I didn't have a dad like other kids, she said she went to the doctor and picked me out and that I was special 'cause she really wanted me. Then when I started to really figure out where babies come from, I asked who the donor was. She just said someone very nice. But then you got famous and Mom couldn't keep it to herself after you won the Pulitzer Prize. There you were in the New York Times, your picture, your biography, and then the book got turned into a miniseries. She brought me the paper, sat me down, and told me the rest.

ADAM: That was last winter. Why have you waited until now?

FOX: Mom got a grant to help develop health services for indigenous people in Central America. It's for two years.

ADAM: And you don't want to go.

FOX: I can't. They won't let her bring family. Or pets.

PAUL: What about Denise?

FOX: She's long gone. After Mom got pregnant, Denise decided that she couldn't handle it. She took off for Colorado, and the last we heard was that she's a deputy sheriff in a small town outside Boulder.

PAUL: She's a nurse. Or she was. We called her "Denise De-Nurse."

FOX: I only know what Mom told me.

ADAM: So what was she going to do with you? Put you in storage with the car and the furniture?

FOX: Boarding school. Pinewoods Academy, Newburgh, New York.

ADAM (*shuddering*): Jesus. So when do you go?

FOX: Supposed to be there on Monday.

ADAM: This Monday? The day after tomorrow?

FOX: Yep.

PAUL: Does Julie know you're here?

FOX: I didn't tell her I was coming here, if that's what you mean.

PAUL: That is what I mean, and I think she'd probably like to know. She's probably worried sick about you.

FOX: I'm not supposed to get to New York until this afternoon. I already called the school and told them I missed my connection in Dallas and I'd let 'em know when I get in.

PAUL: I still think you should let her know.

ADAM: Wow, you've only been a dad for five minutes and you already sound like one.

PAUL (*glaring at ADAM*): Don't you need to go shopping?

ADAM: Are you kidding?

PAUL: Well, okay. Just....

ADAM: Just what?

PAUL: Just.... Never mind.

(*PAUL stares at FOX for a moment then goes to the kitchen and pours himself a large mug of coffee.*)

ADAM: Hey, Fox, you sure I can't get you something to eat? Coffee? Juice? Milk? Breakfast? You like bacon and eggs?

FOX: I'm okay for now. I don't eat meat, anyway.

PAUL: That's right. Julie was quite the vegetarian. Wouldn't eat anything that ever had a face.

FOX: She's upgraded to fish now. But it has to be free range, not raised on a farm.

ADAM: You're pretty good-sized for someone who never had a cheeseburger.

FOX: Well, there's a lot of protein in other foods, too; rice, beans, soy. I do okay on that.

ADAM: Well, we're having chicken tonight, so if you're staying, we'll make some extra salad.

PAUL: Staying?

ADAM: For dinner.

PAUL: When's your flight to New York?

FOX: I don't know yet. I told 'em to leave that leg of the trip open. (*FOX looks around the house.*) So, how long have you been together?

ADAM: Twelve years.

FOX: Really? Married?

ADAM: No.

FOX: Oh, okay. So, how'd you meet?

ADAM: I was one of his students.

FOX: High school?

PAUL: College. I teach history at the university.

ADAM: Don't worry; we were both consenting adults.

FOX: That's cool. Where're you from?

ADAM: Little town in upstate New York. You've never heard of it.

FOX: So, what do you do?

(Throughout this conversation PAUL has been staring at FOX.)

ADAM: I've got a

PAUL *(cutting off ADAM, desperately trying to get back to the subject)*: He was in the Air Force, he owns a gym, and does physical fitness training and therapy for the VA. What's with all the questions?

FOX: I'm just trying to get to know you guys, that's all. I mean, you are my...

PAUL: Look, we should call Julie.

FOX: It's still early in Santa Fe. You call now and you'll wake her up and she'll think it's some kind of emergency.

PAUL: Well, it is an emergency. You're fifteen hundred miles off course from where you should be. If you don't show up at the airport in New York, the school's going to call her and ask where you are, and she'll go nuts.

FOX: I called her last night. Told her I was stuck in Dallas and the airline was putting me up in the hotel there. She's fine.

ADAM: Maybe you should call her anyway. You don't have to tell her where you are.

FOX *(pulls a cell phone out of his pocket)*: It needs to recharge.

(PAUL takes the cordless phone off the wall and plunks it on the counter.)

PAUL: This one doesn't.

FOX: I will. Just not now. Can't we just talk?

PAUL: Okay, let's talk. *(A beat.)* Why are you here?

FOX: I just wanted to meet you. To see you. To find out who you are. That's all.

PAUL: Then what?

FOX (*shrugging*): I don't know.

PAUL: Well, you're going on to boarding school aren't you?

FOX: Well, maybe. (*Looks around the house again.*) How many rooms do you have here?

ADAM: Three bedrooms, two baths.

FOX: Sweet. Big enough place.

PAUL: Tell me about this school. Pinewood, you said?

FOX: I actually don't know much about it other than what I read about it on Wikipedia. S'posed to be a good place, but... (*Shrugs*) Wasn't my idea to go there in the first place. Not really looking forward to it.

ADAM: You don't think you can handle it?

FOX: I can handle it. I do okay in school and I know how to take care of myself. Santa Fe has its share of snotty East Coast preppies. They don't bother me.

ADAM: So what's the problem?

FOX: It's just... I don't know why I have to go there, that's all.

PAUL: If you can't go with your mom, you sure can't stay by yourself.

FOX: Why not?

PAUL: Because you're fifteen. You're still a minor. You can't drive....

FOX: I've been driving since I was eleven. Stick shift, even.

PAUL: I mean legally. You don't have a job. You can't pay the bills.

FOX: Doesn't matter. She's renting the house out to some people to look after the place. They don't want me there, and I don't want to be with them.

ADAM: Don't you have any relatives you can stay with? What about your mom's family?

FOX (*snorting*): They're a bunch of Jesus-freaks in Minneapolis. They disowned Mom when she moved in with Susan.

PAUL: Who's Susan?

FOX: The one before Denise. They won't take me. To them, I'm "that bastard."

ADAM: Jesus.

FOX: That's what they say out loud. Behind my back I'm "that unnatural bastard, spawn of the sodomite."

PAUL: Wait, they know who I am?

FOX: Not by name. But Mom told them how she went through a fertility clinic with sperm donated by a gay friend. I wasn't there when she told them, but I hear it got kinda ugly. They disowned her all over again.

ADAM: So, if you don't want to go to that school and you can't stay in Santa Fe, then what?

FOX: How about I stay with you guys?

PAUL: Whoa. Wait just a minute.

FOX: Why not?

PAUL: Because until now I didn't know you existed.

FOX: I'm your son.

PAUL: Genetically, yeah. But as far as the law is concerned, you're a total stranger. It's no different than if I went to the sperm bank and did it just for the money and the free porn.

FOX: Look, if it's about money, I got that. Mom set up a trust account to pay for school and everything. Doctors make pretty good money in Santa Fe, so if that's the problem, not to worry. (*Pulls out his wallet.*) Look, she gave me two hundred bucks just for traveling and food and stuff.

PAUL: It's not that. It's... I don't know anything about you.

FOX: What do you want to know?

PAUL: Well, I don't know.... What kind of sports do you like? What books do you read? What makes you happy? Do you believe in God? What do you watch on TV? What makes you cry? Cats or dogs? Favorite car? Mac or PC? Coke or Pepsi? Boxers or briefs?

FOX (*without missing a beat*): Baseball, Steinbeck, being with friends, not sure, whatever's on, injustice, dogs, Ford pick-up, PC, Coke, and briefs.

PAUL (*impressed*): Well, okay then. Steinbeck, huh? You at least inherited my ability to remember things. Do you have a girlfriend?

FOX: No.

ADAM: Boyfriend?

FOX: (*chuckling*): No.

ADAM: I had to ask. I mean, it does sorta run in the family. Both sides.

FOX: I'm fifteen. I'm not supposed to be doing that yet.

PAUL: Says who? I started dating when I was thirteen.

FOX: Did you go out with boys?

PAUL: No.

FOX: Then it doesn't count, then. If you're gay and you go out with girls, what's the point?

PAUL: Dating is how you learn to get along with other people, learn to be polite, to care about someone other than yourself. It's part of our civilized society.

FOX (*chuckling*): If you say so. I'm not really into that sorta stuff.

ADAM: Kind of a loner?

FOX: No, I gotta lot of friends. I've just never been into the rituals.

PAUL: Rituals?

FOX: High school dating is a socio-economic behavior pattern instilled in teenagers to reinforce stereotypes, promote premarital sex, and enslave women in the role of servant to men in preparation for their lifetime of playing the part of the submissive woman.

PAUL: You believe all of that?

FOX: I see it enough among the kids I know that some of it's true. Dating is something kids go through so that they can get around to making out.

PAUL: So you don't believe that people do it because they like each other and might fall in love? It's all about sex?

FOX: Sure. That's all it ever is. When you finally got around to dating for real, wasn't that what you were looking for?

PAUL (*unconvincingly*): No.

FOX: So the first time you guys went out, what happened?

PAUL: I don't remember.

ADAM: Are you kidding?

FOX: Oh, come on!

PAUL: I don't. We knew each other before we went out. It wasn't like a first date, anyway; we got together for drinks one night after the gym and....

ADAM: He had his hands on my belt buckle ten seconds after the door closed on his apartment.

PAUL: Well, so what? We were two consenting adults, attracted to each other. What'd you expect us to do, play Scrabble?

FOX: No. But see, it's not all about society and social interaction and all that crap. It's about two people getting together through a ritual that is basically foreplay in public. And I don't see what the big deal is about it, that's all.

PAUL: And you're not in favor of sex?

FOX (*shrugging*): I'm not against it. I suppose I'd like to try it sometime. I know it sounds weird, but sex... I don't know. I mean, look at all the trouble it's caused just in my family alone, not to mention all the trouble everywhere else. Everything's about sex. Our entire culture and social interaction is all hung up on a basic biological function. And look at all the trouble it's caused. It's started wars, cultural divisions, killed millions of people through disease and jealousy.

PAUL: It's also inspired some of the greatest art, literature, and music known to man.

FOX: Sure, but the rotten stuff is a lot worse, and I am not really interested in it. Well, not yet.

ADAM: You got all of that from reading Steinbeck?

FOX (*chuckling*): No. I go to a pretty good school. And we read a lot about sociology and anthropology and stuff.

PAUL: It might also have something to do with the way you came into the world.

FOX: What?

PAUL: You weren't conceived in the usual way and you grew up with.... (*FOX is scowling and PAUL realizes he may have stepped in it.*) Never mind.

FOX: Look, just because I didn't start out life by shooting out of someone's, uh, turkey baster in the back seat of a station wagon and was raised by a single mom who happens to be a lesbian has got nothing to do with it. I don't remember how I got here. You don't know how I was raised. You weren't there.

PAUL: You're right; I wasn't. But that was *my* turkey baster you came shooting out of.

FOX: Oh, well, that explains why mine is just average, then.

ADAM (*interrupting*): Okay, you know what, you two have a lot to catch up on and I need to get the shopping done. (*Picks up the grocery list, car keys.*) Nice to meet you, Fox. (*Pointedly to PAUL*) We'll talk when I get back.

FOX: Sure. Thanks.

(*ADAM exits through the front door. PAUL watches him go.*)

PAUL: I *really* don't want to hear about the size of your, uh, turkey baster, okay? (*Beat.*) This is a lot to take in, okay? Can I just absorb all of this for a moment?

FOX: Sure.

(*PAUL takes a deep breath, looks at FOX, then goes to sit on the couch.*)

PAUL: Wow.

FOX: Can I ask you something?

PAUL (*resigned*): Yeah, sure, ask me anything.

FOX: If you had known about me, would you have been there?

PAUL: Sure, I would have.

FOX: Really? You signed all the papers. And then you took off for Miami.

PAUL: I was twenty-five, fresh out of grad school making shit money teaching history to high school kids. I lucked into a teaching job here that I've worked my ass off to get tenure for and had the great good luck to turn my Ph.D. thesis into a best-seller. If I'd stayed in Santa Fe, I'd probably still be teaching at that school, still driving that old station wagon.

FOX: So why did you do it? Why did you say yes to Mom and Denise?

PAUL: It was their idea. They came to me. They asked me to help them. I said sure. I don't even remember thinking about whether or not I would be legally responsible. In fact, it was Denise who brought it up. She was the one who said that I had to sign the papers if they were going to do it. I think she wanted to make sure that I wouldn't come back some day and try to take custody of the baby.

FOX: Would you?

PAUL: Would I what?

FOX: Would you have taken custody of me? Y'know, like if Mom couldn't or something.

PAUL: Yeah, sure.

FOX: You say that now. But back then.... What did you know about raising kids?

PAUL: Probably as much as your mom did, or anybody who starts a family. You don't come with an owner's manual, y'know. Based on how my parents did it, it's pretty much trial and error.

FOX: Got any brothers or sisters?

PAUL: No. I'm it. They, um, well, they kept trying, but I was it.

FOX: I know how you feel, then.

PAUL: Yeah, they did okay by me. As a matter of fact, they should be here sometime today.

FOX: Looking forward to meeting them.

PAUL: Yeah, well, I sure hope the feeling is mutual. I'm not sure how they feel about surprises.

FOX: Yeah. So. What would it have been like?

PAUL: What would what have been like?

FOX: If you had raised me instead of Mom.

PAUL (*taken a little aback*): Well....

FOX: C'mon, just for grins.

PAUL: Well, for one thing, I wouldn't have named you "Fox."

FOX: Why not? What's wrong with my name?

PAUL: Nothing. It's a perfectly nice name. It's just that in my family, kids are named after parents or grandparents. I'm named for my mother's father and my dad.

FOX: Then in my case, my name would be Pyrex Turkeybaster.

PAUL (*chuckling*): I guess.

FOX: What would you have named me?

PAUL: I never thought about it. Baby names don't come up often in my circle of friends.

FOX: Well, now's your chance. What's my name?

PAUL (*grasping*): I dunno; I've always liked Michael.

FOX: Yeah, I know a few Mikes. (*Tries it out.*) Mike Henderson. I like that.

PAUL: You're not going to change it, are you?

FOX: Nah, just playing around.

PAUL: Good. Fox is a very nice name.

FOX: So, what do I call you? I mean, it would feel kinda weird calling you "Dad." Technically you are, but it's not like you earned it or anything.

PAUL: My name's Paul. That's fine. I don't care.

FOX: Okay. So, now that we've gotten that out of the way, what about it?

PAUL: What about what?

FOX: Can I live here with you?

PAUL: No. You can't.

FOX: Just like that? You don't want to think about it?

PAUL: Don't have to think about it. Even if I wanted you to, it can't happen.

FOX: Why not?

PAUL: Because that's not how things work in the real world. This isn't some Hallmark Channel TV movie and the kid gets to choose what parent he gets to live with.

FOX: Why not? Why can't I have a choice?

PAUL: Because I'm sure that there are all sorts of people – including your mother – who will say you don't get to make that choice by yourself. You're fifteen. You're a minor. You have no

rights. Hell, you'd have better luck if you were a fetus. I have no right to make a custody claim, and I'm pretty sure your mom would not go for it.

FOX: When was the last time you talked to her?

PAUL: Well, obviously, it's been at least fifteen years.

FOX: So let's ask her. (*Finds a pad and a pencil and writes down a phone number.*) Call her.

PAUL: It's still too early.

FOX: She gets up early to do yoga.

PAUL: You didn't mention that ten minutes ago.

FOX: I forgot.

PAUL: Yeah, right. First, you're going to call her and tell her where you are. Then we'll take it from there. (*Picks up the phone and holds it out to FOX. He almost takes the phone, then chickens out.*)

FOX: You know what? I need to... can I, like, use your bathroom? Maybe get a shower? I've been traveling in these same clothes for a whole day now and I feel kinda....

PAUL: Oh, sure. Yeah. There's a bathroom in the guest room. Go ahead; it's in through there, first door on the left.

FOX: Great, thanks.

PAUL: You need anything? If you need something, just... let me know.

FOX: Nah, I got a change of clothes and stuff in here.

(*FOX picks up his knapsack and exits. PAUL watches him go, then picks up the phone and dials. It takes a moment for the call to go through.*)

PAUL (*on phone*): Uh, hello, is this Julie? Hi, Julie, it's Paul Henderson.... Yes, that's right.... Good to hear your voice, too.... No, I'm in Miami, still.... Well, thanks.... Yeah, it was – quite an honor. Well, thanks.... Oh, you did? Well, great, thanks. I didn't know it was out on Blu-Ray.... No, I sold the rights, and so no, I don't make anything off it other than a royalty check whenever they run it again on Memorial Day. Anyway, um, listen.... (*PAUL looks off in the direction where FOX exited.*) Got a minute?

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2

An hour later. PAUL is at the desk, looking at the computer. The front door opens and ADAM enters carrying several grocery bags and a box with The Macallan scotch bottle.

PAUL: Need a hand?

ADAM: Nope, got it. (*Goes to the kitchen, starts unpacking the bags.*) The kid leave?

PAUL: No, he went to take a shower and change clothes. But that was an hour ago; I think he's crashed.

ADAM: Huh. So, what's the story?

PAUL: I called his mom.

ADAM: That must have been an interesting conversation.

PAUL: Yeah. She wants me to put him on the first plane to New York.

ADAM: So are you gonna?

PAUL: All the flights today are booked or standby. The first flight out is tomorrow afternoon. I can get him on it and be back in time for the dinner.

ADAM: So, that's that?

PAUL: Pretty much.

ADAM: He just decided to take a side trip to Miami on his way to prep school just for the hell of it?

PAUL: Hey, kids these days....

ADAM: Yeah, I'm pretty sure there's a little more to it than that.

PAUL: Well, he's sticking with the idea that he wants to come live with me.

ADAM: Yeah? And?

PAUL: I told him no, of course.

ADAM: You did?

PAUL: Of course.

ADAM: Why?

PAUL: Because...I just can't take in a fifteen-year-old kid like he's a stray dog or something.

ADAM: Why not? He's had all his shots and he seems to be housebroken.

PAUL: Well, it's a little more complicated than that.

ADAM: I know it is, Paul. So why did you make the decision so quickly?

PAUL: What?

ADAM: You just decided that without even thinking about it?

PAUL: What's there to think about?

ADAM: Well, the fact that maybe it's something we should have talked about before you decided to send him on his way.

PAUL: You can't seriously believe that I'd even consider it. It's not even worth talking about.

ADAM: Says you! Since when do you get to make a decision like that without even telling me?

PAUL: Oh, come on. It's not like we have to discuss everything, is it? I mean, when I get an e-mail from some Nigerian banker with a foolproof plan to make a million bucks, you want me to talk it over with you?

ADAM: The kid's not spam, Paul. We are supposed to make these kinds of decisions together. You didn't go out and buy this house by yourself, and the things we have we chose together. We talk about them, okay? Agreed?

PAUL: Yeah, well, I wasn't exactly thinking along those lines when a teenage boy showed up on my front step and announced, "Hi, I'm your kid" and said he wants to move in with me.

ADAM: Well, you don't just blow him off, either. Did you even think about it before you said no?

PAUL: Look, even if there was a way – somehow overlooking all the legal stuff and the custody battle and the whole proof of responsibility or whatever – since when did it ever occur to us that we might want to have a kid? It's not exactly what we were planning...or did I miss something over the last twelve years?

ADAM: Have you ever thought about it?

PAUL: Being a parent?

ADAM: Yeah.

PAUL: Well, no. I'm not exactly programmed to think that way. (*A beat.*) Have you?

ADAM: Yeah, I have.

(*PAUL stares at him. ADAM continues to put away the groceries.*)

PAUL: Um, were you planning on telling me that?

ADAM: The subject never came up. But, yeah, I've thought about it. And I think I'd be a good one, too.

PAUL: Based on what? Being a platoon leader to a bunch of military recruits isn't exactly like being a father.

ADAM: What is?

PAUL: What is what?

ADAM: Like being a father?

PAUL: How the hell should I know?

ADAM: Exactly. How do you know that you wouldn't be good at it? That we wouldn't make a hell of a team as parents? With this one, most of the work's already been done. He seems like a nice kid.

PAUL: He is. He's bright, intelligent, well-mannered.... But then, we don't know anything about him. It all may be an act; after all, he's trying to win me over so he can live here. He might be doing drugs. You never know what kind of baggage people come with.

ADAM (*chuckling*): God, listen to you; you sound like my dad. You want me to take him down to the clinic and have him pee in a cup?

PAUL: It might be worth it.

ADAM: Jesus, Paul, you never know with anyone. How much did you know about me before we moved in together?

PAUL: A hell of a lot more than I know about him.

ADAM: Three months. That's how long it was for us. From our first date to the day we signed the lease on that apartment in the Grove. To the day.

PAUL: That was different. We spent a lot of time together –

ADAM (*interjecting*): Mostly in bed.

PAUL: No, not just that. We went to movies, dinners; we even drove down to the Keys and spent the weekend at the B and B.

ADAM: And every other night we were either at your place or mine. We got to know each other pretty well, I'd say. You can learn a lot about someone in a pretty short time. So what's the problem?

PAUL: It's a lot of responsibility. He's fifteen. He still has a lot of growing up to do.

ADAM: Yeah, I know. Don't you think we can handle it?

PAUL: You think we can?

ADAM: I'd like to at least have the chance to get to know him and for us to talk about it.

PAUL: I can't believe we're even having this conversation. Two hours ago we didn't know he existed; now you want to have a serious discussion about him living with us?

ADAM: And I can't believe we're having a conversation about whether or not we should have a conversation about it. By the way, is there anything else about your past life I should know about just in case, y'know, anyone else should happen to drop in?

PAUL: Not that I know of.

ADAM: Are you sure? I knew you lived in Santa Fe, but you seemed to have left out the part about being the friendly neighborhood sperm donor.

PAUL: I would have told you if I had known something had come of it. I'm finding out about it the same way you are. Look, tomorrow afternoon he'll be on a plane to New York and that will be the end of it.

ADAM: It will? You plan on acting like he doesn't exist? Don't you feel any kind of obligation to him?

PAUL: What do you want from me? It would have been different if I had known about him.

ADAM: Well, now you do.

PAUL: So what do you want to do?

ADAM: I think we should talk about it.

PAUL (*glancing off-stage to the guest room*): Well, then, let's talk, because we don't have a lot of time. My folks will be here any minute and then tomorrow I have to put him on a plane.

ADAM: Okay. I say we let him stay.

PAUL: Just like that.

ADAM: You want to send him away "just like that." He's obviously not crazy about going off to boarding school, he's obviously not got a choice about staying in Santa Fe. He's reaching out. He needs us. We've got the room, it's not like we can't afford to feed another mouth, and... I think it would be good for us.

PAUL: How is it good for us?

ADAM: Well, as much as I hate to give any credit to those pompous arrogant "traditional family" freaks, there is something to be said about raising a kid and giving him a good home. It's not only good for him, it makes the parents realize they've got something else to think about other than just themselves.

PAUL: Are you saying we're missing something?

ADAM: No. I'm saying we might be better off to have something more.

PAUL: Jesus, did someone turn on "Dr. Phil" at the gym? Where do you come up with this stuff?

ADAM: Hey, you know what, I happen to think that giving a kid a good home is a good thing. Some kids never get that.

PAUL: Okay... now I get it. It's not about Fox. It's about your dad.

ADAM (*incredulous*): What?

PAUL: That's it, isn't it? Your dad's an asshole so you have to make it up somehow.

ADAM: Oh, so now who's going all "Dr. Phil"? (*FOX, in clean jeans and t-shirt, appears in the doorway. He looks clean and refreshed.*) Leave my dad out of this.

PAUL (*seeing FOX*): All right. Well, how're you doing? Get some rest?

FOX: Yeah, I kinda crashed.

PAUL: Must have been a long day and night for you.

ADAM: Want something to eat? I've got eggs, toast, bacon, anything you want.

PAUL: He's a vegetarian, remember.

ADAM: Okay, so skip the bacon.

FOX: Anything's fine. Whatever you want.

ADAM: Comin' up.

(*ADAM starts to make some breakfast for FOX, getting out eggs and milk and bread.*)

FOX: Look, I heard you guys... before I came in. I didn't mean to cause any trouble. I mean....

ADAM: Forget it. You didn't. French toast okay with you?

FOX: Sure. It's just that....

PAUL: It's just that it's a lot to take in on a Saturday morning, okay?

FOX: I wanted to see who you were, that's all. And when the flight was cancelled and they were trying to get me to New York, they had a flight that made a stop in Miami, so I....

PAUL: Wait a minute. So you just thought all of this up while you were sitting in Dallas waiting for a rebooking?

FOX: Sorta.

PAUL (*holding up the envelope*): You had all of this stuff about me and the paperwork your mom and I signed. You just carry that around with you?

FOX: No. Well, yeah; I was gonna look you up sometime, y'know, maybe call you or come down over Thanksgiving or something. But the flight next to the one they wanted me on was to Miami, and so I just went to the lady at the counter and said, Hey, can you get me on the flight to Miami then to New York? I told her my dad lived here and that I hadn't seen him in a long time.

ADAM: Gave her the old “aw-shucks ma’am” routine?

FOX: Yeah.

ADAM: And she fell for it.

FOX: Yeah.

ADAM (*looking at PAUL*): I know where that comes from.

PAUL: So this whole moving here and living here with me was just something you came up with on the spur of the moment.

FOX (*shrugs*): Well, after I got to know you a little. If you’d turned out to be a jerk I wouldn’t have asked.

ADAM: That’s how it was with me, kiddo.

PAUL: So you’re not serious about it.

FOX: Yes, I am. I mean it. I want to stay here with you, and I’ll do whatever it takes to make it happen. I’ll work it out with Mom and the school.

PAUL (*snapping his fingers*): Just like that?

FOX: Yeah. I mean, she trusted you enough once before. How much could it have changed in fifteen years?

PAUL: There’s a big difference. And I already talked to your mother.

FOX: Oh, yeah? How is she?

PAUL: Well, all things considered, remarkably calm.

ADAM: Did you tell her he wants to stay here?

PAUL: That didn’t come up. I didn’t think it was the right time to mention it. I told her you were on the next plane to New York. She offered to pay me to go along with you just to be sure that you were delivered at the school.

FOX: Cool. You gonna?

PAUL: No. I’m just gonna make sure that the airline escorts you to and from the plane and handles you like you were the Hope diamond.

FOX: Whatever. I’d better call her. (*Gets his cell phone and dials. He waits a moment, then hangs up.*) Voicemail.

ADAM: Why didn’t she try to call you?

FOX: She will when she’s ready. Right now she’s probably going through ten types of yoga to bring her center back to balance. Then she’ll call.

(ADAM brings FOX a glass of orange juice.)

ADAM: Here you go. Squeezed it myself.

FOX: Thanks. *(Gulps it down.)* That's really good. I could get used to this.

ADAM: Yeah, thanks.

PAUL: They sell Florida orange juice in New York.

FOX: So when do your folks get here?

PAUL: Any minute now.

ADAM: Yeah, I think I just heard a car door close.

FOX: So you want me to hide out in the bedroom or something until they're gone?

PAUL: No, that has farce written all over it. *(Shrugs.)* I don't know. Haven't thought about it.

ADAM: How about "Mom, Dad, this is Fox. He's your grandson."

PAUL: You do know CPR, don't you?

FOX: I do.

ADAM: Look, there's no point in turning this into an episode of a bad sitcom. Tell them about Julie and Denise and the turkey baster.

PAUL *(to FOX)*: And nothing about you wanting to live here. At least not yet.

(The doorbell rings and at the same time a woman's voice is heard off stage calling "Yoohoo!")

ADAM: Here we go.

(JIM and DOROTHY enter. They are in their mid-sixties, dressed casually but upscale; Brooks Brothers and Carol Reed summer attire. JIM is carrying a cloth bag with wine bottles. DOROTHY follows.)

JIM: Hello, men. Hell of a time getting here. Didn't think people did anything on Saturday mornings. *(Puts out his hand to PAUL.)* Good to see you.

PAUL: Here, let me get those. *(Takes the bag to the kitchen.)*

JIM: The white goes in the fridge, the red can stay out. *(To ADAM, a tad stiffly)* Hello, Adam. Good to see you too. *(They shake hands formally.)*

ADAM: You too, Jim. Thanks for coming.

JIM: Wouldn't miss it. *(JIM spots FOX, who has moved off towards the bedrooms. Slight double-take.)* Wouldn't miss it. I remember my big four-oh. Had a big party at the skeet club with a band and everything.

ADAM: Well, just dinner here and maybe a trip to the Everglades or something.

JIM: Fine, fine.

(DOROTHY has been looking through the patio doors to the garden.)

DOROTHY: Oh, that vanda is in bloom. How lovely. I can't get mine to do anything. *(She goes to ADAM.)* That's your work, I know. So good to see you. *(They exchange a quick hug.)*

ADAM: Thanks, you too. But actually Paul's the orchid wizard.

PAUL *(coming out of the kitchen)*: Hi, Mom. *(They hug.)*

DOROTHY: You look good. Not bad for middle aged.

PAUL: Gee, thanks Mom, so nice to hear.

DOROTHY: I'm just teasing you.

PAUL: I know. So how was the trip?

DOROTHY: Exhausting. Even with the non-stop from Detroit it seems like we're never able to rest.

JIM: It took almost an hour to get our luggage and get the rental car. And when are they ever going to finish up working on that expressway? It's been under construction since you moved here.

ADAM: Your tax dollars at work.

JIM: But at least the hotel is nice and the TV works. Didn't know there were so many TV channels in Spanish.

PAUL: *Bienvenidos a Miami, papi.*

JIM *(chuckling)*: Well, I've been boning up on my Spanish at Loma Linda.

DOROTHY: Yes, although ordering a margarita isn't exactly the same as taking a class at Berlitz.

PAUL: So, how long are you staying?

JIM: We leave Wednesday morning. But don't worry. Your mother has things planned out to the minute for the two of us.

DOROTHY: We won't be a bother. I know you both have to work. We want to see that estate, Vizcaya, and then the tropical garden, and maybe even the zoo.

PAUL: Great. *(Looks around for FOX.)* We're glad you're here and have things to do...

DOROTHY: Yes, we haven't really had much of a chance to explore. *(She looks around the room.)* The house looks just wonderful. I'm so glad you decided to keep it the way you.... *(She spots FOX.)* Oh, hello.

FOX (*stepping into the room*): Hello.

(*Everybody turns to look at him. Silence for a moment, then FOX looks at PAUL, followed by DOROTHY, JIM, and ADAM. Another beat.*)

PAUL (*forced casual*): Oh, it's my line? Um, okay. Uh, Mom, Dad; this is Fox.

DOROTHY (*smiling, putting out her hand*): Hello...Fox, is it?

FOX: That's right.

DOROTHY: What an interesting name. Nice to meet you.

FOX: You too.

JIM (*shaking hands but looking at FOX quizzically*): Nice to meet you.

FOX: Same here.

DOROTHY: Are you one of Paul's students?

PAUL (*taking the plunge*): Mom, you remember when you and Dad came out to Santa Fe for Thanksgiving?

DOROTHY: Oh, yes, and you were living in that tiny apartment downtown with the mud wall for a fence. Yes, of course.

PAUL: And you remember having Thanksgiving dinner with my friends Julie and Denise?

JIM: Yes, the couple next door.

DOROTHY: Oh, yes, and we had that vegetarian food shaped like a turkey. Well, at least it tried to look like one.

FOX: Tofurkey.

DOROTHY: Beg pardon?

FOX: Tofurkey. Tofu molded to look like parts of a turkey with turkey-like gravy.

DOROTHY: Yes. It was... interesting.

PAUL: Yes, it was. Anyway, Mom, Fox is Julie's son.

DOROTHY: Oh. Well, how nice. Are you a student at the university?

FOX: No, ma'am.

JIM (*to PAUL*): I don't remember her having any kids.

PAUL: She didn't when you and Mom were there. He came along later.

JIM: Oh. But I thought.... She and the other woman....

PAUL: Denise.

JIM: Right, Denise.... I thought they were....

PAUL: They were.

JIM: Oh, so you're adopted?

FOX: No, I'm her kid, biologically and everything.

JIM: Oh. (*Still a bit mystified but polite.*) How old are you?

FOX: Fifteen and a half.

JIM: So, did your mom move here to Miami?

FOX: Oh, we still live in Santa Fe.

JIM: So, you're just visiting?

FOX: Uh, yeah, you could say that.

DOROTHY: How long will you be here?

FOX: Um...

ADAM: We're still working that out.

(*PAUL glares at him.*)

DOROTHY: Well, it's nice to meet you. How is Julie?

FOX: She's great.

DOROTHY: Well, you must tell her you met us.

FOX: Oh, I will, thanks. She'll be very glad to know I met you.

JIM: Oh, really? Why's that?

FOX: Well, she would like to know who...

PAUL (*cutting him off*): Mom, Dad... there's something I gotta tell you.

DOROTHY (*concerned*): What is it, dear?

PAUL: C'mon, let's all sit down in the living room, okay?

DOROTHY: Paul, dear, you're frightening me.

PAUL: It's okay, Mom, just sit down, please?

(*DOROTHY and JIM sit on the couch.*)

PAUL (*deep breath*): Okay, about sixteen years ago Julie and Denise decided that they wanted to have a baby. Biology being the way it is, they needed someone to be a donor. So they asked me. I said sure, I did my, uh, thing at the fertility clinic, and they tried a few times. But nothing happened, so when I got the job here I left and, well you know the rest. But they kept a batch of my stuff and after I moved here they tried one more time and.... (PAUL looks at FOX.)

FOX: And here I am.

PAUL: Yeah. Here you are.

(*Stunned silence from JIM and DOROTHY. Finally DOROTHY looks at JIM, then PAUL, then ADAM, and FOX.*)

JIM: You mean... he's...?

DOROTHY (*interrupting*): My God. I'm a grandmother.

JIM: Just a second, Dottie. (*To PAUL*) How long have you known?

PAUL: About two hours.

JIM: What? Two hours?

PAUL: Yeah. Julie never bothered to... (*Looks at FOX.*) I signed off all my parental rights from the start. She had no obligation to tell me.

JIM: You had every right to know. (*To FOX*) I'm sorry, but your mother should have told him. She had no right to keep it – you – from him.

FOX: I know, right? I kept asking her who my father was, but all she'd say was "It's more important to know where you're going than where you came from."

JIM: New Age bullshit.

DOROTHY: Two hours? You mean you didn't invite him? This wasn't pre-arranged?

ADAM: Nope. He just showed up here this morning.

DOROTHY: What? How?

PAUL: It's a long story, Mom. Look, he's here and ...

FOX (*cutting off PAUL*): And I want to stay.

(*Beat. PAUL glares at FOX, ADAM tries to hide a smile, JIM and DOROTHY are stunned.*)

PAUL: Shit.

ADAM: Well, that cat's outta the bag.

JIM: You want to stay? For how long?

FOX: Forever, I hope. I've spent all my life with my mom, now I want to get to know my dad. I like him, so far.

JIM: But what about...?

PAUL: It's not gonna happen, okay?

ADAM: We haven't decided anything, okay?

JIM: But you can't just...

PAUL (*over JIM*): Nothing's decided, Dad.

ADAM: (*over PAUL*): We're thinking it over.

PAUL (*over ADAM*): But we haven't even talked about it.

JIM (*over PAUL*): But you boys don't even know anything about him.

DOROTHY (*over all of them*): FOX!

(*They all stop and look at DOROTHY.*)

FOX: Yes, ma'am?

DOROTHY: Fox, dear, is this your first trip to Florida?

FOX: Uh, yeah.

DOROTHY: Santa Fe has some lovely desert plants, but have you ever seen some of the tropical plants they have here?

FOX: No, ma'am.

DOROTHY: Come, let me show you. Paul and Adam have done a wonderful job planting in their back yard and patio. They have a magic touch with the orchids. (*She gets up from the couch, puts her hand out to FOX.*)

FOX: Yeah, sure, okay.

(*DOROTHY takes FOX to the patio doors, opens them, and takes him outside, closing the doors behind them. As the rest of the scene progresses, we see DOROTHY showing FOX some of the plants, talking about them in dumbshow, FOX paying polite attention and nodding, occasionally asking questions. After a few moments, they sit on a bench and we see DOROTHY and FOX talking, the expression on their faces reflecting that they are not talking about flowers at all.*)

JIM: How the hell did this happen?

PAUL: You're going to have to be a little more specific, Dad.

JIM: This guy shows up on your front door, says he's your son, and now wants to move in with you?

ADAM: That pretty much sums it up, Jim.

JIM: Well?

PAUL: What do you want from me? Like I said, I had no idea Julie went through with the last batch. Of course I would have told you if I'd have known.

JIM: But how do you know he's even your kid?

PAUL: He's got all the paperwork. Copies of all the documents and release forms that we signed.

ADAM: He's for real, Jim. He even looks a little like Paul, don't you think?

JIM: What does Julie think?

PAUL: I don't know. She just found out this morning that he's here, okay? I called her, told her he's here, and I'm putting him on a plane tomorrow afternoon to send him on his way. (*In ADAM's direction*) And that, as they say, will be that.

ADAM: She's shipping him off to boarding school. He did a little bit of AWOL at the airport last night in Dallas and came here. And no, that is not that.

JIM (*to ADAM*): So you want him to stay... (*To PAUL*) And you don't.

ADAM: Pretty much.

JIM: Well, it's out of the question.

PAUL: Thank you.

ADAM: It's not out of the question if you haven't even talked about it.

JIM: What's to talk about? Even if you worked it out with his mother, are you boys going to take on raising him?

ADAM: Jim, lots of couples have kids. They adopt them, or they already had them before they came out.

JIM: I know that. But what do you know about being parents?

PAUL: As much as anyone does, Dad. What did you know before I came along?

JIM: I knew I was ready for it.

PAUL: Oh, really? You were twenty-five, Mom was twenty-three. You met on a blind date, six months later you were making wedding plans, and seven months after that, I showed up. And nobody bought the line that an eight pound seven ounce bouncing baby boy was "premature." So don't tell me that you were prepared. At least with this kid I won't be changing his diapers at two a.m.

JIM: At least we were married. Are you boys planning on doing that now?

ADAM: We've talked about it.

PAUL: Please, Dad, not that again.

JIM: Well, maybe now you should. Even if he doesn't live with you.

PAUL: Okay, one life-changing decision at a time, Dad.

ADAM: Wait a minute. What did you mean back there about "not that again"?

PAUL: He's been on my ass for us to get married. If I didn't know better, I'd say you two were in cahoots.

JIM: Why not?

PAUL: Just because we can doesn't mean we should. We've been together for twelve years, we own the house, we share everything, we are fine.

JIM: So why not go the final step? Marriage would be good for you. It would give you... stability.

PAUL: We have that. (*To ADAM.*) Don't we?

ADAM (*shrugging*): Sure.

PAUL: It's not like I'm going to just up and leave him for someone else.

ADAM: Good to know.

PAUL: Oh, come on, Adam, you know I'm not. And you're not either, right?

ADAM: No, I'm not. But every time I bring up the idea of getting married, you smile and nod and say, yeah, let's talk about it, and then you change the subject: "Oh, look at the kitty."

PAUL: Why should we have to fit into some heteronormative idea of the perfect relationship?

ADAM: Oh, Jesus, you've been reading Salon dot com again.

PAUL: No, it's just that I don't think we need to let society and the Supreme Court decide how you and I live our lives.

ADAM: They already do, Paul. Might as well go along with it.

JIM: And if you're even thinking about raising that kid, you should at least provide him with a home, and marriage is a solid foundation.

PAUL (*glaring*): Oh, really.

JIM: Absolutely. Your mother and I have been a source of strength to each other all these years. We've had our rough patches, but....

PAUL (*laughs hollowly*): Rough patches?

ADAM: Hey, Paul, don't...

PAUL: Okay. Never mind.

JIM: So if he did live here, what would you do?

ADAM: We've got room. The schools here are pretty good. We'd do something about temporary custody, I guess, assuming his mother goes along with it. I know a couple of good lawyers who can handle it. Hell, Miami's got enough matrimonial attorneys that they advertise on bus benches.

JIM: But what about the rest of it? How old is he?

PAUL: Fifteen.

JIM: He's still a kid, and don't think that when he's eighteen and off to college that it's all over. You're stuck for life. Meanwhile, you have to be parents. You can't treat him like he's your roommate. He's expecting you to be his dad... or dads. Whatever. He'll need boundaries. Life lessons. Socialization. Dating.

PAUL: Oh, no need to worry about that, Dad. He's given us his thoughts on dating. According to him, it reinforces stereotypes, promotes premarital sex, and enslaves women.

JIM: What?

ADAM: He's really smart, Jim. Scary-smart.

JIM: At that age they all are.

ADAM: No, not like that. I know what you mean, but this kid...

JIM: What about the neighbors?

PAUL: Huh?

JIM: You're not worried about what they'll think: two grown men suddenly have a teenage boy living with them, claiming to be their son?

PAUL: Oh, you have got to be kidding.

JIM: Well, you never know what some people might think.

PAUL: I don't give a flying rat's ass what other people might dream up in their creepy obsession with other peoples' lives. God, Dad, that's... Oh, please don't tell me that's what you thought when you first walked in here and saw him.

JIM: Well...

PAUL: Oh God, you're kidding! How could you possibly even think such a thing?

JIM: I don't. But other people might, and other people might treat you and him like that, and no one wants that.

ADAM: Well, you know what, Jim? If they do, fuck them. I mean it. Let them have their batshit crazy dreams about what we do here and the hell with them.

JIM: But what if...

ADAM: There are bullies everywhere. There are bullies in school, bullies in the mall, bullies on TV with their Jesus-shouting and religious liberty crap and all that. And then there's the worst kind of bullies: the ones who beat the shit out of you because they say that it's for your own good and no son of theirs is gonna be a faggot.

JIM: I never said that.

ADAM: Didn't say you did.

(PAUL goes to him and puts his hand on his shoulder.)

PAUL: Hey. It's okay. It's not gonna happen.

ADAM: Damn right.

JIM: I know your dad was rough on you. Paul's told me.

ADAM: Yeah, well, I really don't think about him too much anymore.

JIM: He's still alive?

ADAM: Haven't heard he isn't.

JIM: When was the last time you saw him?

ADAM: The morning of my eighteenth birthday. I got up, packed a few things and walked out. He tried to stop me, but one right cross and he went down like a sack of old laundry. I went to the recruiting station, signed up, and that was it.

JIM: What about your mother?

ADAM: Died when I was twelve, and I'm pretty sure she was happy to go just to get away from him, from me, from it all. She spent enough time with booze and pills to escape when she was alive, so when the doctor told her she had six months to live, she probably asked him to move it up a little.

JIM: I'm sorry.

ADAM: Thanks. Hey, at least I know how not to raise a kid.

(DOROTHY and FOX get up from the bench, hug, and re-enter.)

DOROTHY: Jim, get the keys.

JIM: What?

DOROTHY: Let's go. We're taking our grandson out to breakfast.

ADAM: I was just about to make him some French toast.

DOROTHY: Thank you, but never mind that. We're going over to that little breakfast place you took us the last time, and then we're going to give him a little tour; maybe go by the university or... well, I don't know, but come on, Jim, shake a leg.

JIM: All right, all right.

DOROTHY: We'll be back in a while. (*Guides FOX to the door.*) I want to hear all about this school your mother is sending you off to.

FOX: Okay... (*To PAUL and ADAM*) See ya.

(*JIM, DOROTHY, and FOX exit Stage Left. The front door closes. ADAM watches them go, then turns to PAUL.*)

ADAM: So?

PAUL: So.

ADAM: Well?

PAUL: Well what?

ADAM: What do you think?

PAUL: About what?

ADAM: Don't mess with me, okay? You know what I'm talking about.

PAUL: I still haven't changed my mind.

ADAM: About...?

PAUL: What we were talking about.

ADAM: Fox living here or getting married?

PAUL: I meant Fox living here.

ADAM: Okay, let's start with that. It's three to one now. Four if you count your mom, and I think she's on board with it.

PAUL: No, Dad said it's out of the question.

ADAM: He only said that to goad you into it. Oldest parent trick in the book: to get your kid to do something, tell him he can't do it.

PAUL: Since when is it up for a vote? Why should anyone else decide for us?

ADAM: Exactly. Jesus, Paul, for a guy with a Ph.D., you're sometimes slow as hell. This is our decision. Ours. You and me. Makes no difference what your parents say. You're a day away from turning forty. You don't need to ask their permission; it's not like you're the one who's fifteen.

PAUL: To my parents I will always be fifteen. It's their way of holding on.

ADAM: Yeah, well, I missed out on that bit of Brady Bunch psychology.

PAUL: You know there's one other person who might have a say in all of this. Julie.

ADAM: So, we petition the court to have your parental rights reinstated. If necessary, we find out about adoption.

PAUL: You make it sound so easy, Adam. Do you really want to go through all of it? Hell, by the time we get done, he'll be old enough that we won't need to go through all of it.

ADAM: Fine. Then he can do what he wants and he can really decide to live here.

PAUL: Why are you so eager to do this? Where is this coming from? We know lots of couples who've got kids. When Ed and Hugh adopted Emily we went to the welcoming ceremony. I don't remember you getting all goo-goo ga-ga over her and making like we should do the same.

ADAM: That was three years ago.

PAUL: So? What's changed in three years?

ADAM: A lot, Paul. When you and I met we accepted the fact that living together and sharing a house and a bed was as good as we could expect. Now we have it all. We can get married, I can put you on my VA benefits, you can put me on your university insurance and pension. And now we can be more than just us. We have room for him. Or whoever; if it's not Fox, maybe there's a kid out there who needs a home.

PAUL: What, you want to open up a shelter?

ADAM: Well, no, but I'll bet there are kids who could use a place.

PAUL: Like you did.

ADAM: Well, yeah.

PAUL: How very Hallmark Channel. Maybe they'll do a Christmas special about us.

ADAM: Oh, jeez, I knew you would make a comment like that.

PAUL: I'm sorry. Look, I get all of that. And for all your big muscle-bound goofiness, I like knowing that you think there's more to us than just sharing a bed and whatever else goes along with that. But I still...

ADAM: Yeah, okay. (*Beat.*) We have time. He's not leaving until tomorrow. Between now and then, we have to make a decision.

PAUL: Okay.

ADAM: I'm going to go start the laundry. Even if our world has been knocked on its ass this morning, there's still life's little chores.

(ADAM exits to bedrooms. PAUL watches him go, then goes over to the patio doors and looks out into the garden.)

PAUL *(to himself)*: Oh, look at the kitty.

End of Act I.

The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com

All Together Again

CHARACTERS:

PAUL HENDERSON: Late forties. Athletic build. Given to mood swings.

ADAM CONNOLLY: Mid-forties; Paul's husband. Muscular, stoic.

JIM HENDERSON: Mid-seventies; Paul's father. In the early stages of dementia.

DOROTHY HENDERSON: Mid-seventies; Paul's mother. Empathetic but firm.

GEORGE FOX ENGSTROM HENDERSON-CONNOLLY: Known as Fox. Mid-twenties; Paul and Adam's son. Tall, strong, and caring.

NANCY McCORMICK: Mid-twenties; Fox's fiancée and his equal.

JULIE ENGSTROM: Late forties; Fox's mother. Medical doctor, Quaker.

PLACE and TIME:

A home in suburban Miami. Labor Day weekend, ten years after the action in "All Together Now."

All Together Again

Scene 1

The scene is the living room of the home of PAUL HENDERSON and ADAM CONNOLLY. It is a comfortable place in suburban Miami. It is open and airy. The furnishings are a mixture of antique and contemporary furniture, tastefully done but not extravagant. Upstage right is the kitchen area, open to the rest of the room, with a breakfast table nearby. Upstage left is a dining area with a table and chairs for four and a bar cart with liquor bottles, glasses, and an ice bucket. Downstage right is a comfortable couch, chairs, and coffee table. Downstage left is a reading area with bookshelves and a small desk with a laptop computer. Off stage right is an exit to the rest of the rooms of the house; the front entry hall is stage left. The back wall has a large sliding glass doors and sidelights leading out to a patio and garden area visible to the audience. It is lush with plants and hanging orchids.

At rise, it is morning on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend. PAUL and ADAM are in the kitchen going over a shopping list. PAUL is in his late forties, in good shape for a man his age. He is wearing a t-shirt, shorts, and flip-flops. ADAM is five years younger than PAUL, well-built and still carrying his military bearing. He is wearing jeans, a polo shirt, and sneakers.

ADAM: If I don't go now, I'll have to park across the street from Trader Joe's in the Metrorail parking garage, and I really hate having to cross Dixie Highway carrying groceries.

PAUL: Okay, okay.

(PAUL scribbles furiously on the list, ADAM fidgeting. Finally finishes, hands it to ADAM.)

ADAM *(looking at the list)*: No wine?

PAUL: No.

ADAM: Good for you.

PAUL: Yeah.

ADAM: They'll understand. And they can always bring their own.

PAUL: I guess so.

ADAM: Okay, well, I'll be back in an hour or so depending on traffic. If they get here --

PAUL: I'll find some way of entertaining them. Maybe with my old laser pointer or a ball of yarn. Oh, do you have any laundry? I might as well make myself useful.

ADAM: Thanks, I'm good. I'll do it myself later.

(ADAM crosses to the front door. As he gets there, the doorbell rings.)

PAUL: Snared by the bell. Go on, I'll be the gracious host. They're my parents.

ADAM: Still mine, too. For now.

(ADAM opens the door. DOROTHY and JIM enter. They are both in their mid-seventies, dressed in casual upper-middle-class summer wear, DOROTHY carrying a handbag.)

DOROTHY: Hello dear!

ADAM: Hi, Dorothy, hi, Jim.

(DOROTHY kisses ADAM on the cheek; he returns it, then turns to JIM.)

ADAM *(offering hand)*: Good to see you, Jim.

(JIM looks at him blankly for a second, then smiles and takes his hand.)

JIM: Hello again. This is a nice place.

ADAM: Thank you.

(PAUL crosses to greet them, kissing DOROTHY and JIM.)

PAUL: Hi Mom, hi Dad. So, you guys all settled in? How do you like it?

DOROTHY: Well, the guest quarters are very nice, and the tour was wonderful. They have a lot of facilities: a pool, nature trails, a fitness center.

JIM: It's nice. We'd have our own place. Smaller than what we're used to, but... it's nice.

DOROTHY: And it's close by here, too.

ADAM: That's good. It's why we thought you might like it.

JIM: It's not nearly as big as what we're used to. But it's nice.

DOROTHY: That's right, dear. *(To PAUL.)* Are they here yet?

PAUL: Got in late last night; should be here this morning.

DOROTHY: Good. Have you met her?

PAUL: Just once, at their graduation.

DOROTHY: She looks like a lovely girl.

JIM: Who?

DOROTHY: Nancy. Fox's intended. He sent us pictures. I showed you.

JIM: Of course. Lovely girl.

ADAM: She is. Listen, I'd love to visit, but I need to get going to the store before it gets too crowded.

DOROTHY: Of course! Go. And why don't you take Jim along to lend a hand?

ADAM: Yeah, okay.

PAUL: Mom...

DOROTHY: Oh, he'd be glad to go, wouldn't you, dear?

JIM: Sure. Shopping? Sure. Help pick out the wine.

(DOROTHY reaches into her handbag and pulls out a blue handicapped parking placard.)

DOROTHY: And here, take this. Comes in very handy, so to speak.

ADAM *(takes placard)*: Thanks, appreciate it. C'mon, Jim, it'll be good to have you with me.

JIM: Happy to help.

ADAM: Okay, see you in a bit. C'mon, Jim, let's hit the highway.

JIM: Still got that old Jeep?

ADAM: Nah, got rid of it years ago.

JIM: Good. The seats hurt my ass.

ADAM: Mine too.

(ADAM and JIM exit through the front door. DOROTHY and PAUL watch them go, then DOROTHY looks at PAUL.)

PAUL: That's what's known as the bum's rush. "Nice to see ya, get out."

DOROTHY: I wanted to talk to you alone.

PAUL: Yeah, I gathered that.

(DOROTHY goes over to the sliding patio doors, looks out to the garden.)

DOROTHY: Well, I'm looking forward to getting used to seeing orchids outside. Is that the same vanda you had ten years ago?

PAUL: Yeah, it just keeps going and going. The Energizer orchid.

(DOROTHY smiles and turns to PAUL. Beat.)

DOROTHY: You look good.

PAUL: Thanks. Uh, so do you.

DOROTHY: Hard to believe my baby is fifty years old.

PAUL: Not quite yet. I'm holding on to my forties until the last possible moment.

DOROTHY: Good advice. We may never pass this way again.

PAUL: Right. So. What did you want to talk about, although I think I can guess.

DOROTHY: Have you told Fox?

PAUL: No. And please, for god's sake, do not say anything while he and Nancy are here. This is... this is their time.

DOROTHY: Of course not. *(Beat.)* What happened?

PAUL: Mom, it's... I don't know how to explain it. It's...

DOROTHY: You weren't seeing someone else, where you?

PAUL: Oh, god, no. Never. And neither was he. It's not that. No, we've been great that way. It's just that... Ever since Fox moved out, we've sorta been going through the motions: going to work, coming home, having dinner, going to bed, getting up... doing it over and over....

DOROTHY: Fox moved out five years ago when he was in college. You're telling me you've been going through the motions all this time?

PAUL: No, it was great at first, just like it was before he came to live with us. I mean, we love him and we missed him, and it was a little weird getting used to not having that big goof – that's what Adam calls him – living here and being part of our lives. But then....

DOROTHY: But then what?

PAUL: We started drifting.

DOROTHY: Drifting? What does that mean?

PAUL: Well, you know, Mom. You've been married for, what, fifty years. Haven't you... y'know... drifted?

DOROTHY: Yes, of course. But we never drifted apart.

PAUL: Well, we seem to have. To the point that he's sleeping in Fox's old room. This weekend.

DOROTHY: I understand – well, to a degree – what you and Adam have been through. To wake up one morning and find you have a fifteen-year-old son on your doorstep and suddenly your whole life has changed, and the next thing you know you're married and joining the PTA and your carefree gay lifestyle is over....

PAUL: Mom....

DOROTHY: Oh, I know, it's a life, not a lifestyle. Believe it or not, I'm up on the political correctness. But what you and Adam had for twelve years was all of a sudden taken over by parenthood. I know it. I lived it, too. But your father and I, even with all of our problems and demons, we stayed together. And now.... He's beginning to drift himself. (*DOROTHY stops, struggling to maintain her composure. She forces a smile.*) We'll adjust. We'll be all right.

PAUL: So, what do you think of Coral Gardens?

DOROTHY: Oh, it's very nice. They're very friendly, the place is laid out very nicely, just like a little town all by itself, and the condos are... well, they're a big change from that drafty old barn we live in now up in Toledo. And I suppose I can get used to the heat and the bugs down here.

PAUL: And we'll – I'll be just up the road. So will your grandson.

DOROTHY: He got the job?

PAUL: Oh, shit, I wasn't supposed to say anything. Forget I said anything.

DOROTHY: Paul...

PAUL: I'm not saying anything.

DOROTHY: Paul!

PAUL: Hey, Mom, how'd the Mud Hens do this season?

DOROTHY: All right, have it your way. Is Julie coming?

PAUL: Last we heard she was a definite maybe. Something about a clinical trial running long. She has twenty-four hours to put in an appearance.

DOROTHY: How often does Fox see his mother?

PAUL: He goes out to Santa Fe once or twice a year. She's busy now with her research projects.

DOROTHY: I understand.

PAUL: Mom, let's just make this weekend about Fox and Nancy, okay? My birthday happens about this time every year, but this is a once-in-a-lifetime thing for them and it would be really wrong to make it about anything else.

DOROTHY: Of course. Have they talked about where they want to do the ceremony?

PAUL: Out on the patio. But it's not really a ceremony. The Quakers call it a meeting for worship with a concern for marriage.

DOROTHY: Sounds rather business-like.

PAUL (*chuckling*): Well, in a way, it is. Everybody sits in a circle with the couple to be married sitting together. There's a table in the middle with a big marriage certificate. Then people stand up one at a time and say nice things about the bride and groom, maybe share some memories. Then when everyone's had their say, the bride and groom make their promises to love, honor, and be faithful, they exchange rings, and then they sign the certificate. Then everyone else signs it, too, as witnesses. Then we have a big potluck. In our case, though, it'll be catered.

DOROTHY: No priest or minister?

PAUL: Nope. The meeting – all the people there – are the ones who marry them.

DOROTHY: That sounds... communal.

PAUL: That's the idea. But it's actually really nice. We've been to several of them over the years. Don't worry, Mom, we'll still throw some pre-wedding parties if you want.

DOROTHY: Oh, Paul, it's not about what I want. It's all about them. But please, tell me about the job.

PAUL: Dammit, Mom, I promised them I'd keep it under my hat.

DOROTHY: Can't you give me a hint?

PAUL: No. All I can say is that they won't be living on Top Ramen and oatmeal.

DOROTHY: Have they said anything about children?

PAUL: Not to me.

DOROTHY: I'm looking forward to hearing how you like being a grandfather.

PAUL: Oh, yeah, thanks.

(Pause. DOROTHY goes to PAUL and hugs him.)

DOROTHY: I'm glad we're going to be nearby, in spite of those monster bugs. We miss you.

PAUL: I miss you too.

DOROTHY: Is there anything I can do for you and Adam?

PAUL: Oh, Jesus, Mom, no. Please don't.

DOROTHY: But you boys are so good together and I want to help.

PAUL *(exploding)*: God damn it, Mom, I said no! Just leave it the fu... the hell alone, willya? Don't say anything to him at all!

DOROTHY *(stunned)*: Oh... well... all right. I'm sorry.

(They retreat to opposite sides of the room, DOROTHY trying to maintain control. Finally, PAUL looks at her.)

PAUL: I'm sorry, Mom. I shouldn't have blown up like that.

DOROTHY *(stoic)*: I understand. I shouldn't have pushed you.

PAUL: I appreciate your wanting to help. It's just that....

DOROTHY *(still stoic)*: Let's just drop it, shall we? Talk about something else.

PAUL: Yeah. *(Long, uncomfortable pause while he tries to think of something else to talk about.)* So, have you guys decided when you'll make the move and get down here?

DOROTHY: Oh, well, it will be a while, I suppose. We still have to put the house on the market, and once we sell it – if it sells – we'll have to get organized and go through all the things we want to keep and get rid of. Fifty-plus years in the same place, you accumulate a lot of... things. I hope you can come up and help.

PAUL: Sure. Wow. Selling the house.

DOROTHY: And moving to a much smaller place. The entire living space of the place we looked at yesterday is smaller than the first floor of our house. Of course, no stairs to climb, just two bedrooms, a nice little patio. But it's a change.

PAUL: You've never lived any place else.

DOROTHY: Not since we were married, no. (*Forced grin.*) But it will be an adventure, and your father always says he likes going on an adventure.

PAUL: Mom, when has he ever said that?

DOROTHY: I'm sure he has at some point.

PAUL: Mom, Dad's idea of being adventurous is ordering extra onions on a hot dog.

DOROTHY (*drily*): Oh, he's been adventurous.

PAUL: Mom, we're not going there. Alice was forty years ago and ... well, there's gotta be a statute of limitations.

DOROTHY: Guilt is a self-imposed sentence. I'm fine. (*Changing the subject cheerfully.*) So, we just stopped by to say hello and let you know that we're getting acclimated. We have an appointment later today to meet with the sales staff at Coral Gardens and happily sign over our entire life savings and whatever else it takes to get us set up and settled in that... what do they call it? (*Reaches in handbag and pulls out a glossy brochure.*) "life enriching community." Well, somebody's getting rich, at least. Here, take a look at it. It might come in handy when you get to be our age.

PAUL: I've seen it, Mom. We're the ones who sent it to you in the first place.

DOROTHY: You and everybody else in the elder care industry, including that right-wing death camp up near Orlando; what's it called? The Residence?

PAUL: The Residences. Plural.

DOROTHY: The name itself sounds like something out of a 1950's horror movie; all sweetness and light unless you're a Democrat and then the monsters come out. Do one Google search for Florida retirement living and they pounce. Anyway, is there anything I can do to help to get ready for the festivities?

PAUL: No, we're all set. I've made reservations for us tonight at Ana Capri, and then tomorrow night we've invited some of Fox's friends from high school and college over for the big reveal of the worst-kept secret since Liberace came out. Just start getting used to living here, I guess. Start by forgetting how to use your turn signal.

DOROTHY: Well, that won't be a problem. At Coral Gardens they have shuttle service to everywhere: the grocery store, the mall, the medical centers. I'm sure the supermarket braces itself when it sees the bus pull up and upload a whole herd of old people with their canes and walkers and shouting to be heard through their hearing aids. We won't need both cars anymore.

PAUL: That'll make it easier on you. One less thing to worry about.

DOROTHY: When we get back, I'm selling your father's car. He shouldn't be driving anymore. Last Monday he got up, got dressed, and drove down to the office. They were all very happy to see him; it's been seven years since he retired. But he thought it was a regular work day. Marilyn called me and I went and got him.

PAUL: Oh, Mom.

DOROTHY: The next day it was like nothing happened. He didn't remember it at all, and there he was at the breakfast table reading the paper and chuckling over the comics. (*Sighs.*) He loves that car.

PAUL: You're doing the right thing.

DOROTHY: I know. I'm just glad to be there for him. That's what it's all about. (*She fixes PAUL in her gaze.*)

PAUL (*warningly*): Mom...

DOROTHY (*innocently*): What did I say?

PAUL: Nothing. Not a damn thing. Didn't have to.

(The front door opens and FOX enters. He is a tall, well-built young man of twenty-five wearing a shirt with the American Friends Service Committee logo over jeans and work boots. He is full of energy, grinning from ear to ear. He is followed by NANCY, the same age, wearing a work shirt over jeans and boots. She is also smiling, not as outwardly ebullient as FOX, but obviously glad to be here with him. FOX strides into the room.)

FOX: Hi Dad!

(FOX crosses to PAUL and gives him a bone-crushing hug and kiss on the cheek. He sees DOROTHY and gives her a gentler hug and kiss.)

FOX: Oh, wow, it is so good to see you both! Grandma, this is Nancy.

(NANCY goes to DOROTHY and they shake hands warmly.)

DOROTHY: It's so nice to finally meet you. Fox has told us so much about you and all of it wonderful.

NANCY: Thank you, Mrs. Henderson...

DOROTHY: Dorothy, please!

NANCY: Okay, Dorothy, thank you. Fox loves you very much, too.

DOROTHY: He's such a dear, isn't he?

PAUL (*to NANCY*): Hi, remember me? I'm Paul; I think we've met.

NANCY (*laughing*): Yes, of course! (*She offers him a hug and they embrace.*) It's so good to see you again.

DOROTHY: That's right, you were there for her graduation. So, are you a practicing veterinarian now with an office and everything?

NANCY: Not yet. (*Looks at FOX.*) October fifteenth, isn't it?

FOX: If they finish, yeah.

DOROTHY: Finish what?

(*FOX looks at PAUL, who shakes his head.*)

FOX: We'll talk about that later, Grandma. Where's Pop and Grandpa?

PAUL: They went to do the shopping. Should be back in a while.

DOROTHY: Oh, I get it. All hush-hush.

FOX: No, it's just that we wanted to hold off announcing anything until we're sure. Karma and all that.

DOROTHY: All right. So, where are you staying? Have you found a place yet?

FOX: The meeting has a guest house next to their property, so we're there for a couple of nights. (*Looks at PAUL.*) We're kinda needing a place to stay until we get settled.

NANCY: It's just that the meeting is expecting some other guests in a couple of days. Just need a place to crash after that.

PAUL: Um....

DOROTHY: I'm sure you'll find something soon. So, Nancy, tell me where you're from. New Hampshire?

NANCY: Vermont, actually. A town called Plainfield.

DOROTHY: How nice! Sounds like something out of Norman Rockwell.

NANCY: Yes, it is like that. White church on the town square and everything.

DOROTHY: Well, I'm sure they don't have the same kind of flowers there that we have here. *(Takes NANCY by the elbow and guides her toward the patio doors.)* Let me show you.

NANCY: Sure... thanks.

(DOROTHY closes the patio door behind her and starts to show NANCY the various plants, pointing them out, then leads her to the bench where they sit and carry on the conversation. We cannot hear them.)

FOX: I should have warned her about Grandma's flower show. Remember when she gave me the tour?

PAUL: I do. She's very nice, Fox. I'm very happy for you.

FOX: Thanks, Dad. I... we... She's everything to me.

PAUL: I'm so glad for you.

FOX: Thanks. So, how are you?

PAUL *(a little too blithely)*: Good, good. Getting ready for yet another school year. All those bright shiny faces ready to plunge into the world of higher education and frat keggers. Intro to Modern American History: All that and World War Two...

FOX: You're teaching an intro class?

PAUL: Well, yeah, I was getting tired of all those deep heavy graduate seminars with those deadly dull and stunningly humorless doctoral students who were bound and determined to turn the New Deal into something akin to a mash-up of the Renaissance and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It reached the pits when I had one of them argue with all the seriousness he could muster – in a fifty-page term paper no less – that Eleanor Roosevelt was, in reality, Mao Tse Tung in drag. After all, you never saw them together in the same place. I went straight to the department chair and told her to get me out of that seminar or I swear on a stack of Stephen Ambrose biographies that I'm marching across campus to the theatre department where they teach history with style.

(Beat. FOX looks at PAUL sympathetically.)

FOX: Simon and Schuster said no?

PAUL: Along with Knopf, Harcourt Brace, Random House, you name it. Seems that the history of gays in the military is either too edgy for one, too marginalized for another, old news for most, and in one case, not racy enough. They wanted a graphic description of love in the foxholes.

FOX: I'm sorry, Dad. You worked so hard on it.

PAUL: Five years, two hundred interviews, three laptops, five boxes of papers, letters, pictures, and at least two marriage proposals, and it's...

FOX: You can publish on-line now, Dad. Forget about the old methods; get it out there on Kindle and sell a million copies without killing a single tree.

PAUL: I know, but it's not the same. A book you can hold in your hand, turn the pages, feel the heft of it.... And besides, you can't kill a cockroach with a Kindle.

(FOX laughs and hugs PAUL.)

FOX: You'll be okay.

PAUL: I know, I know. Five more years and then full retirement.

FOX: Great; then you and Pop can kick back and relax, take some trips, maybe even go back to that place in Key West you like so much.

PAUL: Uh, yeah. *(On the verge of saying something, then stops.)* So, the place won't be ready until October fifteenth?

FOX: Yeah, they got way behind on the construction and then the permit got all screwed up, and some of the lab equipment's on backorder and Nancy's license hasn't been issued yet. It's typical bureaucratic bullshit.

PAUL: Appropriate for a veterinary clinic.

FOX: Uh huh. So anyway, bottom line is... we need a place to live until then.

(FOX looks at PAUL pleadingly. PAUL hesitates, then shrugs.)

PAUL: Sure, sure... but when do you start your job?

FOX: Next week.

PAUL: Right. What exactly is it you'll be doing?

FOX: C'mon, Dad, we've been all through it. Counseling youthful offenders at Juvenile Justice. You remember, it took months for me to go through all the background checks and get certified. Pop said it sounded like I was like getting a colonoscopy without all the fun.

PAUL: Yeah, well, he would know.

(DOROTHY gets up and approaches the patio door.)

PAUL: Look... Fox, before we get too deep into the weeds with you and Nancy staying here...

(DOROTHY opens the patio door.)

DOROTHY *(entering)*: I heard a car door. They're back.

(DOROTHY crosses to front door, opens it. ADAM and JIM enter, ADAM carrying several cloth grocery bags, JIM a bag with wine bottles visible.)

JIM: We're back.

DOROTHY: Just in time! Fox and Nancy are here.

JIM: Who?

DOROTHY: Your grandson. And Nancy.

(DOROTHY tries to take bags from JIM. He resists.)

JIM: I got 'em, I got 'em. Jesus, Dottie, I'm not crippled, y'know.

(JIM takes them to the dining table, sets them down, unveils them and inspects them. ADAM takes his bags to the kitchen, starts to unpack them. FOX follows.)

FOX: Hi, Pop!

(FOX and ADAM exchange hugs.)

ADAM: Hey, you big goof, how are ya? Hi, Nancy.

FOX: Great, so good to see you.

NANCY: So glad to be here.

ADAM: Good. All settled in over at the meeting house?

FOX: Yep. Just stopped by to say hi.

ADAM: Great.

JIM: There. Two reds and two whites. Just like the Russian revolution, right, Paul?

PAUL: Right, Dad. (*Sotto voce to ADAM.*) You let him buy wine?

ADAM (*sotto voce*): I didn't "let" him buy anything. He did it himself. He's over twenty-one.

PAUL (*sotto voce, sarcastic*): Great.

ADAM (*sotto voce*): You don't have to drink it.

FOX: Hi, Grandpa!

(*FOX goes to JIM, embraces him. JIM is a bit taken aback, but then returns the embrace.*)

JIM: Why, hello...

DOROTHY (*gently prompting*): Fox.

JIM: I know. How are you, my boy?

FOX: So good to see you.

JIM: And you too. You've gotten so big I hardly recognized you. Muscles all over. Where've you been, training at Fort Benning?

FOX: Costa Rica, building houses all summer.

JIM: Costa Rica. Well, that's nice. (*Sees NANCY.*) Oh, hello.

FOX: Grandpa, this is Nancy.

JIM: Yes. (*Puts out hand.*) Pleased to meet you.

NANCY (*taking his hand*): Thank you, it's wonderful to meet you, Mr. Henderson.

JIM: Oh, call me Jim, please. I'm Fox's grandpa.

NANCY: Yes, he's told me so much about you.

JIM: He's a good boy. Did he tell you how he came to live with my son?

NANCY: Yes, it's a great story.

JIM: He took off all by himself from New Mexico to find his dad. He was just a kid. (*To FOX.*) How old were you?

FOX: Fifteen.

JIM: Fifteen. All by himself. Set off all sorts of consternation. But he ended up here, and all's well that ends well.

FOX: It did, Grandpa.

JIM: Paul, when was that?

(PAUL has been putting groceries away, not really paying attention.)

PAUL: What, Dad?

JIM: When Fox ran away and showed up here.

PAUL: Ten years ago. Exactly. You were here, remember?

JIM: Uh huh. Anyway, his mother showed up in the middle of the night and we all... That was your birthday, wasn't it?

PAUL: My fortieth.

JIM: Quite a surprise. *(To NANCY.)* So nice to have you here. Thank you for coming.

NANCY: You're so welcome.

JIM *(fidgeting)*: Well, good. *(Stage whisper to FOX.)* Where's the biffy?

FOX: I'll show you, Grandpa.

(FOX starts to exit Right with JIM.)

JIM *(as he follows FOX)*: Excuse me, please.

(FOX and JIM exit. DOROTHY turns to ADAM.)

DOROTHY: How was he?

ADAM: He was okay. Took him a minute to get oriented to the store layout, but he followed me and then zeroed in on the wine aisle.

DOROTHY: Like a visit with old friends. He's been holding his own today.

PAUL: He's not the same as he was when we were there at Christmas.

DOROTHY: Well, that was eight months ago and in familiar surroundings. I'm just going to have to take care of him.

ADAM: We all will, Dorothy, when you get here.

DOROTHY: Will you?

ADAM: Yes.

(DOROTHY looks at ADAM, then at PAUL.)

DOROTHY: I hope so.

NANCY: What has your doctor said?

DOROTHY: Well, she doesn't think it's Alzheimer's, thank God.

NANCY: Thank God.

DOROTHY: She says it's just part of the natural aging. Short-term memory loss. Ask him the starting line-up of the 1968 Detroit Tigers and he'll name them all, along with Denny McLain's E-R-A. But ask him what he had for lunch and he won't remember he had it.

NANCY: We went through that with my grandfather.

DOROTHY: And my mother. It's just life. And it sucks.

(JIM re-enters Stage Right, followed at a distance by FOX.)

JIM: All set. Dottie, don't we have to be someplace?

DOROTHY: Yes, dear. We have to go sign our life away.

JIM: I knew it was something important. Well, boys, it's good to see you. Come by any time. *(To NANCY.)* And thank you for coming.

NANCY: So nice to meet you.

JIM: Yes. Okay. Well. See you all later, I guess.

PAUL: The reservation is at seven, so come back around five-thirty for a drink. Or something.

(DOROTHY begins to guide JIM to the front door.)

ADAM: Oh, here's your handicapped parking permit.

DOROTHY: Oh, thank you. Another one of life's new essentials. See you later, dear.

(DOROTHY and JIM exit, ADAM closing the door behind them.)

PAUL: How was he really? At the store.

ADAM: I've seen worse. This is South Florida, remember.

PAUL: Yeah, I suppose.

(ADAM pulls out the receipt from the store and hands it to PAUL, who glances at it, nods, and puts it in his pocket. FOX watches this.)

PAUL *(to ADAM)*: Later.

ADAM: Whenever.

FOX: Hey, Dad?

PAUL: Yeah?

FOX: What's Pop's shaving kit doing in my bathroom?

PAUL: Huh?

FOX: Pop's shaving kit. It's on the sink in my bathroom. And his bathrobe is on the hook behind the door.

PAUL: Uh, well...

FOX: And his overnight bag is in the closet. What's going on?

(PAUL looks at ADAM. They shrug.)

ADAM: Might as well tell them now.

FOX: Tell me what? What's going on?

PAUL: Fox...

ADAM *(cutting in)*: I moved out.

FOX: What?

ADAM: You heard me. I'm staying in your old room for the weekend.

PAUL: For the weekend.

FOX: What, keeping up appearances for me and Nancy and Grandma and Grandpa? Really? Jesus. When did this happen?

PAUL: First week of August.

ADAM: Right. First week of August.

FOX: Where are you living now?

ADAM: Well, for the time being, I'm crashing at Jason's place.

FOX: Jason?

ADAM: Yeah. My business partner at the gym. He coached you in weight training.

FOX: Jason the bodybuilder with the eighteen-inch biceps and the silver posing thong.

ADAM: And the matching boyfriend. It's nothing like that. We just need to work some things out, and until we do, I'm...

FOX (*exploding*): What are you talking about? You guys... I mean, what the ever-loving hell? Dad, what happened?

PAUL: All right, there's no point in yelling about it, Fox.

FOX: Why the hell not?

PAUL: Well, for one thing, I'm pretty sure Nancy doesn't need to hear all about it. Neither do the Dunnigans next door.

FOX: She does if she's gonna become part of this family.

NANCY: I'm all right. Really.

ADAM: Welcome to the family.

FOX: I can't believe it. What happened?

ADAM: Paul and I were having --

PAUL: Hey, you know what? It's none of your goddam business, that's what. Our problems are ours alone, and all you need to know, Fox, is that we're trying to work through them.

FOX: How is Pop crashing on someone's couch in an apartment in Coconut Grove "trying to work through them"? You guys were always telling me to talk things out, stick to it until the problems were solved. And yes, it is my goddam business. You're my dad; so is he. You're my parents. I

already spent the first fifteen years of my life with a single parent and you know what I did about that. So, come on. Talk to me. *(Looks at NANCY.)* Talk to us.

NANCY: Fox is right. At least try.

(PAUL looks at all of them, sighs, shrugs, and crosses to the couch. FOX and NANCY sit on either side of him, ADAM off to one side, watching. Takes a deep breath, looks at FOX, then NANCY, and seems to be on the verge of saying something.)

PAUL: Well, I... *(Hesitates, then suddenly stands up and heads for the SR exit.)* Aw, fuck this shit. I'm not gonna do it like it's some kind of goddam intervention.

(PAUL exits SR, offstage door slams.)

ADAM: And that's pretty much how we left it back around the first of August. *(ADAM heads for the front door.)* Dinner's at seven. Why don't you just meet us at the restaurant, okay?

(ADAM exits through the front door, closing it solidly behind him, leaving FOX and NANCY alone on the couch.)

FOX *(faintly)*: Okay.

FOX looks around the room, then at NANCY. She hugs him, holding him close.

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2

Several hours later; late afternoon. PAUL is at the desk working on the computer. ADAM enters from the front door carrying a garment bag. PAUL glances at him, continues working. ADAM silently crosses to SR and exits. He re-enters a moment later, goes to the kitchen and gets a bottle of water. He crosses to the patio door and looks out at the garden, slowly sipping his water. PAUL keeps working.

PAUL (*typing*): What's in the bag?

ADAM: Clothes for tonight. Thought I might as well dress for dinner.

PAUL: You're early. It's not for a couple of hours.

ADAM: Jason and Brock came back from the gym and decided to continue their workout in the bedroom. Thought I'd give them some privacy.

(PAUL nods, picks up a check from the desk, holds it out.)

PAUL: Here.

(ADAM takes check, looks at it.)

ADAM: Kinda pointless for you to write me a check out of our joint checking account. I mean, it's gonna go right back in. Zero sum game.

PAUL: Use it to open your own account, then.

ADAM (*sighing*): Oh, c'mon... We're not there yet.

PAUL: Yet.

ADAM: Y'know what, I'm not gonna do this. Not this weekend.

PAUL: Okay.

ADAM: Where'd everybody go?

PAUL: Fox and Nancy went back to the guest house. Mom and Dad are still at Coral Gardens measuring for drapes, I assume.

ADAM: I told Fox and Nancy to meet us at the restaurant.

PAUL: Well, Julie called. She's at her hotel. I invited her over for drinks so she's coming over before dinner, so I called Fox and told them to come here first. All together again.

ADAM: Keeping up appearances.

PAUL: Such as they are. Fox and Nancy know. Mom knows.

ADAM: You told her?

PAUL: Oh, hell, you know her. She's like a fuckin' psychic. As soon as you and Dad left for the store, she nailed me.

ADAM: What did you tell her?

PAUL: That we were... That you were staying in Fox's room.

ADAM: That's it. Not that I'm staying with Jason and Brock; just moved into the other bedroom.

PAUL: Why; what should I tell her? What should we tell people? What did you tell Jason?

ADAM: I told Jason we were having the house fumigated and you were on a book tour.

PAUL: For a month?

ADAM: He just said "Cool," and I doubt that he's even thought about it. He's a good draw for the gym and he knows how to keep the books, but he's not a deep thinker. As for what we should tell people, what have you told people?

PAUL: Not a damn thing. Our domestic situation is no one else's business.

ADAM: What about your dad?

PAUL: I'm gonna let Mom figure out some way to tell him. She'll keep the lid on this weekend.

ADAM: What about after this weekend? They're gonna be here permanently real soon. How long do you want to keep up appearances?

PAUL: We'll burn that bridge when we get to it. If we have to.

ADAM: That's up to you.

PAUL: Really? Why is it up to me? You're the one who left, not me.

ADAM (*sardonic chuckle*): Okay, here we go.

PAUL: Yeah, here we go. You're the one who laid down the ultimatum. You're the one who said get sober or you're getting out. Then you left, not me.

ADAM: Because I... (*Stops, takes deep breath.*) Okay, we said we were not gonna do this now.

PAUL: No one else is here. The patio doors are closed and the Dunnigans are away for the weekend. Let's do this now.

ADAM: No, goddammit. I'm not gonna walk into that. We're getting through this weekend with smiles and love for our son and his fiancée and our family, okay? Once it's over, then we can do it.

PAUL: Fine. Just...

ADAM: No "just," dammit!

PAUL: All right! What I was going to say was just don't forget to set out the brie so it can soften before they get here.

ADAM: Uh huh. Nice recovery.

(ADAM goes to the kitchen, starts to get out the cocktail service: cheese, crackers, a tray, glasses. PAUL watches him, then gets up from the computer.)

PAUL: So... Jason and Brock were goin' at it.

ADAM *(snorting)*: When aren't they? Can't keep their hands off each other, not to mention other body parts.

PAUL: Kids these days. Well, I suppose if that's what works, then... great.

ADAM: We were like that.

PAUL: Don't I know it. Two, three times a day.

ADAM: Yep.

PAUL: Yep. *(Beat.)* Let me ask you something.

ADAM: Um, okay.

PAUL: What did you ever see in me? I mean, here's this nerdy, not especially well-built, older professorial type, quiet...

ADAM: Quiet?

PAUL: Well, okay, but you know what I mean.

ADAM: Yeah, okay, but first, let me ask you the same thing.

PAUL: That's easy. You were this brooding, smoldering...

ADAM: Smoldering? You're veering into romance novel territory.

PAUL: Hang on. Yeah, you had that kinda look, along with this killer body – not an ounce of fat – and this defiant yet vulnerable...

ADAM: Oh, shit; vulnerable? Really?

PAUL: Okay, okay, accessible.

ADAM: That's even worse.

PAUL: What? You came off as this distant, hard-core, ex-Air Force...

ADAM: Former Air Force. Never ex.

PAUL: All right already! Believe it or not, it wasn't just because you wore those tight shirts with the short sleeves and the jeans that left very little – or a whole lot – to the imagination. I had no idea you were gay. There was just this connection, and even if I found out that you had a wife and a kid and the whole straight trip, there was something. I knew I couldn't say anything other than "Nice work on your assignment, Mr. Connolly." But I felt that if I got to know you, we could hit it off. After you'd graduated, I'd still see you on campus because of your job at the fitness center, and I'd wave at you through the window and you'd wave back. I'd smile and then go on to my class or whatever and try not to think about seeing you in a skin-tight tank top and spandex shorts because I knew that not even in my wildest romance novel dreams could I imagine that you'd be interested.

ADAM: You were so dense. I was doing everything I could to let you know I was interested, short of standing up in class and yelling HEY DOC!

PAUL: Scared is more like it.

ADAM: Yeah, I think that actually worked in your favor. I mean, you were so freaked out that when I came up to you sitting on the bench outside the Rathskeller and said, "Hey, Doc, wanna get a beer?" you almost dropped your book.

PAUL (*enjoying the memory*): Yeah. Michelob Light.

ADAM: I almost called it off right then. Life's too short to drink light beer.

PAUL: So I learned. But you never answered my question: what did you see in me?

ADAM: After twenty-two years, ten of them married to me, raising our son, you still have to ask?

PAUL: Now that it's up for review...

ADAM: Because you put it there.

PAUL: I thought we weren't going there.

ADAM: We're not. (*Beat.*) To be honest, I don't actually remember anything specific. It was just... And I didn't know you were gay, either. I just knew we could be...

PAUL: So, when I invited you over to my apartment you didn't think we'd...

ADAM: Well, yeah. You may have been dense, but you weren't dead.

PAUL: We sure gave Jason and Brock a run for their money that night. And the night after, and...

ADAM: Yeah. But that wasn't what really mattered. You were my friend. I could live without the sex – hell, I'd spent all my time in the Air Force basically flying solo – but I didn't have too many friends, either. My dad was a total shit, Mom was dead, and I'm alone down here, pretty much living like a monk, never really meeting anyone, much less getting laid. Then one day I walk into your class and there's this cute guy standing at the lectern talking about FDR and JFK and LBJ and --

PAUL: Cute? Seriously?

ADAM: Well, I don't know what the hell it was. I just knew.

PAUL: After all these years, we're finally having this conversation.

ADAM: Didn't know we had to.

PAUL: So. How'd we get here?

ADAM: Dammit, Paul, just... let's get through tonight and tomorrow and then...

PAUL: Fine. Fine. Thanks for at least going through the motions of keeping up appearances.

ADAM: It's all bullshit, you know. This whole thing about keeping up appearances was your idea in the first place. People see right through it. You said your mom knew the minute she walked in.

PAUL: Actually, I told her last week.

ADAM: Christ.

PAUL: I was doing it for Fox, not us. But Mom could tell when she called about something and we got to talking.

ADAM: Jesus, it's a good thing you never applied for Top Secret clearance. You'd blab if someone shined a penlight in your ear. Fox and Nancy know. So why are we bothering with it?

PAUL: Let's just get through it, okay?

ADAM: You and your goddam WASP culture of "don't make a scene; have another drink."

PAUL: As opposed to the knock-down drag-outs that some prefer.

ADAM: They both involve heavy drinking.

(Pause, bordering on uncomfortable as ADAM and PAUL stare at each other. Finally, PAUL looks away.)

PAUL: Yeah. Look...

ADAM: I'm going to go take a shower and get changed for dinner.

(ADAM exits SR. A door closes. PAUL watches him go, mutters something like "Shit" under his breath, then wanders over to the liquor cart. He looks at it for a moment, then shrugs and pours a finger of Scotch neat into a glass. He picks it up, looks at it, then slugs it down. Puts the glass down, then goes back to the desk. He sits, staring at the computer, then turns, looks at the liquor cart, and gets up to cross to it. As he does, the doorbell rings. His shoulders sag, then he goes to the door and opens it.)

PAUL *(forced cheerfulness)*: Well, hi, Julie! Come on in.

(JULIE enters. She is PAUL's age, her hair tied in the back in a long ponytail, her outfit is a blouse of the peasant variety and a full skirt over work shoes. She embraces PAUL.)

JULIE: Thank you. It's so good to see you. *(Looks around.)* Is Adam here?

PAUL: Yeah, he's, uh, taking a shower and getting changed for tonight. You're a little early.

JULIE: I know. I just came from seeing Fox and Nancy over at the meeting house and I wanted to see you two before everyone got here.

PAUL: Fox told you.

JULIE: Yes, he did.

PAUL: So now everyone knows. Well, everyone except my dad and the Miami Herald.

JULIE: How is your dad? Fox said he's showing signs of short-term memory loss.

PAUL: Yeah. That's one of the reasons they're moving into Coral Gardens. They've got facilities and people who know how to take care of them. Of him.

JULIE: That's good. So, what happened between you two?

PAUL: Wow, still the same old Julie. Never one to beat around the bush.

JULIE: Never have, Paul. So?

PAUL: Julie, it's not really something I want to discuss. It's not your concern right now.

JULIE: The hell it's not. I may live a thousand miles away, but I'm just as much a part of this family as Adam or your parents. That's our son who's been living here for the last ten years and I have every right to know what's going on. He's already been through one single-parent life and I don't want him to go through it again without knowing why.

PAUL: Yeah, he mentioned that.

JULIE: Then talk to me. I promise I won't judge.

PAUL: No, I know. You never have.

JULIE: So talk to me.

(PAUL goes in the direction of the liquor cart, thinks better of it, and goes to stare out into the garden. JULIE watches him. Finally, he turns to her.)

PAUL: I couldn't sell the book.

JULIE: The one you called "Our Own Battles."

PAUL: Right. Gay soldiers throughout history, but mainly focusing on the time since World War Two since I could talk to primary sources: men and women who lived through it and could talk about it. From Pearl Harbor to Fallujah; from dishonorable discharge to same-sex weddings at West Point. No one wanted it. Five years' worth of research up the chimney.

JULIE: Who did you pitch it to?

PAUL: Everybody from the old reliables like Simon and Schuster and Knopf to the scholarly publishers like universities, and even the alternative press; y'know, the ones that will print just about anything. No sale.

JULIE: Did they say why?

PAUL: I have a drawer and e-mail inbox full of very nice polite rejection letters. They all start out with thanking me profusely for submitting such a well-researched story and how much they

appreciated me thinking of them, but usually by the second or third sentence comes the inevitable “unfortunately” or “regrettably,” modified with “not at this time” and ending with “best of luck in your future endeavors.” Like I’m auditioning for the road tour of Cats.

JULIE: But they didn’t get specific about why they turned you down.

PAUL: Some did, but mostly they were form letters run off by some intern who mail-merged the name and address with the same list of rejections for such bestsellers as “Quilting for the New Century” or “How to Train Your Cat for Fun and Profit” and “The History of the Cathode Ray Tube.” So, I went back and read it.

JULIE: Read what?

PAUL: The manuscript. What I’d so proudly submitted to them for their consideration. Julie, if a grad student had submitted it to me as their dissertation or even for their masters, I’d have advised them to get a job working at the rib joint because they had no future as a scholar or historian.

JULIE: You’re being too hard on yourself.

PAUL: No, I’m not. (*Crosses to desk, pulls out a thick manuscript, opens it, flips through a couple of pages.*) Here. (*Reading.*) “The field of stone tablets above the beach at Normandy is made up of countless rows of white markers, solemnly noting the names of those who rest beneath them. But none of them tell the whole story of many of the men who gave their lives; what secrets are interred with them: of loves and connections that could not be acknowledged in their lifetime and are forever buried with them.” Yeesh. And it gets worse. (*Flips through a few more pages, reads silently to himself, then closes it and drops it heavily on the desk.*) I’m sorry, I can’t read any more of it out loud. It’s just crap.

JULIE (*sympathetic*): I’m sure it’s not.

PAUL: C’mon. I sent it to my friend Brian Delaney. He and I were in grad school together. He teaches at Notre Dame. I didn’t tell him I wrote it. I told him it was one of my students’ thesis. He sent it back with the rib joint comment. (*Beat.*) I’ve lost it, Julie.

JULIE: Of course you haven’t, Paul. Why do you say that?

PAUL: Because I went from winning the Pulitzer to writing garbage. I’m gonna frame Brian’s letter and put it next to my medal just to show how tempus does fugit.

JULIE: But you’re still teaching, right? Still got them lined up to take your classes, right?

PAUL: It’s all inertia. An object in motion and all that. You should know that from your years in the lab. And the worst part is that I don’t really give a shit. I’ve got tenure, I’ve got T.A.’s, I’ve got a parking space. I’m just going through the motions. I could teach in a Speedo and no one would notice.

JULIE (*snorting*): Yeah, I think they would.

PAUL: Yeah, okay, but you get the idea.

JULIE: I do, and I've seen it happen to other people. It happens. But what has that got to do with Adam moving out?

PAUL: He says I took it out on him.

JULIE: What? You didn't get... physical, did you?

PAUL: Oh, hell, no. He could take me out with one hand while he was eating a burrito with the other. Nothing so dramatic. Just...

JULIE: What?

PAUL: He said I was ignoring him, just like zoning out, not paying attention. It was like I wasn't here. That's what he says. I don't know what he was talking about. I mean, it wasn't like "The Walking Dead."

JULIE: When did it start?

PAUL: He says March, when the first rejections started coming in. At first it was like, oh well, I didn't really expect everyone to jump for it. Believe it or not, being gay in the military is no big deal anymore and the history of it isn't going to get me another miniseries. But by June I could hear the crickets. As in no replies.

JULIE: I got the reference. But you guys have had rough patches before, right?

PAUL: Exactly. We got through them; talk it out, kiss and make up, go to the Keys...

JULIE: Why was this time different than any other time?

(*PAUL wanders over to the liquor cart, picks up his glass.*)

PAUL: I dunno, maybe because it was June and school was out, Fox was heading for Costa Rica, and it was my first summer off in five years. I wasn't doing research, going out doing interviews, meeting with veterans' groups. I had nothing to do, really. (*He pours himself a finger of Scotch, then adds a little more.*) Hey, you want a drink?

JULIE: Uh, no, I'm good. Go on.

PAUL (*sips drink*): So anyway, I'm moping around the house, according to Adam. "Hey," he says, "maybe you should see about getting the deck re-done." Yeah, sure. "Hey, maybe you should look into getting the hurricane shutters replaced." Yeah, good idea. "Hey, if you're gonna

sit around on your ass all day, maybe you can tear yourself away from watching ‘The View’ and do some housekeeping and shit.”

JULIE: Couples argue...

PAUL: We weren’t arguing. I mean, he was right; I could have done those things. *(Takes a larger sip from his drink.)* I just chose not to at the moment. It’s not as if the deck is rotting away, and the shutters made it through the last hurricane okay. And he’s not exactly Mr. Merry Maids himself, y’know.

(PAUL slugs down the last of the drink and gets a refill.)

JULIE: Who is? You should have seen the battles Denise and I used to have about cleaning the kitchen. But how did you two go from “pick up your socks” to “I’m outta here”?

(PAUL takes a gulp. He sways a little but not much, but JULIE notices this.)

PAUL: I’m getting to that. So, the summer rolls on. Fourth of July we had a nice little picnic on the lawn at the Biltmore with friends to watch the fireworks, had a great time. Adam’s gym is humming along and he’s picking up extra hours at the V.A., barely has time to come home, eat, sleep, and go back to work. Meanwhile, I’m still here, like June Cleaver waiting for him to come home. I’m cooking dinner, being the loving husband in bed... most of the time. And then July twentieth rolls around.

JULIE: What happened on July twentieth?

PAUL: Well, for one thing, it’s the anniversary of the moon landing. Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, July twentieth 1969. “One small step for man...”

JULIE *(deadpan)*: Yeah, it was in all the papers. C’mon, Paul, what happened?

PAUL: July twentieth was also the day that Audrey McMillan, my agent since I was in grad school and the woman who basically got me the Pulitzer Prize and all the other stuff that came with it, called me up and said, “Paul, honey, I love you to death and I hate to do this, but...”

JULIE: Oh, no.

PAUL: Oh, yeah. Times are tough, hardcovers are hard to sell, everybody wants e-books, history is niche, even the big names like Doris Kearns Goodwin are scraping by. My last two books barely made back the advance. So, yeah, she’s not renewing my contract which expired... *(Looks at watch.)* August thirty-first. She’s gonna see if there’s anyone else in the office who’ll pick me up, but... *(Slugs down the rest of the drink then gently, carefully places his glass on the cart.)* So, yeah, I’ve been dumped by a woman for failing to perform. I trust you can appreciate the irony.

JULIE *(chuckling ironically)*: Yeah, I can. *(She crosses to him and opens her arms to offer him a hug. He accepts and she holds him.)* It’ll be all right.

PAUL: Yeah. Thanks for coming. It means a lot.

(ADAM enters from SR. He is now dressed in slacks and a polo shirt.)

ADAM: Hi, Julie, great to see you. Thanks for coming.

(ADAM and JULIE embrace.)

JULIE: Any excuse to see my guys again. All of you. You look great.

ADAM: Thanks. A shower works wonders.

PAUL: Yeah, I think it's my turn. Back in a few. Good to see you, Julie.

JULIE: You too.

(PAUL exits SR. JULIE goes over to the patio door.)

JULIE: Every time I come here I can't get over how you guys get things to grow.

ADAM: We can't take all the credit. In this climate even the weeds look good.

JULIE: And in Santa Fe the weeds are the only things that grow. *(Beat.)* So, how are you?

ADAM: I'm okay.

JULIE: Paul doesn't know we talked.

ADAM: No.

JULIE: All right. *(Crosses to couch, sits.)* I'm not sure I know what you're expecting from me.

ADAM: I know you worked at the medical clinic on the Navajo reservation. I know you know how to at least deal with it.

JULIE: I saw it every day.

ADAM: Okay, then.

JULIE: Adam, what I saw on the reservation was an epidemic brought on by poverty and hopelessness. People were drowning themselves in alcohol because that was the only way out of it, not to mention the sheer grinding down of any dignity in a culture that prides itself on honor and tradition. *(She looks around the room.)* Your situation is a little different.

ADAM: Yeah, I get it. But I've seen it before. You know about my parents.

JULIE: You had a double-header; your dad and your mom. I just had the one.

ADAM: So, you know.

JULIE: Of course I know. Better than you might think.

ADAM: Because you treated them. On the reservation.

JULIE: That. And...

ADAM: And...? (*It dawns on him.*) Oh. Really. No idea.

JULIE: That's why they call it Alcoholics Anonymous. I've been sober for twenty-six years. Since the day I found out I was pregnant with Fox.

ADAM: So, you really do know. That's good. I don't mean it's good that you're an alcoholic...

JULIE (*smiling*): I know what you mean.

ADAM: So, you can help me.

JULIE: Well, no, I really can't.

ADAM: Huh?

JULIE: You've got to do it. I can offer some advice, but it's up to you.

ADAM: I don't know how.

JULIE: No one does. You have to figure it out on your own.

ADAM: Well, thanks a lot. (*ADAM gets up and paces impatiently, glancing off SR.*) Can you at least give me a clue? A hint? A nod? I sure as hell don't know where to start.

JULIE: I can tell you what not to do, how about that?

ADAM: And I'm supposed to figure it out from there, is that it?

JULIE: Pretty much. I'm not trying to be coy, Adam. But I will tell you that so far, you're batting a thousand in how not to deal with it.

ADAM: I am?

JULIE: Yes. You walked out on him.

ADAM: What, I was supposed to stick around while he --

JULIE: Of course. You promised you would.

ADAM: What are you talking about?

JULIE: I saw you. I was here. So were your friends, Paul's parents, and Fox. Out there on the patio. Your wedding. "In sickness and in health. 'Til death do us part." You were there, too.

ADAM: Oh, f'r chrissake.

JULIE: F'r chrissake nothing, Adam. If he's as bad as you said he was, bad enough for you to walk out on him, he's sick. He's got a disease. It's chronic, and if it's not treated, it'll kill him. By the way, I got a pretty good idea of how he is. He slugged down two drinks while you were in taking a shower and he was telling me about his book not getting published and Audrey firing him and something about you complaining about him watching "The View," whatever that is.

ADAM: Only two?

JULIE: That's what I saw.

ADAM: So, he didn't tell you about me coming home night after night to find him staring at the TV while a couple of Lean Cuisines sat thawing on the counter in the kitchen. Or the nights when he'd stumble into the bedroom and collapse on the bed and complain that I wasn't returning his "erection's affections." Or the times when I'd call home and the phone would go to voicemail because he was "napping." Or the last straw when I came home and found him curled up on the couch – right where you're sitting – surrounded by bottles on the floor and him stewing in his own shit. So, no, I guess he didn't tell you about that. Or any of it.

JULIE: We never got that far.

ADAM: I was supposed to put up with that?

JULIE: No.

ADAM: So, do you blame me for packing up and crashing on a friend's sofa until he gets his shit together?

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: Jesus!

JULIE: That's what you signed up for! You've been with him for almost half your life. You owe it to him.

ADAM: I don't know what to do!

JULIE: Yes, you do.

ADAM: What, some kind of intervention? Get all his friends around and tell him he has a problem and we're here to help? Then hold hands and sing "Kumbaya"?

JULIE: Interventions don't work unless they really want to be helped. Trust me, I know. And the singing is strictly optional.

ADAM: So what, then? Bundle him in the car and drop him off at some dry-out spa up in Boca?

JULIE: No.

ADAM: Julie, you're not helping.

JULIE: Talk to him. Listen to him. How about that? Have you tried that?

ADAM: He told me all about how the book got rejected and how Audrey dumped him.

JULIE: And?

ADAM: And what? I said that's too bad. I know he busted his ass to write it. And it sucks that Audrey let him go. I said I was sorry.

JULIE: Do you know what the book is about?

ADAM: Yeah, of course. The history of gays in the military.

JULIE: Right. Did you help him on it?

ADAM: Huh? No. C'mon, I'm no historian. What would I know about writing that kind of stuff?

JULIE: You're kidding, right?

ADAM: No! I got my degree in physical therapy. I took his history class because I needed the credits.

JULIE: Adam, how long were you in the Air Force?

ADAM: Six years.

JULIE: Were you gay when you went in?

ADAM: Well, yeah.

JULIE: And when you came out? I mean, when you were done with your enlistment?

ADAM: What?

JULIE: Were you still gay after you were done with your tour of duty or whatever they call it?

ADAM: Well, yeah.

JULIE: So....?

ADAM: You lost me.

JULIE: He wrote the book about you, Adam.

ADAM: No, he didn't.

JULIE: Did you read it?

ADAM: Well, no.

JULIE: Why not?

ADAM: I'm not a big reader, Julie. Never was. Maybe I'm dyslexic or something.

JULIE: Oh, bullshit. Don't make excuses. Look, for whatever reason, he wrote that book about you. For you. It's a three-hundred-page love letter to what you went through, what you had to go through serving in a system that up until they changed the law made you an outcast even though you wanted desperately to be a part of it. Yes, it's about all the gay men and women who served, but the focus was on you. When it failed to get published, he felt like he let you down. It was a rejection not just of his writing and years of research, but of everything you stood for. And he felt like he screwed it up. It's his worst nightmare. And you made it come true.

ADAM: By walking out.

JULIE: Yes.

ADAM: So, how do I fix it?

JULIE: Well, the first thing you do is get your ass back in this house and knock off this ridiculous charade about "keeping up appearances" for the sake of some bourgeois upper-crust cultural façade of togetherness.

ADAM: Spending the weekend here was Paul's idea.

JULIE: And you went along with it.

ADAM: How did you know?

JULIE: Fox and Nancy told me. Who do you think came up with the “bourgeois upper-crust cultural façade of togetherness” line? They’re both pissed off, only they’re too polite to say anything about it.

ADAM: Yeah, I kinda got that when they were here earlier.

JULIE: All right then. When they get here and your folks show up, we’ll drop all this pretense and act like a real family, warts and all.

ADAM: I’ll give it a shot.

JULIE: And take it from there.

(PAUL enters from SR, dressed nicely.)

PAUL: They just called. Fox and Nancy. They’re on their way.

JULIE: Oh, good.

(PAUL goes to kitchen, starts to get things ready for guests. ADAM crosses to him.)

ADAM: Look, I want to help you.

PAUL: Great. Put out the cheese and crackers.

ADAM: No, I mean help you. With --

PAUL: Yeah. Put some ice in the bucket, will you?

ADAM: Paul, I’m talking about your problem.

PAUL: Right now, my problem is that we have company coming and I don’t have time to think about anything other than being the gracious host, and neither do you. I tried talking to you earlier and you didn’t want to. Now you do. Let’s go with your first instinct, okay? And while you’re at it, see if you can find the rest of the cocktail napkins. *(To JULIE.)* Are you okay with cheese or is that still off the menu?

JULIE: That’s fine. Thanks.

PAUL: Something to drink?

JULIE: Club soda.

PAUL: Coming right up. *(To ADAM.)* Can you get her drink, please? I already cut up the limes.

(PAUL holds up the dish of limes. ADAM glares at PAUL, takes the limes to the liquor cart, then puts the cheese tray on the coffee table, gets the ice bucket and fills it from the freezer. Stony silence as he goes back to the liquor cart, puts some ice in a glass, opens the club soda bottle, fills the glass, adds a slice of lime, gets a cocktail napkin. He crosses to JULIE and smiles sweetly.)

ADAM: Your cocktail, milady.

JULIE: Thank you, kind sir. *(She glances in PAUL's direction. Sotto voce.)* Now's not the time.

ADAM *(sotto voce)*: Yeah, I got that.

(Silence descends. ADAM is staring at PAUL, who remains in the kitchen. JULIE sips her drink, then picks up a cracker and munches it. Long, awkward pause. Then ADAM starts to cross to the kitchen.)

ADAM: The hell with it. Look, all I wanted to say is that I want to --

(Doorbell rings.)

PAUL: Get the door, please.

ADAM *(under his breath)*: Shit.

(ADAM goes to the front door, opens it. DOROTHY and JIM enter. They are wearing casual dinner attire. JULIE stands.)

DOROTHY: Hello again. *(To ADAM.)* Well, don't you look nice! You're so handsome, and I'm so impressed with how you've stayed in such good shape all these years.

ADAM: Thank you. Owning a gym helps.

DOROTHY: Certainly. *(Sees JULIE.)* Oh, hello, dear! So good to see you again. Don't you look nice!

JULIE: Thank you, so do you.

DOROTHY: Not bad for a girl my age. *(To JIM.)* Dear, you remember Julie. Fox's mother.

JIM: Yes, of course. *(Offers his hand.)* Nice to see you.

JULIE: Yes, same here.

JIM: Do you live here, too?

JULIE: No, I'm still in Santa Fe. New Mexico.

JIM: Yes, of course. Well, thanks for coming.

ADAM: Dorothy, can I get you a drink?

DOROTHY: Scotch on the rocks, please.

ADAM: Sure, I'll see if we still have some. Jim?

JIM: Hmm?

ADAM: A drink?

DOROTHY: Scotch rocks for him, too.

JIM (*chuckles*): It sure does!

(*ADAM goes to liquor cart to make the drinks.*)

DOROTHY (*to PAUL*): Do you need any help there, dear?

PAUL: All set, Mom, thanks.

(*PAUL comes out of kitchen area with a tray of sliced vegetables – carrots and celery sticks and dip cup – and puts it on the table. ADAM returns with drinks, hands them to DOROTHY and JIM.*)

JIM (*raising glass*): Cheers!

(*JULIE and DOROTHY raise their glasses. JIM takes a drink.*)

JIM: You boys joining us?

PAUL: Sure, why not. (*He goes to liquor cart, pours Scotch in his glass, raises it.*) Cheers.

JIM: Cheers.

(*ADAM goes to the kitchen, comes back with a bottle of Coke.*)

ADAM: Cheers.

DOROTHY (*to JULIE*): Have you seen Fox and Nancy?

JULIE: I saw them this afternoon.

DOROTHY: Have they set a date?

JULIE: They were thinking over the holidays. Nothing fancy, of course.

DOROTHY: Of course. Paul told me all about the... uh... meeting for marriage.

JIM: What meeting?

DOROTHY: The wedding, dear.

JIM: The wedding?

DOROTHY: Fox and Nancy.

JIM: Of course. It's a meeting?

JULIE: It's called that, but it's really a wedding.

JIM: Oh, good. Sounds nice.

DOROTHY: And they'll do it here.

JIM: Here?

DOROTHY: Out on the patio. At Christmas.

JIM: Sounds nice. *(To JULIE.)* You live here now?

JULIE *(patiently)*: No, I'm still in Santa Fe.

JIM: Of course. I remember.

(PAUL slams his drink.)

PAUL: Anybody ready for a top-off?

ADAM: We're good.

(PAUL goes to refill his drink, ADAM glaring at him. PAUL sees this and defiantly pours the Scotch and takes a good sip of it. The front door opens and FOX and NANCY enter, both dressed nicely; FOX in khakis and a polo shirt, NANCY in a blouse and skirt.)

FOX: Evening, everybody.

(General greetings from everyone.)

PAUL *(forced joviality)*: Well, you certainly clean up nice!

FOX: Thanks, Dad.

PAUL: Fix you a drink?

FOX: I'm good.

NANCY: Me too. But the veggies look nice.

(FOX and NANCY find places to sit. DOROTHY looks around.)

DOROTHY: Well, it's so nice to have the family together. And this weekend it's all about Fox and Nancy, isn't it?

(DOROTHY fixes both PAUL and ADAM in her gaze and nods. They nod back.)

ADAM: Yes, it is.

PAUL: It is.

DOROTHY: Good. So, tell us all about the wedding plans. We still can call it that, right?

NANCY: Yes, of course. We just decided to follow the Friends tradition since it gives all the people there a part in making it happen. They're not just witnesses but part of the marriage. At least at the outset.

FOX: And after. Everyone who signs the certificate is saying they will help us throughout our marriage.

DOROTHY: That's a very practical idea.

JULIE: It comes from the idea that a marriage isn't just about two people. It's about the community supporting the couple. Being there when they need them.

DOROTHY: I like that. I wish more weddings – and marriages – were like that.

(DOROTHY shoots a glance at PAUL, who grimaces.)

JIM: So, there's no priest or minister?

FOX: That's right, Grandpa. Well, actually, all the people there are, sorta.

JIM: Hmm. Who was it that married us?

DOROTHY: Reverend Graham.

JIM *(nodding)*: I remember him. Nice fellow. Lousy golfer.

DOROTHY: It's my understanding that there's no baptism, either.

JULIE: No, that's not a part of the Quaker tradition. None of the sacraments are.

DOROTHY: Will you raise your children as Quakers?

FOX: Well, Grandma, that's assuming we have any.

DOROTHY: Oh, well, of course. You're going to, aren't you?

FOX: Um...

(FOX and NANCY trade looks.)

DOROTHY: I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked. That's a very personal question.

FOX: No, it's okay, Grandma. It's just that we've decided we're not going to have children.

(Everybody freezes. Long beat as they digest this.)

DOROTHY *(almost a whisper)*: No children?

FOX: That's the plan.

JIM: So why are you getting married?

FOX: Well, Grandpa, we love each other and we want to be together. We're just not going to have kids, that's all.

DOROTHY *(to NANCY)*: Is everything... all right?

PAUL: Jesus, Mom.

DOROTHY: I'm only...

NANCY: It's all right. I'm fine. Perfectly healthy.

JIM *(to FOX)*: How about you?

FOX *(chuckling)*: As far as I know, Grandpa.

JIM: That's a relief.

FOX: Then again, I've never... tried it out.

(Again, everybody freezes. Long beat.)

ADAM: You mean you're still...?

FOX (*blithely*): Yep. Still a virgin.

PAUL: Wow. I didn't know they still made them.

FOX: Well, it's not that I haven't had plenty of offers – from both teams – but you know where I stand.

PAUL: That was ten years ago when you were fifteen and lecturing us on all the trouble sex had caused in the world: war, disease, and so on.

FOX: I really haven't changed my mind. And we don't think that with all that's going on in the world – sea level rise, global warming, pandemics, overcrowding – it's morally right to bring in another life and burden them with our problems. Look, we've got enough to worry about and take care of as it is. The kids I'll be working with at juvey; they're struggling just to find room to breathe, much less grow and improve the world around them.

DOROTHY (*to NANCY*): And you agree with this?

NANCY: Absolutely. One of my primary duties as a veterinarian is advocating for spaying and neutering. Population control is key to global survival for all life.

ADAM: You're not gonna go that far, are you?

FOX (*laughing*): No!

JIM: How long have you known each other?

NANCY: A little over a year, Jim.

JIM: How long have you lived together?

FOX: About six months, including three in the jungles of Costa Rica.

JIM: And you've never taken the top off the cookie jar?

DOROTHY: Jim!

FOX (*laughing*): Grandpa, I love you! No, we've never ... gone for the Oreos.

PAUL: Or even the Chips Ahoy.

NANCY: In all the time we've been together, I've never seen him naked. I'm not sure he even has a penis.

JULIE: Oh, he does, trust me. I gave birth to him, I changed his diapers, I raised him from infancy through puberty. Yeah, he's got one.

FOX: You want me to show you? *(He reaches for his belt buckle.)*

EVERYONE: No!

FOX: All right, then. Look, we thought about it and talked about it a lot. Lots of couples don't have children. They're not any less a family, right? They're together because... *(He looks at PAUL.)* Because they belong together no matter what.

PAUL *(fidgeting)*: Oh, shit, you're not gonna lay that Lifetime Movie of the Week guilt trip on me. *(Goes to liquor cart.)*

FOX: Dad, stop.

DOROTHY: What guilt trip?

FOX: Grandma, Dad told you Adam's sleeping in my old room, didn't he?

DOROTHY: Why, yes.

FOX: What he didn't tell you was that it was just for the weekend.

DOROTHY: They're going through some things, that's all, dear.

JIM: Paul and Adam? What is it, son?

PAUL: Dad, it's --

FOX *(over)*: He lied, Mom. Adam's moved out. He's sleeping in my room this weekend so that it looks like he's still living here, but he's staying with Jason and Brock.

JIM: Who?

PAUL: Jason. His business partner and his boyfriend. Jesus, Fox, what the fuck?

DOROTHY: Adam, is that true?

ADAM: Yep.

DOROTHY: What really happened? *(Beat.)* Tell me.

(ADAM looks at PAUL, then looks around the room at each of the other guests. He takes a deep breath.)

ADAM: Well, you know what? (*Beat.*) The hell with it. C'mon, we've got dinner reservations at a really great place, and it's my treat, so let's all get in our cars and head on over there. We'll have a great time, we'll enjoy each other's company, and if you really want to hear all about it, we can come back here and talk it out. (*Looks at watch.*) But from this moment forward, it's all smiles and happiness and no one's making a scene, just like we always do, okay?

FOX: Okay.

NANCY: Okay.

DOROTHY: All right.

JULIE: Okay.

ADAM: Okay. (*Goes to the front door and opens it, beckoning everyone out. They get up and head for the door.*)

JIM (*to NANCY*): Welcome to the family.

They exit, ADAM the last to go, turning off the lights and closing the door behind him.

End of Scene 2.

The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com

All Together At Last

CHARACTERS:

PAUL HENDERSON: Mid-sixties.

ADAM CONNOLLY: Early sixties. Paul's husband.

P.J. HENDERSON-CONNOLLY: Fifteen. Paul and Adam's grandson.

WILL KURTZ: Seventeen. P.J.'s boyfriend.

DOROTHY HENDERSON: Nineties. Paul's mother.

FOX HENDERSON-CONNOLLY: Forty. P.J.'s father, Paul and Adam's son.

GENE KURTZ: Late thirties. Will's father.

PLACE and TIME:

A home in suburban Miami. Memorial Day weekend, fifteen years after the action in "All Together Again" and twenty-five years after "All Together Now."

All Together At Last

Scene 1

The scene is the living room of the home of PAUL HENDERSON and ADAM CONNOLLY. It is a comfortable place in suburban Miami. It is open and airy. The furnishings are a mixture of antique and contemporary furniture, tastefully done but not extravagant. Upstage right is the kitchen area, open to the rest of the room, with a breakfast table nearby. Upstage left is a dining area with a table and chairs for six. Downstage right is a comfortable couch, chairs, and coffee table. Downstage left is a reading area with bookshelves and a small desk with a laptop computer and a printer (unseen) under the desk. Off stage right is an exit to the rest of the rooms of the house; the front entry hall is stage left. The back wall has a large sliding glass doors and sidelights leading out to a patio and garden area visible to the audience. It is lush with plants and hanging orchids.

At rise, it is dawn, the room dimly lit from the sunlight coming in from the patio. PAUL HENDERSON, a man in his mid-sixties, is standing next to the kitchen table. He is wearing a t-shirt, jeans, and flip-flops. He is in decent shape for a man of his age. He is talking on a cell phone.

PAUL: Thank you for everything you did for him. We really appreciate it. ... We'll be down later. ... All right, thank you. Goodbye.

(Clicks phone off, puts it on the table, closes his eyes, and heaves a sigh. After a beat, ADAM CONNOLLY enters. He is five years younger than PAUL, in a t-shirt and boxers, bare feet. He is still in good shape; well-muscled and trim for a man of sixty.)

ADAM: He's gone?

PAUL: In his sleep. About twenty minutes ago.

(ADAM embraces PAUL and they hold each other.)

ADAM: You okay?

PAUL: Yeah. I was ready for it, I guess. They already called Mom and told her.

ADAM: They say how she took it?

PAUL: Oh, you know her. She apologized to the nurse for making her work on a holiday weekend.

ADAM: Yeah. Did you call Fox?

PAUL: It's four-thirty in Santa Fe. Might as well let him sleep in a little. Nothing he can do from there anyway.

ADAM: Think he'll come?

PAUL: I'm sure he will. If I know Fox, he's already got a go-bag packed and ready. One call to the airline and he'll be here before dinner. *(Beat.)* Meanwhile, I'm gonna go get some coffee. Herbal tea isn't going to cut it this morning.

(PAUL digs his car keys out of his pocket and heads for the front door. ADAM follows.)

ADAM: Hey.

(They stop and embrace again, this time we hear a sob from PAUL.)

ADAM *(cont'd)*: He had a good life. And making it to ninety; that's pretty damn good in my book.

PAUL: Yeah. I should live so long.

ADAM: Twenty-five more years.

PAUL: Except for him the last ten really sucked.

ADAM: Can't have everything.

PAUL: You want anything?

ADAM: The usual.

PAUL: Tall Pike Market with a shot of cream.

ADAM: And a green stopper stick so it doesn't spill.

PAUL: Got it. *(Nods in the direction of the bedrooms.)* Think P.J. will want anything?

ADAM: Let him sleep.

PAUL: Okay. Back in a bit.

(PAUL opens the door.)

ADAM: Love you.

PAUL: Love you.

(PAUL exits. ADAM watches him go, then goes to the patio and slides open the door, looking out to the garden.)

ADAM *(to the plants)*: Morning, guys, how're you doing?

(ADAM goes out onto the patio and starts to inspect and tend to the orchids. As he does, P.J. enters stealthily from the bedrooms. He is a tall, well-built boy of fifteen, wearing only boxers. He looks into the living room and kitchen, not seeing ADAM out on the patio. Thinking he is alone he beckons to someone off-stage. WILL enters. He too is a well-built young man with wire-rimmed glasses, wearing a wrinkled shirt, jeans, and sneakers that are untied. He looks like he dressed in a hurry. He and P.J. start to cross to the front door. ADAM sees them but does nothing. When

P.J. and WILL get to the door, P.J. gives WILL a quick hug, whispers something, and starts to open the door. ADAM steps inside.)

ADAM: P.J., if Paul and I taught you anything, it's to offer your date some breakfast the next morning.

(P.J. and WILL stop in their tracks.)

P.J.: Shit.

WILL (*sotto voce*): Busted.

ADAM: If it's any consolation, I heard you come in last night.

P.J. (*embarrassed*): Did G-Dad hear?

ADAM: No, he was conked out. None the wiser. Yet.

P.J.: Where is he?

ADAM: Went for coffee. So, are you gonna introduce me?

P.J.: Oh, yeah, sorry. This is Will. Will, this is my granddad. One of them. I call him G-Pop.

ADAM: You can call me Adam.

WILL: Okay. Wow. You don't look like a grandfather.

ADAM: Thank you. Come on back in, you guys. P.J., go put on some clothes.

(P.J. exits to bedroom. WILL smiles tentatively at ADAM, who smiles back. WILL is definitely uncomfortable, but he tries to mask it. ADAM chuckles.)

ADAM: Relax, Will. We're cool.

WILL: Okay.

ADAM: I remember the time I almost got busted sneaking out of my boyfriend's house. I was about your age. Did you ever try putting on a pair of jeans in the dark with a pocketful of change with parents in the next room? It's not easy.

WILL: Oh, yeah...

ADAM: So, how'd you know P.J.?

WILL: From school.

ADAM: So, you're how old?

WILL: Um, sixteen.

(ADAM fixes his gaze on him. WILL gulps, ducks his head.)

ADAM: Sixteen?

WILL: Um...

(ADAM again fixed his gaze on him.)

WILL *(cont'd)*: Okay. *(Beat.)* Seventeen. Just. My birthday was last week.

ADAM *(deadpan)*: Happy birthday.

WILL: Thank you.

ADAM: I take it you know that P.J. is fifteen.

WILL *(whispered)*: Yessir.

ADAM: A very mature fifteen.

WILL: Yessir. We're in the same class. And on the wrestling team.

ADAM: But still fifteen.

WILL: Look, Mr. Connolly –

ADAM: Adam.

WILL: Adam. We've been friends since we were kids, and he and I... We...

ADAM: Relax, Will. P.J. came out to us when he was twelve. How about a glass of orange juice?

WILL *(relaxing)*: Sure, thanks.

(ADAM goes to the refrigerator, gets the orange juice carton and a glass. Pours it, hands the glass to WILL.)

ADAM: He can be both very charming and persuasive, a trait he gets from his father.

WILL: I know his mom and dad.

ADAM: Oh, you do? Funny how he's never told us about you.

WILL: Well....

ADAM: So, I take it he's told you why he's living with us.

WILL: Yeah, his parents are in New Mexico working on an Indian reservation this year.

ADAM: That's right. It's a package deal. His dad is a school counselor, his mom is a veterinarian. They both take care of kids, so to speak. P.J. wanted to stay behind and go to school here in Miami. Now I understand at least one reason why.

WILL *(shy grin)*: Uh, yeah.

ADAM: Paul and I have some experience raising a teenager. Did he tell you about how his dad showed up on that doorstep all the way from Santa Fe at the age of fifteen? Instant family on Paul's fortieth birthday, no less.

WILL: He said something about that.

ADAM: We've always been a pretty close family. We look out for each other. So, let me ask you: what are your intentions towards P.J.?

WILL (*flustered*): I'm sorry?

ADAM: Are you guys just friends with benefits, or are you serious about each other?

(*WILL is stunned for a moment, then screws up his courage a little.*)

WILL: Well, yeah, we're serious. I mean, I am. About him. But we've never –

(*P.J. re-enters. He is now wearing jeans and t-shirt.*)

P.J.: So, what're you guys talking about?

ADAM: Oh, just getting acquainted.

(*P.J. sizes up the situation and goes to WILL.*)

P.J. (*to WILL*): Third degree?

(*WILL starts to answer, but ADAM cuts him off.*)

ADAM: Just some polite conversation.

P.J.: Okay.

(*P.J. takes WILL aside and whispers to him. At first WILL shakes his head, but P.J. gets determined and WILL reluctantly nods. ADAM watches all of this with bemusement.*)

ADAM: You guys want to be alone... again?

P.J.: G-Pop, Will has something he wants to ask you.

WILL (*to P.J.*): Not just me.

P.J.: Okay, we have something we want to ask you.

ADAM: I'm all ears.

(*P.J. squares his shoulders, screwing up his courage, then deflates a little.*)

P.J.: Um...

(*P.J. looks at WILL, who nods his head and smiles tentatively as if to say "Go on, you can do it."*
P.J. looks back at ADAM.)

P.J. (*cont'd*): Okay. (*Deep breath.*) Will wants to move in with me.

WILL: It was your idea.

P.J.: But you want to, don'tcha?

WILL: Yes, but –

ADAM (*interrupting*): Hold it. Back the truck up.

P.J. (*to WILL*): Whaddaya mean, “Yes, but...”?

WILL: What I mean is –

P.J.: You said you want to.

WILL: I know. I do.

P.J.: So? What's the problem?

WILL (*glancing at ADAM*): Nothing. It's just –

P.J.: Seriously?

WILL: P.J....

P.J.: Will...

ADAM (*loudly*): Hey! Cool it.

(*P.J. and WILL subside. Beat while ADAM looks at them both.*)

ADAM (*cont'd*): All right. Start over. Why, aside from the obvious reasons, do you want Will to move in with you.

P.J.: Because we love each other.

(*P.J. looks at WILL, who, after a second, shrugs and nods in agreement.*)

ADAM: Um, okay. I'm pretty sure Will's parents might have something to say about it, though.

P.J.: They're divorced. His mom took off for Oregon a long time ago. He lives with his dad. Or he did.

ADAM: Why the past tense?

WILL: Because I don't live there anymore.

ADAM: How come?

P.J.: Because –

WILL: Don't –

ADAM: Because...?

(P.J. takes WILL over to a corner of the living room, whispering. WILL shakes his head, looks at ADAM, shakes his head again. P.J. becomes insistent. Finally...)

P.J.: Show him.

(Reluctantly WILL goes over to ADAM and lifts up his t-shirt, revealing several fist-sized bruises on his abdomen and several scrapes.)

P.J.: His dad did that.

(ADAM examines the bruises. WILL drops his shirt.)

ADAM: When did that happen?

WILL: Last night. We were –

P.J. *(interrupting)*: We were sitting out on the back patio at Will's dad's place. We were just talking, not holding hands, not doing anything. Just talking. Then all of a sudden, his dad comes out all shitfaced and starts yelling at us, calling us faggots and all sorts of names and he gets in my face for "seducing" Will and saying me and my whole faggot family did this to him, and he starts to take a swing at me –

ADAM *(interrupting)*: Did he hit you?

P.J.: No, but then he starts to go after Will and he –

WILL *(interrupting)*: I hit him back.

P.J.: Knocked him down.

WILL: Pretty easy when he's drunk.

ADAM: Are you all right?

WILL: I'm a wrestler. Been hit worse.

P.J.: So, his dad starts yelling, "Get the fuck outta my house, don't wanna see your sorry faggot ass ever again."

WILL: So, we left.

P.J.: And came here.

(Pause as ADAM absorbs all of this.)

ADAM: Where were you going? This morning when you were leaving?

WILL: My cousin has an apartment over by the university. I was gonna crash on his couch until...

P.J.: See, that's why I want him to move in here.

ADAM: Has he hit you before?

(WILL hesitates.)

P.J.: Tell him.

WILL: Couple of times.

ADAM: Have you told anyone?

WILL: Like who?

ADAM: Well, your school counselor? A doctor?

P.J.: I told him to.

WILL: No.

ADAM: Why not?

WILL: Just haven't. Not a lot anyone can really do. I mean, a drunk's a drunk, and he's a mean one. That's why Mom left.

ADAM: I know what you're going through.

P.J.: So, it's okay?

(Beat as ADAM thinks, his fists clenched.)

ADAM: I have to talk it over with Paul. *(Sigh.)* And I'm sorry to have to tell you, but there's something a little more pressing right now.

P.J.: What?

ADAM: Jim died this morning.

P.J. *(shocked)*: Grampy?

ADAM: He went in his sleep.

(P.J. goes to ADAM and embraces him, holding him, and we hear P.J. sob. WILL looks uncomfortable.)

ADAM: He had a good life. He loved you.

(P.J. is now crying openly.)

WILL: I should go.

P.J.: No. Please don't.

(P.J. goes to WILL and hugs him, which WILL accepts hesitantly, then welcomes it. They hold each other. P.J. then turns to ADAM.)

P.J.: Does my dad know?

ADAM: We haven't called him yet. It's two hours earlier there. Paul will call them later.

P.J.: Okay. Aw, Grampy...

(PAUL enters from the front door carrying a cardboard Starbucks tray with two paper cups. P.J. sees him and goes to him, hugging him tightly, nearly knocking over the tray. PAUL awkwardly comforts P.J. as he looks around the room, taking in ADAM and does a slight double-take when he sees WILL.)

PAUL *(to ADAM)*: You told him, I take it.

ADAM: Yeah.

(PAUL sets the tray down somewhere and properly hugs P.J.)

PAUL: He had a good life, and he had people who loved him. That's all that matters.

P.J.: I know.

PAUL *(to WILL)*: Hello.

WILL: Hi.

P.J.: G-Dad, this is Will.

PAUL: Nice to meet you. You're a friend of P.J.'s?

WILL: Yessir.

PAUL: Okay. *(Gets coffee, hands cup to ADAM.)* If I'd known we were having company, I'd have gotten more coffee.

WILL: That's okay. I should be going anyway.

PAUL: Well, nice to meet you, Will.

WILL: You too.

(WILL starts to head for the door, but P.J. stops him. Once again, they get into an intense whispered discussion as PAUL and ADAM look on, trading looks.)

P.J.: Where're you going?

WILL: My cousin's. I'll call you.

P.J.: What about...?

WILL: Not now.

P.J.: When, then?

WILL: I don't know. But not now.

P.J.: It's too late. We already told G-Pop. (*Turns to PAUL.*) G-Dad, I want Will to move in here with us, okay?

(*Classic double-take from PAUL.*)

PAUL: I'm sorry, what?

P.J.: I want Will to move in here.

PAUL (*to ADAM*): You know about this?

ADAM: They just told me.

P.J.: His life sucks at home, his dad's a drunk –

PAUL: Hold it, I don't need the whole backstory right now. Just...

ADAM: Déjà vu, huh?

PAUL: Twenty-five years later another stray kid shows up on our doorstep.

ADAM: Let's go out on the patio and I'll fill you in.

WILL: I should go.

ADAM: No, you two just sit tight, okay? We'll get this figured out and then we'll talk and then... Well, we've got other things to think about, but it's not like Jim's going anywhere at the moment.

PAUL: Thanks for reminding me.

(*ADAM and PAUL take their coffee cups and go out to the patio, closing the door behind them. We see them sit on the bench and start talking.*)

WILL: I really should go. My timing sucks.

P.J.: No, G-Pop said to wait.

WILL: For what?

P.J.: They said they'd figure something out.

WILL: Yeah, some way of getting me back in with my dad. "It's for the best," or some lame shit line like that. (*Beat.*) I'll call you later. Sorry about your... what was he, your great-granddad?

P.J.: Yeah. G-Dad's dad. He was here when my dad showed up here. G-Mom wanted him to go to some boarding school, but Grampy and Grammy talked them into letting him stay. At least that's what my dad says.

WILL: You have funny names for them: G-Dad, G-Pop, Grampy, Grammy.

P.J.: What do you call your grandparents?

WILL: Nothing. They're all dead. All I've really had was my mom and dad. So, anyway, I'll see you later.

(*WILL gets to the door.*)

P.J.: Hey, wait up.

(*WILL stops.*)

P.J.: Do you remember the first time we met?

WILL: Third grade. Mrs. Edward's class.

P.J.: Yep. I knew right then.

WILL: You knew what right then?

P.J.: That you and I were... kindred spirits. That we were meant to be together.

WILL: Aw, c'mon. You were eight. You didn't know about...

P.J.: About being gay? No, I didn't. But I knew. You were this shy kid with glasses but a great build –

WILL: I was nine. Nobody has muscles when they're nine.

P.J.: Maybe not, but.... And you were nice to me. I mean, here I was, this goofy kid raised by Quakers with the vegetarian lunches and –

WILL: Your "FREE NELSON MANDELA" t-shirts –

P.J.: Which were hand-me-downs from my dad. But I just knew.

WILL: Yeah. Me too.

P.J.: I meant it back there, y'know. I do love you.

WILL: Yeah. I know. (*Sheepish grin.*) And I love you too.

P.J.: 'Bout time.

WILL: Hey, you know I do. I just don't...

P.J.: Yeah, I know. It comes easy in my family. We're always saying it.

WILL: Never got much of that.

P.J.: Gonna try to fix that.

WILL: You think they're gonna go for it? I mean, we kinda sprang it on 'em, and then your ... Grampy....

P.J.: We'll get them to see that it's just like you're gonna be spending the night, that's all. For the next two years until we graduate from high school. A long-time houseguest. And now with Grampy gone, maybe they'll be more –

WILL: Oh, you're gonna do that guilt trip shit on them. That's just....

P.J.: No. They'd see through it in a second, and besides, I don't need to. All you have to do is tell them about life with your dad. Shit, my dad would probably go over there and pack your stuff himself.

WILL: If you say so.

P.J.: Yeah, I do.

(P.J. goes over to WILL, gently embraces him, and after a discreet glance out to the garden, kisses him. WILL returns it, and they start to get into it. Then WILL breaks it off.)

WILL: Yeah, okay, I'm getting kinda...

P.J.: Yeah, me too.

WILL: And we promised...

P.J.: I know...

(They separate reluctantly, trading smiles, maybe an affectionate cuff on the arm or something. The patio door slides open and PAUL and ADAM re-enter.)

PAUL: All right, guys, here's what we've come up with. Will, you can stay here this weekend. We're going to reach out to your father and see if we can't work out some kind of reconciliation between you two –

WILL (*interrupting*): He won't go for it –

ADAM: You don't know that.

WILL: Yeah, I do.

PAUL: Well, be that as it may, we need to do everything we can to somehow work things out between you two. Meanwhile –

P.J. (*interrupting*): Meanwhile, let's go make some room for you in my room. Thanks, G-Dad; thanks, G-Pop.

WILL: Yeah, thank you.

(*P.J. grabs WILL by the hand, and they go off to the bedrooms leaving ADAM and PAUL alone.*)

PAUL: Well, shit.

ADAM: Yeah, no shit.

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2

Several hours later, mid-afternoon. There are several cardboard boxes of various size and condition on the floor of the living room. P.J. is at the computer, WILL standing next to him, reading what's on the screen.

P.J.: There. Found it.

WILL (*reading off the screen*): “Temporary Guardianship Agreement.”

P.J.: Yeah. Download it, fill it out, have your dad sign it, done. Don't even need to take it to court.

WILL: Yeah, but what does it mean?

P.J.: It means that G-Dad and G-Pop become your guardians. They become like your parents.

WILL: For how long?

P.J. (*reading the form*): It looks like for as long as you want. Or at least until you're eighteen. My dad did this all the time when he worked at the Juvenile Justice office.

WILL: I don't know. He might not go for it.

P.J.: He kicked you out. He said to get your faggot ass out of his house.

WILL: He was drunk.

P.J.: He also tried to beat the crap outta you.

WILL: Yeah, well.

(P.J. hits a few keys on the computer.)

P.J.: Look, I'll save the form. We can talk about it with them when they get back.

WILL: Okay.

(WILL goes over to the boxes, pokes one with his foot.)

WILL (*cont'd*): Kinda weird.

P.J.: What.

WILL: My whole life in a couple of boxes.

P.J.: It's not everything.

WILL: Clothes, books, records and stuff. Pretty much it.

(P.J. goes over to one of the boxes, pulls out a small stuffed toy kitten.)

P.J.: You brought Snowball.

WILL (*embarrassed*): Hey, c'mon.

P.J.: I think it's adorable: a big muscle-bound goof like you still has his stuffed animals.

WILL: Stop it.

P.J. (*gently teasing, to Snowball*): How about it, Snowball? You happy to be in a new place? (*Holds Snowball up to his ear as if he's listening.*) Why, yes, it is a nice place, and Will's gonna make sure we're happy here, aren't we?

WILL: C'mon!

(*WILL goes over to P.J., and a gentle game of Keep-Away ensues, but P.J. finally gives Snowball to WILL, who holds him for a moment, then puts him carefully back in the box.*)

P.J.: I love it that you still have him.

WILL: Well, don't you still have your... whatever you had?

P.J.: Oh, I'm sure Mr. Panda from the World Wildlife Fund is somewhere, either here or at our house.

WILL: Okay, then.

(*P.J. goes to him and gives him a hug, which WILL returns.*)

P.J.: This is all gonna work out. You'll see.

WILL: Hope so. 'Cause if it doesn't –

P.J.: Then we'll think of something else, okay?

WILL: Okay.

(*Another embrace, then the front door opens, and they separate. PAUL and ADAM enter, followed by DOROTHY. She is close to ninety but doesn't look it; she's dressed nicely, if a bit somberly, carrying a large handbag. She moves slowly but surely and without assistance.*)

DOROTHY: Thank you for coming to get me, dear. Is he here yet?

ADAM: Didn't see a car.

DOROTHY: He could have come in a taxi, you know.

PAUL: Fox texted me from Dallas as he was getting on the plane, but that was before noon.

DOROTHY: So, anytime. (*Sees P.J.*) Hello, dear.

P.J.: Hi, Gram.

(*P.J. goes and gives DOROTHY a kiss. She returns it.*)

DOROTHY: So good to see you. (*Sees WILL.*) Well, hello there.

WILL (*shyly*): Hullo.

P.J.: Gram, this is my friend Will.

DOROTHY: Nice to meet you.

(*DOROTHY offers him a hand; they shake, and she pats it.*)

WILL: I'm really sorry about... your husband.

DOROTHY: Oh, thank you, dear.

PAUL: Mom, can I get you anything? Water? Lemonade?

DOROTHY: No, I'm fine. I know you don't have anything stronger, so I'm good.

(*DOROTHY sits on the couch.*)

DOROTHY (*cont'd*): It's just nice to get away from all the people coming up to me and calling and hovering. I just needed some time to be with the family. Have you heard from your parents, P.J.?

P.J.: Yeah, Dad called me.

DOROTHY: I called him first thing. I was afraid I would wake them, but he needed to hear it from me. It turns out he'd already heard; the nurse called them because he was on the list.

P.J.: So, you're okay?

DOROTHY: I knew it was coming, dear. And really, he's been gone for years; his body just didn't know it. At the end he just... (*Beat.*) So, how are you? School going well?

P.J.: Uh, yeah, I guess. Gonna be a junior in the fall and then...

DOROTHY: Off to college, I hope. What about you, Will?

WILL (*off guard*): Uh, yeah, I guess.

DOROTHY: Good.

(*PAUL looks at the boxes.*)

PAUL (*to P.J.*): What's all this?

P.J.: Some of Will's stuff.

PAUL: We said just for the weekend.

P.J.: Well, yeah, but –

PAUL: Don't get ahead of yourself.

P.J.: I'm not. We just –

PAUL: P.J., we talked about this. We still need to work this out with Will's dad. How'd you get this over here?

WILL: Dad's on duty this weekend. We went over and got it after he left.

PAUL: Yeah, but how'd you get it here? On your bikes? How far does he live from here?

P.J.: A couple of miles. Will's got his license.

ADAM: I lent them the Mustang.

P.J.: Well, yeah.

WILL: It was my idea. I was real careful.

PAUL: I'm sure you were. (*Mild glare at ADAM, who returns it.*) Yeah, okay, you guys. We need to set some ground rules here. First of all –

DOROTHY: What's going on?

PAUL: Nothing, Mom. Will's just staying with us for the weekend, that's all.

DOROTHY: He packed a lot for a weekend.

(*Awkward silence.*)

P.J.: He's moving in with me.

PAUL: We haven't decided that yet.

DOROTHY: Why?

P.J.: Because his dad threw him out. He's got no place to go.

WILL: It's because P.J. and I are...

P.J.: Gram, Will's my boyfriend.

DOROTHY: Oh, that's nice. I'm very happy for you. But you haven't answered my question. Why?

PAUL: He told you. His father threw him out.

DOROTHY: No, I understand that. I want to know why you haven't decided yet.

PAUL (*mystified*): Decided what?

DOROTHY (*exasperated*): To let him move in with P.J. With you.

PAUL: It's complicated.

DOROTHY: At the risk of sounding like a broken record, why? Why is it complicated? (*To WILL.*) Is everything all right?

WILL: Um...

P.J.: No, it's not. His parents are divorced, he lives with his dad, and he's a drunk. I mean, his dad's a drunk. A mean one. And he's a cop, so he knows how to –

DOROTHY: Does your father abuse you?

WILL (*hesitantly*): You mean, like...?

DOROTHY: Does he hit you?

(*WILL looks around at PAUL, ADAM, and P.J. Hesitates.*)

P.J.: Go on, show her.

WILL: Uh...

P.J.: You showed G-Pop.

(*WILL reluctantly lifts up his shirt and shows her the bruises, then drops it.*)

DOROTHY: Oh, dear. (*To PAUL.*) Complicated, my –

PAUL: Mom...

DOROTHY: How can you even think of not taking him in? It's not like you haven't done it before.

PAUL: That was different. Fox is my son. And it was complicated then, too.

DOROTHY: Only because you two lovebirds had to learn how to be parents. But you did all right. And this boy – (*To WILL.*) Excuse me, Will; how old are you?

WILL: Uh, seventeen.

DOROTHY: Really?

WILL: Yes ma'am.

DOROTHY: This young man needs your help. And it's not like he just showed up on your doorstep from the wild west. (*To P.J.*) How long have you two known each other?

P.J.: Since third grade.

DOROTHY: Good lord, he's practically family.

PAUL: Well, we've just met him –

ADAM: Dottie, we're dealing with it. It'll be okay. (*Beat.*) Is there anything more we need to do for you; for the arrangements for Jim?

DOROTHY (*softly*): No, dear. It was all taken care of. By now they've taken him – his body – to the funeral home and are...

(Beat. DOROTHY reaches into her handbag and pulls out a piece of paper.)

DOROTHY *(cont'd)*: Paul, here's a list of people I think we should call. Friends back in Toledo. And since you're such a good writer, do you think you could write up something for the paper? It doesn't have to be long; just the usual obituary. And you know they'll charge you by the column inch, so...

PAUL: I'll take care of it, Mom.

DOROTHY: Thank you, dear. *(Sigh.)* All right, then. When do you think Fox will be here?

(PAUL feels his phone vibrate and pulls it out.)

PAUL *(reading from the phone)*: He's just getting off the freeway and will "be there soon."

DOROTHY: Good. Can't wait to see him.

(DOROTHY starts to slowly get up from the couch. WILL goes to help her.)

DOROTHY *(cont'd)*: Thank you, Will, but I think I can manage.

(Stands unaided, and she smiles to herself.)

DOROTHY *(cont'd)*: Now if I could just still play a set of tennis.

(DOROTHY crosses to the patio door, then beckons to WILL.)

DOROTHY *(cont'd)*: Will, have you seen their garden?

WILL: No, ma'am, not really.

DOROTHY: Come, let me show you.

(DOROTHY exits out to the patio, WILL behind her. She gestures to him to close the door, and he does. We see her point out various plants, then they sit on the bench and carry on their conversation, inaudible. PAUL, ADAM, and P.J. watch.)

PAUL: She's giving him The Talk.

ADAM: Welcome to the family, Will.

PAUL *(to P.J.)*: So, have you spoken to Will's father like I asked you?

P.J.: What am I gonna say? He threw me out, too. He thought I was the one who turned him gay.

PAUL: Did you actually see him hit Will?

P.J.: Yeah, I was there for the whole thing. It was like one of those fights on TV. He slugged Will a couple of times, then Will slugged him back and, boom, down he goes. *(Admiringly.)* Will's fuckin' strong. Then we got the hell outta there, got an Uber, and came here. Look, if you're worried about us sleeping together, we didn't. He slept in the other bed. It's not like we're –

PAUL: Stop right there.

P.J.: Yeah, okay. (*Snickering.*) Not like I haven't heard you two goin' at it.

ADAM: Learn from the best, I always say.

PAUL: All right, all right. I still think we need to let his father know where he is.

P.J.: I told you, he doesn't give a shit.

PAUL: Well, we can't just take him in like a lost dog.

P.J.: You can do a temporary guardian thing.

PAUL: A what?

P.J.: Temporary guardian. I looked it up. (*Goes to the computer, pulls up the document.*) There, see? "Temporary Guardianship Without Court." You fill out a form, we get it signed, and that's it. Easy-peasy.

(*PAUL reads the document, then looks at ADAM.*)

PAUL (*to ADAM*): You know about this?

ADAM: I've heard of it.

PAUL: Okay, well, for the sake of argument –

ADAM: Discussion.

PAUL: For the sake of discussion, how long would he stay? I mean, there's gotta be a limit, right?

P.J.: Not really. The form says it can be for as long as you say so.

PAUL: Well, those are things we need to talk about. What about school?

P.J.: We get out for the summer next week.

PAUL: Then what? Let's be practical. (*Looks out to the patio.*) He's a big guy, and if he's anything like you, he eats like a horse. It's not gonna be cheap.

ADAM: Oh, c'mon, Paul. You want to run his financials?

P.J.: He has a job, G-Dad. He bags groceries at Publix on weekends. During summer he does it full time. He'll help pay his way.

PAUL: Okay, then. (*Beat.*) What happens if you two...?

P.J.: What?

PAUL: If things don't...

ADAM: He means if you break up.

P.J.: I love him. He loves me.

PAUL (*glancing at ADAM*): It's not that simple. There are times...

ADAM: Let's not get ahead of ourselves. The thing to deal with is what do we do right now. (*To PAUL.*) One day at a time. He's here, he's safe. (*To P.J.*) Why don't you go out there and be with your Gram, okay? She needs us right now. Whether or not she shows it, she's grieving. Go give her some love.

P.J.: Okay.

(*P.J. goes out to the patio and sits with WILL and DOROTHY, closing the door behind him.*)

PAUL: You're taking Will's side.

ADAM: Damn right. Been there, done that.

PAUL: Yeah. Don't you think they're a little young?

ADAM: They're not getting married. And, so what if they are sleeping together?

PAUL: Seriously? P.J. is fifteen.

ADAM: News flash, hon. Kids that age are doing it.

PAUL: And you're condoning it?

ADAM: No, I'm being a realist. At least we know they're not sneaking around behind our backs. By letting them know that we know, it'll take the thrill-seeking element out of it. We treat them like the responsible young men we expect them to be, not like a couple of horny sex fiends.

PAUL: By definition, teenagers are horny sex fiends.

ADAM: Look, the most important thing is that we get Will the hell away from his dad. Then we can deal with the rest of it.

PAUL: So, we do the temporary guardianship.

ADAM: Yeah. First, though, we talk it over with Fox. I mean, after all, P.J.'s his son, remember.

PAUL: I keep forgetting. I'm having turkey-baster flashbacks.

(*There is a knock on the front door, and then it opens.*)

FOX (*off*): Hey, made it.

(*FOX enters. He is in his early forties, in good shape, tanned from working outside, wearing jeans, work shirt, and boots, carrying a daypack. He is naturally upbeat and cheerful, but at the moment he's tired from travel and showing the proper amount of restraint for the situation.*)

PAUL and ADAM: Welcome home.

(They embrace, hugging, exchanging kisses and ad-libs, then FOX sets down his daypack.)

FOX: Good to be here. Where's Grandma?

PAUL: She's out on the patio with P.J. and –

(DOROTHY enters from the patio, followed by P.J. and WILL, who hangs back.)

DOROTHY: Oh, there's my one and only grandson.

FOX: Hi, Grandma.

(They embrace.)

DOROTHY: Oh, I'm so glad you came.

FOX: Well, of course. How are you?

DOROTHY: Oh, I'm fine. Really. I was ready for it, and so was he, I'm sure. The last few weeks... Well, you're here. *(To FOX.)* How's your mother?

FOX: She's fine. I called and told her. She sends her love.

DOROTHY: Where is she now?

FOX: Still in Costa Rica. We're house-sitting for her.

DOROTHY: I hope she's well.

FOX: She is. *(He sees P.J.)* Hey, P.J., good to see you in person.

P.J.: Hi, Dad.

(They embrace.)

FOX: Skype and FaceTime every couple of days just aren't the same.

P.J.: Guess not. Dad, you remember Will.

(They all turn to look at WILL, who is still hanging back. He grins nervously and gives them a small wave.)

WILL *(shyly)*: Hi.

FOX: Yeah, hi Will.

(FOX goes to WILL and they shake hands, FOX patting him on the shoulder.)

FOX *(cont'd)*: Good to see you. Wow, you've gotten big.

WILL: Thanks.

FOX: How are you?

WILL: Um, I'm okay.

P.J.: Actually, Dad, he's –

PAUL (*cutting him off*): Guys, can we just take a moment, let your dad catch his breath. (*To FOX.*) Get you anything? Water? Lemonade?

ADAM (*to himself*): Prozac?

FOX: I'm good. I just thought I'd stop by here before going over to check on the house and see how things are there. Never know with house-sitters, even if they are your colleague's son and daughter-in-law.

PAUL: I called them to tell them you were coming. They're expecting you.

P.J.: I went by yesterday after school to check it out. It's fine.

FOX: Oh, thanks.

P.J.: Sure, Dad. So, anyway –

ADAM (*cutting him off*): Sounds good. You go get settled in then come back around six or so. We'll order in from Shorty's Barbeque – Jim loved that place – and we'll have a quiet dinner in his honor and memory. Then tomorrow we can go to the Quaker meeting house and see about doing a celebration of Jim's life there. (*Beat.*) How's that sound?

(*Pause as everyone looks at each other, nodding in agreement, PAUL a little taken aback by ADAM'S sudden take-charge moment.*)

FOX: Well, that does sound like a plan. Okay, I'll be back around six. Let me know if there's anything I can do.

PAUL: Will do.

(*FOX goes to the door. PAUL follows him.*)

PAUL (*cont'd*): Fox...

FOX: Yeah?

PAUL (*sotto voce*): Any word?

FOX (*sotto voce*): Yeah, but now's not a good time.

PAUL (*concerned*): Really?

FOX (*reassuring*): It's good, Dad. (*To the rest.*) See you in a little while. Lots of news to catch up on.

P.J.: There sure is, Dad. Lots.

(*PAUL glares at him.*)

DOROTHY: See you soon, dear.

(*FOX exits.*)

PAUL: I know you want to tell him, but it's a little much to spring it right now, okay?

ADAM: He just got here. Let him decompress.

P.J.: But we will tell him, right?

PAUL: We'll discuss it.

P.J.: But –

ADAM: Hey, “we'll discuss it” is better than “no fuckin' way.” Take the win, cowboy.

P.J.: Okay.

WILL: He's right, P.J. (*To PAUL.*) Thank you, Mr. Henderson.

PAUL: Okay, well, in the meantime, text me your dad's number so I can let him know where you are. (*To ADAM.*) Unless you want to call him.

ADAM: No, you go ahead. I don't think I could... (*Shakes head.*) Anyway, you do it.

PAUL: All right. Good idea about take-out from Shorty's, by the way.

ADAM: I know Jim loved their baby-back ribs and coleslaw.

DOROTHY: He did indeed. Do you have any idea what Fox's news is?

ADAM: No idea.

PAUL: Well, it can't be any more surprising than what's been going on here today.

DOROTHY: If it is, I came prepared. (*DOROTHY reaches into her handbag and pulls out a bottle of The Macallan scotch and sets it on the coffee table.*) Could somebody please get me a glass?

End of Scene 2.

The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com

Welcome to the Family

CHARACTERS:

WILL KURTZ: Early twenties. Muscular.

P.J. HENDERSON-CONNOLLY: Early twenties. Well-built. Will's fiancé.

TONY DURAN: Late thirties.

JOSH DURAN: Sixteen. Tony's son.

PAUL HENDERSON: Early seventies. P.J.'s grandfather.

ADAM CONNOLLY: Late sixties. P.J.'s grandfather by marriage.

PLACE and TIME:

A home in suburban Miami, mid-June. The action of this play takes place five years after "All Together At Last."

Welcome to the Family

Scene 1

The scene is the living room of the home of PAUL HENDERSON and ADAM CONNOLLY. It is a comfortable place in suburban Miami. It is open and airy. The furnishings are a mixture of antique and contemporary furniture, tastefully done but not extravagant. Upstage right is the kitchen area, open to the rest of the room, with a breakfast table nearby. Upstage left is a dining area with a table and chairs for six. Downstage right is a comfortable couch, chairs, standing lamp, and coffee table. Downstage left is a reading area with bookshelves and a small desk with a phone, a laptop computer and a printer (unseen) under the desk. There is a small stack of mail on the corner of the desk. Off stage right is an exit to the rest of the rooms of the house; the front entry hall is stage left. The back wall has a large sliding glass doors and sidelights leading out to a patio and garden area visible to the audience. It is lush with plants and hanging orchids.

At rise, it is mid-morning on a Saturday in June. WILL KURTZ, a muscular man in his early twenties in jeans, a worn Gold's Gym t-shirt, and wire-rimmed glasses, is at the desk working on the computer. He picks up a book from the desk, leafs through it, jots down a note on a pad, and goes back to work. A moment later the phone rings. WILL answers it.

WILL (*preoccupied*): H'lo.... No, this is Will.... I'm his grandson, sorta. ... It's complicated. ... Yeah, I heard the message you left yesterday. ... No, he and his husband are out of town.... Can I take a message? ... Okay, hold it. (*Starts to write down the message.*) Yeah, okay, I got it. ... Uh, yeah, they're due back on Monday afternoon. We're just housesitting for them... Yeah, I will. (*Listens somewhat impatiently as the person on the other end goes on.*) Yeah, I will. I will tell him. Okay. G'bye.

(WILL hangs up the phone, shakes his head, and goes back to work. A moment later the front door opens and P.J. HENDERSON-CONNOLLY enters. He is also an attractive and well-built man in his early twenties. He is wearing jeans, a polo shirt, and sneakers. He is carrying a manila envelope in one hand and a Fed Ex envelope in the other. He drops both on the desk and gives WILL a kiss, which he returns.)

WILL: So, how'd it go?

P.J. They want eighteen hundred, including the tent.

WILL: Did you tell them we don't need the tent?

P.J. Several times. It comes as a part of the package whether we want it or not. Something about food safety regulations.

(P.J. crosses to the kitchen and picks up the coffee carafe. WILL follows.)

P.J. (*cont'd*): Shit, we drank it all. You want some more coffee?

WILL: No, I'm good. Did you tell them that it's not the Biltmore? (*Gestures to the garden.*) There will be thirty people, tops. It's gonna be more like a quiet little dinner party instead of a wedding. Right?

P.J.: Right. I told them. But there's a minimum for this and that, plus a serving staff –

WILL: Serving staff? Jesus, why don't we just hire a couple of guys from Adam's gym to prance around in their Spandex pants and tank tops? It's a gay wedding, so we might as well go for all the cultural stereotypes.

P.J.: Yeah, I think the Village People are booked. Look, it's no big deal, and having a caterer do it instead of us will be worth just the hassle alone. All we gotta do is pick out the menu and write the check. (*Picks up manila envelope, opens it, and pulls out a sheaf of papers.*) Take a look. They need to know by tomorrow. That and a deposit.

WILL: The wedding's not until August.

P.J.: Yeah, but it's the busy season, they're booking up, and it's pretty amazing how fast two months can fly by.

WILL: Pick out whatever you want.

P.J.: Yeah, okay. How about half vegan and half real food?

WILL: Fine with me. Like I said, whatever you want.

P.J.: I love how decisive you are.

WILL: Hey, the important thing is that we're getting married, okay? Finally. The rest of it is just...

P.J.: You were the one that wanted to wait until we finished college –

WILL: And landed jobs. Yeah, I know. What we shoulda done is run off to that little guest house in Key West, have the lifeguard perform the ceremony on the pool deck, and be done with it.

P.J.: Yeah, I don't think they make a tuxedo version of a Speedo.

WILL: So, we go clothing-optional. If not for the guests, at least for us.

(*P.J. laughs and they embrace.*)

P.J.: You'd like that, wouldn't you?

WILL: Well, save it for the honeymoon. By the way, does the name Buddy Sykes mean anything to you?

P.J.: No. Should it?

WILL: He just called. He also left a message yesterday for Paul. Said something about going through Audrey Somebody's old files and needs to talk to him.

P.J.: Audrey Hepburn?

WILL (*looking at the message*): Audrey McMillan.

P.J. (*shrug*): Never heard of her. Probably has something to do with G-Dad's retirement account.

WILL: Okay. (*Sees the FedEx envelope.*) What's that?

P.J.: I dunno, it was leaning up against the front door when I came in. It's addressed to you.

(*WILL opens the envelope, pulls out the papers, reads, then stops and stares at it.*)

WILL: Holy shit.

P.J.: What is it, your grad school recommendation letters? Don't they do all that on line now?

(*WILL wordlessly hands the papers to P.J.*)

P.J. (*reading*): Certification of birth. (*Beat.*) Holy shit is right. Who sent this to you?

WILL: The return address is Portland.

P.J.: So, your mom. Jesus, didn't you ask her for it like five years ago? Right after you moved in here with me and G-Dad and G-Pop?

WILL: Yeah, I did. She said she'd look for it, but I never heard back... I guess she forgot, and it didn't seem like it mattered. I mean, I have my Social Security card and all the adoption papers proving that I was...

P.J.: You've never seen this before.

WILL: No.

P.J.: How'd you get your driver's license? I needed my birth certificate to prove I was old enough and my name was really Paul Jerome Henderson-Connolly.

WILL: I dunno; Gene did all that when we applied for mine. Showed them some paper. All I worried about was passing the vision test. But my license says William Kurtz, not –

P.J.: Guillermo Antonio Duran.

(*Beat.*)

WILL: Yeah.

(*Beat.*)

P.J.: So, why's she sending it to you now?

WILL: Gene's dead. Maybe she thought it was safe now.

P.J.: She thinks you still live here.

WILL: Yeah, I never gave her our address after we moved out. She knew about the whole temporary custody thing five years ago, and I told her about living with you and Paul and Adam, but...

P.J. (*drawing it out with a Spanish accent*): Guillermo Antonio Duran.

WILL: C'mon.

P.J. (*teasing*): Sounds really sexy. Guillermo...

WILL: C'mon. Here in Miami, I'm just another –

P.J.: Don't say it.

WILL: Just another guy named Will *en español*.

P.J. (*reading*): It says the father's name is Antonio Andrés Duran of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Hey, we should get Mom and Dad to look him up, see if he's in their neighborhood.

WILL: That was over twenty years ago, and he was in the military. He's probably moved somewhere else.

P.J.: Let's find out.

(*P.J. goes to the computer and starts to type.*)

WILL: No, don't.

P.J.: C'mon. Hello, Google...

WILL: I mean it. Don't.

(*P.J. stops typing.*)

P.J. Okay. Sorry.

WILL: It's just that... I mean, I didn't even know he existed until five years ago. I don't know if he knows I exist. Be a hell of a surprise to show up outta the blue and –

P.J.: In this family, that's the norm. Just ask G-Dad and my dad. That's how they first met thirty years ago, Dad showing up at that front door. "Hi, Paul, I'm Fox. I'm your kid." But, so far, so good.

WILL: At least Paul knew there was a possibility with your grandma and the IVF turkey baster. In my case, all this guy did was shoot his load and make tracks.

P.J.: You don't know that.

WILL: That's what Gene said.

P.J.: Your stepdad was a mean, homophobic asshole drunk. That bridge abutment on the Palmetto Expressway did the world a huge favor by running into him three weeks ago. The only reason anybody showed up at his funeral was just to make sure he was really dead. At least now you have a shot at finding out who your family really is.

WILL: Hey, as far as I'm concerned, you guys are it: Paul and Adam, Fox and Nancy...

P.J.: And G-Mom. But you said you wanted to know who your dad was; what your real name was.

WILL: Yeah, okay, that was a long time ago. And, well, now I know.

P.J.: So that's it?

WILL: Yeah, pretty much.

(P.J. shrugs in exasperation and goes to the patio doors, looking out. WILL sits at the computer and starts to go back to work.)

P.J. When we get married, are you gonna change your name?

WILL: I don't know; haven't thought about it. Why; do you want to change yours?

P.J.: I might.

WILL: To what? String ours together? Henderson-Connolly-Kurtz?

P.J.: That sounds like either a law office or a dynasty.

WILL: Well, then, what?

P.J.: When my dad was born, he was named George Fox Engstrom. Then when he moved in here with G-Dad and G-Pop, he added Henderson-Connolly. So, his full legal name is George Fox Engstrom Henderson-Connolly. It barely fits on his license, much less a credit card. So to the world he's Fox Henderson-Connolly, which is still a lot. *(Beat.)* Maybe we should start our own family name instead of sounding like some European monarchy.

WILL: Like what?

P.J.: What was your mother's maiden name?

(WILL takes the birth certificate and searches. He smirks and snorts.)

P.J.: What is it?

WILL: Feese.¹

P.J.: You're making that up.

WILL: Read it and weep. Sheila Marie Feese.

P.J.: No way in hell am I gonna be P.J. Feese.

WILL: Or Will Feese. What about your mom's? McCormick.

P.J.: That would work. The point is, you don't have to be Will Kurtz anymore. That part of your life will be over.

¹ Rhymes with "geese."

WILL: It was over a long time ago.

P.J.: Exactly. Now that we're gonna get married, you have a chance to start over.

WILL: Are you gonna stick with Henderson-Connolly?

P.J.: Depends on what you want to do. And what if we decide to have kids? What will we call them?

WILL: A miracle.

P.J.: You know what I mean.

WILL: How about Pyrex Turkey-Baster? Jesus, P.J., does it really matter? Why is it so important to you all of a sudden? It's not like changing my last name is gonna change who I am, either William Kurtz or –

P.J. (*sexy Spanish*): Guillermo Antonio Duran.

WILL: Yeah, that. I'm still just me.

P.J.: And I love you no matter what. But the family name is kinda important, too, don'tcha think? I used to listen to my great-granddad go on and on about his family history, how the Henderson ancestors came over from Scotland sometime after the Punic Wars and settled in the Midwest to grow haggis. Bored the crap outta me, but Grampy was so proud of our history and that we turned out the way we did even when it looked like G-Dad was gonna be the last of the Henderson line because his uncle Frank had nothing but girls who married guys with names like Wayne Nandermunch. So, when my dad showed up fresh outta the petri dish and was straight, it was like a sign from God: here was another kid to hear the tales of great-great-great-granddad Angus from Banffshire, and the family would carry on. That's why G-Dad and G-Pop are on their vacation over there: to see where it all began.

WILL: Banffshire? Sounds like something outta *The Hobbit*.

P.J.: It's a real place. I looked it up.

WILL: I'll bet. Look, I'm glad that your family means something to you. I mean it. But it's never really been a big deal to me. I never knew my grandparents, my mom was an only child, Gene's sister hated him, my cousin is a stoner, and... (*Sees the look on WILL's face.*) Look, if you want me to become Will Henderson-Connolly, that's fine. I move up a couple of notches on the alphabet.

P.J. (*sulking*): Do whatever you want.

WILL (*sigh*): Okay.

(*WILL starts to exit SR.*)

P.J.: Where're you going?

WILL: To the bathroom. That's what happened to all the coffee.

(WILL exits, P.J. watching him go, almost follows. The desk phone rings. P.J. answers it.)

P.J.: Hello. ... No, sorry, they're not here. ... I'm P.J., their grandson. Is this Buddy? ... *(P.J.'s eyes widen, a surprised look on his face.)* Oh... wow. *(P.J. looks off SR where WILL has exited.)* Uh, yeah, he's here, but he's...busy right now. You want to wait to talk to him? *(Looks off SR.)* He'll be back in a few minutes. ... I'll tell him you called. ... *(A look of surprise as he listens.)* Yeah, okay. ... Well, I guess so. *(Looks at his watch.)* Okay. ... Um, it's One-Two-Nine-Zero-Zero Southwest... Oh, you got it. Right. ... Okay. See you. G'bye.

(P.J. hangs up the phone, stares into space, then looks off SR.)

P.J. *(to himself)*: Holy shit. *(Calling off.)* Hey, Will. *(Louder.)* Will.

WILL *(off)*: What?

P.J.: Uh...

(WILL enters SR.)

WILL: What?

P.J.: Your dad just called.

WILL: What?

P.J.: Your dad. Tony Duran. That was him on the phone.

WILL: What did he want?

P.J.: He wants to come see you.

WILL: When?

P.J.: Now.

WILL: He's here? In Miami?

P.J.: Yeah. He said he'd be here in an hour or so. He knew the address and everything.

WILL: How did he –

P.J.: I'm sorry, I didn't know what to tell him. He acted like it was no big deal, like he thought you might be expecting him or something.

WILL: Jesus.

P.J.: Look, I didn't know what to say. I'm sorry—

WILL: No, it's okay.

P.J.: If you wanna take off, y'know, go back to our place, I can make up something like an emergency at work or something.

WILL: No, it's okay.

(WILL heads for the SR exit.)

P.J.: Now what?

WILL *(exiting)*: Gonna change. Can't meet my father for the first time in an old gym shirt.

(WILL exits, and P.J. looks at his own clothes, and decides he's okay. He starts to move around the room, tidying up, neatening up the desk, checking the dining area and kitchen, looking out to see if the garden is in order. His cellphone in his pocket chirps. He looks at the screen, then answers it.)

P.J.: Hey, G-Dad, how's Scotland? Finding your ancestral roots? ... Really? A castle and everything? Wow, maybe we're related to royalty. ... Oh, yeah, everything's great. *(Looks out to the patio.)* The red vanda bloomed again. Other than that. ... *(Listens.)* Oh, okay. Sure. What time do you get in? We can come get you. ... Okay. Yeah, we'll see you then. Okay. Safe travels.

(Ends call, lets out a long sigh. WILL enters as he's pulling on a polo shirt, tucking it in.)

WILL: How's this look?

P.J.: Huh? Oh, that's good. You and your bulging pecs.

WILL: Thanks. Who was that?

P.J.: Who was what?

WILL: On your phone just now.

P.J.: Oh! G-Dad. They're getting in this afternoon.

WILL: I thought they weren't due back until Monday.

P.J.: It's been raining non-stop in Glasgow and so they said the hell with it, they'd seen everything they wanted to see, so they got an earlier flight. He was calling from the plane. Jesus. When it rains, it pours.

WILL: What are you so worked up about?

P.J. *(sarcastic)*: Oh, nothing. Your dad, who you've never met, is about to show up here, followed by my two grandfathers. It's got all the makings of a really bad Hallmark TV classic.

WILL: No, for that you need a lonely mid-thirties career woman from Manhattan who chucks it all and moves to Vermont to open a candle shop and meets a really hot guy who makes maple syrup and has a Golden Retriever named Bailey. She falls in love with him, but it turns out he's gay, so she ends up with the widowed assistant manager of the lumberyard who has a ten-year-old daughter who hates her –

P.J.: You're really not taking this seriously.

WILL: No. Why are you?

P.J.: You're the one who changed his shirt.

WILL (*laughing*): C'mere, you goof.

(*P.J. and WILL embrace, WILL chuckling.*)

WILL (*cont'd*): Wow, you're more nervous than the first time we had sex.

P.J.: But I knew that was coming –

WILL: Yeah, we both did. Twice.

P.J.: Let me rephrase that.

WILL: Please do.

P.J.: Have you thought about what you're gonna say to him?

WILL: Not really, other than hello, nice to finally meet you.

P.J.: Then?

WILL: Then what? Show him around the house. Offer him a drink. (*Beat.*) Why, what do you think I should say?

P.J.: If it was me, I'd wanna know why he took off and left your mom alone. Why he never got in touch with you and why's he doing it now. Did he plan it all out, with your birth certificate showing up in the mail and then an hour later he's ringing your doorbell?

WILL (*making the "Twilight Zone" theme*): Do-do-do-do, do-do-do-do...

P.J.: Come on! I mean it. It's all too coincidental.

WILL: Well, so what?

P.J.: What does he want?

WILL: When he gets here, you can ask him. Jesus, P.J., when we went up to Vermont last summer for your uncle's wedding, you didn't get all squirrely about meeting all those relatives you never knew existed, including your cousin Jack who seemed way too interested in us being on the wrestling team and what it was like being pinned by a half-naked guy.

P.J.: What's that gotta do with this?

WILL: Nothing except I thought it was funny that you've got a cousin who's married with two kids and is probably gayer than both of us put together. You never know with family. So why get all worked up about it?

(*P.J. goes to the kitchen, opens the refrigerator.*)

P.J.: All we've got is a pitcher of iced tea, Diet Pepsi and those little bottles of water from the gym.

WILL: Planning on serving him lunch?

P.J.: I've got time to run to Publix and pick up some snacks.

WILL: Like what?

P.J.: I dunno, a cheese tray or something. I'll decide when I get there.

(He heads for the SL door, pulling out his keys as he goes.)

P.J. *(cont'd)*: Back in a few. Might want to tidy up the place a little.

WILL: It's not Martha Stewart, it's just my dad.

P.J.: Yeah, okay. Still, you might wanna, y'know...

WILL: It's fine. See you in a bit.

(P.J. exits. WILL looks around the house, much as P.J. did, tidies up the desk, plumps up the cushions on the couch, straightens the books on the coffee table, fidgeting. Finally, he stands in the middle of the room, looks around, and lets out a deep breath.)

WILL: Holy shit.

End of Scene 1.

Scene 2

About an hour later. The stage is empty, then P.J. enters from the SL front door carrying a paper grocery bag. He goes to the kitchen, takes a prepared deli snack tray and box of Triscuits out of the bag, followed by a six-pack of ginger ale, which he puts in the refrigerator. He puts the tray on the coffee table, goes back for napkins, then puts some of the crackers on a plate. He looks around the house, tidies what WILL has already tidied, then looks out at the garden to make sure everything is in its place out there. He nods or shrugs as if to say, "Okay, it'll do."

P.J. (*calling*): Hey, hon, I'm back.

WILL (*off*): Be right out.

P.J.: Okay.

(WILL enters from SR. He has changed into yet another different-colored polo shirt, put on khaki slacks, and loafers without socks.)

P.J.: Well, you look good. Going a bit formal, are we?

WILL: I'm not wearing socks, so no.

P.J.: What was wrong with the other shirt?

WILL: You could see my nipples.

P.J.: I still can.

WILL: Yeah, but not through the fabric. So, what'd you get?

P.J.: Cheese, crackers and a six-pack of ginger ale just in case he wants something different.

WILL: No beer?

P.J.: Uh, no. House rules.

WILL: Right.

(WILL goes to examine the cheese tray, picks up a cracker, nibbles it, then goes over to the front door, looks through the peephole.)

P.J. (*smirking*): You *are* nervous.

WILL: Shut up.

P.J.: Now it's my turn to tell you to relax, okay? We're just having a friend over for a little snack before lunch.

WILL: Yeah. So, you think we oughta do something about lunch?

P.J.: Well, for us I was gonna make soup and sandwiches. If it's the three of us we can go over to Guadalajara and see what the lunch special is. Or is going a Mexican restaurant a little too on the nose?

WILL: Very funny. Let's just wait and see.

(P.J. comes over to him and takes him in his arms.)

P.J.: I know how to relax you.

(They hug, then P.J. kisses WILL on the mouth, which WILL returns.)

WILL: That's not exactly relaxing me, but...

P.J.: Yeah, I know...

(They reluctantly separate.)

P.J.: Seeing just your bulging pecs will have to do for now.

(The doorbell rings.)

P.J.: Okay, it's showtime.

(WILL does not move.)

P.J.: You wanna answer the door?

(Doorbell again followed by a knock.)

WILL: Uh...

P.J.: I'll get it.

(P.J. goes to the door and opens it. Standing in the entry is TONY DURAN, mid-thirties, casually but nicely dressed: a collared shirt, slacks, and dress shoes. TONY speaks with a slight New Mexico Spanish accent, most noticeable when he pronounces Spanish names. Next to him is his son JOSH DURAN, mid-teens, thin, dressed in casual teen attire: a loose untucked t-shirt, jeans, and sneakers. JOSH's accent is standard American. TONY is grinning broadly, JOSH smiling politely.)

P.J.: Hello. Come in.

(He offers his hand, and they all shake hands, and they enter.)

TONY: Thank you. I'm Tony Duran, and this is my son Josué² --

JOSH: Call me Josh.

TONY: We call him Josh.

² Pronounced "Ho-sway."

JOSH: Yeah.

P.J.: Certainly. Nice to meet you, Tony, Josh. I'm P.J. Henderson-Connolly.

TONY: My pleasure.

JOSH: Yeah, same here.

(WILL has not moved since P.J. went to open the door. He is looking at TONY and JOSH, silent, taking this in for a moment. Then...)

WILL: I'm Will.

(A beat in which P.J. looks a bit apprehensively at WILL, then at TONY, then at JOSH. He is on the verge of saying something to cut the tension, but then WILL comes over, smiles, and shakes hands with TONY and JOSH.)

WILL: Nice to meet you both.

TONY: Nice to see you... Will.

P.J.: Can I offer you something to drink? We've got water, iced tea, soda. And we've got some cheese and crackers.

TONY: Water sounds great.

P.J.: Josh?

JOSH (*shrug*): Sure. Water.

P.J.: Great. C'mon in, have a seat. Cheese and crackers on the table. Will, anything?

WILL: Uh, no thanks, I'm good.

(P.J. goes to the kitchen to get the water. WILL, TONY and JOSH move to the couch area with TONY and JOSH settling on the couch, WILL in the chair. The entire time, WILL is gazing at TONY as if he's trying to see something of him in him. JOSH, meanwhile, is discreetly checking out WILL. A moment of awkward silence.)

P.J.: So, what brings you to Miami, Tony?

TONY: I have some business here, and Josh is going to be a junior next year, so we're looking at colleges.

P.J.: Oh, can I ask what business you're in?

TONY: I'm an attorney. Real estate, property, that sort of thing.

P.J.: Oh, great. What colleges, Josh?

JOSH: Uh, U of M, I guess, and that other one, F-I-U.

P.J.: Wow, that's great. Will and I went to UM.

TONY: Oh, so maybe you can show him around sometime...

P.J.: Be glad to.

(P.J. delivers the waters, sits in the other chair, tries to keep the conversation going.)

P.J. *(raising a water bottle like a toast)*: Welcome to Miami.

(Those with water bottles raise them and murmur something. Another awkward silence.)

TONY: This is a beautiful home.

P.J.: Thank you. It belongs to my grandfathers.

JOSH: Grandfathers?

P.J.: Paul Henderson and Adam Connolly. My dad is Fox Henderson-Connolly, Paul's son. You might know him; he and my mom live in Santa Fe.

TONY: What does he do there?

P.J.: He teaches at the college, and she's a veterinarian. Dr. Nancy McCormick.

TONY: I know Dr. McCormick. She fixed our cat.

P.J.: Oh, well, wow, what a small world.

TONY: Santa Fe's a small town.

(P.J. looks at WILL as if to prompt him to join in the conversation. WILL is still looking at TONY silently, not moving.)

P.J.: Uh, yeah, we've been out there a few times to visit my parents. We thought about moving out there... And my grandmother lives out there, too.... Fox's mom. Maybe you know her; Dr. Julie Engstrom?

TONY *(finally noticing WILL staring at him)*: No, can't say I do.

P.J.: Well, she does a lot of work on the reservations.

(Long awkward deafening silence.)

P.J.: So, Josh, is this your first visit to Florida?

JOSH: Huh? Uh, yeah, uh, yessir.

P.J.: Well, I've seen some of the stuff they grow out in the desert in New Mexico: piñon, sage, juniper, but I'll bet you've never seen orchids growing in the wild.

JOSH: No, I guess not.

P.J.: Well, c'mon, let me show you. G-Pop raises them.

JOSH: G-Pop?

P.J.: That's what I call Adam. Dad called him Pop, so I call him Granddad Pop. G-Pop. C'mon.

TONY: Go take a look.

JOSH (*getting up*): Okay.

(P.J. and JOSH go to the patio, exit, and close the sliding doors behind them. TONY watches them go and then looks at WILL.)

TONY: So. Nice to see you.

WILL: Nice to meet you, too.

TONY: Yes, it's, uh, been a while.

WILL: Really? Because I don't remember ever meeting you before. In fact, until about five years ago, I didn't even know you existed.

TONY (*genuinely surprised*): What?

WILL: Yeah. I was seventeen when Gene Kurtz announced in this very room that I was the bastard son of some soldier who knocked up my mom and then took off back to Mexico or wherever he came from. I didn't even know your name and my birthname until this morning—

TONY: This morning?

(WILL goes to the desk and finds the FedEx envelope and papers.)

WILL: This morning. Via FedEx.

TONY: I thought you knew. I was sure that your mother told you about me. About us.

WILL: Well, she didn't. Kind of a shock to find out at seventeen that I'm a bastard, and then this morning to find out my real name.

TONY: Why didn't she tell you?

WILL: Ask her. Maybe Gene scared her into keeping quiet about it.

TONY: I believe it about Gene.

WILL: You knew him?

TONY: I knew of him. He prowled outside the base looking for any reason to make trouble for non-coms and the enlisted. But you've got it all wrong about your mother and me. It wasn't some one-night stand. We were in love. Yeah, we were young; I was eighteen, she was seventeen, but I really loved her. And when we found out she was pregnant, I was all set to marry her, settle her in on-base housing, and start a family together. I was there the night you were born. I held you in my arms. I named you.

WILL: Guillermo Antonio.

TONY: Named for my father and me. And we're not Mexican.

WILL: What are ... we?

TONY: Spanish. Our family has been on the same land in Santa Fe for twenty generations. Descended from nobility, actually.

(WILL acknowledges this with a nod and a shrug. Beat.)

TONY: You look good, all grown up and.... *(Indicates WILL's build.)* "Swole," as the kids say.

WILL: Comes from working my way through school at Adam's gym.

TONY: He runs a fitness center?

WILL: He owns it. Has for about thirty years. It's not a "fitness center." It's a gym. A real one with weights and barbells and squat racks and bench presses. No Nautilus machines, no Bowflex, no yoga mats, and no juice bar.

TONY: Oh, I get it. Like in "Pumping Iron."

WILL: Yeah.

TONY: So, you went to UM? What did you major in?

WILL: Physical therapy and sports medicine.

TONY: Nice.

WILL: Yeah, I'm applying to grad school. Going for my doctorate in it.

TONY: Great.

(Another awkward silence.)

TONY: Look, I—

WILL: Why are you here?

TONY *(taken aback)*: I thought I—

WILL: More to the point, why did you leave?

TONY: I... I was deployed. Sent overseas. Stationed in —

WILL: You still coulda gotten married. I know a lot of guys who're in the army with families and they're on active duty. But you took off. You went off to war or whatever, then back to your twenty generations of land in New Mexico, went to law school, got married, and started all over again. Does your wife know about me? About Mom? Or were we just, y'know, something in the past you never talk about?

TONY: She knew.

WILL: Well? What does she have to say about it?

TONY: She died last summer. Cancer.

WILL (*genuine*): Oh. I'm sorry.

TONY: Thank you. Carmen was a wonderful person and a great mom to Josh. She knew that I had a son before we met and got married.

WILL: Did she ever say if she wanted to meet me? To get to know me?

TONY: She said that was another life, another time. She...

WILL: Out of sight, out of mind. When did you tell Josh?

TONY: Last year, after his mother died. I thought he should know.

WILL: How'd he take the news that he had an older brother?

TONY: He said he wanted to meet you.

(*WILL looks out to the patio where P.J. and JOSH have sat on the bench and are talking.*)

WILL: Looks like a nice kid.

TONY: The rest of my family... they never knew. About you. About Sheila.

WILL: You never told them? Why not?

TONY: You have to understand. We come from a different culture, a different...

WILL: Oh, so Mom wasn't good enough for them. I get it. They might have thought she was a white trash whore and I was her little bastard out to ruin your noble Spanish blood.

TONY: It would have been very difficult for her. For you. To fit in.

WILL: Even as Guillermo Antonio Duran?

TONY: No.

WILL: So, it might as well have been a one-night stand, fucking in the back of a Jeep for all the good it did us. Mom ended up married to that abusive sonofabitch.

TONY: He abused you? (*Indicates WILL's crotch.*) Like...?

WILL: He never went for my cock, if that's what you mean. His fists were enough. For both of us.

TONY: I had no idea.

WILL: Yeah, no shit. You never answered my question. Why are you here?

TONY: I thought it was time.

WILL: Now that Gene's dead, you mean.

TONY: Sheila told me that he had died. I'm sorry.

WILL: Hell, I'm not. Did she put you up to this?

TONY: No. I asked her about you. She told me you were living here.

WILL: P.J. and I got our own place over near Dadeland two years ago.

TONY: I guess you don't keep up with her much.

WILL: I used to get a birthday and Christmas card from her, but other than that, she's got her life, I've got mine. Sounds like you're more in touch with her than I am.

TONY: When was the last time you saw her?

WILL: The morning after she had yet another knock-down with Gene. She tossed a suitcase in the back of her Pontiac station wagon, patted me on the head, and said to be a good boy. I was ten. Next thing we heard from her was a certified package of divorce papers from some lawyer in Portland. I moved in here with P.J. after Gene found out I was gay. He tried to beat the crap outta me and kicked me out. I was seventeen. Paul and Adam took temporary custody of me. They helped me get into college, they helped me get scholarships, and they accepted me as one of the family. So now, as they say, you know the rest of the story.

TONY: Oh.

WILL: Oh? You don't have a problem with me being gay, do you? You don't have a problem with me living with a gay couple and my fiancé, do you? Not that it matters.

TONY: No, I don't. Not at all. Some of my best clients...

WILL: Seriously? Okay, let me ask you the big one. What do you want?

TONY: Want?

WILL: Yeah. You need a kidney or something? My blood type is O-negative, and I'm HIV negative, in case you're interested.

TONY: No, nothing like that. I don't want anything other than to –

WILL: Make up for lost time? Way too late for that.

TONY: Look, I know I can't. I know that. I just wanted to say I'm sorry.

(Beat.)

WILL: You're sorry? For what? For not wearing a condom on that magical night twenty-two years ago? For bailing on me and Mom? Well, you know what? I'm sorry, too, Tony. I'm real sorry that you feel sorry, but I sure as hell don't need you to tell me you're sorry that you couldn't

be here, because I don't need it or even fucking want it. For what it's worth, you got no right to show up here and act like I ever fucking mattered to you. I grew up, I went to school, I turned out okay even if I did have to hide under my bed from Gene's drunken rages, and I got strong enough to fight back. I fell in love with a great guy and we're gonna get married. So, as far as I'm concerned, you and Josh can go back to your twenty generations' worth of desert in New Mexico and forget about me like you have for the last twenty years.

(They glare at each other, then TONY goes to the patio door.)

WILL: That's right, just take off. That's what you're best at.

(TONY pauses, then opens the door and exits out to the patio. WILL watches him go, then paces around the room, muttering to himself. JOSH enters from the patio.)

JOSH: What did you say to my dad?

WILL: I said a lot of things. Twenty-plus years' worth.

JOSH: He's really upset.

WILL: Well, how the hell do you think I feel, finding out that the first seventeen years of my life were a lie? That my real dad is some guy in New Mexico with a family and everything and I had no idea? And now he wants to say he's sorry and that's supposed to make up for it like some stupid movie happy ending? Oh, and that I have a brother?

JOSH: Dad really wanted to reconnect with you. He feels like he owes it to you.

WILL: I get that.

JOSH: So why are you being such an asshole?

(Beat. Deep breath.)

WILL: I'm sorry. I shouldn't be yelling at you.

JOSH: Yeah, you shouldn't. Or at Dad, either. What the fuck?

(WILL glares at JOSH, who, after a moment of trepidation, returns the glare. WILL relaxes.)

WILL: Okay. I'm sorry. It's a lot to take in. When I got up this morning, I'd never heard of Guillermo Antonio Duran and you didn't even exist.

JOSH: How do you think he feels? He's been nervous as shit this whole trip. He's been talking about finding you ever since Mom died, and when he finally heard from Sheila that your stepdad had checked out, he decided to come.

WILL: He said he was here on business and to look at colleges for you.

JOSH: He made that up. I'm gonna go to U-N-M.

WILL: Why didn't he call first? I mean, from Santa Fe, instead of just dropping in.

JOSH: He was afraid you wouldn't want to see him.

WILL: Well, what was he expecting, candy and a stripper?

JOSH: No. Jesus. Don't you get it? He wants to make things right with you.

WILL: How is this making things right?

JOSH: Hey, you know what? He could have done nothing. He could have stayed away, not called your mom and get her to send your birth certificate. He could have left it all alone. But he didn't. He felt like he owed it to you so you'd know something about where you came from. P.J. said you've been thinking about it ever since you found out, like what, five years ago?

WILL: Yes.

JOSH: Well, there you are. Now you know. Sorry if knowing the truth is such a fucking disappointment for you.

(Beat.)

WILL: Yeah, you're right. I'm sorry.

JOSH: Don't tell me. Tell my dad.

WILL: I... I will.

(WILL goes to the patio door, sees TONY and P.J. talking, reaches for the door, then stops, turns back, and paces, JOSH watching him warily. Finally, WILL stops, tries to calm down for JOSH's sake.)

WILL: How was your chat with P.J.?

JOSH: He's a nice guy. He's gay.

WILL: Yeah, I know. Me too. Is that a problem?

JOSH: No, it's cool.

WILL: Glad to hear it.

JOSH: I'm straight.

WILL: Nobody's perfect.

JOSH: No, I didn't mean...

WILL: Don't worry, being gay isn't hereditary. Although three of P.J.'s grandparents are, so you never know.

JOSH: They are?

WILL: P.J.'s dad, Fox, was in-vitro from his lesbian mom and Paul. We're pretty sure everyone's straight on his mom's side, although he does have a cousin we're wondering about.

JOSH: That's –

WILL: It's family. You got any brothers or sisters?

JOSH: No. You?

WILL: No. They tried. God knows I heard 'em trying often enough, but looks like ole Gene was shooting blanks.

(JOSH gigglesnorts.)

WILL: I kinda always wanted a brother.

JOSH: How come?

WILL: Oh, you know, someone to play with when I was a kid. I mean, I had friends, but... And then when I got older, to run interference between me and Gene. Now I know why he hated me.

JOSH: P.J. said he's known you like forever.

WILL: Since third grade.

JOSH: So, did you know then that you were gay?

WILL: Not about the sex, but I knew I liked guys. Kids figure that out early even if they don't know about the mechanics and how parts fit together and stuff.

JOSH: Are you guys gonna get married?

WILL: Yeah, out there on the patio, August twenty-eighth. You should come.

JOSH: Um –

WILL: Don't worry, we won't do anything gross like make out in the hot tub. We don't even have one.

JOSH: No, I know. It's just...

WILL: What. You gotta problem with two guys getting married?

JOSH: No. I ...

WILL: C'mon, tell me.

JOSH: Why get married? You live together, right?

WILL: And we sleep together, too. Sometimes we even just sleep.

JOSH: So why get married?

WILL: Because we love each other and want to stay together.

JOSH: I get that. But do you need to get married to prove it or something?

WILL: Well, maybe I'm old-fashioned, but I think that when you promise someone that you'll be with them until death do us part and do it in front of your friends and family – not to mention spending eighteen hundred bucks on it – it means more than just “your place or mine.” And until not too long ago, the idea of P.J. and me getting married was against the law.

JOSH: Okay, but –

WILL: But...?

JOSH: Well, I get that same-sex marriage is legal now and all that, but how come you want to conform to some heteronormative paradigm that basically is the same middle-class lifestyle dictatorship that was oppressing you for so long? Why do you want to become like those people who've been telling you that gay marriage is wrong?

(Beat as WILL gapes.)

WILL: Wow. What the hell are they teaching in school these days? Heteronormative paradigm?

JOSH: It means conforming to all the straight –

WILL: No, I get that. Believe it or not, we do subscribe to The New Yorker. The only thing we're conforming to is that we want to get married. Let someone else worry about the paradigms. We just want to be a family.

JOSH: Why?

WILL: Why?

JOSH: Yeah, why? You already have a family, don'tcha?

WILL: No, not much. Not until Paul and Adam took me in. And now you guys show up. You think your dad and your family out in New Mexico want to welcome us with open arms? “*Bienvenido a la familia, mijo*”?

JOSH: *¿Hablas español?*

WILL: I grew up in Miami. Anyway, from the sound of it, your family doesn't sound real open to having a half-Spanish gay guy show up with his totally Anglo husband and disrupt the nobility of twenty generations.

JOSH: Dad makes us sound like we're fuckin' royalty. Truth is my ancestors were foot soldiers with the *conquistadores* who stole the land from the natives when they weren't banging the women and giving them smallpox and the clap. Yeah, some family. So, I don't get why you're making such a big deal out of it.

WILL: How old are you?

JOSH: Seventeen. Almost.

WILL: That's how old I was when I found out that what I thought was my family was a lie. The man I thought was my father turned out to be this monster who married my mom because she

didn't hit him back. He adopted me in a moment of weakness which he regretted for the rest of his life. My family life was one long rant against the criminal underclass and sissy libtards who were out to destroy his precious world of monster trucks, cheap beer, and the Second Amendment. I didn't even know who I really was until the night he told me I was a bastard for real and happily handed me over to Paul and Adam. And ever since then... being with them and P.J. and ... *(Beat.)* You're goddam right I want to get married and have our own family, and if that's conforming to the heteronormative paradigm and measuring up to the middle-class lifestyle dictatorship, then let me at it. And I don't need some snot-nosed almost-seventeen-year-old kid who has no fucking idea what my life has been like to have the fucking nerve to even question it. You got that?

(Beat as they stare at each other.)

JOSH *(almost a whisper)*: Yeah. I got it.

(JOSH exits to the patio, closing the door behind him. WILL watches him go, then shakes his head. A moment later, P.J. enters from the patio.)

P.J. Okay, it's my turn.

WILL: Turn for what?

P.J.: Well, you've insulted your father and yelled at your brother. There's no one else in the house, so it must be my turn.

WILL: Half-brother.

P.J. Well, that's half more than what you had this morning or than I've ever had. What's going on?

WILL: It's a lot to take in, alright?

P.J.: Yeah, I know. But isn't it what you've been looking for, to find out who you are, where you came from, who your family is?

WILL: Not like this.

P.J.: How, then?

(WILL doesn't answer; he stares out at TONY and JOSH, who are still on the patio.)

P.J. *(cont'd)*: So, what did you and Josh talk about?

WILL *(shrug)*: Not much other than him telling me that us getting married is some kinda cop-out to the heteronormative paradigm. He's straight, by the way.

P.J.: You asked him?

WILL: No, he told me after he told me you were gay. Which I kinda knew already.

P.J.: He's a very smart kid.

WILL: Apparently.

P.J.: Did you know he's learning to play classical guitar? He likes baseball. He speaks both French and Spanish as well as English. He reads a lot, he prefers Star Trek over Star Wars, he prefers anything to hip-hop, he's a car nut – he wants a first-generation Mustang – and he likes green chile on his enchiladas.

WILL: How do you know all this?

P.J.: I talked to him, which is more than what you did. He also told me that he's been wondering about you ever since he heard he had an older brother; what you were like, even trying to imagine what you looked like. When I wasn't asking him about his favorite condiment, he wanted to know about you.

WILL: What did you tell him?

P.J. (*snarky*): That you sleep in the nude and that you eat crunchy peanut butter out of the jar with your fingers. C'mon. I told him to ask you, which he was going to do if you had given him the chance. (*Beat.*) I've never seen you like this. Ever since that night when you moved in here you've been wondering who your dad was, where you came from. Now you know. It sounds like a pretty nice family; I mean Tony's got a decent law practice going, Josh has his shit together, which is pretty good for a kid his age, and they want you to be a part of their family in some way. Isn't that what you wanted? After all the shit you went through with Gene?

WILL: Did he tell you why he finally showed up?

P.J.: What did he tell you?

WILL: That he felt he owed it to me. That he was sorry.

P.J.: Okay....

WILL: He's sorry. After more than twenty years, he's finally sorry. Sorry for what? For running off? Leaving Mom and me? Starting a whole new family as if we didn't exist? Telling me that he couldn't marry Mom because his family wouldn't approve of his white-trash wife and bastard brat? Tossing me out like the first pancake and doing it right the second time with Josh and his classical guitar, his first-generation Mustang, and his green chile enchiladas?

P.J.: Wow, you have got a whole lotta passive-aggressive projection and transference going there all at once, Will.

WILL: Oh f'r Chrissake, spare me your dean's-list undergraduate degree in psychology bullshit, willya?

P.J.: Well, excuse me Mr. Bulging Biceps with the three-point-oh degree in jockology for trying to figure out what the hell is driving you nuts all of a sudden.

WILL: You don't get it.

P.J.: Well then explain it to me.

WILL: I just did. If you'd been listening like you did with Josh instead of trotting out your Freud or Jung or whatever on me, then maybe you'd have gotten it the first time.

P.J.: Oh, Jesus Christ. Fuck you, Will. I mean it. Seriously. Fuck you and your being pissed off at the world for nothing more than your father reaching out to try to make amends. He didn't have to, y'know. He's got nothing to gain from you knowing the truth –

WILL: Except easing his guilty conscience.

P.J.: So? What's wrong with that? He's proud of you. They both are. I am. Jesus, Will. I still love you despite the fact that right now you're being the biggest dick in Miami-Dade County, and not in the way I like. By the way, how do you think I feel about all of this?

WILL: Does it matter?

P.J.: Are you fucking kidding me? The man I love is going through one of the most traumatic things people go through and he's treating me like a wet dog at a wedding. Let me tell you how I feel about all of this. Did it ever occur to you that if Tony had married your mom and taken you to live in New Mexico, that you and I would have never met? That I'd have gone through my life without you? That I wouldn't have fallen in love with the most loving, giving, not to mention sexiest man I could ever imagine having the great good fortune to find? How different our lives would be if I hadn't seen you that first day of third grade and known right there and then that you were ... *(On the verge of tears, if not already.)* Oh, shit, Will. For all the hell you went through, think for one split second how something good came from it. You and me. *(Beat.)* Or maybe it doesn't matter. Does it or doesn't it?

WILL: P.J. –

P.J.: They're going back to Santa Fe on Monday. Maybe you can go with them.

(P.J. heads for the front door.)

WILL: Where are you going?

P.J.: To get some green chile. I'm making enchiladas for dinner.

P.J. exits SL, slamming the door. WILL looks after him, then exits SR to the bedroom area, slamming a door. TONY and JOSH come in from the patio, looking after them.

End of Scene 2.

The play is not over. To find out how it ends, contact the playwright at pmw@barkbarkwoofwoof.com