

SUNSHINE QUEST

A Play in Two Acts by William Ivor Fowkes

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SETTING

The Sunshine Quest Club, a social club for senior gay men in Fort Lauderdale, Florida

TIME

December 1999

CAST BREAKDOWN

A Cast of 5

Al Getz	Male	Age – 60s	Handsome, successful realtor. Former movie star, Todd Hammond. Lived a private gay life for many years. Came out publicly five years ago. A gentleman.	13 scenes
Brad Hall	Male	Age – 30	Assistant manager of Sunshine Quest. From North Carolina. Apparently straight. Lusted after by many members of the club. Attractive and polite, but a bit mercurial. A Christian. Southern accent.	12 scenes
Robby Smirnoff	Male	Age – 70s	Retired agent. Jewish. Flamboyant and funny. Sharp-tongued, but sweet. Likes much younger men.	10 scenes
John Strathmore	Male	Age – 60s	Retired company man. Straight-laced and conservative in appearance. Openly gay all his life, but recently widowed from a woman to whom he was married for ten years. Distracted by his mourning.	10 scenes
Mary King	Female	Age – 50s	Ballroom dance instructor. A Southern woman who prefers the company of gay men. Funny, sexy, and warm-hearted. Southern accent.	7 scenes

A voice with a southern accent and a lot of personality makes several announcements throughout the play. These announcements should be pre-recorded by one of the cast members or by another actor.

SCENES**Act One**

Scene 1	Late one afternoon, December 1999.	Al, Brad
Scene 2	The next evening.	Robby, Al, Brad
Scene 3	The next evening.	Al, Mary, Brad, Robby, John
Scene 4	The next night.	Brad, Al, John, Robby
Scene 5	The next afternoon.	Al, Brad
Scene 6	Three days later. Afternoon.	Mary, Robby, Brad, Al, John
Scene 7	The next day. Early evening.	Mary, John, Al, Brad, Robby

Act Two

Scene 8	Five nights later.	Robby, John, Brad, Al
Scene 9	The next afternoon.	Brad, Al, Robby, John
Scene 10	The next evening.	Mary, John
Scene 11	The next evening.	Robby, John, Al Brad
Scene 12	The next day. Late afternoon and early evening.	Brad, Mary, Al
Scene 13	The next night—December 20, 1999.	John, Al, Robby, Mary, Brad
Scene 14	A few days later—Christmas Day 1999.	John, Robby, Al, Mary

THE SET

Most of the play takes place in the main room of the Sunshine Quest Club, a large multi-use space that includes a sitting area (seen on stage) and a dance floor (unseen). Off-stage are various facilities, including a dining room, a kitchen, a fitness room, a locker room, some meeting rooms, and a computer room—as well as an outdoor pool, a tennis center, and a small beach. Club members sometimes look out at the audience, as if watching people dancing out on the dance floor. The sitting area on stage includes a few chairs and end tables and a small bar stage left (the main bar is offstage). There are exits stage right and stage left to, respectively, the outside and the rest of the club. If possible, there should also be a window upstage center with an ocean view.

Scenes 1 and 5 take place in a small room where Brad Hall sometimes gives massages. This location should be suggested by placing and lighting a massage table downstage center, along with a chair, and keeping the rest of the stage in the dark.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Late one afternoon, December 1999.

The stage is in blackout.

Projection or voiceover: “Fort Lauderdale, Florida in the year of our Lord 1999.”

Massage music starts to play.

After a few moments, the lights come up to reveal Al Getz lying on his back partly covered by a towel. Al has just received a massage. Brad, the masseur, is packing things up. Brad turns off the music.

AL

(purring and sighing)

Mmmm...! Mmmm...! I've never felt so good! ... I could lie here like this...
forever!
(dramatically)

Brad clears his throat.

BRAD HALL

I'm afraid I've gotta go set up the tables for bingo night.

AL

Oh...sorry.

Al gets up and starts to get dressed.

BRAD

I didn't mean...

(trying to control his excitement)

I'm a big fan, by the way. I've seen all your movies.

AL

You're confusing me with someone else.

BRAD

C'mon! I recognize you. You're Todd Hammond.

AL

My name is Albert Getz.

BRAD

You put out a book! You were on all the talk shows!

AL

That was five years ago. No one read it. And I haven't acted in fifteen years.

BRAD

But everyone around here knows who you are.

AL

Big deal. Five minutes of telling me how much they love *Moon Over Miami* and then we're back to real estate—that's my passion now.

BRAD

My mother loved all your movies.

AL

Like that new condo on Los Olas—what a beaut!

BRAD

She still watches them whenever they're on TV.

AL

Hey, are you in the market?

BRAD

I can't afford a condo!

AL

How about your mother?

BRAD

She lives in North Carolina.

AL

Any siblings down here?

BRAD

I'm an only child.

AL
(forcing his business card on Brad)

I could help you get a mortgage.

BRAD
Do you have any idea what the Spaulding Brothers pay us?

AL
Oh, well. Just a thought.
(gingerly)
By the way, do you do that for all your clients? That little something extra—that unexpected “release.”

BRAD
(flustered and embarrassed)
Oh...yeah...about that. I...uh...I’ve never done that before.

AL
And at a respectable place like the Sunshine Quest Club.

BRAD
(urgently)
Please don’t tell anyone! I don’t know why I did it. I’m so sorry. I swear it won’t ever happen again!

AL
No, no—I’m not complaining. I was just a little surprised, that’s all.

AL
Okay. It can be our little secret.

Brad wipes down the massage table as Al continues getting dressed.

BRAD
You see, the thing is—I guess I feel safe with you, because I know you—from all your movies.

AL
If you’re expecting me to be Todd Hammond, you’re in for a big disappointment.

BRAD
I don’t understand.

AL
People put on facades—or in my case, let others do it for them. Maybe you do the same thing—maybe we know nothing about the real Brad Hall.

BRAD
(laughing nervously)

Me? No—what you see is what you get.

AL

So, you're just a masseur?

BRAD

Well, no. I'm not a masseur.

AL

Oh, that's right—you're called massage therapists now.

BRAD

No, I mean givin' massages isn't all I do.

AL

(dryly)

Well, I think we've established that!

BRAD

(sharply)

Please don't make fun of me!

AL

Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

BRAD

It's okay. I'm a little too sensitive sometimes. I guess it's 'cause I was teased a lot when I was a kid.

Brad starts to fold up the massage table.

AL

You know, you remind me of someone...someone I was in love with for many years.

BRAD

I remind you of a woman?

AL

No, a man—a young man. I miss him.

BRAD

I'm not that way, Mr. Getz.

AL

If you say so. I hope I didn't offend you. And I hope you don't think I was hitting on you. I bet a lot of the guys around here do that.

BRAD

I can handle myself.

AL

You mind my asking how you ended up working at a gay men's club?

BRAD

This isn't so bad. I'll say one thing for you guys—you're very generous with the tips.

Al quickly pulls out his wallet and hands
Brad some money.

AL

We appreciate people who understand our special needs.

BRAD

Well...I better start working on those Bingo tables before the Spaulding Brothers unleash their dogs on me. The last time I fell behind, they docked my pay.

AL

Let me go talk to them, Brad; I'll get them to back off.

BRAD

You don't have to do that.

AL

But I want to help.

BRAD

Please don't. They're very touchy. I think they're havin' financial problems.

(pointing to his watch)

And you really have to go now.

AL

Oh, sure. Hey, can you book me for Friday—same time?

BRAD

No problem. Oh, and Mr. Getz!

AL

Al.

BRAD

Thanks for tryin' to help me out, Al.

Al and Brad exit. The lights dim.

VOICE #1

N as in "Nelly"...37.

(pause)

B as in "Big Biceps"...14.

(pause)

O as in "Orgasm"...75.

VOICE #2

(joyfully)

Bingo!!

SCENE 2: The next evening.

Sound: A bell dings.

Disco music starts to play. Disco lights flood the stage. Al is on stage watching the dancers out on the dance floor. Robby Smirnoff enters with two drinks. Robby wears a flashy shirt, a big wristwatch, and lots of gold jewelry. Robby approaches Al and hands him a drink. The music fades.

ROBBY SMIRNOFF

Here you go, sir. Payment in full, as promised.

AL

After the way I pulverized you on the tennis court, you should have to buy me drinks for a year.

ROBBY

The deal was ONE drink. I always stick to the deal.

AL

And I bet there are bodies scattered all over New York and L.A. as a result of your deals!

ROBBY

I was one of the best agents in the business, Mr. Hammond.

AL

Mr. Getz, please. My name is Al Getz.

ROBBY

Come off it, buddy boy! We both know who you really are.

AL

(annoyed)

How many times do I have to keep asking you?

ROBBY

O.K.! O.K.! But I've always been a big Todd Hammond fan.

AL

That name was forced on me by the studio. There's a lot more to me than a few movies—and one unfortunate appearance on Broadway.

ROBBY

But that's my world! I don't care about anything else!

AL

Then why did you ever move down here?

ROBBY

(suddenly perky)

Oh, that's an entirely different matter—I moved down here for the boys!

AL

We're a bunch of old men.

ROBBY

Speak for yourself. And I can assure you I've had no problem attracting the attention of the boys. Besides, you can't grow old in New York or L.A. Have you ever seen anyone our age at the Abbey or Splash?

AL

I never went to places like that.

ROBBY

(sarcastically)

Oh, that's right—Todd Hammond had to keep his real life secret. Then what are you doing living in Fort Lauderdale? Isn't that like putting up a billboard screaming, "I'm here, and I'm queer"?

AL

Haven't you read my book?

ROBBY

I'm waiting for the movie.

AL

Well, if you had, you'd know I came out when I realized my acting days were long behind me so there was no need to pretend anymore.

ROBBY

I'm sure I could still find you some acting work.

AL

I'm much better at real estate.

ROBBY

But you don't need the money. You should be having fun!

AL

That's why I come to Sunshine Quest! Boy, when we celebrate the new millennium next month, I'll be celebrating this club. How lucky are we to have a place like this just for men like us right in the neighborhood? Even our own beach across the road. It really is a whole new world.

ROBBY

You don't have to sell me on it, Mac! I joined the moment I moved down here.

AL

I just hope it survives.

ROBBY

Oh, these places are always having money problems. I never let that prevent me from having fun.

AL

What's your idea of fun?

ROBBY

I told you—it's boys! Some tennis. A bit of bingo. Maybe a tea dance or two. But most of all—boys, boys, boys!

Brad enters.

ROBBY
(indicating Brad)

See—like flies to honey!

(beat)

Someone told me he's started giving massages on the side.

AL
Yes, Brad's a very talented massage therapist.

[Robby gives Al a startled look.]

ROBBY
(calling out)

Brad! May I speak to you?

Brad comes over.

BRAD
Yes, Mr. Smirnoff?

ROBBY
Call me Robby, please!

BRAD
What can I do for you, "Robby"?

ROBBY
(dramatically—flirtatiously)

Where do I begin?

(beat)

Is it true you give massages now? How'd you like another client?

BRAD
I'm afraid I've already got a pretty full plate, but I'll let you know if my schedule opens up. Hang in there!

Brad exits.

ROBBY
I didn't realize he was such a stuck-up little thing. What does he mean—"hang in there"? Is he expecting me to drop dead any minute now?

AL
I just think he's a little uncomfortable around us sometimes.

ROBBY

Nonsense! He's always undressing me with his eyes. I know the type. Sniffing around older men hoping to find a sugar daddy.

AL

He's not like that.

ROBBY

Mind you, I'm perfectly willing to be someone's sugar daddy—as long as he gives me some sugar.

AL

(deadpanning)

And we wonder where the expression "dirty old man" comes from.

ROBBY

There's nothing dirty about it. Why shouldn't I share my wisdom, charm, and money with the right young man?

AL

Just watch out for people waiting to take advantage of you.

ROBBY

Hey, I've been around the racetrack a few times, Pally-Wally. I'm not like Chuck Battista, for God's sake!

AL

Who?

ROBBY

Chuck Battista—the one who's always coming on to everyone like a Pekingese lion-dog in heat.

AL

You mean the guy who wears a harness?

ROBBY

Someone should tell him that leather and wrinkles don't go together.

AL

He grabbed my derriere the first time I met him.

ROBBY

(slyly checking Al's butt)

See—I'm not like that! Chuck Battista only just came out of the closet. At 69, he shouldn't have bothered!

AL

Maybe he had to wait until the kids were fully grown.

ROBBY

Nothing as honorable as that. Back in New York he'd show up at parties with women he insisted were his girlfriends, but then drool over all the guys and carry on like the gayest bird in the nest.

AL

I've known plenty of men like that.

ROBBY

What a putz! One night he got plastered and finally told me he knew he was really gay—COMPLETELY gay—but couldn't admit it because it would kill his mother. I mean, I loved my mother and all, but can you imagine?

AL

Mothers always know.

ROBBY

Well, let's hope Mama Battista up in heaven enjoys watching her fey little leather boy running after every other fey little boy in the sunshine state!

(looking out at the dance floor)

Hey, look at those guys making out in the middle of the dance floor!

(calling out)

Someone's gonna get lucky tonight!

AL

That's Bobby and Stefan.

ROBBY

(calling out)

Go get him, Bobby!

(to Al—excitedly)

Oh, this night is looking very promising. Soon the younger crowd will arrive and my heart will overflow!

AL

Remember my warning.

ROBBY

Don't be a killjoy!

(looking out at the dance floor)

Wow—they're still going at it! I just love first dates!

AL

Bobby and Stefan have been partners for thirty years.

ROBBY

(with disbelief)

But they seem so happy!

AL

And they're not the only ones.

(pointing)

There's Paul and Eric...Jorge and Reinhold...the two Davids. The place is filled with them.

ROBBY

What is this—a social club or a shelter for old married farts?

The disco music resumes.

ROBBY

(checking his watch)

Ooh, I've got to fly! I'm late for a mahjong!

Al and Robby start to exit, but Al goes on alone as Robby stops to look at something out on the floor.

ROBBY

(looking out at the dance floor)

Well, look at that—a leather vest and nipple clamps tonight?

(to himself)

I think that's much more becoming than the harness.

ROBBY

(calling out)

Nice outfit, Chuck!

Robby exits quickly. The lights dim. The music stops.

SCENE 3: The next evening.

Sound: A bell dings.

VOICE

All right, cowboys! Hike up your skirts—we're heading into a barn-burning two-step!

Country Western music starts to play. Lights up. Al and Mary are dancing, finishing a simple two-step dance. The music ends in a fast fade. Al bows to Mary. Mary curtsies.

MARY KING

Thank you, Darlin'—that was fun!

AL

It was my pleasure, Miss Mary.

MARY

No one's called me that since I was a girl!

AL

You looked just like a girl out there!

MARY

You're too kind.

(looking around)

Now, where'd I leave my bag, Honey?

Mary finds her bag on the bar—a big, overstuffed, open-top bag with a shoulder strap—and slings it over her shoulder.

MARY

Here we go!

Brad enters.

BRAD

(to Mary)

Boy, you were really somethin' out there on the dance floor, Ms King! I wish I could have a turn with you sometime!

A different country song fades up.

MARY
(flirtatiously)

How about right now?

BRAD
I'm workin'; I don't think the Spaulding Brothers would appreciate it.

Mary hands her bag to Al and grabs Brad.

MARY
Well, I don't always appreciate the Spaulding Brothers, so let's just go for it!

Mary and Brad start to dance a western swing dance. Brad breaks away from Mary and dances very enthusiastically.

MARY
Lookee there! Honey, you can really dance!

Brad continues to dance wildly, but then stops suddenly. He seems mortified by his own behavior.

MARY
(to Brad)
Thank you, young man.

BRAD
(embarrassed)
I'm sorry I got so carried away.

MARY
You were wonderful!

BRAD
(looking offstage)
No, I was outta line.
Oops—I'm being summoned.

Brad exits. The music fades. Mary retrieves her bag from Al.

MARY
Funny kid. But what a hottie! I'm all flushed!

AL

It's called youth.

MARY

You're ALL young at heart as far as I'm concerned.

Robby scurries in all decked out in over-the-top country western garb.

ROBBY

Yee-haw! Am I late?

AL

(dryly)

It's country western night, Robby, not Halloween!

ROBBY

I'll have you know I got these clothes from a gen-u-ine cowboy.

AL

Is he lassoed to your bedpost even as we speak?

ROBBY

Mebbee.

MARY

Well, I think you look sexy!

ROBBY

(to Mary)

Mary King, I've always said you're a most ravishing and perceptive young lady!

MARY

Right back attcha, Sunshine!

ROBBY

Believe me, I'm no lady.

(beat)

I keep meaning to come to one of your classes and watch you foxtrot. Or maybe cha, cha, cha!

MARY

Anytime, Robby.

ROBBY

(shyly indicating his outfit)

If you really think I look sexy, can I entice you out onto the dance floor?

MARY

Okay, Shug [pronounced as in “Sugar”]!

Mary hands her bag to Al.

MARY

(to Al)

You mind again, Honey?

Al takes the bag.

MARY

Now show me what you can do, cowboy!

Mary grabs Robby’s hand and leads him out.
Brad enters.

BRAD

Looks like you lost your dance partner, Mr. Getz.

Suddenly self-conscious, Al tosses Mary’s
bag on the floor.

AL

Please—now that you’ve seen me *au naturel*, don’t you think you should call me Al?

BRAD

You haven’t told anyone what happened, have you? I could lose my job.

AL

(sincerely)

Believe me, that’s the last thing I’d ever want.

(embarrassed)

I mean—this place couldn’t run without you.

BRAD

I still don’t know what came over me.

AL

It just happened. A private moment. I promise you no one will ever know.

BRAD

Thanks, but I should be more respectful—especially to someone with such an illustrious career.

AL

I don't think realtors deserve special treatment.

BRAD

I mean your OTHER career.

AL

Look, I know everyone thinks Hollywood is very glamorous—and I had some great times out there—but acting was just something I fell into. I was never very good at it.

BRAD

Are you kidding? I just watched *Moon Over Miami* again.

AL

Oh, no. Here we go...

BRAD

It makes me cry every time I see it.

AL

(dryly)

Me too.

BRAD

The big scene at the end with Natalie Wood—that's actin'!

AL

That's doing 20 takes until the director gets something he thinks he can use. They even put chemicals in my eyes to make the tears flow.

BRAD

What was it like to be with her? She's so beautiful!

AL

She was a lovely gal, all right.

BRAD

Did you have the hots for her? You must've had the hots for lots of the stars you worked with.

AL

Sure—but none of them were female.

BRAD

Really? I figured you couldn'ta been gay back then—none of the big stars were.

AL

Then what am I doing here?

BRAD

Good question. Maybe some of your hormones are dryin' up. I've heard that happens to some people.

AL

I assure you I've always been gay.

BRAD

But my mother says you were a big heartthrob. She can reel off the list of all your girlfriends. I even think she was in love with you, too.

AL

That's because I was discreet, and the studio's publicity machine kept manufacturing one love affair after another to throw your mother off track.

BRAD

She'd be so disappointed if she ever found out.

AL

(conspiratorially)

Maybe she doesn't need to know.

BRAD

Don't worry; I'll never tell her!

(sudden change of mood)

Hey, before I forget—what can I get you?

AL

Oh, I guess I could use a vodka tonic.

BRAD

Sure thing, Mr. Getz—I mean, Al!

John Strathmore enters.

JOHN STRATHMORE

If you're taking orders, I'd love a Heineken.

AL

Brad, put them both on my account!

Brad exits.

JOHN

Thank you, but what did I do to deserve this?

AL

I'm just in a good mood. I sold a big condo this week.

JOHN

Sorry—I'm not on the market.

AL

That's okay. I'm Al Getz, by the way.

JOHN

(suspiciously)

“Al Getz”?

(shaking hands)

John Strathmore.

AL

How are you enjoying Sunshine Quest?

JOHN

Everyone's very friendly. You're not the first guy to buy me a drink.

AL

The men around here always come flocking when they smell fresh meat. But watch out—that usually means they expect to see some action.

JOHN

Then I'm afraid they'll find me disappointing.

(after a pause)

I'm still recovering from a loss.

AL

(suddenly serious)

Oh, I'm so sorry.

JOHN

It's O.K. You couldn't know.

AL

When did your partner die?

JOHN

My WIFE died six months ago.

(sadly)

Sometimes the pain is unbearable.

AL

I know all about that pain.

JOHN

You wrote about that in your book, didn't you,

(with emphasis)

Mr. Hammond?

AL

(as if caught)

Oh... So YOU'RE the one who read it.

JOHN

Your partner was a lot younger than you, wasn't he?

AL

Some people thought he was my nephew or assistant. We didn't bother to set them straight. But after he was gone, I realized there was no public record of our 20 years together—of what we really were to each other. That's when I decided this was all bullshit. Now I don't care what anyone knows or thinks—I just want to live my life.

JOHN

And how's that going?

AL

Very well, thank you.

(more sincerely)

Though sometimes it hurts to think I may never find someone to love like that again.

JOHN

(hopefully)

When does the pain go away?

AL

I'll let you know.

JOHN
(deflated)

Oh, I was hoping...

AL
(backtracking)

I don't mean YOUR pain won't go away. It eases up. Slowly. Month by month. At least you're not alone. Once the wives die, lots of husbands finally come to grips with what they've always known about themselves.

JOHN

I don't follow.

AL

Coming out late in life is very common down here.

JOHN

I'm not coming out.

AL

You mean you're still in the closet?

JOHN

I'm not in any kind of closet!

AL

Pal, if you're looking for the Rod and Gun Club, it's down the road.

Robby and Mary return. Robby is wiping his brow.

MARY

You sure know how to shake a lamb's tail, Honey!

ROBBY

Doesn't she have the cutest little expressions?

(noticing John)

Well, someone hooked himself a good-looking fish while we were out on the dance floor!

AL

Steady, boy. This is John Strathmore. He just joined the Club. John, allow me to introduce Mary King and Robby Smirnoff.

JOHN

Nice to meet you.

(impatiently)

Now pardon me, but I need to excuse myself for a moment. I don't mean to be rude; I just have to take care of... I have to go to the... the...

ROBBY

...the John, John?

John scurries off.

ROBBY

That's why I like 'em young—much better bladder control.

MARY

Darlin', you did make a little pit stop yourself on the way out to the dance floor.

AL

Uh...I hate to interrupt, but I should probably explain something about Mr. Strathmore.

ROBBY

He WILL come back, won't he?

AL

I thought you only liked them young.

ROBBY

(deadpan)

In a pinch, I might be willing to bend my standards.

AL

Well, I'm afraid John's off limits. His wife died recently—yes, his wife.

ROBBY

So, now he's decided he can finally come out—practically a cliché in Fort Lauderdale!

AL

Sorry, he plays for Mary's team.

MARY

I didn't know I had a team.

ROBBY

Then what the hell's he doing at the Sunshine QUEST Club? It's not a club for mountain climbers, you know! Q-U-E-S-T! "Queers Enjoying Social Times." I'm sure it's spelled

out in the literature somewhere.

MARY

He'll never fit in.

AL

You're always saying you wish you had a man in your life again.

MARY

Darlin', I took myself off the market after my last little fling. I can only take so much heartbreak.

ROBBY

(joking)

Oh, good—now you can be all mine! We don't need those straight guys!

AL

Well, if you ever change your mind, consider Mr. Strathmore.

MARY

Honey, he's in MOURNIN' not in heat!

(more sincerely)

Thanks for looking out for me, but just put that idea on hold. I've gotta go! Robby here wore me out.

ROBBY

Hey, it takes two to tango!

MARY

We were doin' the Texas Two-Step, Sunshine!

Mary kisses them each in turn, then looks around.

MARY

Now where's my...?

Mary spots her bag.

MARY

(dramatically—scolding Al)

Oh, please! Don't ever put my bag on the floor!

AL

Sorry.

Mary picks up her bag like a wounded pet, takes out a moist towelette, wipes off the bottom of the bag, and then slings the bag over her shoulder with a grunt.

AL

Mary, do you keep your whole life in that thing?

MARY

It's a woman's prerogative to carry all her essential possessions around with her. I'm surprised you guys haven't caught on to this.

ROBBY

I tried a man-purse for a while, but it clashed with too many of my outfits.

MARY

(to Robby)

Come to my class next week. I'll teach you how to rumba.

ROBBY

I might just do that!

Mary exits.

ROBBY

What a gal!

(spotting something out on the dance floor)

Oh, spare me! Bobby and Stefan are going at it again!

(calling out)

Get a room!

(beat—louder)

Preferably in Chicago!

The lights dim.

SCENE 4: The next night.

Sound: A bell dings.

VOICE

Ditch your partners tonight, guys, and join us for the best line dancing in South Florida!

Line dance music starts to play. The lights come up. Al and John are watching people

dance. Brad enters with two martinis. The music fades.

BRAD

(handing out drinks to Al and John)

Here you go—martinis courtesy of Chuck Battista.

AL

(taking his drink)

Thanks!

BRAD

Enjoy!

Brad exits.

JOHN

Who's Chuck Battista?

AL

(indicating)

See that guy in the corner of the dance floor?

JOHN

(looking)

The one in the plaid shirt?

AL

Next to him wearing the leather mask.

JOHN

Is it costume night?

AL

No, it's just Chuck.

JOHN

(studying his martini)

Why do you think he did that?

AL

You don't want to know.

Robby enters.

Martinis tonight? Good idea!

ROBBY

And apparently they're free!

JOHN

Even better! Brad!

ROBBY

Robby signals Brad. Brad enters and approaches.

Would you like something, Mr. Smirnoff?

BRAD

Robby!

ROBBY

What would you like,
"ROBBY"?!

BRAD
(dramatically)

How about a massage?

ROBBY
(flirtatiously)

What's your second wish?

BRAD
(teasing)

I'd love one of those free martinis.

ROBBY

I'm sorry, Robby; those were a gift for Al and John—from an admirer.

BRAD

What admirer?

ROBBY

Chuck Battista!

AL

Robby eyes John up and down.

ROBBY

Well, Chucky Boy's in for a big surprise, isn't he?

BRAD

(to Robby)

Would you like a drink anyway?

ROBBY

I'll pass for now, but I'll accept that massage anytime.

BRAD

(teasing)

Behave yourself.

Brad exits.

ROBBY

(flustered and excited)

Did you see the way he looked at me? I'm telling you—it's just a matter of time.

AL

(deadpan)

I wish you well.

ROBBY

(to John)

What happened last night? You went off to take a pee and never came back!

JOHN

I decided to go home.

ROBBY

(sharply)

Did you hook up with somebody in the bathroom?

JOHN

I beg your pardon?

ROBBY

Oh, that's right—you play for the other team.

JOHN

I haven't signed up for any teams yet.

ROBBY
(snapping)

What are you doing here if you're not gay?!

JOHN

Who says I'm not?

AL

You said your wife died recently and you weren't in the closet—so I just assumed.

JOHN

I've been a proud and open homosexual my whole life, Mr. Hammond. Long before YOU came out.

Robby and Al exchange a look.

ROBBY

How could you be openly gay and married at the same time?

JOHN

My wife was a wonderful woman.

ROBBY

I'm sure she was, but... Didn't she realize you were gay?

JOHN

We fell in love.

ROBBY

But did you have conjugal relations?

JOHN
(annoyed)

That's none of your business.

AL

Robby, let's change the subject and just try to have a good time.

ROBBY

What's the big deal? So, he's bisexual. Who cares?

JOHN

I'm not bisexual. I'm gay!

ROBBY
(studying John)

You know, you remind me of someone I used to know in Vegas. He claimed he could fake it, too.

(beat)

He made a killing as a male escort.

AL

Robby!

ROBBY

I'm just saying—that's how these guys operate. They'd fuck a giraffe if the price was right!

AL

Stop it!

JOHN

I think it's time to go home again.

John exits. The line music starts to come back up.

AL

Robby, are you single-handedly trying to drive this place out of business?

ROBBY

We don't need those AC/DC types—it's all too confusing. Hey, how about a line dance?

AL

Thanks, but no.

ROBBY

Never mind. I can do the El Paso Stomp myself!

Robby does a simple line dance.

ROBBY
(to Al)

Now it's your turn. C'mon! You know the Tucson Toe Slap!

Al gets up reluctantly but launches into a well-executed line dance. Robby tries to follow along but gives up quickly. When Al's done, he starts to exit.

AL
(to Robby, as he exits)

That's how it's done, sweetheart.

Robby watches Al exit. The music stops suddenly.

VOICE
Okay, cowboys! Everyone out on the floor for the Santa Fe Slide!

ROBBY
(enthusiastically)
The Santa Fe Slide? Wait for me!

Robby runs off stage. The lights dim.

SCENE 5: The next afternoon.

Sound: A bell dings.

Massage music starts to play. Brad enters and sets up the massage table. Al enters shirtless and lies down on the table. Brad starts to massage Al's shoulders. The music fades. Lights up.

AL
Work them a little harder, will you? ... Yeah—that's good! You're my savior!

BRAD
Maybe you shouldn't play so much tennis.

AL
As long as you're around to help me recover, I'm gonna keep playing!

BRAD
Who'd you play with today?

AL
Francis Buffante [pronounced boo-FAHN-tay]. You know him?

BRAD
(flatly)
Yeah—I know him.

AL

A good-looking guy, don't you think?

BRAD

I'm not that way, Al. I've told you that.

AL

You confuse me. Last time you gave me a happy ending—I can't help getting ideas.

BRAD

It didn't mean anythin'.

AL

Where I come from, it always means something—and you seem so comfortable around me.

BRAD

That's because I know you're not really like these other guys. You're certainly not like Francis Buffante!

Brad massages Al a bit too hard.

AL

Ow!

Al starts to sit up.

BRAD

Sorry. I don't think you should play tennis with him.

AL

(joking)

When did you become my mother?

BRAD

Francis Buffante is a bad influence. He's beyond saving.

AL

Get off it! What are you talking about?

BRAD

He's played around with the devil.

AL

What devil?

BRAD

You know—Satan—the devil.

AL

I didn't realize he played tennis. I bet he has a great backhand!

Brad stands behind Al and resumes massaging Al's shoulders as he sits on the table.

BRAD

You can joke, but he's had Francis Buffante in his clutches for years. I don't expect you to know about these things, Al, but the devil makes men abuse their bodies and then films them to recruit other men.

AL

You've lost me.

BRAD

Jack Wrangler. Jeff Strykker. Ryan Idol. They're all the devil's tools.

AL

They're just porn stars from the golden age of "all male" movies. How do you know about them?

BRAD

(ignoring his question)

And the most shameless of all was Frank Buff.

AL

And the hottest! But what about him?

BRAD

He's Francis Buffante.

AL

(surprised)

How do you know that?

BRAD

I've done a lot of research.

AL

(suspiciously)

I see.

BRAD

I thought he looked real familiar. Then it hit me—shorten “Francis Buffante” and you get “Frank Buff.”

AL

That’s funny.

BRAD

Believe me, there’s nothing funny about what’s in store for that man.

AL

Leave the poor guy alone!

BRAD

I finally confronted him, and he admitted everything. Then he made a pass at me.

AL

(joking)

Another story with a happy ending!

BRAD

No! He’s tryin’ to be a respectable businessman these days, so he promised to leave me alone if I didn’t reveal his identity.

AL

You just broke your promise—you told ME.

BRAD

You can’t negotiate with the devil. And I know you’re on my side—deep down. I mean, you don’t really know what you’re doing

AL

I know exactly what I’m doing, and I’ve been doing it very happily for a very long time—so please stop insulting me!

BRAD

I’m not trying to insult you, Al, but God’s rules are God’s rules.

Al stands up.

AL

I think that’s enough for today, thank you.

BRAD
(disappointed)

Are you sure?

Brad approaches Al and touches him, almost seductively.

BRAD

We've still got more time.

Al looks at Brad as if tempted to make a move, but gently removes Brad's hands.

AL
(a bit sadly)

Yeah, I'm sure. Thanks.

Al starts to get dressed.

AL

I didn't realize you were so religious.

BRAD

I'm not really.

AL

But how do you know "God's rules"?

BRAD

My father was a preacher.

AL

Oh, so now I suppose you're going to start quoting Leviticus?

BRAD

What's Leviticus?

AL
(deadpan)

Sometimes illiteracy is a good thing.

BRAD

What's that? Another crack? There's nothing wrong with wantin' to be a good Christian.

AL

(sympathetically)

But you don't have to believe everything your father says. Have you ever tried challenging him?

BRAD

It doesn't matter now. He's dead.

AL

I'm sorry. When did he die?

BRAD

I mean he's dead to me.

(angrily)

The state police caught him having sex with a man at a rest area on the interstate one night.

(softening)

Turned out he'd been going there for years. Then he left town, and the other kids never let me forget it.

AL

I'm sorry, Brad. What a horrible thing to live through.

BRAD

He was my hero, my best friend. We'd go out into the woods together and blow up tree stumps. We'd light the fuse and laugh our heads off as we sent those devils to hell!

(more seriously)

What a joke.

AL

He sounds like a tortured man.

BRAD

He's shameful. He could have stopped himself. Smokers do it. Drunks do it.

AL

It's not a habit.

BRAD

It's an addiction!

AL

It's just part of what you are.

BRAD
(angrily)

Shut up! Don't say that!

Brad grabs Al and covers his mouth.

BRAD

Don't ever say that!

Brad lets Al go.

BRAD
(horrified)

I'm sorry—so sorry! I didn't mean to do that! That was completely inappropriate!

AL

Are you all right?

BRAD

I'm frightened, Al!

AL

You seem more angry than frightened.

BRAD

I'm scared to death I've got the same sickness in me. Sometimes I get these feelings. I don't want to be that way.

AL

Maybe you can't control what you are.

BRAD

I don't want to end up at rest stops.

AL

I've never gone to rest stops. I don't know anyone who does.

BRAD

Is that true?

AL

Of course it is!

BRAD
(more optimistically)

I was hopin' I'd find someone like you down here. I've been thinking about another way.

AL
What do you mean?

Brad hugs Al suddenly and kisses him.

AL
(backing off)
Are you sure this is a good idea?

BRAD
Please, Al. Help me.

Al finally reciprocates, and they embrace passionately. The lights dim. Al and Brad exit with the massage table.

SCENE 6: Three days later. Afternoon.

Sound: A bell dings.

Hawaiian music starts to play. When the lights come up, Mary is teaching a hula class (facing the audience). Mary's bag is with her, as always.

MARY
That's right, class. Nice and easy. That's how I want you doin' it tonight.

Robby enters wearing a pareo, a lei, an open Hawaiian shirt, and neon flip-flops. He stands a few yards behind and to the side of Mary. He studies Mary as she dances.

MARY
(dancing)
Let's make a few waves ... pull in the fishing net ... and check our catch.

Robby starts to copy Mary's movements as best he can. Mary makes long graceful waves with her arms. Robby's waves are angular and awkward.

MARY

(more slowly—teaching the moves)

Now, let's make a few waves... Let's pull in the fishing net... Let's check our catch.

Mary makes graceful pulling gestures with her arms. Robby struggles to pull his net in. He finally peers into his net.

ROBBY

Hey, they all got away!

MARY

Very nice, class. See you at the luau tonight. Aloha!

Mary and Robby exit in opposite directions as the music continues. Brad enters carrying a large inflatable palm tree and sets it down in a downstage corner. Robby re-enters dressed as before, but with a skimpy bathing suit in place of the pareo and a large woman's floppy sunhat. The music fades.

ROBBY

(flirtatiously to Brad)

Hello there, young man! ... Yoo-hoo, Buddy Boy! ... I said hello!

BRAD

(finally noticing—gently)

Mr. Smirnoff, I'm afraid you can't wear your bathing suit out here.

ROBBY

Oh, very well.

Robby starts to take off his bathing suit while Brad goes to get a second large inflatable palm tree.

BRAD

(returning—horrified)

No! Put that back on!

ROBBY

Well, make up your mind!

Robby puts his bathing suit back on.

BRAD

I mean, you can't come in here dressed like that. Bathing suits are only permitted by the pool.

ROBBY
(snapping)

What is this—a social club or a military base?

BRAD

I don't make the rules.

ROBBY

Well, who does then?

BRAD

The Spaulding Brothers.

ROBBY

Who the hell are THEY?

BRAD

The owners.

ROBBY

Well, maybe it's time to get some new owners.

BRAD

If you don't like the way they run this place, why don't you buy it and run it yourself?

ROBBY

It would be a lot more fun around here if I were in charge.

BRAD

Is that all you care about—having fun?

ROBBY

What's more important than that?

BRAD
(gently)

I don't like having to say this, but you guys don't have many years left. Have you tried spending time with Jesus?

ROBBY

Jesus? No, I haven't tried spending time with Jesus—I'm Jewish!

(beat)

We killed him, remember?

(beat)

I think he's still pissed off at us.

BRAD

You can joke all you want—that's not gonna help you on judgment day.

ROBBY

Jesus, you're in a pretty foul mood!

BRAD

Please, don't take the Lord's name in vain.

ROBBY

I didn't!

(lying—said childishly)

I just said... "Cheese Whiz!"

BRAD

I better go—I have work to do.

Brad starts to exit, but pauses.

BRAD

And please leave before anyone else sees you like that.

Brad exits. A moment later Al enters. Robby crouches down behind one of the palm trees.

ROBBY

(dramatically)

Al, baby, turn away! Don't look at me!

AL

What's the matter?

Robby stands up and approaches Al holding the tree in front of him.

ROBBY

I'm not supposed to be here.

AL

Why not?

ROBBY

(putting the tree down)

There's some rule against wearing bathing suits in here—if you can believe it!

AL

Oh, I guess there is.

ROBBY

That little Nazi queen tried to give me a hard time! Then he started talking about Jesus.

AL

Oh. Well, don't mind that. He's really a very decent young man.

ROBBY

Decent! Schmecent! I wish I could buy this place. Then I'd run all these decent people out of here and replace them with some hot young men who know how to fawn over their elders properly.

AL

(eagerly)

If you're serious, I'd be happy to handle the purchase for you.

ROBBY

No, I'm not serious. I just don't like all these rules. I moved down here to have fun, for god's sake!

Brad re-enters.

BRAD

Mr. Smirnoff, I don't mean to be rude, but I gave you a warning.

ROBBY

(snapping)

Yeah, yeah, yeah! I don't see you giving Chuck Battista a hard time, and my bathing suit is much more tasteful than those bare-assed chaps of his!

BRAD

The Spaulding Brothers could fire me.

ROBBY

Well, maybe that wouldn't be such a bad thing!

AL

Robby!

ROBBY

Well, what do you want me to do? I was on the beach all day watching the boys play volleyball—I got distracted! All those balls bouncing up and down! I lost track of the time and didn't have a chance to change. So, sue me!

BRAD

Mr. Smirnoff, I'm trying to be nice about this.

ROBBY

Nice would be to stop bothering me!

BRAD

Are you gonna leave peacefully or do you want me to carry you out?

Robby considers the proposition, then approaches Brad slowly.

ROBBY

You'll find I'm light as a feather!

BRAD

Act your age!

ROBBY

Oh, are you looking for a silver fox? You wanna be my sugar baby?

AL

(diplomatically)

Robby, why don't you just do what Brad wants? There's no need to cause a scene.

ROBBY

All right! If you're all gonna gang up on me!

BRAD

Thank you.

ROBBY

Prissy little queens! I can't stand them!

Robby exits.

AL

I'm sorry he gave you such a hard time. You handled him well.

BRAD

He's quite a handful!

AL

(sudden change of tone—suggestively)

YOU were quite a handful last night, Mr. Hall.

BRAD

(teasing flirtatiously)

Did I wear you out, Mr. Getz?

AL

Not at all. You were—you ARE—invigorating and energizing—not to mention adorable!

BRAD

The feeling's mutual, Al. Especially the adorable part. Being with you feels so natural. Like we were meant to be together.

AL

Maybe we were.

BRAD

All I know is—no girl's ever made me feel like this.

AL

(disappointed)

Oh, so you do date girls.

BRAD

Not anymore I don't. I feel like a whole new person.

AL

That's how I feel, too.

BRAD

You can't possibly mean that. You were Todd Hammond. You're experienced. I'm just the next guy.

AL

But I do feel new. I can't explain it. It's like... Well, when you go to bed with someone, you're lucky if it works out—physically, I mean. But every now and then, you find something more, and it's like a gift from the gods. It's like...

BRAD

(cutting him off excitedly)

It's like expecting sex, but discovering love.

AL

You're too young to be so profound.

BRAD

I've grown up a lot in the last few days.

AL

(playfully)

Am I robbing you of your youth?

(suddenly serious)

Wait—I shouldn't joke. I do worry I'm leading you to something you may not be ready to handle.

BRAD

No, you're showin' me the way home. I've never been so happy to be alive!

AL

I'm happy, too.

BRAD

And you know what else? I think Jesus would approve.

AL

Brad, don't...

BRAD

(cutting him off)

I know you don't like it when I go there, but I've thought a lot about this, and I don't know why he wouldn't. Didn't he preach the gospel of love? But don't worry; I won't mention him again. Hey—can I come over to your place after work?

AL

Of course.

BRAD

I just hope I can wait that long!

Brad starts to hug and kiss Al, but notices John entering and backs off.

BRAD

(suddenly formal)

Anything else I can do for you, Mr. Getz?

AL

Uh, no thank you, Brad.

BRAD

How about you, Mr. Strathmore? You want a drink or a snack?

JOHN

Maybe later.

Brad exits.

JOHN

Seems like a nice kid.

AL

Yeah—real nice.

JOHN

And not bad in the looks department either.

AL

So you DO notice these things.

JOHN

What is it with you people? YOU don't believe I'm gay, and Robby thinks I'm a male prostitute.

AL

Robby didn't mean any harm. Your case just struck him as a little unusual.

JOHN

What's so unusual about marrying a woman?

AL

The normal pattern is to marry a woman and then come out as a gay man, not the other way around.

JOHN

Well, maybe nature offers up a little more variety than people realize.

AL

I guess that's what Robby was trying to get at in his clumsy way when he asked if you

had sex with your wife.

JOHN

I'm sure he wouldn't be very pleased if I started asking personal questions about HIS sex life.

AL

You don't know Robby.

JOHN

And I don't care to.

AL

Well, just for argument's sake, then, would you mind if I asked you the same question in a less clumsy way?

JOHN

Of course my wife and I had a sexual relationship. There wouldn't have been much point in getting married otherwise, would there?

AL

Then why did you object when Robby said you were bisexual?

JOHN

Because I'm gay.

AL

How does a gay man have sex with a woman?

JOHN

Didn't your mother teach you about the birds and the bees?

(beat)

I think the point is to give each other pleasure, to enjoy each other's company. I don't think it matters what goes on in your head. If you need to pull up a couple of images—or use one of those little blue pills—who cares?

AL

(not fully satisfied)

Whatever works for you, I guess.

JOHN

I can tell you're still confused. Look, I don't know about you, but I lost a lot of good friends to AIDS.

AL

Hollywood wasn't spared.

JOHN

I don't know why *I* was spared, but the whole thing made me pull back from other men. I practically became a recluse. I met Evelyn at a funeral. She'd lost even more friends than I had and become a crusader in the fight for AIDS research. We became good friends. Just friends. But she rarely did things halfway, so eventually it was impossible not to fall in love with her. Then one night it became sexual, and it felt so good to be intimate with someone again. We both saw it as a new beginning, so we decided to get married. And it was bliss...until the cancer came.

AL

You don't have to talk about this.

JOHN

I like talking about her, actually.

AL

I guess the world's changed a lot since those days.

JOHN

How so?

AL

Well...the treatments for AIDS keep getting better—and who ever thought we'd see gay characters in the movies or someone like Ellen come out on primetime TV?

JOHN

So what? Where it counts, this country still treats gay people like shit—even our so-called friends. Like Bill Clinton.

AL

What's wrong with Bill Clinton?

JOHN

HE gave us Don't Ask Don't Tell and the Defense of Marriage Act.

AL

But how about this club? A place like this would never have existed a generation ago—or it would've been fire-bombed.

JOHN

Who says there aren't crazies out there who'd like to do exactly that? But, hey—enough of this. What's on the agenda tonight? I love how there's always something going on here.

AL

It's Luau Night. Then tomorrow Carnival begins—five nights of nonstop fun.

JOHN

But it's December. Carnival's supposed to happen in March.

AL

We do things our own way at Sunshine Quest. Whatever the time of year, there's nothing like some hot young male dancers in tight shorts to get a bunch of retired men's hearts pumping.

JOHN

(joking)

I hope they have oxygen pumps standing by.

AL

If you're gonna collapse, there's no better place in South Florida to do it.

JOHN

Not a bad way to go, either, I bet!

AL

Amen.

Brad re-enters and approaches Al.

BRAD

(in a very serious voice)

Mr. Getz, the Spaulding Brothers would like a word with you. Please come with me.

AL

(to John—joking)

Gee, I've never been summoned to the principal's office before.

Brad and Al start to exit in one direction. John exits in the other direction. When Brad sees that John has left, he looks around to make sure no one is watching, gives Al a quick kiss, and takes his hand.

BRAD

(to Al)

I couldn't wait any longer, Stud! I've reserved some massage time for us.

Brad leads Al out.

VOICE

Attention movie fans! Join us for the first annual Frank Buff Film Festival. As a special

treat, the star himself will be available for autographs.

SCENE 7: The next day. Early evening.

Sound: A bell dings.

Party music plays as the lights come up. The entire cast enters dancing and carrying piñatas. They dance around the stage, decorate the stage with the piñatas, and then exit. The music fades as John re-enters with Mary following several steps behind him. Mary wears Mardi Gras beads and a carnival mask. She also carries her bag over her shoulder as usual.

MARY

Well, hello there, Mr. Strathmore. Are you ready for Carnival?

Mary pulls out a string of Mardi Gras beads and places it around John's neck.

JOHN

I think so, ma'am, but I'm afraid I've forgotten your name.

MARY

(taking off her mask)

Did I make so little an impression?

JOHN

No, you made a very nice impression—I'm just bad with names.

MARY

The name's Mary, Honey. Mary King.

JOHN

Pleased to see you again, Ms. King.

MARY

Call me Mary. The King part's just a relic from an old marriage. I understand that YOU were married until recently. I'm very sorry to hear about the passing of Mrs. Strathmore. What did she die of, if you don't mind my asking?

Brain cancer.

JOHN

Oh.

MARY

It moved very fast, but she was a fighter right up until the end.

JOHN

How long were you married?

MARY

Ten years.

JOHN

Mr. King and I only managed to make it to our third anniversary.

MARY

I still felt like I was just getting to know her. That was the thing about her—she was always capable of surprising me.

JOHN

She sounds like a remarkable woman. And I bet she loved you very much.

MARY

Yes, she did. ... Love without qualification or judgment.

JOHN

(starting to tear up)

Any children?

MARY

She said she loved me too much to share me with anyone.

JOHN

(crying)

Mary pulls a handkerchief out of her bag and hands it to John.

Tell me somethin'—does it feel like you'll never meet someone like that again, that you'll have a big hole in your heart for the rest of your life?

MARY
(consoling him)

Sometimes it does, yes.

JOHN

MARY

That's how I felt when Mr. King and I got divorced. Oh, I know it's not exactly the same thing—the bastard didn't have the decency to die on me—but it made me feel like I'd never find happiness with a man again. Like there's something wrong with me.

JOHN

I don't always feel that way.

MARY

Honey, I'll tell you what you do when you get that feeling.

(holding him and stroking his hair or back)

Just let it wash over you, like an ocean wave. Just let it wash over you, because you know what? As sure as the wave comes in, it eventually goes right back out, and you're in the clear air again.

JOHN

That's very profound.

MARY

It's something my mama taught me.

John blows his nose into the handkerchief.

JOHN

Thank you for sharing it, Mary.

John hands the handkerchief back to Mary. Horrified, she puts it in a plastic baggie before returning it to her bag.

MARY

We've been put on this earth to help each other, don't you think? Mama said that, too.

JOHN

Well, you're certainly doing your mama proud today.

MARY

I don't know about that.

JOHN

I mean it. You're a lovely woman.

MARY

I don't know about that either, but I do know that one day you're gonna be ready to meet someone new and consider...well—whatever possibilities appeal to you, I suppose.

JOHN
(cheering up)

I already have days when that's exactly how I feel.

MARY

Good for you! And Shug, since we've both been there, when you think you're ready, just let me know. Maybe I can help you come out into the world again.

JOHN

That's why I joined this club, actually.

MARY

But Darlin', you're a breeder! Look, I know I'M a fag hag, but don't you let yourself become one, too!

JOHN
(soberly)

Mary, I think I may have given you the wrong impression. I'm gay, too.

MARY
(a sound of disbelief)

Pfff! ... Don't go switching teams just because your heart's broken!

JOHN

I've always been gay! My wife was the only woman I've ever been with. All my other relationships have been with men. My next one probably will be, too.

MARY

Then why'd you go leading me on like that?

JOHN

I wasn't leading you on.

MARY
(starting to get angry)

You let me pour my heart out to you!

JOHN

We were just making conversation.

MARY

Is that what you call it when you come on to a lady?

JOHN

I didn't...

MARY

(erupting)

You're worse than any of THESE guys! They don't pretend! I know just where I stand—or DON'T stand—with them. But you? What are you? What the hell ARE you?

JOHN

I'm sorry if I upset you.

MARY

(not hearing him)

And what the hell am I doing here?

Mary takes out her sunglasses and snaps them on.

MARY

I just hope there's still time to get to that speed-dating mixer up at Pompano Beach!

Mary "accidentally" hits John with her bag as she exits.

JOHN

(jumping back)

Ouch!

AL

Evening, Mary.

Mary ignores Al as she storms out.

AL

(to John)

What's with her?

JOHN

I think I need a drink.

John exits as Brad enters.

AL

(to Brad)

Oh, there you are!

BRAD

(coolly)

Good evening, Mr. Getz. What can I do for you?

AL

I just want to talk to you.

BRAD

(stiffly)

I'm sorry, but I have to finish setting up for Carnival.

AL

Why are you being so standoffish?

BRAD

I'm just doing my job.

AL

You're acting like a completely different person—where's my lover boy?

BRAD

Please—I told you I don't want anyone knowing about that.

AL

I've been very discreet. I had twenty years of practice with Jeff. I'm not going to jeopardize this.

BRAD

I better get back to work.

AL

But when can we get together?

BRAD

I'm not sure we can do that again.

AL

(more quietly)

You told me you loved me.

BRAD

Not here! Please!

AL

O.K., O.K., But when can I see you?

BRAD

I can't see you. I just got a call from my mother. She's sick—she needs me.

AL

I'm sorry to hear that.

BRAD

(glumly)

This will be my first visit since...since you changed me.

(suddenly upset)

She can't see me like this!

AL

Brad!

BRAD

I've been fooling myself. Jesus would definitely not approve!

AL

(patiently)

Do what you have to do. I'll see you when you get back.

BRAD

That's not going to happen.

Brad storms off.

AL

Brad!

Al follows Brad. Robby runs on stage wearing a pirate costume.

ROBBY

Ahoy, mateys! Let the carnival begin!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE 8: Five nights later.

Party music up. When the lights come up, everyone in the cast is on stage dancing. When the music stops suddenly, everyone freezes during the following announcement.

VOICE

Attention, boys and boys! Carnival '99's not done yet! So get your butts out on the dance floor one last time and win a romantic weekend for two in San Juan, Puerto Rico!

Everyone cheers. The music resumes. Everyone exits. Music down. Robby and John, looking exhausted, re-enter and stare out at the dance floor.

ROBBY

I feel like a squeezed out tube of lube.

JOHN

Maybe you should take a night off.

ROBBY
(suddenly rallying)

And miss the go-go boys?

JOHN

We've had them every night.

ROBBY

Yes, we have! *Chicos! Chicos! Chicos!*

JOHN

And I've watched you stuff their pants every night.

ROBBY

Forget your treasury bills and offshore investments—THIS is where I prefer to deposit my money!

JOHN

How much of a deposit have you made so far?

ROBBY

Not that much, really. I got \$1000 in small bills from the bank on Monday. Let's see what I've got left.

Robby reaches into his pocket and pulls out a dollar bill.

ROBBY

(sadly)

Oh. Maybe I went a little overboard.

JOHN

I hope you got your money's worth.

ROBBY

I didn't even get a little kiss.

JOHN

I'd take legal action if I were you.

Latin dance music starts to play.

ROBBY

(brightening)

Maybe I'll get lucky tonight.

JOHN

Then maybe you better go back to the bank.

ROBBY

I have other enticements. Look, I'll show you.

Robby starts to dance to the Latin beat.

JOHN

What are you doing?

ROBBY

Setting the trap.

Robby continues to dance—a flamboyant and suggestive Latin dance. John signals to Brad to come over. At the end of his dance,

Robby finally notices Brad.

ROBBY

See—works every time!

BRAD
(to John)

Can I get you something?

JOHN
Brad, I could use a Heineken. And please get my friend anything he wants—on me.

BRAD
What would you like, Mr. Smirnoff?

ROBBY
(with a dance gesture or two)
Robby, please. I've told you before, you must call me
(in a seductive low voice)

ROBBY!

BRAD
(his patience starting to wear thin)
What would you like?

ROBBY
Oh, you know very well what I'd like.
(dramatically)
We've had this date from the beginning, Blanche. And now I think it's time to deliver.

BRAD
(snapping)
Cut it out and behave yourself!

JOHN
Robby, would you like something to drink or not?

BRAD
Forget it! I'll get your Heineken, but I'm cuttin' this guy off!

Brad storms off.

JOHN
(sympathetically)
I'll get you a drink from the bar.

ROBBY

(stunned)

No...uh...I'm okay. ... I don't think I need a drink.

JOHN

Maybe everyone's nerves are a little frazzled.

Al enters.

AL

What have I missed, Gents?

ROBBY

(revving up)

That Nazi queen you keep insisting is a nice young man just assaulted me!

JOHN

Well, that's a bit of an overstatement.

ROBBY

He started yelling at me for no reason at all and refused to fill my drink order. No wonder this place is in financial trouble!

Brad returns with John's beer.

BRAD

Here you go, Mr. Strathmore.

John takes his beer.

AL

What would you like to drink, Robby?

BRAD

Sorry—the bar's closed to him!

AL

(to Brad)

He says you assaulted him.

BRAD

(to Robby)

You want to press charges? Go press charges!

ROBBY

I just want him to apologize.

JOHN

I'm sure everyone's sorry.

BRAD

If a member misbehaves, we're not supposed to serve them liquor. Go ask the Spaulding Brothers yourself.

AL

Will you excuse us for a moment?

Al walks Brad away from John and Robby to speak in private. John and Robby exit.

AL

First of all, tell me about your mother.

BRAD

It was a false alarm. She was just lonely.

AL

So are WE okay?

BRAD

There IS no "we."

AL

Brad!

BRAD

What was I thinking? God made woman to be with man—and vice versa. It's all very simple. There were no gay couples on Noah's Ark.

AL

Boy, a couple of days with your mother, and you come back all twisted!

BRAD

My mother only wants what's best for me. She thinks it's time for me to find a woman and settle down.

AL

And how does she feel about your working at a gay club?

BRAD

Maybe I forgot to tell her.

AL

So, maybe she's not the right person to be giving you advice.

BRAD

Maybe you're not right for me either.

(sharply)

Besides, you're too old!

AL

(calmly and ignoring Brad's comment)

So, you came back from visiting your mother all stressed out and took it out on Robby.

BRAD

He started propositioning me right in front of everyone, waving his arms and acting all queer. I can't stand that stuff.

AL

You chose to work here. You know what this place is like. And you know what Carnival is like.

BRAD

But I don't have to like it.

AL

Does that mean you don't like me either?

BRAD

At least you don't go drooling over men and running around acting like a queen all the time.

AL

I may not be as flamboyant as Robby, but I enjoy a room full of men having a good time as much as anyone. And I'm trying to show you that you can like all that, too. The world won't come to an end if you admit the truth about yourself.

BRAD

I never said I wanted to be like you! People like you disgust me! I want nothing to do with you ever again!

Brad storms out. The Latin music resumes. The rest of the cast enters dancing, removes the piñatas, and exits. Lights down. The music stops.

SCENE 9: The next afternoon.

Sound: A bell dings.

Lights up on Al sitting reading a newspaper. Brad enters tentatively and playfully. Al ignores him.

BRAD
(teasing and flirting)

Yoo-hoo! ... Mr. Getz! ... Al!

(more quietly)

Lover!

AL
(stiffly)

Oh, good afternoon, Mr. Hall.

BRAD

Don't be that way!

AL

How do you expect me to act?

(ignoring Brad—reading the paper)

Look at that—another abortion clinic was bombed in Gainesville yesterday. What's the matter with these people?

BRAD

They're just following their conscience.

AL

Are you serious?

BRAD

(ignoring Al's question—trying to be cheerful)

Hey, did you have a good time last night?

AL
(sullenly)

What do you think?

BRAD

I'm sorry I had to work. You know I wanted to be with you!

AL

Are you schizo? Last night you said I disgusted you!

BRAD

I'm sorry. Sometimes I say things I don't really mean. It's like I can't control myself.

AL

Well, at least that sounds like the stirrings of some self-awareness.

BRAD

Maybe you could help me sort things out.

AL

(sarcastically)

I thought Jesus gave you all the help you needed.

BRAD

We're not speaking at the moment.

AL

Oh? Did you lead him on and then drop him cold, too?

BRAD

I didn't lead you on.

Al closes his paper and slams it down.

AL

(defiantly)

You're right! I knew EXACTLY what I was doing! I've had LOTS of men in my time—some of the hottest guys in Hollywood. What do I care if one little screwed-up Bible-thumper from Butt Fuck, Carolina tried to dump me? I've already moved on!

BRAD

(trying to lighten the mood)

Hey, I know what you need!

Brad goes behind Al and squeezes his shoulders.

BRAD

I bet you haven't had a massage in a while—unless you've found someone new.

AL

(softening)

No, I haven't.

BRAD

I miss you. I miss...that. I've been thinking about things. I NEED that. I need YOU. Okay?

Al breaks away.

AL

I'm confused. You said some pretty ugly things last night. I can't just forget all that; I have feelings, too. And it sounds like your mother's already mapped out a plan for you that doesn't include anyone like me.

BRAD

My mother means well. She just... Well, she's way up there in North Carolina. My life's down here in Florida now—with you.

AL

I thought I was too old for you.

BRAD

I'm sorry. I was wrong. You know, if my mother knew you, if she could ever meet you—could see how happy you make me—maybe she'd have a different view of things.

AL

You really believe that?

BRAD

(laughing)

No!

(beat)

Hey—can we get together? I'll be off duty in a little while.

AL

How about dinner here at the club?

BRAD

I don't want to jeopardize my job.

AL

No one would care. But okay—it doesn't have to be anyone's business but our own.

BRAD

I'll drive over to your place when I'm done.

AL

And I'll go home to light the candles.

BRAD
(quietly)

I love you.

AL

I never doubted that. I love you, too.

Brad looks around to make sure no one has seen them. Then he exits. Al picks up the newspaper, all revived and in a much better mood. Robby enters wearing outrageous tennis gear—very tight shorts, neon sneakers and socks, a splashy shirt, and a headband—and carrying a tennis racket.

AL

Carnival ended last night, Mr. Smirnoff.

ROBBY

Very funny, buddy boy.

(proudly)

These are from the Galleria—the very latest in ergonomically-designed sportswear!

AL

Well, I wish you luck.

ROBBY
(deflated)

Don't tell me—are these all wrong? The salesman assured me—he was very cute, by the way. And he kept coming on to me! Well, he assured me this was the same outfit Andre Agassi is wearing these days.

AL

I think you look adorable!

ROBBY

A compliment from Todd Hammond?

(dramatically)

I'll write this in my Memory Book tonight!

AL

By the way—who won the trip to San Juan last night?

ROBBY

I'm sorry to say it was Chuck Battista. Can you imagine what's in store for the poor guy he drags down there with him?

Robby looks at his watch.

ROBBY

3:30 already! You haven't seen John Strathmore, have you?

AL

Sorry, no. But I better go. I have a date...I mean an appointment.

ROBBY

An "appointment," huh? Are you fooling around with someone?

AL

I assure you I'm very serious.

ROBBY

Is it one of your closeted Hollywood boyfriends? You know—one of those Scientologists?

AL

If I blab, he might vanish into thin air.

Al hands Robby the newspaper and exits.
Robby opens the newspaper and spots something.

ROBBY

(out loud to himself)

See? The salesman was right!

Robby puts down the newspaper. Struts proudly, as if greeting his adoring public at the U.S. Open. John enters.

JOHN

Who are you supposed to be?

ROBBY

Andre Agassi, of course!

JOHN

I was afraid you might chicken out.

ROBBY

YOU'RE the one who's late!

JOHN

I'm sorry—I got the time wrong. The court's not available for another half hour.

ROBBY

So, what are we supposed to do?

JOHN

Whatever you want.

ROBBY

Let's go sit by the water. I want to show off my new duds to the boys in the sand.

(coyly—indicating his tennis outfit)

So, *nu*? You like them?

JOHN

I don't know anything about fashion.

ROBBY

Oh, that's right—we're not at all sure you're even gay. You swing BOTH ways, don't you? Or is it THREE ways?

JOHN

Don't!

ROBBY

I take it all back. Shall we head out?

JOHN

You mean sit out there in this heat?

ROBBY

It's the same heat we're gonna play tennis in.

JOHN

Yeah, but to just sit there? It's too much for me!

ROBBY

If you can't handle the heat, why the hell did you move to Florida?

JOHN

I came down here to get a new start on life.

ROBBY

You know, you did seem kinda depressed when I met you—and now...well, something's obviously working.

JOHN

I guess there's nothing like meeting new people to pull you out of yourself. I've met some great guys.

ROBBY

And don't forget the boys! We're here to meet the boys, right?

JOHN

Well, I don't know about the boys, but I **HAVE** met someone special.

ROBBY

I thought that might happen!

JOHN

You did? Well, this person is truly amazing!

ROBBY
(excitedly)

I know! Now I don't know her all that well, but I can attest to her charms—both on and off the dance floor.

JOHN

What are you talking about?

ROBBY

You're involved with Mary King, right?

JOHN

I don't think Mary's even speaking to me. She made a play for me, so I had to set her straight, so to speak.

ROBBY

So, **THAT'S** why I haven't seen her around here lately?

JOHN
(mocking)

Gee, I didn't mean to deprive this place of its favorite fag hag!

ROBBY
(getting angry)

Fag hag? I thought *I* was the only one who used insulting language like that! Maybe you don't deserve a woman as wonderful as Mary.

JOHN

NOW who's being insulting?

ROBBY

So, who IS this incredible person who's transformed you from a self-pitying boor into a slaphappy, second-rate tennis player?

JOHN

You remember that guy who bought me a martini the other night?

ROBBY

Chuck Battista?

JOHN

(proudly)

Exactly!

ROBBY

(deadpan)

I'm sure you'll have a wonderful time in San Juan.

Lights dim. Robby and John exit.

SCENE 10: The next evening.

Sound: A bell dings.

VOICE

Will the owner of a powder blue Ford Pinto convertible with the license plate "CHAPS" please remove it from the front driveway?

Waltz music begins to play. Lights come up on Mary and John waltzing.

MARY

One, two, three. ... That's it. ... One, two, three. ... Very good.

Mary and John finish their dance.

JOHN

Thank you, Mary. I understand now why everyone says you're such a wonderful teacher.

MARY

It's the least I can do for acting like a wild woman the last time we were together.

JOHN

You didn't know the situation.

MARY

I gotta admit you do one helluva good impersonation of a straight man.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to.

MARY

Zip it, Shug! There's nothing to apologize for. I don't know what got into me—I don't need a man. I prefer the company of THESE fellas. And now that we've sorted it all out and put everyone back into their right boxes, we're gonna be the best of friends.

JOHN

I'd like that.

MARY

Done!

Mary gives John a quick kiss on the cheek.

MARY

And sealed with a kiss!

(more relaxed)

So, now that we're best friends, tell me how your new life is working out. I want to hear all about your exploits.

JOHN

What exploits?

MARY

(sing-song)

A little birdie told me you've been seein' someone.

JOHN

What birdie?

MARY

A Robby birdie.

(seeing John's shock)

It's okay, Honey. There are no secrets at Sunshine Quest.

JOHN

Doesn't anyone else find "Robby Birdie's" behavior appalling?

MARY

Sometimes it's best just to pretend not to notice. That way we can all still get along and have a good time.

JOHN

Is that more of your mama's wisdom?

MARY

(more seriously)

Look, John, I know I'm a little too pushy for some people's taste, so you don't have to tell me about your private affairs if you don't want to.

JOHN

No, I don't mind. I feel completely comfortable with you.

MARY

Likewise, I'm sure.

JOHN

I HAVE been seeing someone.

MARY

A man, this time?

JOHN

Yes, Mary—a man.

MARY

Well, that's a relief! I bet it feels good to be back in the old saddle again.

(suddenly realizing her double entendre)

Oh, I didn't mean...!

JOHN

(laughing)

It's OK. And yes, I still remember how to ride!

MARY

(laughing—and a bit embarrassed)

Well, Yee-Haw!

JOHN

(more seriously)

But to tell you the truth, I'm not so sure I've found the right bronco this time.

MARY

Well, don't you worry—you can ride lots of different Broncos here.

JOHN

That's not who I am. I prefer riding just ONE. Getting to know it so well, I can anticipate all its moves until there's no other bronco in the whole world I can imagine riding.

MARY

(almost shocked)

Well, Goll-lee, Honey!

JOHN

(embarrassed)

I'm sorry.

MARY

It's okay.

(from her heart)

I know what you mean. It's what I've always believed in, too. It's just not easy to find these days. And I think a lot of THESE guys don't even try.

JOHN

But I bet some of them want it and just don't realize it.

MARY

We ALL want it; we're just afraid to admit it.

JOHN

Afraid we'll get hurt, I guess.

MARY

(fascinated and infatuated)

Shug, I'm gonna say something, and I hope it doesn't embarrass you, but I think I understand exactly how your wife fell in love with you.

JOHN

We fell in love with each other.

MARY

It's not about body parts, is it?

(touching her heart)

It's about connecting somewhere deeper.

JOHN

(seeing her with new eyes)

You're a treasure, Mary King.

MARY

May I say something else?

JOHN

No, Mary, you may not.

John reaches over and kisses Mary. She reciprocates. The lights dim. They exit.

SCENE 11: The next evening.

Sound: A bell dings.

Light jazz music begins to play. The lights come up as Robby enters and looks around for the bartender. The music fades.

ROBBY
(calling out)

Bartender! Anyone around?

Deciding that no one is around, Robby goes to the bar and gets himself a glass of seltzer. A moment later, John enters and watches Robby.

JOHN
(teasing)

Stop thief! Or should I call the police?

ROBBY
(momentarily frightened)

Good god!

(defensively)

Relax! It's just a *bissel* seltzer.

JOHN
(teasing)

I'm not sure I want to talk to you anyway—not after the way you abandoned me on the tennis court the other day.

ROBBY

You have no idea how sorry I am about that.

JOHN

I get it. He was young and cute.

(joking)

Though I don't know why he'd want to throw himself at a man who's old enough to be his great-great-grandfather.

ROBBY

He claimed to be a law student down here on vacation. He was very polite and seemed well educated, so I invited him out to dinner. Afterwards, he wanted to come back to my place, and I figured—why not?

JOHN

Do I want to hear this?

ROBBY

We all need to hear this. He started getting very touchy-feely, and I got nervous—I mean, could I really satisfy such a hot guy—in bed, I mean? But he insisted he just wanted me to hold him, so we lay on top of the covers until I fell asleep. Of course, when I woke up, my wallet and several valuable personal items were missing. I don't think he was even gay.

JOHN

You're lucky he didn't beat you up.

ROBBY

Oh, I hadn't thought of that.

JOHN

I hope you went to the police.

ROBBY

I don't care about the money. And I don't want revenge. The only thing is, this whole episode has left me feeling more alone than ever.

JOHN

Don't let it throw you off track. You can take comfort in your friends.

ROBBY

I don't really have any friends.

JOHN

I hope you consider me one.

ROBBY

I'd like to think you are.

JOHN

Well, I am. And I'm sure you have many friends back up in New York and out in L.A.

ROBBY

I don't really have any friends in those places either.

JOHN

How can that be? You were a big, successful agent.

ROBBY

Being a good agent means being good with people; it doesn't mean being CLOSE to them. I know lots of people who owe their success to me—but do any of them really care what becomes of Robby Smirnoff? No.

JOHN

We all feel that way sometimes.

ROBBY

I thought things were starting to change for me down here.

(brightening)

But maybe you're right—I just have to make myself buck up.

JOHN

Frankly, I'm a little surprised to see the sensitive side of Robby Smirnoff. I thought you were just all about fun—

(joking—imitating Robby)

You know—boys, boys, boys!

ROBBY

(soberly)

Maybe this was a wakeup call. You see, all that stuff about the boys is just a game I play. Nothing's really at stake. But the thought of having a relationship with a MAN? A peer? Now THAT'S terrifying!

JOHN

It CAN be.

ROBBY

That's why I admire you. To think you were able to get past your mourning and take a step like that.

JOHN

A step like what?

ROBBY

You told me you were seeing Chuck Battista.

JOHN

Please don't ever mention that name to me again!

ROBBY

You said he was truly amazing!

JOHN

Yes, he has amazing fetishes!

ROBBY

Well, I know he wears those chaps to every formal event at the club.

JOHN

It wasn't just the chaps. It was the whole leather thing. Most of his wardrobe was leather, including his underpants. So was his sofa. His armchairs. His sheets. I reached my limit when he insisted on wrapping me in leather from head to toe and stuffing a ball in my mouth whenever we had sex.

ROBBY

I'd pay good money to see those photos!

JOHN

Then I discovered he was also addicted to men.

ROBBY

Pretty common around here.

JOHN

Yeah, yeah, but when you're out with Chuck, his eyes—as well as his tongue—are aimed at everyone in sight. The guy's nothing but raw libido wrapped in cattle hide.

ROBBY

I always tell people, the later in life you come out, the weirder it's gonna be.

(flirtatiously)

So, does that mean you're back on the market, Johnny?

JOHN

Sorry, Robby, you've missed your chance again. I've already settled into something new.

ROBBY

(dramatically)

Oy! Spare me the details on this one, will you?

JOHN

And they'll be here any minute now.

ROBBY

I've gotta run!

Robby starts to exit with drink in hand.

JOHN
(calling after Robby—joking)

I mean it—if you take that seltzer with you, I'll have to report you to the police!

ROBBY

Ask for Officer Ramirez—I've already served time with him on the beach!

Robby exits. Al enters.

AL

Evening, John.

JOHN

What's up?

AL
(evasively)

Oh—just meeting someone.

JOHN

Me too.

AL
(embarrassed)

Actually, I'm not sure where we're supposed to meet. Maybe I should check outside.

Al motions as if to exit.

JOHN

You can drop the pretence, Al. It's a small club—it's pretty hard to keep these things hidden. Especially when the other person works here.

AL
(defensively)

There's nothing sordid going on.

JOHN

I sure HOPE there is.

AL

Do you think anyone else knows?

JOHN

Can you handle the truth?

AL

(disappointed)

Oh. I thought I was being discreet. Why don't they say anything?

JOHN

Because then they won't have a big, juicy secret.

AL

Damn—it's just like Hollywood all over again. Only this time I don't have a publicity department ready to crank out phony stories to cover my tracks.

JOHN

But you don't need that anymore. Why would you want to sneak around anyway?

AL

Because that's what he wants, and I want to please him. ... Well, to be honest, maybe I like it that way, too.

JOHN

But you wrote a whole book about this. About finally being open. You went on all the talk shows!

AL

I know, but it's one thing to admit you're gay, and quite another to let the world see you in a relationship. You see, sometimes I still have dark moments when I think there might be something wrong with all this.

JOHN

I thought you'd put those demons to rest.

AL

I thought so, too. Maybe it's time to read my book again.

Brad enters and watches Al and John for a few moments.

JOHN

Don't be too hard on yourself. Two steps forward, one step back—right? Everyone here loves you, you know. If you need help fighting those demons, we'll all pitch in.

Al finally notices Brad.

AL

Hey, Brad, come on over. We're just chatting.

JOHN

I better go.

John exits. Brad approaches Al.

BRAD

You two looked very chummy.

AL

John's a nice guy.

BRAD

I didn't know you were so close.

AL

We're not, really.

BRAD

Have you ever hooked up with him?

AL

Of course not—and that's a ridiculous question. I'm involved with you.

BRAD

But if we weren't involved, would you be interested in him?

AL

But we ARE involved. There are lots of people I might be interested in, but I'm not.

BRAD

Oh, really? Who else?

AL

What's this all about?

BRAD

It's about us. We've made a commitment to each other—you have to honor it.

AL

I'm not sure what you're referring to.

BRAD

(getting upset)

Are you kidding me? I've turned my whole life upside down for you! I've become a different person!

AL

I know, and I love you for that. If you want to talk about making a commitment, I'd be happy to have that conversation.

BRAD

You can't back out of this now, mister! If I ever caught you with anyone else, I'd kill you!

AL

Whoa, cowboy! Don't go saying things you don't mean.

BRAD

Who says I don't mean it?

AL

Brad, you need to calm down.

BRAD

Don't tell me what to do!

AL

(softening)

Let's take this down a notch or two, okay? I'm very tired and in no mood to play games. Maybe we need a little breather. I'll meet you at the book signing tomorrow afternoon, and we can have a good, long talk about all this.

Al gives Brad a quick kiss and starts to exit.

BRAD

Don't walk away from me while I'm talking to you!

Brad exits, trailing Al. Lights down.

VOICE

Attention Sunshine Questers! The sushi making demonstration starts in five minutes.

SCENE 12: The next day. Late afternoon and early evening.

Sound: A bell dings.

Xmas music starts to play. Brad carries in a decorated artificial Xmas tree and sets it down in a corner. Exits. Lights up. Mary enters, sprays some perfume, and walks into the spray. She sits, reaches into her bag for lipstick and a mirror, and starts to apply the lipstick. Brad enters with a pair of folding chairs. The music fades when Brad spots Mary.

BRAD

Uh, Mary, the room's not ready.

MARY

I had to get here early to make sure I got in.

BRAD

He's not coming for two hours.

Brad starts to set up the chairs in a straight line facing the audience downstage. Mary pulls out a hardcover copy of a Stephen King novel.

MARY

I HAVE to meet him! I want him to sign my book!

BRAD

Hey, wait! KING—Stephen King. Is he your uncle or something?

MARY

I'm just a big fan. I've read all his books. Have you read any?

BRAD

I don't read his kind of books.

MARY

Too scary for ya?

BRAD

He deals in devil worship and other things that go against the Bible.

MARY

Well, I don't know about any of that. I just think his books are so entertaining! They're ...engrossing—that's the word! When I read a Stephen King novel, I get completely lost in it!

BRAD

I don't want to get lost!

Brad goes to get two more chairs. Mary plants herself and her bag on one of the chairs already set up.

MARY

Oh, well—whatever suits ya, I guess.

Brad sets up the two new chairs in the same row as the others.

BRAD

Mary, why do you hang around here so much? This is a club for gay men. You're not...

MARY

(cutting him off)

A man? Darling, I figured that out by the time I was two.

BRAD

I mean...

MARY

I know what you mean. People ask me that all the time.

BRAD

Then you know it's not normal.

MARY

Normal? I don't know what's normal. All I know is I love these guys. Maybe it's cause they're sort of misfits, and we're all misfits deep down, don't you think?

BRAD

You just feel that way 'cause you haven't found Jesus yet.

MARY

Honey, people've been introducing me to Jesus my whole life. We're sick of each other's company! Now we just keep a respectful distance from each other.

BRAD

You'll be sorry come Judgment day!

MARY

Judgment day is every day of our lives—it's how we treat each other.

BRAD

Don't you read the Bible?

MARY

I prefer Stephen King.

BRAD

If you read the Bible, you'd know you shouldn't be hanging out in places like this.

MARY

The Bible mentions the Sunshine Quest Club?

BRAD

God says what these guys are doing is wrong. They're gonna pay for their sins one way or another.

MARY

Well, if you feel that way, what the heck are you doin' working here?

BRAD

(sitting next to Mary)

Mary, I can tell YOU—you're not one of them.

(conspiratorially)

I'd always heard about Fort Lauderdale. ...

(starting to get riled up)

How these guys come down here to retire. Back up north, they live lonely, tortured lives sneakin' around looking for other men with the same disease.

(loudly)

They go off to rest areas to commit their sins, and no one even has any idea until they get caught and everyone's life falls apart!

MARY

Are you all right?

BRAD

(ignoring her question)

But do they finally repent in their golden years? No—they spend all their time having fun! The whole city practically throws a celebration in their honor. Look at this place! We've gotta stop these guys from moving down here! Somebody ought to do something!

MARY

Do what?

BRAD

I don't know—SOMETHING. Maybe close all these places down—just like those abortion clinics in Gainesville.

MARY

(trying to console him)

Honey, put those thoughts out of your head. Maybe you're just having a bad day. These are very nice guys. You like them—I know you do. I see how kindly you treat them.

BRAD

I think they're despicable.

MARY

How about Al Getz? He's not despicable, is he?

BRAD

He's the worst of all.

MARY

He's a very nice man!

BRAD

He doesn't love me!

MARY

What do you mean? He doesn't...? ...

(suddenly realizing)

Oh, I see.

BRAD

(crying—baring his soul)

I told him I loved him! I tried to show him. I DID show him...and he tried to break up with me. I told him I'd kill him if he ever left me!

Al enters and sees Mary consoling Brad.

AL

What's going on here? Brad, what's the matter?

MARY

He's not himself. I guess you fellas had a little disagreement.

AL
(to Brad)

I told you I'd meet you here this afternoon.

BRAD

You walked out on me!

AL

I was tired.

MARY
(cutting him off)

Maybe I'll just leave you boys alone to straighten things out.

(to Brad)

See, Honey. I told you everything'd be all right. Al's a very sweet man. And you're sweet, too.

Mary kisses Brad and exits horrified, but
hiding her distress from Brad.

AL

Now what's this all about? Why are you crying?

BRAD

I'm having a hard time handling all this.

AL

You're going through a lot of changes. That's not easy.

BRAD

I've thought it all through and decided I can't be this way. I don't want to end up in hell.

AL

Do you honestly believe that's what would happen?

BRAD

I don't know. I think I hate myself.

AL

I love you.

BRAD

But I feel so alone. And it would kill my mother.

AL

People are a lot more resilient than you think. I still kick myself for missing the chance to share my real life with my mother.

BRAD

See—you knew it would kill her.

AL

She would have survived. And besides, it's a whole new world now.

BRAD

Not in North Carolina it ain't.

AL

Some of the biggest fighters for gay rights are mothers.

BRAD

You don't know my mother.

AL

Well, it's time YOU did. All it would take is one little visit or phone call, and you could start a whole new relationship with her.

BRAD

I'm not going to betray her.

AL

Admitting who you are isn't betrayal.

BRAD

(starting to get upset)

Try walking in my shoes for a while.

AL

(gently)

I know what you're going through.

BRAD

(erupting)

No one knows what I'm going through! And now please leave me alone and let me get back to work.

Brad storms out. The lights dim.

Sound: applause.

Lights up. Al is seated. Mary enters anxiously.

MARY

I've been lookin' for you!

AL

How come you didn't ask Stephen King any questions? I thought you were a big fan.

MARY
(distracted)

I am.

AL

I saw him sign your book.

MARY
(urgently)

Forget about that! I need to talk to you quick before Brad comes back!

AL

It's okay—he's gone to close up the tennis center.

MARY

How serious is this thing with you two?

AL

Did you already know about us, too?

MARY

I'd heard the rumors, but I wasn't sure.

AL

The truth is—I love him.

MARY
(sadly)

Oh...love...

(seriously)

Honey, I don't know how to tell you this. That boy's not stable.

AL

Yeah, he gets a little hot under the collar sometimes, doesn't he?

MARY

No, I mean there's something seriously wrong there. I'm worried.

AL

Trust me, I know him. He's a very sweet boy.

MARY

Sweet?

AL

You told him so yourself.

MARY

I didn't mean it—I was scared to death! He told me he threatened you—he said he'd kill you.

AL

He didn't mean it either.

MARY

And he's obsessed with Jesus! He says you're all sinners!

AL

Yes, I know all about that.

MARY

No, you don't! Where I come from, the real Jesus talkers mean what they say. They'd kill you right here and now just to prove a point.

AL

I don't think I'm in any kind of danger.

MARY

I better not find you hacked up in pieces one day. I'd never forgive you!

AL

No, I don't suppose you'd be able to.

MARY

I'm glad you can joke. I better go. But, Darlin', promise me you'll be careful. Keep all sharp objects away from that boy!

AL

Mary!

MARY

If he starts acting strange, throw him out and lock the door. Or call me up, and I'll come rescue you.

AL

I'll remember that.

MARY

Bye, Babe.

Mary kisses Al and then starts to exit.

AL

Wait—you haven't told me what Stephen King wrote in your book.

MARY

(embarrassed)

Oh. I made a fool of myself in front of that man. I pushed people out of the way to get to the front of the line. I even knocked a couple of chairs over. I told him I'd waited hours for him to sign my book.

AL

So what did he write?

Mary pulls the book out of her bag. Al takes the book away from Mary and reads from it.

AL

“For Mary—who just inspired a new character for my next book.”

The lights dim. Mary and Al exit carrying the folding chairs with them.

SCENE 13: The next night. December 20, 1999.

Sound: A bell dings.

VOICE

Big news, men! The Vermont Supreme Court just cleared the way for gay civil unions! So hijack a partner and come celebrate out on the dance floor!

Techno music starts to play. Lights on John and Al with drinks in hand. John carries Mary's bag slung over his shoulder. The music fades.

JOHN

What a night! Whoever thought we'd see something like this in our lifetime?

AL

The state will never follow through. And even if they do, someone will knock it down just the way they did in Hawaii a couple of years ago.

JOHN

It's gonna happen! And some people think Massachusetts will go even further and legalize same-sex MARRIAGE.

AL

What have you been smoking?

JOHN

I thought *I* was supposed to be the pessimist. Mark my words— with the new millennium starting in a couple of weeks, I think we're gonna see a lot more changes like this.

AL

Well, I hope you're right—and I'll drink to that!

Al takes a big sip with a flourish.

JOHN

God, you guys do a lot of drinking!

AL

It keeps me off the dance floor—and believe me, that's a good thing.

JOHN

(protesting mildly)

I've seen Todd Hammond dance.

AL

If you're referring to my one appearance on Broadway, you understand why my career ended so abruptly.

JOHN

I missed that one.

AL

Whoever thought the world needed a musical version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*

JOHN

I mean right here with Mary.

AL

She can make anyone look good.

JOHN

She sure can!

Al looks off stage and sees Robby.

AL

On the other hand, do you think the country's ready to see THAT coming down the aisle?

Robby enters wearing an Elvis-style dance outfit—gold or silver lamé bell-bottom pants and a long-sleeved shirt with flared cuffs unbuttoned almost to his navel.

ROBBY

(announcing)

If it's hot dancing you want, you've got the right man!

JOHN

I'm happy to see you're back in the swing of things.

ROBBY

I wasn't about to let a little setback keep me from enjoying Hot Dance Night.

JOHN

So, what do YOU think about the news from Vermont?

ROBBY

Gay marriage? Why not? It's about time Bobby made a respectable man of Stefan.

AL

Would YOU ever consider getting married?

ROBBY

I DO look fabulous in a tuxedo. Then again, it pains me to think of all the hearts I'd be breaking!

Mary comes rushing in.

MARY

Honey, am I too late?

ROBBY

No, Shug, you're always welcome!

MARY

I meant THIS honey.

Mary goes up to John, removes her bag from John's shoulder and slings it over her own shoulder.

MARY

MY honey.

JOHN

No, you came along just in the nick of time, dear.

Mary and John share a passionate kiss.

ROBBY

Is this what you meant by "settling into something new"?

(snapping)

You called her a fag hag!

JOHN

And you said she was a wonderful woman!

MARY

Guilty on both charges!

ROBBY

Mary, you're getting him on the rebound.

MARY

I don't care how I get him, as long as I get him.

ROBBY

You've gotta go into these things with your eyes wide open!

JOHN

We just want to be together. Where's the harm in that?

ROBBY

I'll tell you where the harm is...!

MARY

Robby! Don't! Aren't we all looking for someone?

ROBBY

Yes, but sometimes you have to be patient.

MARY

You can spend your whole life being patient—but we're already here; it's already time. You want me to open my eyes? Well, I did, and I saw a wonderful man—so I grabbed him!

JOHN

Actually, Dear, I think *I* was the one that did the grabbing.

ROBBY

But what about...?

AL

Robby—leave them alone!

ROBBY

I just...!

(crying)

I just...

(protesting)

You've got each other. Bobby and Stefan have each other. Love is busting out all over this place! When's it MY turn? When do *I* get some?

MARY

Oh, Honey, WE love you! John—tell him!

JOHN

Well, love might be an overstatement.

MARY

John!

JOHN

Robby, I love you. ... So to speak.

AL

Mary's right—we love you. *I* love you.

ROBBY

(dramatically)

I feel just like Natalie Wood in *Moon Over Miami*.

Brad enters as everyone else forms a group hug.

MARY

(breaking up the hug)

Hey, guys, we've got a lot to celebrate tonight! Let's get out there and dance!

(spotting Brad—sweetly)

Evening, Honey!

Brad refuses to acknowledge Mary. Mary watches Brad suspiciously.

AL

(studying Brad)

You all go ahead without me.

Mary, John, and Robby exit. Brad approaches Al.

BRAD

(menacingly)

I've been lookin' for you!

AL

Are you okay?

BRAD

(angrily)

You don't care!

AL

Of course I care.

BRAD

Then why'd you do it?

AL

Do what?

(as if caught)

Oh. ... Right...

BRAD

You said you loved me!

AL

I did it because I love you.

BRAD

Fuck you—you had no right!

AL

I couldn't stand to see you keep torturing yourself.

BRAD

My mother never did anything to you!

AL

Mothers always want what's best for their children, even if it hurts a little.

BRAD

You think a phone call from a big shot Hollywood star makes everything okay?

AL

You said she was such a big fan of mine; I thought it would be easier coming from me.

BRAD

(sarcastically)

Then you must have been so disappointed when she didn't ask for your autographed picture.

AL

Brad...

BRAD

What? You thought she'd welcome your news with open arms? Say how proud she was to be my mother? Show us off to all her friends and neighbors? Maybe even give me away at our wedding in Vermont? ... You destroyed her world!

AL

You were never going to tell her yourself.

BRAD

She called me a sinner and said she never wants to see me again!

AL

Give her time.

BRAD

Time's up! My life's ruined now!

AL

I know this hurts, but everything's going to work out.

Brad laughs bitterly.

BRAD

You are such a fool! And I was so blind!

Al goes to hold Brad.

BRAD

Don't touch me!

Brad storms off. Al is feeling the effects of his argument and his drinking. The techno music resumes as Robby re-enters and marches deliberately towards Al.

ROBBY

(chanting in a Bela Lugosi voice)

Pull dee string! Pull dee string!

Robby grabs Al and shakes him for a moment.

ROBBY

Pull dee string!

AL

Not now, Robby!

Robby lets go of Al, marches a few more steps, and then freezes in a contorted position. The music fades slightly.

AL

Wait—are you all right?

Al looks around.

AL

I think we need some help here! Somebody?

Robby unfreezes.

ROBBY

(in a normal voice)

I'll help you, Buddy Boy! What do you need?

AL

Jesus—what do you think you're trying to prove?

ROBBY

I'm just trying out a new dance. You like it?

AL

No, I don't.

ROBBY

Well, Mr. Grumpy, get out there and see for yourself what the boys are doing to this new music. It's like performance art. Very hip and nouveau.

AL

I'll stick to disco.

ROBBY

You're so twentieth century, Al Baby! I'm telling you, these boys are showing me a whole new millennium.

AL

You're welcome to it.

Brad re-enters.

ROBBY

Look, I'll show you more.

AL

Please don't!

Robby makes robotic dance moves as he approaches and circles Brad.

BRAD

Are you all right, Mr. Smirnoff?

Robby moves away from Brad and freezes in a contorted position again either in a chair or on the floor. Brad rushes over to Robby.

BRAD

(to Al)

Something's wrong with Robby!

AL
(annoyed)
He's fine.

Brad attends to Robby.

BRAD
(desperately—to Robby)
Al, help me!
Are you okay, Robby?

Robby opens his eyes.

ROBBY
(to Brad)
At last, my dear, our rendezvous with destiny!

Robby grabs Brad and kisses him passionately. Brad pushes him back down and jumps away.

BRAD
What the...! That's the last time you ever mess with me, you pervert!

Brad attacks Robby. Depending on Robby's position, the attack should consist of kicking, punching, or choking. Before Brad can do much damage, Al rushes over and pulls Brad away from Robby.

AL
Brad, what are you doing?

Al and Brad struggle until Brad pins Al's arm behind his back. Finally, Brad releases him.

AL
Brad, calm down!

BRAD
(wildly)
It's time for all you faggots to go back where you came from?!

Brad runs off stage. The lights fade. Al helps Robby up and out of the room. Lights go to

blackout. A half-spotlight comes on upstage center. Brad enters from stage right carrying a backpack. He stops when he reaches the spotlight.

BRAD
(facing the audience)

Hey, Dad! Watch this one!

Brad exits stage left. Blackout. After a moment, there is the sound of an explosion, followed by a fire alarm and then police and fire sirens. The stage remains in blackout for several moments.

SCENE 14: A few days later.

Sound: A bell dings.

Lights up. The room is a mess—chairs, tables, and the Xmas tree knocked over; glasses and debris scattered, etc. A safety cone or a hazard barricade partly blocks the stage left exit. John is examining the damage and starting to pick things up. After a moment, Robby enters slowly and cautiously.

JOHN
(seeing Robby)

Should you be here?

ROBBY

I'm still in some pain, but I'm okay.

JOHN

What a way to spend Christmas Day!

ROBBY

It's not really my holiday anyway.

JOHN

The kitchen's totally gone.

ROBBY

Do you think he MEANT to kill himself?

Al enters, clearly upset.

AL

(looking around)

I just can't believe he did this! I'll never forgive myself.

JOHN

It's not your fault. Who knows why anyone does what they do?

AL

Something like this makes you question your ability to judge people—to connect with others.

ROBBY

Don't be so hard on yourself.

(unable to resist a joke)

Sickos can be very seductive.

JOHN

Robby!

ROBBY

(suddenly serious)

You think this was the action of a sane man?

AL

I think it was a cry for help.

ROBBY

He could have called 9-1-1, for God's sakes!

JOHN

Good thing that bomb wasn't more powerful.

AL

It was hardly a bomb, just some crude homemade thing. He wasn't an explosives expert or a terrorist.

ROBBY

(more seriously)

Wasn't he a terrorist? He thought we were all sinners and deserved to die!

AL

No—he couldn't live with the fact that HE was gay.

ROBBY

Destroying the truth about yourself is the worst kind of terrorism.

AL

I just don't know.

Mary enters slowly and soberly, and without her bag. Looks around the room horrified. Stops as if she has made a decision. Approaches John.

MARY

(to John)

Darling, I've come to a decision. We can't let the Spaulding Brothers shut this place down!

JOHN

It's too late. They're gonna take the insurance money and run.

MARY

They can't do that! This is where we met.

JOHN

I don't think they care.

MARY

But it's more than just that. Look here—I can't imagine some of the suffering you guys have endured in your lifetime. Well, this is your reward for taking that journey!

ROBBY

A bombed-out mess?

MARY

No—the beautiful club you're gonna build. You need to show the bullies you're not going anywhere. And this time don't be so discreet about it—where's the big Sunshine Quest sign? You need one so big that all South Florida will know you're here and take pride in your survival. Al, you're in real estate! Promise me you'll buy this place.

AL

I don't know if that would be wise.

ROBBY

It would take an awful lot of money.

JOHN

And probably never make a profit.

MARY

Zip it, fellas! This is our home. You guys have got to buy this place and put it back together again! That's all there is to it.

JOHN

I guess that settles it—Mary always gets her way.
(to Mary)

We'll figure something out.

MARY

Yes, please!

ROBBY

(to Mary)

Where's your bag, Mary? I don't think I've ever seen you without your bag?

MARY

I've retired it, fellas. I finally realized I don't need to CARRY my whole life around with me. I just need to live it.

JOHN

What she means is, now she has ME to be her pack mule.

MARY

Oh, do you have my mints, dear?

JOHN

(handing her the mints)

See?

(taking out the keys)

I also have the keys to this place. And now I've got to return them, so let's all please go!

MARY

(looking around)

Oh! ...

(stepping forward and facing the audience)

It's not goodbye, Sunshine Quest! I'll be teaching my ballroom dancing classes again before you know it—or my name isn't Mary...

(proudly—to Robby)

Doesn't Mary Strathmore have a beautiful ring to it?

John stands at the exit shaking the keys.
Mary and John exit.

ROBBY

I'd like to clear something up. I never believed the rumors about you and Brad, so I just want you to know that if I HAD, I never would have carried on and thrown myself at him the way I did.

AL

Apparently you're the only one around here who didn't spread the rumors.

ROBBY

Oh, I didn't say I didn't spread them—I just didn't believe them.

AL

Why not?

ROBBY

I didn't think you'd sneak around like that. The Todd Hammond I saw in those TV interviews was open and proud.

AL

Well, maybe Al Getz had a little setback.

ROBBY

Look—I've never even been in a relationship with a man.

(beat)

Unless you count that night with a Portugese short-order cook under Dick Dock in Provincetown.

(beat—sincerely)

So, I'm in no position to judge. And despite the way you chose to live out in Hollywood, the point is you still managed to find someone special to love. So, naturally, when Brad came along and offered you something not so different—well, old habits die hard, I guess.

AL

For a man who's never been in a relationship, you sound like you know a thing or two.

ROBBY

A good agent always knows what's best for his clients. And if you'd like some free advice, here it is: Let's do what Mary wants. Let's buy this club and rebuild it! Let's fill it with men like us: Open. Proud. And ready for a relationship with a peer.

AL

You make it sound so simple.

ROBBY

I bet it is.

AL

I know you're right. It's just that...

(crying)

I can't help it. I'm gonna miss him. Despite what he did, I still love him. Is that silly?

ROBBY

There's nothing silly about what goes on in a man's heart. Just know that other people care about you—including all the ones you haven't even met yet.

AL

(pondering)

I'd like to believe he would have wanted us to rebuild, too. That he would have wanted a chance to do things the right way.

ROBBY

(encouraging Al)

Yes, yes—I'm sure he would. Look—it would be very easy. We could even make improvements.

(pointing eagerly)

We could move the bar closer to the kitchen. We could buy some comfortable armchairs, for Christ sakes! We could build a permanent massage studio!

Al stares at Robby. They exchange a brief meaningful look.

ROBBY

Or maybe the club doesn't need a massage studio.

AL

That's okay. We should provide whatever the members want.

ROBBY

(hopefully)

Does that mean you're in?

AL

(making a decision)

Yes, Robby, I'm in. We'll buy this place and make it the best damn club in the world!

ROBBY

Thank you, Buddy Boy! You won't be sorry.

(brightening at a thought)

And I insist on being in charge of hiring the staff! Now—we better go.

Robby starts to exit.

ROBBY

Coming?

AL

In a moment.

Robby exits.

AL

(after a moment)

Why did you do it, Brad? Someday it'll be easier for people to accept the truth—even in North Carolina. I'm just sorry you won't be here to see it.

Al exits.

END OF PLAY