

X GAY BAR
by
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CHARACTERS

DOROTHY: 30s, female; affable, big-boned bartender; also plays:

- MOTHER, Todd's mother
- STACI, Todd's best friend
- JEAN, a teen boy trapped in mid-transition to female at New Horizons conversion camp
- STRAIGHT WOMAN, the female voice in a movie
- FATHER DOMINICK, a Catholic priest

BUD: 30s, male; hipster alpha dog with issues; also plays:

- FATHER, Todd's Father
- SIMON, alpha teen at New Horizons conversion camp
- OLDER GAY MAN, a voice in a gay porn flick

JACK: 30s, male; seen some rough road but has made it through; also plays:

- ATTENDANT 1, representative/strong-arm for New Horizons conversion camp
- SEBASTIAN, a teen undergoing conversion therapy
- YOUNGER GAY MAN, a voice in a gay porn flick

COSMO: 30s, Latinx, male; well-coordinated newbie; also plays:

- ATTENDANT 2, a representative/strong-arm for New Horizons conversion camp
- ORLANDO, a Puerto Rican teen at New Horizons;
- STRAIGHT MAN, a voice in a romantic movie

TODD: 20s, male; a loner; trying to rebuild his life after suffering excruciating torture at an ex-gay conversion camp; a college senior, trying to win people to his cause, and save men and women from ex-gay conversion therapy; smart, funny, broken and keeps on fighting; tries to control his temper; gets nauseous when embraced

DOCTOR DOCTOR: 40s: leader of the Ex-Gay Conversion Therapy camp; strong, solid man of authority; driven to help confused young men find the right path.

SETTING

X Gay Bar, sports bar for the Ex-Gay crowd.

As Todd's story takes over, the bar opens up, becoming Todd's bedroom as well as New Horizons conversion camp in the Caribbean. The action moves fluidly between a sports bar for the ex-gay crowd, Todd's bedroom, and a camp in the Caribbean.

The style of the play starts out squarely in a comic tone, but gradually the story darkens. By the time we get to Act Two, it is a blend of comedy and horror. The comedy helps sustain the narrative into darker waters.

X GAY BAR

By David Simpatico

SC. 1: INTRODUCTION, BAR

Interior of X, a video sports bar for the ex-gay community. The bar has a few tables and chairs, an open space for dancing. The place is tricked out with a wide array of sports paraphernalia (baseball bats, boxing gloves, a fight dummy, etc.) Off-stage screens show various sports events. (Note: screens are just heard.)

At the bar, DOROTHY, the agreeable, masculine bartender, preps drinks. At a nearby table, three friends in their 30's shoot the shit while watching the game. BUD, the alpha dog; JACK, the beta dog; COSMO, a stylish gent. Their bowling bags and shoes on the floor.

TODD, an amiable, anxious loner, sits by himself at a table, texting and drinking white wine.

The sound of the onscreen football game erupts in a big disappointed GROAN. The guys react in disbelief.

THE GUYS

(Variously shouting)

Fumble! Touchdown! No way! Can you believe it?

JACK

Buncha Marys, useless!

COSMO

Useless.

BUD

They got no defense is the problem.

JACK

Yeah, and their offense is pathetic.

Cosmo mutes the TV volume with the control wand.

BUD

Dude got sacked how many times--

JACK
Gonna be limping for a week.

BUD
And that Wide Receiver?

JACK
What's his name, Balzak?

BUD
Ball-*sack* more like it.

COSMO
Oh, Jack, I watched that Dick Hoover Pro Bowling Tips video, it really helped.

JACK
That's good. I just wonder if maybe we can't tweak your approach a little bit.

COSMO
Tweak my approach?

JACK
Yeah, no, it's good, it's just you know, I mean, it's nothing--

COSMO
What?

BUD
You bowl like a girl.

COSMO
I kicked *your* sorry ass, bro.

BUD
It don't matter what you do, it matters how you do it, am I right, Jack?

COSMO
Jack? Do I bowl like a girl?

JACK
No, no, I mean, you know, a little--

BUD

(Indicating Todd, who is busy texting.)

Do it. Go on, right now. There's no one here, one guy, he's in his phone--

COSMO

Okay, fine.

Cosmo takes his invisible ball in hand, focuses and bowls a strike, with a graceful flourish. He bows.

Todd gives him a friendly, impressed nod. Jack and Bud just look at Cosmo.

COSMO

What.

BUD

Bowling is a man's sport. It's about rage, not the ballet.

Bud takes his invisible ball, his body a focused machine of meat, sweat and anger. He hurls his ball at the pins. Raises his arms in ferocious, manly victory.

Todd finds shelter in his phone, texting.

BUD

Yes!

JACK

See how he does it? You gotta think like a block of wood.

BUD

It's all in the approach, my friend. You'll get it.

COSMO

Uh huh. Thanks.

Cosmo gives a friendly smile to Todd, who smiles back.

COSMO

(Referring to Todd)

Don't turn around, but is that dude looking at me?

BUD

Not in this bar, he's not.

Right?

JACK

The guys give Todd a friendly group nod. Todd shifts, smiles nervously. Takes a pill, sips his wine.

BUD

So, you get your car fixed or what?

JACK

Yeah, oh yeah, took it over to the guy at the place with the thing. Fixed it right up.

COSMO

Did I tell you or what?

JACK

Purrs like a pussy now.

Cosmo high-fives Jack.

COSMO

Path of Truth, bro.

JACK

Path of Truth.

BUD

Path of Truth.

Dorothy brings the drinks.

THE GUYS

Dorothy! Thank God! Yo! It's about time. I'm parched!

DOROTHY

Sorry for the delay, ladies.

All three men are stung by the phrase "Ladies".

JACK

Hey now!

BUD

Come on with that "ladies" shit--

COSMO
 You promised!

DOROTHY
 Relax, boys, I'm just yanking your converted little man-chains.

She holds up a Budweiser.
 Budweiser?

BUD
 Yo!

Bud takes the beer. She holds up a shot glass.

DOROTHY
 Whiskey?

JACK
 Right here.

Jack takes the drink. Dorothy holds up a cosmopolitan.

DOROTHY
 Raspberry Cosmopolitan?

COSMO
 Mille grazie!

Cosmo takes the drink. Dorothy heads back to the bar.

BUD
 (To Cosmo)
 Mille grazie? Seriously?

JACK
 You doin' the manly visualizations at home?

COSMO
 Every night before I go to sleep. And every morning when I get up.

JACK
 (About Dorothy behind the bar)
 She's hot, right? Dorothy?

COSMO
 Used to be a dyke.

JACK
That's hot, right?

COSMO
Now she's engaged. To a *man*.

BUD
Fuckin' A.

JACK
She looks strong. I like that in a woman.

BUD
Nice tits.

JACK
Right?

BUD
I wanna fuck her hard--

COSMO
That heaving bosom--

JACK
That massive ass--

BUD
Yo, so I joined that Christian dating site, the one in last month's newsletter--

COSMO
ResErection.com?

JACK
Yeah, some hot chicks on there, for sure.

BUD
Got a few lined up, nothing definite.

COSMO
I'm still working on my profile--

JACK
You're a babe-magnet, Cosmo, chicks are gonna be lined up.

BUD

(To Cosmo)

Remember how miserable you used to be?

COSMO

Yeah...no, it's much better than it was. No, really.

JACK

You're still new at it, Coz, gotta let it take effect, let it deepen.

BUD

We got each other's backs, right?

COSMO

Fuckin' A.

JACK, BUD

Fuckin' A.

COSMO

Being a man can be tricky.

JACK

It's all about how you're raised.

BUD

There's no one right way. When I was 13, my dad took me to a hooker in Jersey City. All that skin and hair and big swirly boobs and her legs wide open, I was terrified. Dad pushed me out of the way, dropped his pants and fucked her himself.

COSMO

Your dad made you watch him have intercourse with a prostitute.

BUD

Ninety seconds, in and out.

JACK

Yo, Bud, that's child abuse, kinda sorta, no?

BUD

Nah, he was just being a good dad. You have to trust them, even if it don't make sense.

Cosmo becomes Bud's snarling FATHER.

COSMO

“Fucking little motherfucking cocksucker, when I was your fucking age, I had a fucking hard-on for anything that fucking moved!”

Needing a distraction, Bud nods to Todd.

BUD

Hey pal, all by yourself? Pull up a chair, join us, shoot the shit.

TODD

(friendly, a bit anxious)

Oh, thanks, but I’m, I mean, I’m waiting on someone, well, okay, why not--

BUD

First time here? I’m Bud, nice to meet you, bro.

Todd nods, takes a breath, tries to relax. They join him.

TODD

Oh, right, I’m Todd, hi guys.

JACK

Jack.

COSMO

Cosmo!

Bud calls to Dorothy at the bar.

BUD

Dorothy, bring one for our new pal over here, put it on our tab.

TODD

No, I’m good, ‘kay, thanks, sure, why not.

DOROTHY

You got it.

JACK

Like they said at the workshop, one for all, and all for one.

BUD

Path of Truth.

COSMO

(Aside, to Todd)

That's where we all met, last winter. Conversion therapy weekend retreat. In the Berkshires. Divine.

TODD

Lots of discipline and manual labor? Did you guys dig ditches, too?

JACK

No ditches, but we did shovel the path to the cabin, it was February.

COSMO

Plus, we made snowmen, that takes a lot out of you.

TODD

Sounds like you guys had a great time.

BUD

Bunch of exercises, lot of ritual stuff, like hitting a pillow with a badminton racquet, get all the rage out, all the shame. And the guilt, right guys?

JACK

It's very spiritual, very thought-out, safe, you can really open up.

BUD

Now, I'm happy, my parents are happy, my friends, everybody's happy. I love every minute of life.

COSMO

They take all major credit cards. Not inexpensive.

BUD

Worth every penny.

COSMO

The workshop helps you get in touch with your inner self; and then, ignore it.

JACK

Simplifies your choices, helps you choose the right path.

TODD

The Path of Truth?

BUD

It was hard, but it was heaven. To stand naked and honest in a room full of naked and honest men, accepting me as God intended me to be.

TODD

And what did God intend you to be?

BUD

An ex-gay man.

Bud and the others raise their glasses, toasting.

THE GUYS

Path of Truth!

TODD

Well, uhm, I actually had quite a different experience than you guys in the Berkshires, which sounds totally nice, by the way.

COSMO

You should come. The retreat is so much fun.

TODD

The camp I went to was definitely not fun.

BUD

How long were you there? Weekend? I heard some retreats offer a full week, I'd love that, right?

TODD

Nine months, three weeks and two days.

COSMO

One of those residential programs, nice.

TODD

Not really, unless you consider electroshock therapy 'nice.'

JACK

Electro-shock?

Dorothy comes back with the glass of wine.

DOROTHY

Here you go, hon.

TODD

Thanks. This was a few years ago. It messed me up pretty bad.

COSMO

Oh, no!

TODD

I'm much better, now.

COSMO

Oh, good.

BUD

So, Todd, what brings you in here tonight, you do know what kind of bar this is, right?

TODD

Uhm, yeah. Sports bar for the ex-gay crowd, right?

BUD

Fucking A.

TODD

I'm uhm actually speaking on a national panel later tonight for people who've been through reparative conversion therapy. Figured I should finally see what this place is like.

JACK

Fun place to kill an hour, watch the game. Nice bathrooms. Great bartenders.

DOROTHY

Thanks, hon. Place'll be packed by midnight.

COSMO

Honestly, the best thing about the retreat was meeting these two gents.

TODD

Yeah, I miss my friends from the camp. I really do.

JACK

The men, the new friends...

COSMO

And the 'Smoers.

JACK

We shared 'Smores and coming out stories around the campfire. Helped us bond.

TODD

I guess we all have that in common, coming out to our parents--

JACK

I would never have come out if I knew I was going back in.

COSMO

I need a closet with a revolving door.

BUD

When I told my father I was gay, he used the belt with the metal studs on it. 20 lashes, counted each one out loud. Poor guy was crying. I still got the scars.

TODD

Harsh, no?

BUD

Made me tough. After that, he sent me to an all-male military academy. Best thing he could have done. I was in amazing shape. Five hundred sit-ups a day.

COSMO

Five hundred blowjobs a night.

JACK

I told my folks at my grandfather's funeral. Figured they were already crying.

TODD

Yeah, it can be tough when you come out.

COSMO

Back in high school, Mr. Pec used to call me names during gym class--

Hard, fast: Bud and Jack spit out epithets, the taunting voices of Cosmo's past.

BUD

Faggot!

JACK

Fairy!

BUD

Sissy!

Homo!
JACK

Cocksucker!
BUD

Butt-muncher!
JACK

Fudge-packer!
BUD

Freak!
JACK

COSMO
So, I finally sat down with my father, looked him in the eye and told him, “Daddy, I’m a homosexual.” He closed the paper, looked at me and said,

JACK
(As Cosmo’s Father)
“Son, didn’t we already have this conversation?”

How about you, Todd?
BUD

Yeah, how’d you tell?
COSMO

Me? Oh, no, no, no, no you don’t wanna hear that.
TODD

Sure we do. We’re here for you, bro. Have some nuts.
JACK

Jack slides a bowl of nuts on the table to Todd.

COSMO
What kind of conversion therapy did you take? There’s a buncha variations.

TODD
It’s hard to believe what happened if you never went through something like it yourself.

COSMO
Well, we’ve all been through it.

JACK

If anyone can relate, it's us.

BUD

Path of Truth, bro.

DOROTHY

Go on, hon, it's a slow night.

TODD

I was going to wait til I went away to college, but my best friend Staci could see how miserable I was. She's the one who said I should just tell them: Mom, Dad, I'm gay.

He steps into his story, as it unfolds in the empty bar.

SC 2: ABDUCTION, TODD'S BEDROOM

Bud becomes FATHER; Dorothy becomes MOTHER.

FATHER

I'm sorry, you're what?

TODD

I'm gay, Dad.

FATHER

No. That's impossible. Absolutely not.

TODD

Well, uhm, I am.

FATHER

No, I'm sorry, Todd. I don't want to hear this.

TODD

I'm gay, Dad.

MOTHER

Are you sure? I read how sometimes it's just a phase, all boys go through it.

COSMO

She's right.

FATHER

Excuse me, all boys do not go through it, I never went through it, it's not normal.

TODD

What's normal, what does that even mean? Don't we all have our own 'normal?'"

FATHER

I'm normal, your mother's normal. Your mother's cousin Vincent is *not* normal.

MOTHER

But he does lovely work with hair.

FATHER

(Holding back tears)

How do you know? How do you know you're gay?

TODD

How do you know you're straight?

DAD

Because I know I am.

TODD

Well, it's the same for me. I know I'm gay.

FATHER

You just told me the worst thing in the world. Where's my Todd, where's my little boy?

TODD

I'm right here.

FATHER

I should have known, ever since that time in the sandbox with that pudgy little friend of yours...

TODD

I was five years old, Dad.

FATHER

I saw, but I turned a blind eye. This is my fault.

TODD

Why can't you just love me and tell me it's going to be alright?

MOTHER

Because it's not alright, Todd, it's disrespectful.

TODD

Of what?

MOTHER

Of us, of your mother and father. Of God.

JACK

The nuns said the same thing.

FATHER

You just threw a brick in God's face.

TODD

God made me this way. This is how I was born.

MOTHER

You were most certainly *not* born that way.

FATHER

How are you going to be happy?

(To his wife)

I told you not to let that fruitcake cousin of yours cut my boy's hair.

MOTHER

Don't be an idiot, you can't turn gay from a haircut.

COSMO

Ha!

FATHER

Well, we don't have any homos on my side of the family--

COSMO

Not that he's aware of.

FATHER

(Choking up)

You used to love baseball. Remember catching that fly ball way out in left field?

TODD

Dad, nothing has changed--

MOTHER

Todd, we love *you*, but what you *are* is wrong. What you *desire* is wrong. It's a sin and it's a choice. But you can choose to *ignore* your desires, Todd. I do, all the time.

FATHER

I'm begging you, son, fight it with everything you have, nip it in the bud--

MOTHER

It's not a healthy lifestyle. You could get AIDS.

JACK

Yep, heard that one too.

FATHER

(Turning on Mother)

This is all your fault. You were supposed to teach him right from wrong, not how to cook French Toast Almondine!

MOTHER

My fault? If you ever paid attention to him, he'd be a God-fearing decent Christian man.

FATHER

Help him, he's your son.

MOTHER

He's your son, too!

Mother exits, crying.

FATHER

Your mother and I need to talk.

He exits. Todd and the others drink.

BUD

I mean, you never know how they're gonna take it.

COSMO

(To Todd)

French Toast: nutmeg or cinnamon?

TODD

Cinnamon.

COSMO

(To Jack, vindicated)

Thank you.

BUD

Their one job is to make sure we don't die.

JACK

Try a little nutmeg next time.

BUD

They're showing us how to be who we are.

COSMO

Mine kept telling me to be somebody else.

Todd steps back into his story. Dorothy, as STACI, appears on her phone.

STACI

Oh, Todd, I'm so proud of you. That was really, really brave.

TODD

Oh my God, Staci, I was like, "What's normal, don't we all have our own 'normal'?"

STACI

I'm sure that went over big. What are they going to do?

TODD

Not sure, maybe ground me til graduation? My father's so ashamed. I've never seen that expression on him before. It kind of kills me.

COSMO

You just want to make your parents proud, right?

JACK

Mine wouldn't talk to me for three years.

TODD

Oh my God, I cannot *wait* to go to college.

STACI

As long as they let you go to the Prom with me, which is only three months away.

TODD

Girl, totally.

COSMO

I got my head pushed in the toilet at the prom.

JACK

Fun times.

TODD

And I know the tux I'm going to rent to go with your fabulous Vera Wang knock off.

STACI

Oh my God, did you hear who Maisie's going with? Bobby Blakemore!

TODD

(swooning)

Bobby Blakemore.

STACI

Bobby Blakemore is such a hottie.

TODD

I think he's gay. Well, gay friendly.

STACI

How do you know?

TODD

Because I kissed him.

STACI

You did not! Where?

TODD

On the mouth. With tongue.

STACI

No, I mean *where*?

TODD

In the Boys' Lavatory, during Homeroom. He's very sweet. Said he was going to call me. I was like, whatever.

STACI

Now I know you're a liar-mouth. You did not kiss him.

TODD

No, but I *want* to, don't you? Honestly, girl, I think I'm in love.

STACI

Here's what we do: during the Sadie Hawkins Gender Fluid Swap, I'll dance with Maisie and you can dance with, why hello, you must be Mr. Bobby Blakemore!

TODD

Oh my God, that sounds perfect. What would I do without you?

Father appears in the door way, sad and stern with TWO MALE ATTENDANTS, played by Jack and Cosmo.

FATHER

(To the Attendants)

That's him, that's Todd, my son. You have my permission. Take him.

Attendant 1 grabs Todd's phone. Attendant 2 tosses various personal articles in a small traveling bag. Dorothy rejoins as MOTHER, goes to the Father.

TODD

Hey, give me that phone--Mom, Dad, who are these guys? Fuck you, don't touch me!

MOTHER

(To Todd, with concern)

Your father thinks this is the best way.

ATTENDANT 1

It's cool, Todd, put your shoes on. We gotta catch a plane, so let's move it along.

TODD

At midnight? I'm not going anywhere, who the fuck are you?

MOTHER

(To Attendants)

We raised him not to swear, he's a good boy--

FATHER

Your mother and I are trying to help you.

TODD

I don't need help, help me do what?

ATTENDANT 2

Get back on the straight and narrow, Todd. Now pack a bag, show a little hustle.

MOTHER

I packed his bags, they're in the foyer closet--

Mother, visibly upset, gets Todd's dental retainer.

TODD

Mom, what are you doing, Dad--

Mother gives the retainer to Attendant 2.

MOTHER

(To Attendants)

Make sure he wears his retainer every night when he goes to sleep.

TODD

What about the Prom, what about graduation, college--

MOTHER

(conflicted)

It's, it's just for a few weeks, honey, like summer camp. They have a pool and everything. Your father thinks this is the best way.

FATHER

It's the *only* way. Take him already!

The Attendants leash a belt around Todd's body.

TODD

What the fuck are you doing? Stop!

MOTHER

Stop that, take that thing off my boy! Todd--

FATHER

Is that belt really necessary?

ATTENDANT 1

Just until we get him on the plane.

ATTENDANT 2

Sir, you'd be surprised how many of 'em try to run.

TODD

Owww, you're hurting me!

Mother charges to the defense of her son:

MOTHER

Don't hurt him! Don't you hurt him!

(to Father)

Why can't you just talk to him, he needs you.

Father holds her back, fights his own tears.

FATHER

He needs help, professional help--

MOTHER

Let go of me! He's our son!

FATHER

My son is not gay!

TODD

Make them stop! My arm!

MOTHER

Leave him alone! Todd!

FATHER

I want my boy back, I want my son--

MOTHER

Let me go, let go of me, this is a mistake--Todd--

TODD

Help me! Help me!

The Attendants drag Todd screaming off stage.

End of Scene.

BACK AT THE BAR,

They go back to their drinks, a bit shaken.

BUD

Well, no, I mean, you know, they're trying to help you get right by God.

COSMO

Bud, you don't kidnap your own kid to make him right by God.

JACK

Path of Truth was totally voluntary, we all wanted to be there.

BUD

No, I hear you, it's harsh, but sometimes harsh measures are called for.

TODD

I was 17, I was an honor student, I was in marching band, I was Class Treasurer.

BUD

Well, you must have done something.

TODD

I did. I told my parents I'm gay.

COSMO

I'm sorry, but rapping that belt around him, like an animal, that's insane. It's humiliating.

TODD

It was like a straight jacket. Dragging me through the airport, everybody looking at me like I was crazy. I felt like a criminal. It took us 10 hours to get to the camp.

Todd sits alone at a table.

SC 3: INDUCTION, NEW HORIZONS, DOCTOR'S OFFICE

We hear a PRIMAL SCREAM from off-stage. DOCTOR enters. A solid, amiable man in white linen pants, he sits at the table with Todd.

DOCTOR

Reparative Therapy *repairs* the childhood trauma and shame that make you homosexual. It brings you back to God....

TODD

Uh huh. So is this some kind of Jesus Camp?

DOCTOR

No, Todd, we practice a more ecumenical, scientific approach.

TODD

Science is good.

DOCTOR

You see, Todd, it all starts with the mother being too 'loving,' teaching the boy effeminate skills.

TODD

Uh huh.

DOCTOR

The father resents the attention to the son, and commits sexual abuse on the boy in a twisted display of alpha dominance. The Father then becomes distant and dissociative; the son is frustrated at the lack of attention from his father. As he develops, the boy seeks to reconnect with masculinity via the warped prism of homosexual attraction in order to win back the love of his father.

TODD

Uh huh.

Doctor smiles, makes a note in his book.

DOCTOR

Clearly, you've been sexually abused.

TODD

No, not really, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Most homosexual boys were.

BUD

It's true. Google it.

TODD

I'm pretty sure I wasn't.

DOCTOR

Todd, trust me: the shame you feel is like a devil whispering in your ear, but you can cast that devil out, just as God cast Lucifer out of heaven.

COSMO/TODD

Wait, Lucifer was gay?

DOCTOR

That's right, he rebelled against God's natural law. But you can change. You can play football, hockey, you can be what you were born to be.

And what's that? TODD

An ex-gay man. BUD

A heterosexual man, with issues. DOCTOR

Same thing. BUD

(To Doctor)
But what if I was born gay? TODD

Nobody is born gay. BUD/DOCTOR

No, some people are born gay, but they *choose* to live straight. COSMO

True that. DOROTHY

As long as it makes you happy, right? JACK

What does that even mean, happy? COSMO

It means ex-gay is the only way. BUD

It means you have to be able to wake up and look at yourself every day and not want to put your fist through the fucking mirror. DOROTHY

Happy means whatever makes you happy. Gay, straight, whatever. JACK

I guess I'm whatever. COSMO

BUD

You can be whatever you want to be, dude.

COSMO

I just want to be happy.

BUD

Path of Truth.

COSMO

I wanted to meet the right guy, I wanted to fall in love, the whole shebang.

BUD

Yeah, so how'd that work out for you.

JACK

Bud, lay off him--

DOCTOR

Todd, now, repeat after me: I am, but I do not want to be homosexual.

COSMO

I felt so empty when I tried to live the gay lifestyle.

TODD

But I do want to be homosexual.

JACK

(To Cosmo)

You don't have to.

DOCTOR

I am, but I do not want to be homosexual. Say it, Todd.

TODD

But I don't mean it.

COSMO

I can't do it anymore.

DOCTOR

Say it, even if you don't really mean it: I am, but I do not want to be homosexual.

TODD

I am, but I do not want to be homosexual.

DOCTOR

There you go.

COSMO

So, I'm attracted to women now, it's fine.

DOROTHY

Whatever works.

We hear a primal SCREAM from another room. Todd nearly jumps. Doctor makes a note in his book.

TODD

Do my parents know about this place?

DOCTOR

Your parents are paying the tuition to help make you normal.

TODD

(To the guys)

Six thousand a month. They took a loan out against the house.

JACK

They must love you.

COSMO

Sex is just sex, right?

JACK

It's a choice, I guess.

BUD

Personally, I hate anal sex, it hurts, not in a good way.

JACK

There are other options, Bud.

BUD

What's the point of being gay if you don't like anal sex?

DOCTOR

Remember, Todd, sodomy is unnatural and incompatible with Christianity.

TODD
How about oral?

Cosmo LAUGHS. Bud gives him a look.

COSMO
What? He's funny.

DOCTOR
Todd, you laugh, but the joke's on you: you're not attracted to men, you're attracted to your shame.

TODD
I am?

DOCTOR
Work on your shame, you won't need the gay stuff.

TODD
But why can't I like guys, if that's how I'm wired?

BUD
Because you're wired wrong.

Doctor puts his arm around Todd's shoulders, a 'mentor.'

DOCTOR
We can re-wire you, Todd. Isn't that great? We can change how you get an erection.

COSMO
Theoretically.

We hear another agonized primal SCREAM.

DOCTOR
Remember, there is no such thing as homosexuality.

TODD
Then why am I here?

DOCTOR
It's a disease, Todd. We have to eradicate the homosexual condition. Look what we did with polio!

Off-stage, loud SCREAMING.

TODD

What is that!?

Doctor assumes a more officious tone.

DOCTOR

Questions are not tolerated, Todd.

COSMO

What does that mean?

TODD

What does that mean?

DOCTOR

It means no popular media other than approved Christian media. No complaining about how you really feel. Wear a smile at all times. Reveille is at 5:30 every morning; breakfast in the mess, 6:00 to 6:20; lunch is twelve noon, a full hour; dinner at 6, and lights out at 8pm. You will engage in two hours of Group Therapy three times a week, Deep Shame work on Tuesdays and Fridays. You'll also have private one-on-one prayer sessions, at my discretion. Phone please.

TODD

What? No way. I'm going to call my mom and get the hell out of here.

DOCTOR

Don't worry, Todd, there's no signal down here, anyway. After the standard six month probationary period, you may use the landline in my office to call home.

TODD

Six months?

JACK

Are you kidding me?

BUD

It's about discipline.

DOCTOR

Discipline is key, Todd.

BUD

See?

DOCTOR

We're trying to save your life.

TODD

And when can I leave?

DOCTOR

When you have fully embraced your God-given heterosexuality.

TODD

I wanna go home.

DOCTOR

Homosexual teenagers account for the highest rate of suicides in the nation. Be honest, haven't you ever thought about killing yourself?

TODD

Does right now count?

DOCTOR

Consider this a psychological and spiritual intervention. Phone please.

Another SCREAM. Todd hands over his cellphone.

We love you, Todd. We don't want you to kill yourself.

End of Scene.

BACK AT THE BAR

While they chat, Doctor places a label on their foreheads.

BUD

The Doctor guy sounds intense, but good.

JACK

Yeah, strong, smart, right?

TODD

I'm sure he'd agree with you.

DOROTHY

No phone for six months?

COSMO

There's a difference between adults choosing to do something, and minors being forced to do it against their will, is all I'm sayin'.

DOROTHY

My father made me take that identity workshop with the pastor and his wife.

BUD

And see how happy you are now?

Bud tests a baseball bat from a rack of equipment.

DOROTHY

Uh huh. Want another beer?

BUD

Yeah, thanks. Hop to it, woman.

Dorothy holds her tongue; gets another beer.

JACK

I think maybe Cosmo's right, he should choose for himself.

BUD

He's 17, what does he know what he wants, he's a kid.

COSMO

That's my point. We were all adults at the retreat, we gave our consent.

TODD

None of us chose to be down there. We were prisoners.

Doctor puts a label on Todd's forehead: FAGGOT.

Doctor and Todd step back into the story.

SCENE 4: GROUP THERAPY, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

The 'class' forms a semi-circle around a fully anatomical FIGHT DUMMY laying on the floor. Doctor sips from the cool glass of water.

Cosmo becomes ORLANDO, 17, a snap-queen hiding inside a macho, latino 'thug'. His label: HOMO.

Bud becomes SIMON, 17, the over-zealous jock hiding behind his bravado: His label: FAIRY. He warms up with the baseball bat, paces around the dummy.

Jack becomes SEBASTIAN, 17; he struggles to smile as he sags under an ever-present, twenty-five pound SACK OF ROCKS on his back. His label: GAY BOY.

Dorothy becomes JEAN, 18, a teen boy caught in mid-transition to female. Their label: FREAK.

DOCTOR

Simon, whenever you're ready, son.

SIMON

(Painful honesty)

I am afraid my father will never love me. I'm afraid I will never be normal.

He bashes the dummy with the baseball bat.

FUCK YOU, FAGGOT! I'm a normal, heterosexual man! With issues!! Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you--

Todd stares in horror at the violent outburst.

TODD

Oh my God, stop it! Stop!

The class gasps at Todd's forbidden comment.

DOCTOR

(With a smile)

Boys, this is Todd. Make him feel welcome, everyone.

BOYS

Hi, Todd/Welcome/Great to meet you/Whatever.

TODD

Uhm hi?

DOCTOR

Todd, the dummy on the floor represents the gay demon controlling your SSA.

TODD

SSA?

BOYS

Same Sex Attraction.

DOCTOR

Name your fear, release your anger; bash the gay demon out of you. It's scientific.

(To Simon)

Excellent anger, Fairy. Who's my best boy?

SIMON

Me, Doctor.

Doctor removes Simon's FAIRY label; gives him a big hug. Orlando thrusts his hand up.

ORLANDO

Me next, Doctor! Please!

DOCTOR

Alright Orlando, show Todd how it's done. Orlando's made huge strides. Watch.

ORLANDO

(Painful honesty; a tough, 'thug' attitude)

I'm afraid God doesn't love me no more. I'm afraid I will never go to like the celestial kingdom where I would live forever in the presence of God's eternal love.

(He assaults the dummy.)

Fucking gay homo cunt! I hate you, Papi! I hate you, Mommy! I hate you I hate you I hate you I hate you I hate you!

DOCTOR

Good anger, Homo. I'm very proud of you. And so is Jesus. Doesn't that feel good?

Doctor gives Orlando a big hug; he peels off Orlando's HOMO label.

ORLANDO

(Fighting tears in Doctor's deep hug)

Yes, Doctor, thank you--

DOCTOR

(To Jean)

Jean?

Jean takes the baseball bat, gathers herself.

JEAN

(Quiet, addressing the dummy directly)

I look at you and all I see are my parents staring at me. I'm afraid I'll never be who they want me to be. I'm afraid I'll never know who I am.

(sobbing, beating the dummy)

Why don't you love me? Why did you let this happen to me? Why did you leave me?

TODD

(Stepping back from the emotional tidal wave)

Holy Moly.

DOCTOR

(with a deep, warm hug)

Speaking truth to power. See what happens when you trust and let go, Freak?

Jean finds genuine strength in Doctor's strong embrace.
Doctor pulls the FREAK label off Jean's head.

JEAN

Thank you, Doctor.

Doctor gives the bat to Sebastian.

DOCTOR

Todd, your body lodges trauma directly into the muscle tissue. By externalizing the pain through Bio-Energetics, you can release your anger and beat the gay demon out of you.

TODD

I think I get it.

DOCTOR

Fear keeps you a prisoner; anger sets you free.

Sebastian drops to a knee.

TODD

Uhm, I think Sebastian dude needs help.

DOCTOR

You're right, Todd, that's why he's here.

SEBASTIAN

Don't...worry...fine..I'm fine...see?

DOCTOR

Good boy, Sebastian! Be a man, stand strong. Fight for it, dig deep--

Sebastian struggles to stand and smile.

SIMON

Come on, bro, you can do it--

Sebastian stands up, steady.

DOCTOR

There you go! A week in solitary has been very helpful, hasn't it, Gay Boy.

Doctor takes off Sebastian's label, takes the bat.

SEBASTIAN

Yes, Doctor.

TODD

What's with the rocks?

SIMON

No questions, bro!

SEBASTIAN

I carry--around the--inner burden--of my--homosexuality...dude.

Doctor gives Todd the bat.

DOCTOR

Todd, focus in: take the bat, beat the dummy. Name your greatest fear: Go!

TODD

Parallel parking?

SIMON

(Under his breath)

Faggot.

Doctor takes the bat from Todd.

DOCTOR

That's okay, Todd. Relax.

Doctor puts away the SSA Dummy and the bat.

BACK AT THE BAR,

The guys and Dorothy refresh themselves at their drinks.

BUD

Sounds like the bio-energetic stuff we did, right? Difference of degree?

JACK

I dunno, feels like fag-bashing to me, the baseball bat, the fight dummy.

COSMO

Yeah, I prefer the badminton racquet and big fluffy pillow back in the Berkshires.

DOROTHY

We never did any of that anger stuff at Pastor's. We mainly drank Whisky Sodas.

BUD

When you find that root, that authentic rage, and pop it open, it's like a damn bursting.

COSMO

Finding the rage is important, of course--

BUD

For 12 years, I was suicidally depressed, I hated myself, I hated my life, I wanted to die.

JACK

Path of Truth, dude.

BUD

Fuckin' A. Path of Truth gave me a sense of community, of reassurance of who I was as a man. They offered me that, and I never got it in the gay community, never.

COSMO

The gay community can be very picky, very judgmental.

BUD

Fuck them. It's not about facts and statistics, it's about feeling. It's about helping us choose the path we want.

JACK

By facing our fear and releasing our anger.

BUD

It's all the approach, my friend, just like bowling. Bam!

Doctor comes back.

DOCTOR

Okay! Now, boys, in order to release your anger, you have to feel what?

They are instantly back in the camp.

BOYS

Shame.

DOCTOR

No, you have to feel *trust*, right. Bathed in the glow of my ‘Golden Father Energy,’ you’re safe in your daddy’s arms, without the molestation.

SIMON

Ex-gay is the only way.

DOCTOR

Who wants to share a non-sexual hug?

The boys eagerly raise their hands.

Todd?

Todd hugs Doctor.

BUD

It’s all in there, right? The shame--

JACK

The guilt.

COSMO

The rage.

BUD

Hitting that pillow, letting all that shame out, screaming and crying and all that shit--

COSMO

We did the label thing, too.

JACK

Yup. And Trust Circles.

DOROTHY

(To Todd, in Doctor’s hug)

Did you guys do Trust Circles?

TODD

No--

Doctor squeezes tighter. Todd winces.

UUGHhhhhhh ribs--

COSMO

I miss the Trust Circles.

DOCTOR

You can learn to be heterosexual, Todd, it's easy. Play sports, drink beer, eat steak. Avoid homosexual interests like theatre, music, art. Watch how heterosexual men behave, mimic the way they walk, talk, urinate.

TODD

(slowly squirming in the hug)

Uhm, Doctor?

DOCTOR

Breathe with me, Todd. Non-sexual contact. Non-sexual touch.

JACK

Non-sexual Trust Circles. In the nude.

COSMO

(Smiling)

That was the third night.

Doctor locks his wrists behind Todd's back, increasing the pressure and pain of his bearhug.

DOCTOR

Embrace your shame. Crush it before it crushes you.

TODD

Owwww--my back--

Doctor releases Todd, who steps back, distressed.

COSMO

I'm really glad I met you guys at the workshop.

JACK

These last six months have been the best, right?

BUD

Brothers-in-arms, dude. Like-minded individuals supporting a chosen lifestyle.

COSMO

The guys at work are immature, macho assholes--

DOROTHY

Most men are assholes, present company excluded, of course.

COSMO

It's like there's only one way to be masculine and if you don't fit that model, you're fucked.

DOCTOR

Todd, shame is coded into the homosexual boy's brain. To unlock you from the cage of your basic instincts, we need to examine the perverse Hero's Journey narrative that made you "gay." Pretty standard stuff. Lots of fun. Simon, pass out the scripts.

Simon passes out scripts. He hurls a script at Todd. The boys grab various props and costume pieces.

TODD

Hero's Journey?

DOCTOR

Follow the other boys, you'll get the hang of it. And....begin!

The boys leap into the story, a band of inept troubadours in a bad school play.

SIMON, ORLANDO, JEAN, SEBASTIAN

"The Story of Captain Ahab the Homosexual, and His Insatiable Quest for Moby Dick!"

DOCTOR

"A Cautionary Tale of Homosexual Shame, Guilt and Obsession."

Jean points out Todd's lines, guides him into the story.

TODD

"Call me..." wait, what? "Call me...Ish-Male?"

DOCTOR

Ish-Male. He's male-*ish*; loved too much by his mother and too little by his father.

TODD

“*Ish-Male*, a life long bachelor, feels the tug of the sea and journeys out to discover his masculinity.”

SEBASTIAN

“He travels to...Lower New Bedford, Massachusetts, a town teeming with...homosexuals who have no interest...in women.”

SIMON

“*Ish-Male* stays in a whalers’ inn.”

JEAN

“Since the inn is full, *Ish-Male* has to share a bed with a tattooed savage from the South Pacific named *QueeQueg*.”

Orlando steps forward holding a big plastic bone.

ORLANDO

(guttural and primitive)

“*QueeQueg!* *QueeQueg!* *QueeQueg!*”

Orlando ruts against Todd’s leg like a dog in heat.

TODD

“The two homosexuals take one look at each other and plunge their penises into and against each other all night long in their honeymoon love-nest, a cosy, loving pair.”

DOCTOR

It’s lust, not love. Never love. Continue, you boys are doing great.

JEAN

“*Ish-Male* and *QueeQueg* find work together on Captain Ahab’s whaling boat, a savage-looking ship adorned with the ribs and teeth of sperm whales.”

Simon grabs a large ‘harpoon’, takes the ‘stage.’

SIMON

“Captain Ahab appears on deck, holding his massive harpoon.”

DOCTOR

Ahab is the Hunter; the homosexual obsessed with Same Sex Attraction.

SIMON

“*Moby Dick* is my obsession, I must thrust my massive harpoon into the great white sperm whale, for he is the embodiment of evil and shame.”

TODD

(To Simon)

Such a thespian.

SIMON

Eat me.

The boys each grab a 'harpoon' prop and hunt whales.

ALL THE BOYS

"They cruise for sperm 'round the world, plunging manly harpoons into whales a'plenty."

DOCTOR

Harpoon equals penis.

ORLANDO

"A few whales are successfully caught and processed for their oil."

JEAN

"The Crew proceed to cut off and skin the whale's giant, jet-black penis--"

ORLANDO

"And turn the skin into a sleeveless penis robe for the mincing queen."

TODD

Oh now, come on, you're making this up.

DOCTOR

See Chapter 95.

Orlando gives a quick ramp-walk in his Penis Coat.

ORLANDO

You may exclaim!

The boys give Orlando a beat. He scorches the floor.

BOYS

Go Landy, go Landy, go Landy, go Landy--

Orlando crashes into Doctor.

ORLANDO

Oh my God, Doctor, I am so sorry--

DOCTOR

Ten laps. Now. The rest of you, keep going.

Orlando jogs around the perimeter of the room.

Orlando, keep running, be Moby Dick--

JEAN

(Pointing at Orlando)

“MOBY DICK! THAR SHE BLOWS! MOBY DICK!”

DOCTOR

All of you, chase after the giant Moby Dick--

The boys chase the Whale in a boisterous whale hunt.
Simon readies his ‘harpoon,’ aimed at Orlando/Whale.

SIMON

“Ahab raises his mighty harpoon, ready to ram it deep into the monstrous whale--”

TODD

“But suddenly, Ahab gets hurled out of his boat--”

SIMON

“Nooooo!”

The boys ‘rope’ Simon to Orlando.

JEAN

“Ahab is caught in the tangle of ropes and harpoons, pinned to the side of the great white sperm whale--”

SEBASTIAN

“--Moby Dick, who brings Ahab deep to his underwater grave at the bottom of the ocean.”

DOCTOR

With all the other homosexuals.

The boys squirt Simon with water pistols.

SIMON

“No no no nooooooooooooo--”

TODD

Sucks to be you, Ahab.

Doctor grabs the script from Todd.

DOCTOR

(With urgency)

Todd: Does *Ish-Male* follow in Ahab's homosexual obsession and early death, or does he choose to be a heterosexual man, with issues, and live a long, moderately happy life?

Caught up in the moment, Todd grabs Doctor's glass of water, and douses Simon fully in the face and chest.

TODD

Die, faggot, die!

All the boys are stunned; wary of Simon's anger.

JEAN

Oh my God--

ORLANDO

Oh no you didn't!

SIMON

(Soaked and pissed)

Asshole!

DOCTOR

"*Ish-Male* paddles back home where he marries a woman and has eleven children, never to think of Moby Dick again. End of story." Welcome the new boy! Outstanding!

The others high-five Todd; Simon drips with anger.
Sebastian helps Simon up.

BOYS (EXCEPT SIMON)

Yo!/Amazing/Die Faggot Die!

DOCTOR

Great first day, Todd, am I right, boys?

ORLANDO, JEAN, SEBASTIAN

Yes, Doctor.

JEAN

You were awesome, Todd

Doctor peels off Todd's FAGGOT label, gives him a hug.

DOCTOR

Congratulations, Faggot! I'm very proud of you. The water was a brilliant way to liquidate your gay demon.

TODD

Thank you, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Remember, the only labels you wear here are the ones you came in with. Simon, it looks like you may have a challenger for Best Boy.

SIMON

Bring it on, bro!

He swipes a fist at Todd's jaw, knocks him down.

TODD

Ughh, what the fuck?

Doctor quickly yanks Simon back.

DOCTOR

(Snarling)

SIMON! BAD BOY!

(smiling)

Save it for Fight Night.

Sebastian faints under his burden.

End of Scene.

BACK AT THE BAR...

The guys drink.

COSMO

And that was your first day?!

JACK

How long were you there?

TODD

Nine months, three weeks and two days.

BUD

Yeah, I dunno, I've been to seven weekend retreats, we never did *Moby Dick*.

JACK

That's true. We never did *Moby Dick*.

COSMO

No, we did *Mame*, and Jerry Herman said I was the best Vera Charles he'd ever seen.

BUD

You need a friggen tune-up, man.

COSMO

Oh, please--

Bud becomes Simon, stretching at his bunk. He recites the camp mantra:

SIMON

"I love women."

TODD

It takes a lot of energy maintaining the facade.

SIMON

"I enjoy a woman's body in the nude."

COSMO

Yes, but it's so hard to open up and be yourself.

Cosmo becomes Orlando.

SIMON, ORLANDO

"Having sex with a woman is wonderful."

TODD

You can't be yourself and somebody else at the same time.

SIMON, ORLANDO

"I am changing. I love women. Amen." Come on, guys.

They reenter the story.

SC. 5: LIGHTS OUT, BUNKS, LATER THAT NIGHT

The boys sit on their 'bunks.' Orlando kneels in punishment, balances two sets of books in each outstretched hand.

Sebastian, still wearing his bag of rocks, scrubs the floor with an old tooth brush. Todd holds a bag of ice to his jaw.

SIMON, ALL

“I love women. I enjoy a woman’s body in the nude. Having sex with a woman is wonderful. I am changing. I love women. Amen.”

TODD

But what if I don’t love women?

ORLANDO

Just say it.

JEAN

It’s like positive reinforcement.

Sebastian sobs.

TODD

Poor guy, here, let me help you with that--

Todd takes the sack of rocks off Sebastian’s back.

SEBASTIAN

No give it give it give it don’t help me, I can do it--

Simon SHOVES Todd away from Sebastian, protective.
Talks gently to Sebastian, securing the bag of rocks.

SIMON

It’s okay, bro, I got you.

TODD

I’m sorry--you don’t have to shove me--

Jean gestures for Todd to stop talking.

SIMON

Doctor finds out you helped him, he’ll punish Sebastian, not you.

TODD

I’m sorry, I didn’t know.

SIMON

I'm watching your ass, bro.

TODD

I bet you are. *Bro*.

SIMON

I'm Best Boy. I can help you. Or I can fuck you up.

Doctor pokes his head in the room.

DOCTOR

Hey, boys, lights out in five. Sebastian, you can stop now. Orlando, put the books down. Todd, how's that jaw? Simon: Would you please come into my office?

Doctor exits. Simon fixes his hair as he follows Doctor off. (Bud sits down, drinks, listens.)

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir sings in Doctor's office.

TODD

Where the fuck am I?

ORLANDO

(Latina snap)

You in Hell, girlfriend. And it is motherfucking *humid*.

JEAN

You're about 200 miles south of the Santo Domingo airport.

TODD

I can't do this, I have to get out of here, I have to get out--

JEAN

Listen to me: you want to survive, you play the game.

ORLANDO

Unless you wanna wind up like Sebastian--

SEBASTIAN

I am, but I do not want to be homosexual...

BUD

(Sipping his beer)

The more you say it, the more you believe it.

TODD

But I can't like girls just because he tells me to like girls.

ORLANDO

You got to try, when he likes you, it feels so good, right?

JEAN

Yeah, he's like all the good stuff about having a dad.

SEBASTIAN

Until it isn't.

JEAN

Until it isn't. You fight him, you lose.

ORLANDO

Your funeral, chiclet.

SEBASTIAN

...no way out...no way out...

JEAN

People say 'it gets better.' It doesn't. It gets worse. Every single day.

BUD

(To Todd)

I hated being gay.

JEAN

Doctor tells me I can either choose to live the rest of my life as a lonely man who wishes he was a woman, or as a lonelier woman who hates herself because she's a man.

TODD

But what about your parents?

JEAN

Don't ask. I'd been doing hormones secret-like for ten months, so when my parents went away at Christmas, I used their Amex card to get my boobs. I wanted to surprise them. They walk in the door, Mom takes one look at me, turns to Dad, and says: "You're its father, you deal with it."

TODD

No way my parents know what's going on down here.

ORLANDO

Girlfriend, they know. Or maybe they don't *wanna* know, which is the same thing.

SEBASTIAN

I miss Ollie...

TODD

Who's Ollie?

JEAN

His dog.

TODD

My parents will get me out of here.

ORLANDO

Your parents are the ones who put you here. My papi's a preacher, crazy charismatic, with the storefront downstairs. One Sunday he catches me jerking off to pro wrestling before service. When he gets up there on the pulpit like, he's on fire, like coming out of his eyeballs.

Sebastian becomes Orlando's FATHER, a preacher.

SEBASTIAN

"If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, they are abominations, and shall be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads!"

Jean becomes Orlando's MOTHER.

JEAN

Preach, papi! Amen!

SEBASTIAN

The second your child throws down that limp wrist, you beat him hard, otherwise before next thing you know he be taking a man's penis in his mouth or between his buttocks.

JEAN

Amen!

SEBASTIAN

Orlando, boy, come up here and stand before the altar of God. Come on, boy, don't be afraid, let him into your heart.

ORLANDO

Papi, help me live right by God!

SEBASTIAN

Son, you are not fit for deliverance, there is a devil living behind your eyes.

ORLANDO

But I love you.

SEBASTIAN

I rebuke your love!

Sebastian backhands Orlando to the floor.

EAN

Rebuke! Rebuke! Hallelujah!

Jean stomps around Orlando's body, speaking in tongues.

ORLANDO

Twelve people hold me down, they stomp on my body, punch me in the face, Mommy's speaking in tongues, tearing my heart out, all betrayed, ashamed, crying, Mercy, mercy.

TODD

How fucked up is that?

JEAN

Right?

ORLANDO

That's when I started to drink, so I wouldn't have to think like maybe I was disobeying God every time I jerked off. I got alcohol poisoning three times, sophomore year. My parents brung me here. To 'save' me.

TODD

(About Sebastian)

What's with the rocks?

JEAN

Sebastian's a runner. He tried to escape.

ORLANDO

Three times. They weigh him down with rocks and meds.

TODD

Poor guy.

JEAN

You want to survive, say what he wants you to say, pretend you're getting 'better', don't talk back. A smart-ass comeback will get you a week of hard labor.

ORLANDO

Smile. *Always*.

JEAN

Try to act straight. Butch it up. Show him, Landy.

Orlando swaggers with sexy, masculine menace.

ORLANDO

(Butch)

I'll pop a cap in your ass, muthafucka.

(with sass and a snap)

Oh my God, I am so kidding!

TODD

How'd you do that?!

Orlando teaches him the walk; Todd emulates.

ORLANDO

Come on, do it with me. It's all in the balls; like kiwi fruit, let 'em swing, that's it--

TODD

At least we got each other, right?

ORLANDO

Wrong.

JEAN

Be careful around Simon. He's Best Boy.

ORLANDO

Doctor's eyes, ears and deep throat.

BUD

I like Simon.

SEBASTIAN

Simon's a good guy.

Orlando helps Sebastian off with his backpack.

ORLANDO

Come on, baby, time for beddy-bye.

Sebastian lies on his side. The guys get ready for sleep.
The Choir is silent. We hear the nocturnal jungle outside.

JEAN

(To Todd)

Hey, Todd. You got me, anyway.

TODD

Maybe we can help each other escape?

ORLANDO

Villagers catch you, bring you back for the reward, you get a month in solitary.

SEBASTIAN

...no escape...

Pause. Then, sotto voce,

JEAN

Doctor has the car keys on his belt.

Pause.

TODD

(To Jean, in a whisper)

What happens if I do everything I can to become straight, and I fail?

Simon enters, hiding his tears. He lies on his bed, near
Sebastian's bed. Sebastian sits next to Simon.

SEBASTIAN

(Quietly)

What happened?

SIMON
(quietly crying)

We prayed.

Sebastian hugs him. Simon cries.

End of scene.

BACK AT THE BAR,

DOROTHY

Anyone need another drink?

BUD

Yeah, I'll have another beer.

DOROTHY

S'matter, Bud, got something in your eye?

BUD

I'm fine.

DOROTHY

Anyone else? Come on, boys, drink up, I need the tips.

Todd rubs his head, takes a pill out of his pocket.

TODD

Can I have a glass of water, please?

DOROTHY

Yah, sure.

Dorothy goes to the bar.

BUD

You know, sometimes corporal punishment is called for, right?

JACK

These are kids, Bud.

BUD

Kids who need help.

COSMO

Releasing your rage is one thing; being held prisoner is another.

BUD

Path of Truth, dude. It's all about repairing.

TODD

I wasn't broken, 'til I went there.

JACK

But the Caribbean sounds nice, right?

COSMO

It's fabulous. Except for the heat and the humidity. And the flies. Did they give you sun screen? Was the pool nice?

TODD

(Angry)

It's not a fucking summer camp!

COSMO

(Demurring)

Well, pardon my sarong.

TODD

It's a concentration camp.

BUD

They were just trying to toughen you up.

TODD

We dig trenches in the pouring rain for 12 hours straight. How does that toughen me up?

BUD

It's good physical training.

TODD

We ask a question, we get punished. We take a break, we get punished. We stop smiling, we get punished.

BUD

It's, I mean, it's like bootcamp, they break you down before they build you up.

TODD

There is zero contact with the outside world. We're totally cut off. There is no escape.

BUD

See, you're exaggerating again. I mean, you got out, clearly.

TODD

(Angry)

Yeah, I did get out, Bud. And it almost killed me. We didn't have fucking pillow-fights!

BUD

Whatever.

Dorothy comes back with the drinks. Doctor enters, pushing on a full-length, empty mirror frame.

TODD

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have yelled.

DOCTOR

Look into the mirror, Todd.

BUD

Self-examination, dude. It's gonna help you.

Todd stands in front of the mirror. Doctor makes a note.

SC. 6: MAN IN THE MIRROR, DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Doctor looks into the mirror with Todd.

DOCTOR

Look deep in the Mirror. Now, what do you see?

Doctor makes a note in his book.

BUD

(As Todd's Father)

No son of mine is gay.

DOROTHY

(As Todd's Mother)

Deny your *urges*, Todd, especially the gay ones.

TODD

I dunno, average, kinda dorky, kinda okay-looking kinda, bad hair?

COSMO

I like your hair.

DOCTOR

I see a broken, psychological cripple, desperate for help.

TODD

That's what I meant.

Doctor ruffles Todd's hair, in an effort to relax him.

DOCTOR

Relax, Todd, breathe. Do I make you nervous, son? Does my physical presence effect you?

Todd looks up, unsure.

TODD

God no I mean well yeah kinda--

DOCTOR

That's your shame acting up. See, Todd, you project sexual desire onto the male relationships in your life, so as to recreate the original moment of shame and abuse you suffered when your father sexually molested you.

TODD

And I do that because?

DOCTOR

Your father sexually molested you.

Bud nods 'yes.'

TODD

Right.

DOCTOR

Todd, tonight I'm going to unlock your trauma through stimulating muscle memory.

BUD

(To Cosmo)

See, he's trying to help, right?

DOCTOR

(With utmost professionalism)

Take off your shirt.

COSMO

Yeah, he's trying to help himself to some chicken.

TODD

(Demurring)

Thanks, I'm ok.

DOCTOR

(With calm authority)

No, Todd, you're not. Take off the shirt. Fold it. Good boy. Now the pants. Fold them.

DOROTHY

Oh, God, is this familiar...

Todd takes off his pants, folds them.

DOCTOR

You're doing great, Todd. Now, as you shed your clothes, shed your defenses. Stand in front of the mirror. Look at the masculine *essence* of you.

Todd stands vulnerable in his boxer briefs.

DOCTOR

Take a breath. It's just you and me, Todd. Now, touch yourself. Go on.

COSMO

Uh huh.

TODD

You want me to touch myself?

DOCTOR

That's right, Todd. Through the body's physical response to homoerotic stimuli, we'll be able to find your homosexual switches, the better to turn them off.

BUD

It's scientific.

TODD

In my underpants?

The Doctor puts his hand on Todd's shoulder, smiles.

DOROTHY

Yep, there it is, hand on the shoulder...

DOCTOR

Todd, what do you think defines your masculine essence?

TODD

Uhm, I dunno, my dry, teen wit?

DOCTOR

No, Todd, your masculine essence is defined by your penis and testicles.

Doctor cups Todd's testicles.

BUD

Whoa--not cool--

TODD

Uhm okay okay okay okay let go--

Doctor releases him. Makes a note in his book.

DOCTOR

Relax. Breathe. Just you and me. Good boy. Now, Todd, in order to locate your homo-erogenous zones, I want you to tell me a homoerotic sexual fantasy.

JACK

And here we go...

COSMO

'Pizza Boy, He Delivers.'

DOROTHY

'The Pastor, his Wife and the Underage Lesbian.'

TODD

Okay, right, well, okay, yeah...So...okay....so...there's this guy on my swim team--

DOCTOR

What's his name?

TODD

Bobby Blakemore.

Doctor makes a note in his book.

DOCTOR

There you go. Tell me about Bobby Blakemore. Go on, son.

TODD

Well, I mean, Bobby is so dreamy, with the dark hair, the glasses, dimples for days--

DOCTOR

Hairy or smooth? For my records.

TODD

Oh, hairy for sure. He's got this intense happy trail, which is funny because most of the other guys on the team shave their bodies.

DOCTOR

What the gays call an 'otter.'

Doctor makes a note in his book.

TODD

So, it's after swim practice. Bobby comes out of the pool, in the fantasy. He's looking at me. He smiles, like he's hugging me with his eyes.

DOCTOR

Todd, tell me specifically where in your body do you feel his 'hug?'

TODD

Uhm I dunno my heart? My chest?

DOCTOR

Okay good, that's good. Touch your chest, Todd.

Todd pokes his finger awkwardly into his chest.

It's not a pork chop, son. Don't poke it. Caress it. Allow yourself to enjoy it.

Todd obeys; his hands caress and fondle his chest.

That's better. Very good, Todd. And the nipples, play with the nipples.

JACK

See, now, what's that about?

DOCTOR

Your nipples are primary erogenous zones.

BUD

You gotta trust, is all.

DOCTOR

Believe me, that jittery feeling you have when he smiles at you is the same shame you felt when your father sexually molested you.

Doctor makes a note in his book.

COSMO

Again with the shame.

BUD

Cosmo, remember how cathartic it felt, hitting the pillow, releasing all that shame?

DOCTOR

Go on, son, I can feel the defenses crumbling. Keep going, Bobby Blakemore...

TODD

Bobby heads to the showers, drops his towel. His ass is thick, round, hairy. He turns, he smiles, oh my God, those lips, you just want to suck on them for hours...

DOCTOR

And when he takes off his towel, where do you feel the arousal?

COSMO

(To Jack)

I know where I feel it.

DOROTHY

(To Cosmo)

You're not even trying to hide it, now.

DOCTOR

You can trust me, Todd. Where do you feel arousal?

TODD

My stomach, I think. He gives me butterflies.

Doctor makes a note in his book.

DOROTHY

Why are men always so sweaty?

DOCTOR

Todd, caress your stomach. Feel it. Enjoy it. That's right. You're doing great.

Todd caresses his belly.

TODD

Now we're in the shower, me, Bobby, those eyes, that smile, those full, bushy armpits--

DOCTOR

Nice, good, pits, excellent--

Doctor makes a mark in his book.

TODD

He comes closer--

DOCTOR

Bobby Blakemore....

COSMO

Bobby Blakemore...

JACK

Bobby Blakemore...

TODD

I'm under the shower, he comes in for a kiss, those beautiful lips, that mouth. He presses his mouth to mine...

DOCTOR

How does the kiss make you feel?

BUD

Good. Bad, I mean bad.

TODD

Complete. Like I'm in love and everything is good.

DOCTOR

Another delusion.

BUD

Men are incapable of loving each other.

TODD

(To Bud)

No, Bud, *damaged* men are incapable of loving each other.

DOCTOR

Todd, focus: Where do you feel aroused when you kiss Bobby Blakemore? Do you feel it down lower?

Todd's fingers lower and spread down his stomach.

DOROTHY

Pastor's hands were always so sweaty.

TODD

Maybe?

COSMO

Here it comes.

Todd's fingers the waistband of his underpants.

DOCTOR

Good, Todd. Now, touch yourself. You have my permission.

Todd pulls away.

TODD

Stop. Please. This feels wrong, like inappropriate wrong.

DOCTOR

That's good, it means the therapy is working!

BUD

What the fuck?

DOCTOR

You need to trust me. Take off your underpants.

TODD

No way. I don't feel comfortable with this. At all.

DOCTOR

Todd, I'm a trained psycho-therapist.

COSMO

Emphasis on the psycho.

TODD

I shared something special with you, and you turn it inside out you, make it ugly! You're trying to destroy the *essence* of me.

DOCTOR

I'm trying to *heterosexualize* the essence of you. The underpants, Todd.

TODD

Fuck you, don't touch me--I'm going to tell my parents, I'm going to tell my Mother everything you do down here!

Doctor pulls back.

DOCTOR

Todd, I apologize. I pushed you too hard, too fast. Breathe.

TODD

I'm gonna tell them all!

DOCTOR

You're obviously not ready for this advanced exercise. Get dressed, session's over.

Todd yanks his clothes on. As he heads for the door,
Close the door behind you. And Todd?

(With a smile)

Smile. You're doing great.

Todd forces on a big smile. Doctor exits.

End of Scene

BACK AT THE BAR,

The friends are silent a moment.

BUD

No, I mean, you know, I mean you gotta go deep for therapy to work.

COSMO

How deep? Nine inches?

BUD

(About Todd)

He's the one who's fucked up, not us. We're fine.

TODD

(With rising ire)

You're the one living a lie, not me.

COSMO

Maybe my heart's not in it.

BUD

Don't give up, Cosmo, you can do it, right, Jack?

JACK

If it makes him happy.

DOROTHY

Once a fag, always a fag.

COSMO

Well, excuse me, Lady Godiva Bar.

DOROTHY

You guys are slaves to your dicks.

COSMO

At least, I'm not some frustrated dyke getting married to a man.

DOROTHY

My life, not yours. And fuck you, too.

BUD

The workshops made me feel good. He's making it sound like prison.

COSMO

I'm sorry, so, you only believe what happened to you? What about me, what about Jack? How about Dorothy? Is our experience valid?

BUD

I would not be here today if it weren't for Path of Truth. They made my life better.

TODD

Yeah, by suppressing who you are.

BUD

I don't know what your game is, but I'm not buying it.

TODD

It's not a game, it's life and death. Fucking coward.

BUD

Who you calling coward, faggot!

Bud pushes Todd, who snaps into fight mode.

DOROTHY

Hey, hey, hey, hey now--

Doctor enters, wearing a black and white referee's shirt, a metal whistle hanging around his neck. He pushes apart Todd and Bud. He blows the whistle loud.

SC. 7: FIGHT NIGHT, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM, END OF THE FIRST WEEK

The boys glove-up around a large fight mat. Sebastian stands facing a wall. Orlando and Jean step onto the mats.

DOCTOR

When I blow the whistle, fight as hard as you can; when I blow it again, stop. No pulled punches, if you don't hit your opponent hard enough, I'll hit him for you. And...fight!

He blows the whistle.

ORLANDO

Doctor, I'm sorry, I can't fight her--let me fight Sebastian--

JEAN

Come on, dude, I'm okay, fight me.

ORLANDO

I'm sorry, but like I cannot hit a girl--

DOCTOR

That's not a 'girl,' that's a boy who has chosen to mutilate his body with grotesque, synthetic appendages. Hit her. Him. It.

JEAN

Landy, do what he says--

ORLANDO

But Jesus says turn the other cheek--

JEAN

Jesus will understand, just hit me please--

DOCTOR

Orlando, turn around and hit her!

ORLANDO
 Okay, whatever, fine--

Orlando turns around; Jean punches him in the eye.
 Owwww!! My eye!

JEAN
 I'm sorry, oh my God, Landy, I'm so sorry--

ORLANDO
 Girlfriend, hello?!?!

DOCTOR
 Hit him! HIT HIM!

Jean drives her knee hard into his balls.

ORLANDO
 Oh...fuck...me...

Orlando cradles his balls. Doctor blows his whistle.

DOCTOR
 Orlando, you just won a week of Ditch Duty.

JEAN
 Landy, I'm sorry, let me help you, can you breathe?

Jean tries to help Orlando up, he pushes her away.

DOCTOR
 Simon, Todd, you're up, we'll make it a Best Boy match, champion vs. challenger.

Simon trots to the center, shaking out his firm muscle.

SIMON
 Come in here all 'die faggot die' and water in my face shit, I'll show you who's Best Boy, I'm gonna own your ass.

TODD
 What is it with you and my ass, already?

SIMON
 Knock you out with my Simon Special, bro--

TODD

Doctor, I really don't believe in fighting.

DOCTOR

Beliefs can change, Todd, just like your sexual preference.

SIMON

Pussy.

DOCTOR

We're breaking down old, sick habits with good, normal, masculine aggression. Ready?

Doctor blows the whistle. Simon steps in fast; slips a jab to Todd's jaw, rocking him back on his heels.

TODD

Owwwww! Stop that!

DOCTOR

There you go! Hit him again!

JEAN

Put your hands up, dude, protect your face--

Todd puts up his hands; blocks a punch, ducks, etc.

TODD

Why can't we be friends?

SIMON

Because I hate you!

TODD

You don't even know me!

Simon slams a kick into Todd's gut.

Uuughh--Jesus Christ--

ORLANDO

Get up, bro, up--

DOCTOR

Stay on the attack, Simon--Best Boy!

Jean coaches Todd to go for the stomach. He swings a fist deep into Simon's gut; Simon staggers, drops to a knee.

Todd slams into Simon, head-locking him tight.

TODD

We don't have to fight, Doctor is wrong--

DOCTOR

Orlando, hit Todd.

TODD

Don't listen to him, Landy--

DOCTOR

Hit him, Orlando, that's what Jesus would do!

Orlando slams a fist into Todd's nose; it bleeds. Simon and Todd struggle for control. In overlapped shards,

TODD

You can't make me straight/I am
gay/Don't believe/Doctor/help me

SIMON

Doctor/prove to Doctor/his boy his boy his
Best Boy/fuck you Best Boy/fuck you

Todd winds up on top.

TODD

This is all wrong! I quit!

Todd heads off the mat. Doctor drops Todd with a right hook to the gut.

TODD

OOOOFFFFFFF...

Todd struggles to remain standing.

DOCTOR

Do you still think Reparative Therapy is wrong, Todd?

TODD

...yes...

DOCTOR

Simon?

Simon hits Todd with his Simon Special combo [left jab; grab near wrist; step on foot to anchor; right cross to the head], knocks him out cold.

SIMON

AWWOOOOO!!

DOCTOR

The winner and still Best Boy...Simon! Todd, you have a lot to learn. Remember this the next time you question me, or reparative therapy. Or talk to your mother.

(To the others, with excitement)

Who wants some bug juice? Come on!

Doctor jogs out of the room. Simon follows. Orlando limps out. Jean hovers over Todd, as he revives.

JEAN

Oh my God, Todd, I am so sorry--

DOCTOR

(Off-stage)

Jean, now!

Jean leaves Todd on the mat, exits to join the others.

Stillness. Todd raises with great pain to his haunches. Sebastian turns his head, looks at Todd.

SEBASTIAN

It gets worse.

End of Scene.

End of Act One.

ACT TWO

SC. 1: BACK AT THE BAR

Bud, Jack and Cosmo confer while Todd is in the Men's Room; Dorothy is at the bar, getting another round.

COSMO

“Hit him, that’s what Jesus would do?”

JACK

Unfuckingbelievable. And that poor kid with the rocks on his back, how insane is that?

COSMO

I had no idea this shit was going on.

BUD

Yeah, don’t believe everything you hear. He’s *amplifying*.

COSMO

Oh, Bud, please. I totally believe him.

BUD

Reparative Therapy saved my life. Why do I have to listen to this crap?

JACK

Maybe cuz you’re scared?

BUD

Of what?

JACK

That they’re doing this shit to kids?!

BUD

How do we know he’s not making all this up?

COSMO

Why the hell would he make it up?

JACK

Something bad happened to him, you can see he’s suffered--

BUD

I don't see nothing.

Todd reenters, from the Men’s Room.

TODD

Anything. You don't see anything.

BUD

Damn right, I don’t.

TODD

Because you don't want to see it.

BUD

Todd, I got no gripe with you, man.

TODD

You can be who you are, Bud.

COSMO

Yeah, okay, but then why is it so hard for men to love each other?

BUD

Because it's biologically and psychologically impossible.

COSMO

No, love *is* possible. I just never met the right man.

BUD

Because you're not gay.

COSMO

No, because I confused lust for love.

JACK

Been there, done that.

COSMO

I had this desperate need to be desired, fucking three, four guys a night, the more guys wanted me the more I was loved, right? But they didn't want *me*, they wanted my body, my mouth, my ass, my cock, like I was a collection of body parts that didn't add up to anything--

BUD

Put it behind you, right Jack? It's your choice, let it go, deny it, ignore it--

COSMO

The loneliness was unbearable. I just wanted to be loved. But on those rare occasions when a totally nice guy would express more than a fleeting interest in me, I'd boot him out, swipe left, delete, next, like a gerbil wheel of sex and shame. I didn't even hesitate, I figured rejection was just part of the gay lifestyle.

BUD

Because it is, my friend.

COSMO

Two years ago, New Year's Eve, I'm sitting in the corner of a packed gay bar. The lone papi chulo, again. All that manic happiness, the whole desperate gay swirl of colognes and armpits. And I'm sitting alone, at two minutes to midnight, crying in the corner, looking for someone, anyone, on Grinder, Scruff, Daddyhunt--

BUD

Dude, so been there--

COSMO

And this older guy, maybe 50, but sexy, he stands near me in the corner, grabs me right at midnight, kisses me, deep. Amazing. I'm stunned. He chose me. He's kissing me. He wraps me up like he's been waiting for me my entire life. Then, he turns to this other guy who's been watching us make out, he leans across me, says to the guy, *about* me, "Yeah, I know, I can do better." The other guy looks at me like, are you going to take that shit? And I do, I take it. Because I agree with him. He can do better. I can barely keep from sobbing. I wrap my scarf around my face, head home in a blizzard. Tears freeze my eyelashes shut.

BUD

Tears of shame, bro--

COSMO

(Fighting sudden tears)

Why is it easier to suck someone's cock than it is to just be yourself?

TODD

(With a smile)

You're doing it now, aren't you?

COSMO

(Smiling)

I guess.

BUD

Or, Cosmo, you can commit to going ex-gay, and be done with it. You can lock it away. You can be happy.

COSMO

But, I'm not happy! I'm miserable.

BUD

You sound like you don't believe conversion therapy works.

TODD

Conversion therapy *doesn't* work.

BUD

I didn't ask you.

COSMO

I'm having severe doubts.

BUD

It does work. It repairs the shame that made us gay.

TODD

No, it reinforces the shame we've been force-fed since birth. It creates the shame, it creates the damage.

BUD

You can tell yourself anything, you can believe anything, it's your choice.

JACK

You got to listen to your gut, man.

BUD

Digging ditches and carrying rocks because they don't smile? No phones? Fight Night? He's making it up, he's concocting. Nothing like what we did on the retreats, nothing.

TODD

(With strained patience)

It's not a retreat, Bud, it's a prison.

BUD

Blah blah blah. Fake news. Where's my beer?

Dorothy brings another round of drinks.

DOROTHY

Gay men are sheep, they do what they're told.

COSMO

What about Act-Up?

DOROTHY

Honey, that was 40 years ago.

BUD

Conversion therapy is the only way out, right, guys?

TODD

Conversion therapy is dehumanizing.

BUD

Only if you fight it!

COSMO

I can only take so much loneliness, Bud.

TODD

But you're not alone.

JACK

You got us.

BUD

It's wrong, your body knows it's wrong, it's shameful--

TODD

Don't you feel ashamed hiding behind someone else's idea of what you should be?

BUD

No.

DOROTHY

No.

JACK

Only when I think about it.

COSMO

I felt ashamed when I was gay. But I feel more ashamed now, pretending to be straight.

BUD

No, you don't.

COSMO

Yes, I do. And don't tell me what I feel!

TODD

Jack?

JACK

Yeah and no and yeah big time, maybe?

BUD

Get off the fence, Jack.

JACK

Don't push me, Bud.

DOROTHY

You either feel ashamed, or you don't feel ashamed because you don't give a flying fuck what anybody thinks. Very simple.

JACK

For you, maybe.

BUD

(to Todd)

Know what I think? You coming here tonight is a cry for help. I think you're desperate to get back on track. Subconsciously.

Doctor strides in, holding a large desk phone.

TODD

I'm actually talking on a panel later about how we can end conversion therapy in this country, so I do feel moderately secure, thanks.

BUD

Just moderately?

Doctor sits at his desk, with the phone.

DOCTOR

Remember what I told you, Todd.

BUD

So there's maybe a little part of you that doubts, that maybe he's right, you're wrong?

TODD

No, I mean, I do still hear his voice in my head. It's pretty toxic--

BUD

Exactly. You doubt yourself. You got to trust the doubt, dude.

DOCTOR

Tell them you're happy here, tell them the therapy is working.

TODD

(Dubious)

Uhm, I mean, you can believe anything you want to believe, I guess.

BUD

Replace doubt with belief. Conversion Therapy works for me because I believe it works for me.

Doctor makes a note in his book.

TODD

It traps you inside a mask.

DOCTOR

Tell them how nice the pool is.

TODD

I know how hard it is, Bud, but you can be gay and you can be happy. It is possible.

BUD

No disrespect, pal, but I don't want to hear anymore of your fairy tale.

COSMO

Well, I want to hear it.

JACK

Me, too.

BUD

Well, I don't.

COSMO

Well, we do! Now, you, sit down, zip it shut and be nice.

(To Todd)

And you, continue. Please. Maybe pick up the pace a little, highlights, thanks.

End of scene.

SC 2: PHONE CALL: DOCTOR'S OFFICE, SIX MONTHS LATER

Todd joins Doctor in his office; he sits in front of the speaker phone. Father sits next to Mother, ear glued to hear the shared phone. Father holds a folded piece of paper; Mother nurses a glass of chablis.

TODD

(Barely holding it together)

...I want to come home, Mom. Today. I have to get out of here.

Mother looks at Father. After a slight pause, the Father gently shakes his head 'no.'

Mom?

MOTHER

(Trying to sound positive)

Well, Todd, you know, Doctor recommends at least another six months of treatment, honey, he says you're making real strides, isn't that wonderful?

TODD

Six months? Are you serious? I'll be dead in six months!

MOTHER

Oh, don't be silly. He says you still have a ways to go, that's all.

TODD

Listen to me, Mom, please, I need you to get me out of here, today, I can't take it, I can't take it anymore, you have no idea--

Doctor stands: 'careful what you say.'

MOTHER

Doctor said you might react this way, it's normal, it means the treatment is working.

TODD

Whatever you think it's like down here, Mom, it's a hundred times worse.

Mother covers the phone with her hand;

MOTHER

He needs to come home.

FATHER
 Doctor told us be strong.

MOTHER
 It's been half a year--

FATHER
 Absolutely not.

TODD
 Mom?

MOTHER
 (To Todd)
 Uhm, yes, but Doctor says the discipline is good for you.

TODD
 Why, what did I do so wrong?

MOTHER
 (Fighting tears)
 Well, Todd, I mean, it's very hard to get past your gayism.

TODD
 My gayism?

COSMO
 His gayism?

TODD
 Do you know what these last six months have been like? Do you have any idea?

MOTHER
 I'm sure it hasn't been easy.

TODD
 We dig trenches in the pouring rain. We carry bags of rocks on our backs. We're put in solitary confinement if we don't smile.

Doctor presses the MUTE button.

DOCTOR
 Be careful, Todd.

He releases the MUTE button.

MOTHER

Todd, are you there?

TODD

You're right, Mom. It hasn't been easy.

MOTHER

No, it hasn't. That sounds hard, Todd, it does. I'm sorry it's been so rough on you. Do you know what I did these last six months?

TODD

No, Mom, what?

MOTHER

I cried, like I lost a child. Is this all my fault? Did my husband do something wrong? Why must we suffer like this? Some days I can't even get off the couch.

TODD

You sound depressed.

Mother covers the phone, fights tears; looks at Father.

FATHER

We're trying to help him.

MOTHER

Is that what we're doing?

Father hands Mother a handwritten note.

FATHER

Go on. Read it to him.

MOTHER

Maybe if you talked to him more when he was growing up we wouldn't be having this conversation right now.

(to Todd)

Your father has something he wants to read to you. Go on.

The Mother puts the phone in his hand.

TODD

Dad? Dad?

FATHER

(hesitant, reading from the note)

“Dear Todd, We cannot support you in your choice. Your mother cries nearly every day. I feel like someone took out a lung. The guys at work keep asking me what’s wrong. How can I tell them my son is a homo? What is wrong with you? You used to be normal. Yours truly, Dad. P.S.: We need you to respect our opinion about your ‘situation.’”

TODD

Can you respect mine?

FATHER

(Wiping tears; to Mother)

I’m working double shifts, going into hoc to make him better. Tell him.

MOTHER

You have to make yourself right by God; only He can judge you, we do not judge you.

TODD

Yes, you do! You do judge me, otherwise what am I doing here?

MOTHER

(Fighting tears)

I don’t know, Todd. Like the Doctor says, you have to *repair*.

TODD

Doctor says it’s not my fault--

MOTHER

Listen to Doctor, he knows how to help you.

TODD

Doctor says Daddy sexually molested me.

Father and Mother are shocked. Doctor stands over Todd.

FATHER

I did no such thing!!

MOTHER

Todd, honey, Doctor doesn’t know what the hell he’s talking about.

She muffles the phone against her chest; nails her husband with her gaze:

Does he.

Doctor presses the MUTE button.

DOCTOR
 What did I tell you?

FATHER
 I never touched that boy.

Doctor raps his knuckle hard into Todd's head.

TODD
 Owwwwwwwwwwww!

FATHER
 I never even changed his diapers.

MOTHER
 Sometimes I wonder why I married you.

FATHER
 (Touching her arm)
 Because you love me.

She slaps his hand away.

MOTHER
 Don't touch me.

Doctor releases the MUTE button. Father uncovers the phone receiver. Todd and Mother hesitate to speak.

TODD
 Uhm. uh, Mom--

FATHER
 (Choking back tears)
 I want my boy back.

MOTHER
 Todd?

TODD
 How can you not love me anymore?

MOTHER
 What kind of wife would I be if I go against your father's wishes?

TODD

What kind of mother will you be if you don't?

MOTHER

(With great struggle)

Todd, if you change, I can love you again.

Todd's face empties. His world crashes. He is alone.

TODD

Okay Mom. I should go.

MOTHER

(fighting tears)

Ok well, try to make the best of it. Make sure you get enough sleep. Use that nice shampoo I sent down. And remember to wear your retainer.

TODD

Yah, ma, I will.

MOTHER

Pray it away, honey, just pray the gay away.

JACK

Jesus Christ.

TODD

I have to go.

MOTHER

Todd.

TODD

Mom.

MOTHER

I miss you, Todd.

TODD

I miss you too, Mom.

MOTHER

Okay. Goodbye, honey.

MOTHER

How can you be so hard? He's our son.

FATHER

No son of mine is a homosexual. Not in this house.

MOTHER

Someday, you're going to wake up and find yourself all alone in this house because there won't be anyone else here!

She exits.

FATHER

I never touched him, I swear!

He exits. Doctor lets the phone buzz then ends the call.
He smiles and leaves Todd sitting alone.

End of scene.

BACK AT THE BAR...

COSMO

My dad never laid a hand on me. My dad never paid *attention* to me.

JACK

My parents disowned me. They actually signed a paper.

Dorothy gives a rueful snort.

DOROTHY

Ha.

COSMO

What's so funny?

DOROTHY

You do what you have to do. Fuck the rest. My mom died when I was three. It was me and Dad, he was everything, taught me how to hit, how to catch. I was a real tomboy.

COSMO

Go figure.

DOROTHY

I turn 13 and bam, these girls arrive in full bloom.

COSMO

You have great breasts, by the way. 36?

DOROTHY

Double D.

JACK

(To Cosmo)

See?

DOROTHY

Dad liked my figure, said I looked like my mom, said he wanted me to act like a lady now that I was becoming a woman.

BUD

Just trying to make sure you grow up normal and all.

DOROTHY

Then he caught me in bed with Sandra, the second baseman.

COSMO

Sliding into home.

DOROTHY

It was nothing, girly stuff, kissing, hugging, groping. He freaked out. Next morning, he dragged me to the church for this one-on-one Identity Counseling for 'confused' girls.

COSMO

The Pastor and his Wife.

DOROTHY

Pastor was doughy, sweaty. But his wife smelled like hand cream. She taught me how to be feminine, how to wear high heels, how to wear make-up--everything to attract a man.

BUD

But that's good, right?

DOROTHY

We sat in their bedroom with the air conditioning. We sat on the bed. We drank Whiskey Sodas. They told me that lesbians weren't real women, that I needed to have sex with a man to know what I was missing, to see how good it was.

COSMO

I know where this is going.

DOROTHY

He was blessing a holy medal I got from my Dad; his hand went down my breast, rubbed my nipples, then down between my legs. My dress was off before I knew it. He laid down on top of me. His wife stroked my hair, she kissed my throat, said I was a good girl. I gasped. She told me that it always hurts a little, it's part of God's plan. They were grooming me for Jesus.

TODD

FYI: forced sexual activity with someone of the opposite gender is called corrective rape. Please continue.

DOROTHY

Eleven months of this. I told my father it was working. I started drinking, heavily. What am I gonna do? I needed my Dad's love but I couldn't tell him the truth. By the time I had the abortion, I was a full-blown alcoholic.

COSMO

Wait, what?

DOROTHY

They told me I got pregnant because God wanted me to be straight, but that I didn't deserve it because I was a lesbian, so they took me to their private 'doctor.' I couldn't tell my dad, I had no idea who I was, what I was doing. I quit the softball team. Twice I tried to run my car into the metal divider on the high way.

BUD

I know the feeling.

JACK

Right?

DOROTHY

Second time, I wound up in the hospital for six weeks, got addicted to pain killers, my thinking was all messed up; what if Pastor was right, maybe I tried to kill myself because I hated my lesbian impulses. But then I thought of his wife's hands, her lips, her hair, the taste of her saliva, I thought of Sandra and no, I know who I am, right? I'm Dorothy, fuck them, I like girls. By the time I got out, I was convinced Pastor was a monster, and so was his wife. I can still smell the cream on her hands.

TODD

Some things you can't forget--

BUD

No matter how hard you try.

DOROTHY

I left for college, suitcase full of Oxycontin. First week there, I came out, a full-fledged lesbian. I started to feel more like who I am; I was happy.

COSMO

Prolly the Oxy, hon.

DOROTHY

Prolly. When I came home at Christmas, I told my Dad I was gay. Broke his heart, he loved me more than anyone in the world, but now he couldn't love me anymore. It killed him. Told me to leave immediately. At the door, in tears, he says: If you change, I can love you again. Exact words. My dad.

TODD

I'm sorry.

JACK

What did you do?

DOROTHY

Dropped out of school, got sucked down a K hole of drugs, booze, anything to numb myself. If I lived how I really felt, I lose my father. I love him, he's all I got.

TODD

It's not your fault.

DOROTHY

It is what it is. Fucked me up for years. And, I did the ex-gay thing and then I didn't and then I did, like I was looking for something I lost, but I couldn't remember what it was. Last year, Dad was diagnosed with stage four prostate cancer, terminal, six months, tops.

Her tough exterior wavers for a moment; she brushes away sudden tears.

Sorry.

BUD

You can't fuckin' win.

COSMO

Surrender, Dorothy.

JACK

I'm sorry.

DOROTHY

He calls to tell me, the only thing he wants is to love me again. I didn't even think about it: I'm ex-gay now, Dad, I like men! It just shot out of my mouth. He bursts into tears, tells me to come back home. That's all I needed.

TODD

'If you change, I can love you again.'

DOROTHY

I wore my heels, I put on skirts, I used hand cream. I found a man in the church, Phil. Now, I'm engaged, and my father can die happy.

BUD

Love is about sacrifice. Good for you!

COSMO

But it's not real--

JACK

You're using "Phil" to make your dad happy? What happens to Phil?

DOROTHY

I don't expect anyone to understand--

COSMO

Good thing.

DOROTHY

--And I don't give a fuck if you do. I want my father to love me again. I can give this to him. Soon, he'll be dead. And then, I can have my life back.

Doctor rolls on a full length mirror in front of Todd.
Opens his notebook.

JACK

Waiting for someone to die is no way to live.

COSMO

You need to take a good long look at yourself, lady.

TODD

No, I know exactly how it feels when something inside snaps.

DOCTOR

Todd, I see potential in you.

TODD

You doubt everything, you doubt your desires, you doubt your feelings--

DOCTOR

You're smart, observant, you think on your feet.

TODD

You'll do anything to be what they want.

BUD

Anything.

DOCTOR

Your parents only want what's best for you. And so do I.

TODD

They already broke my body. That phone call broke my heart.

SC. 3: MAN IN THE MIRROR THERAPY: DOCTOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE

Todd stands in front of the mirror; Doctor to his side, in full 'golden father' mode.

DOCTOR

You know, Todd, with some work, you'd make an excellent Best Boy. What do you think of that, buddy?

TODD

I think...I think that's awesome.

DOCTOR

Simon's a wildcard, impetuous, needy; but you're steady, smart, strong.

TODD

(To the guys)

I was busted up, I was empty. I didn't know what to do.

Todd makes a muscle.

(To Doctor)

I've gotten stronger, sir.

Doctor squeezes the muscle, makes a note in his book.

DOCTOR

Very good. Very, very good. You see, hauling rocks for 12 hours straight not only builds a strong character, it builds a strong body.

BUD

(To the guys)

See?

DOCTOR

Todd, are you ready to go the next level?

TODD

Yes, Doctor. I'm ready.

DOCTOR

Good boy. Tonight, we go Deep Shame. Look in the mirror, what do you see?

TODD

(Genuinely, to Doctor)

Fear. Guilt. Shame. What do you see, Doctor?

DOCTOR

A lonely, broken boy, addicted to men. But you don't need other men, Todd; you have me. And Jesus.

BUD

(To his pals in the bar)

He's right.

COSMO

Hallelujah.

TODD

Help me, Doctor.

Doctor gently puts his hand on Todd's shoulder.

DOCTOR

Todd, how do you feel about what your mother said on the phone?

DOCTOR/DOROTHY

If you change, I can love you.

Something inside Todd snaps. He cries.

TODD

Bad. I feel bad...

Doctor makes a note, rubs Todd's back.

DOCTOR

Todd, are you ready to let go of the pain? Are you ready to let go and let live?

TODD

Yes...Doctor I am...help me...I'm ready...

DOCTOR

Deep shame requires deep trust.

BUD

It's all about trust.

TODD

(Narrating)

Is he right? Can I change?

DOCTOR

Take off your shirt.

Todd takes off his shirt.

COSMO

(To Dorothy)

You have no idea who you are.

DOROTHY

And you do?

DOCTOR

I want you to become addicted only to me. And Jesus.

TODD

(Narrating)

He's offering me something--

DOCTOR

The Gays hate you.

TODD

(Narrating)

He's offering me hope.

DOCTOR

You're nothing but a piece of ass, a commodity, a slab of meat to devour and toss away.

Doctor takes a close inspection of Todd's naked torso, squeezing here and there, making notes.

BUD

Ain't that the truth.

TODD

Yes, Doctor.

(Narrating)

What I don't tell him is what it really feels like when I pull the shirt over my head and expose my naked flesh to him. I'm afraid he's going to laugh at me. I'm afraid he won't think I'm sexy. I'm afraid he won't want me. I'm afraid he will. I'm defensive. I'm resentful. I'm ashamed. I'm also incredibly turned on.

BUD

(To the others)

See? It's his own fault. He wanted it!

TODD

The male body responds to erotic stimulation even when we don't want it to, Bud.

DOROTHY

It's all about men and their dicks.

DOCTOR

How can you live like that, always hoping they find you man enough, firm enough, big enough, young enough. Peddling your flesh to cover your rent.

Doctor makes a note in his book.

TODD

(Narrating)

I stand taller, my stomach shudders deep into my groin to have his eyes and breath on me while I expose my chest. I want him to like me. I want him to be nice to me.

DOCTOR

Lift up your arms, son. There you go.

Todd obeys. Doctor inhales Todd's 'essence.' His professional veneer wilts with the intoxicating musk.

DOROTHY

(To Cosmo)

I just want him to love me before he's gone, is that so terrible?

COSMO

So let him love you, not some made-up version of you. You only get one shot.

TODD

I feel his breath deepen, his face close to my body, inhaling me, absorbing me, melting me, replacing me, oh fuck I didn't expect it to feel like this.

DOCTOR

(trying to resist bliss)

When I was your age, I had a boyfriend, a 'fuck-buddy,' sweet, damaged boy named Max, smart, sexy, funny, like you, blur of drugs sex cash love. Max. I found him dead on the bathroom floor. Slit his wrists. Felt my insides rip out. This is going to happen to me. This is what I deserve. And that's when God sent me to my first meeting. So I could be here to save you.

TODD

In that moment, I feel a tiny shred of pity for this powerful, unhappy man.

DOCTOR

You can't be happy if you're gay.

BUD

Thank you.

TODD

(Narrating)

And I realize I'm not the only one in need of help.

DOCTOR

Take off your pants.

TODD

(Narrating)

I'm not the only one who's trapped.

Todd removes his pants. Doctor puts down his book.

COSMO

Is it me or is it getting hot in here?

Todd gives an enticing, 'casual' full body flex.

DOCTOR

Strong, young, intelligent, whole future ahead of you...

TODD

(Narrating)

His hands glide along my skin barely grazing me. There's a shock running back and forth between us, I can feel it in my gut and my balls. He feels it, too, I know it. And I like it, I hate it, it turns me on and makes me angry. He wants me, that makes me powerful. It also makes me a victim, stuck here in the middle of the jungle, alone.

BUD

(To himself)

It's a choice--

DOCTOR

Go deep shame, Todd. You can do it. You can be happy.

TODD

(Narrating)

All I have is me--

DOCTOR

You want your mother's love?

TODD

(To Doctor)

Yes.

DOCTOR

Take off your underpants.

Todd slides off his underpants. Doctor opens his arms.

BUD

Fuck.

DOCTOR

Who's my good boy? Who's my Best Boy?

Todd steps into his non-sexual hug.

DOCTOR, TODD

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come...

End of scene.

BACK AT THE BAR,

Doctor leaves with the mirror. Todd dresses.

BUD

Yeah, no, I'm not sure he's got your best interests at heart, bro--

JACK

Guys like this guy, like Father Dominick, I gave him so much power, because he was a man of Jesus, and it's all about Jesus, right?

BUD

Right, you give them your trust, and they fuck you up the ass.

COSMO

Really?

BUD

We're not talking about me, we're talking about Todd.

TODD

Actually, we were talking about Jesus.

COSMO

I had a huge crush on Jesus. That loincloth, those thighs--

BUD

I outta bust you one.

COSMO

Take the stick out, Muriel.

JACK

They used to tell us suicide was a mortal sin, except if you were gay. If you were gay, it was okay to kill yourself on accounta our unnatural abomination, and Jesus would say it was alright. But only if you were gay.

BUD

Jack was an altar boy.

JACK

Father Dominick gave me a gay exorcism.

COSMO

Well, of course he did.

Dorothy becomes Father Dominick.

DOROTHY

“...Therefore, put on the full armor of God, For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Dorothy takes a feather out, traces it along Jack’s body.

JACK

Up in his private quarters. Incense, candles, the whole nine yards. Had me strip naked, lay on the bed, put an Angel Medal on my forehead, told me --

JACK

--He was my protector.

DOROTHY

I am your protector.

JACK

I closed my eyes. He took out a long feather and went up and down my body, til everything was erect. Then he sucked the demon out through my penis.

BUD

What?

COSMO

Talk about *The Bad Seed*.

Dorothy takes out a small plastic Ziplock.

JACK

Then he spit it out into a Ziplock bag, along with pieces of plastic and metal he said he sucked out of me.

BUD

That’s too fucked up.

JACK

Once he spit out a thumbtack.

Dorothy spits a thumbtack into the bag.

Bud becomes Simon, at the camp.

BUD/SIMON

(Reciting catechism)

“I love women.”

JACK

I was so confused and upset I remember praying to God please let me get this over with.

SIMON

Come on, guys, with me. “I love women.”

SC 4: BUNKS, LIGHTS OUT

End of the night. Todd and Orlando hand-scrub the floor.
Sebastian strains to hold up a stack of books in each
outstretched hand; he carries his bag of rocks on his back.
Jean struggles through push-ups.

BOYS

“I love women.”

SIMON

“I enjoy a woman’s body in the nude.”

BOYS

“I enjoy a woman’s body in the nude!”

SEBASTIAN

(Holding back tears)

I miss my dog Ollie.

ORLANDO

(To himself)

Hail Mary, full of grace...

JEAN

(struggling)

One more--

SIMON

“Having sex with a woman is wonderful.”

BOYS

“Having sex with a woman is wonderful.”

SEBASTIAN

Daddy says I’m homo cuz I’m the runt, just like lil’ Ollie-pants.

ORLANDO

...the Lord is with thee...

SIMON

“I am changing. I love women.”

BOYS

“I am changing. I love women.”

SEBASTIAN

Says he shoulda drowned me at birth.

SIMON

“Amen.”

BOYS

“Amen.”

Todd and Orlando take a break from scrubbing the floor.

ORLANDO

Oh my Jesus, I can’t do it anymore--

SIMON

Come on guys, it’s almost lights out. “I love women.”

TODD

(Looking for distraction)

Sebastian, I love dogs, tell me about your dog, tell me about Ollie.

SIMON

Sebastian, come on, “I love women.”

SEBASTIAN

Oh, Ollie's just a big ole' black-and-white meathead pit-bull, a real scaredy cat, 'fraid of his own tail. We watched *The Wizard of Oz* every Friday night, he loves Toto.

ORLANDO

(to himself)

...blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus...

JEAN

(Struggling with the push-ups)

...one more, one more...

TODD

I bet you can't wait to see him again.

SEBASTIAN

(sadness erupting)

Mr. Olliepants....

SIMON

(To Todd)

I told you knock it off.

TODD

(Defiantly)

Sebastian, I'm here for you, dude.

SIMON

(Emphatically)

"I love women."

SEBASTIAN

(barely holding it together)

When I told him I was gay, Daddy got his gun, shot Ollie right in the head.

TODD

Oh, fuck.

SEBASTIAN

Twice.

ORLANDO

Hail Mary full of grace--

SEBASTIAN

(distraught)

My little Ollie, he always smiled always always--

SIMON

(To Todd)

Asshole.

SEBASTIAN

(falling apart)

He was looking to me for help, and then he was dead and I miss him, I can't stand it, I miss him so much...

Sebastian sobs, totters. Todd goes to help him. Simon shoves Todd angrily away.

SIMON

Stay the fuck away from him!

JEAN

You guys, knock it off!

SEBASTIAN

(Crying)

Ollie little Olliehead--

SIMON

I'm not afraid of you, bro.

TODD

It's not me you should be afraid of, *bro*.

SIMON

I'm Best Boy. Do not get in my way.

SEBASTIAN

Twice in the head...

TODD

Are you threatening me, bro?

SIMON

Got another Simon Special with your name on it, bro.

SEBASTIAN

Ollie pants, Ollie, Ollie Ollie Ollie--

SIMON

(Tenderly, to Sebastian)

Hey, hey, it's alright, it's okay, come on now, it's okay, you got to stop crying, dude, don't let him see, come here, that's right--

Simon rocks him in his arms; his heart breaks for his friend; they both cry.

Doctor pokes his head in the door. The other boys notice Doctor, gird themselves for the storm.

Sebastian sees Doctor; he gasps, steps away from Simon; he trembles.

DOCTOR

Sebastian, stop trembling. It's weak.

SIMON

Doctor, I can explain.

DOCTOR

I'm speaking to Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

It's all my fault--

DOCTOR

Be a man, Sebastian, stand on your own two feet.

SEBASTIAN

Punish me, not him. Please, Doctor--please--

DOCTOR

You disgust God and you disgust me. The both of you.

SEBASTIAN

I was telling them about Ollie about how when my Daddy shot him in the head twice right in front of me--

DOCTOR

Those bullets were meant for you, Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN

Please don't please--

DOCTOR

Your daddy shot Ollie because he couldn't shoot *you*. Will of God.

Sebastian cracks; his words explode out of him.

SEBASTIAN

Fuck God! Fuck God! Fuck you! Fuck my father! Fuck my mother! Fuck the Holy Spirit!
And Jesus Christ can suck my fucking dick!

Doctor punches Sebastian in the gut, drops him to his knee. Sebastian gasps for air, moaning.

Doctor walks around Simon, fresh prey. Simon is desperate; he knows what's coming.

SIMON

I can explain--

DOCTOR

Simon, add five more rocks to Sebastian's bag.

SIMON

But it's too heavy for him, sir.

DOCTOR

Do not countermand me, boy.

SIMON

Yes, sir.

Simon adds rocks during the following:

TODD

(Bulldozing Simon)

Simon's in love with Sebastian!

JEAN

Todd!

DOCTOR

Simon, have you developed an unhealthy emotional attachment for Sebastian?

SIMON

No way, I was helping him.

TODD

He's in love with him, Doctor.

SIMON

Hell no, I'm not gay anymore.

DOCTOR

Homosexual love is a delusion gay men use to justify their degenerate impulses.

TODD

I've seen them in the bunks after lights out--

ORLANDO

Dude, chill--

TODD

Making out and giggling real quiet and holding each other. I heard him say "I love you."

DOCTOR

Simon, I had higher hopes for you.

SIMON

He's lying!

DOCTOR

Despite all my hard work, you are never *not* going to be homosexual.

SIMON

He's jealous, he wants to be Best Boy, don't listen to him--

DOCTOR

Todd would make an outstanding Best Boy, wouldn't you, Todd?

TODD

Yes, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Todd, hit Simon.

Todd punches Simon in the mouth. Simon raises his fists.
Simon, put your fists down. Accept your punishment.

SIMON

But I don't love Sebastian, I do not love him, I don't, I swear--

SEBASTIAN

It's okay--

DOCTOR

We may need to send you home, Simon, let your Daddy handle you.

SIMON

No! You said you wouldn't, please Doctor, don't do that--

TODD

Send him home. Let his father throw him down the stairs again--

Todd pushes Simon to the floor

SIMON

Shut up--stop--

Todd hits him freely.

TODD

How many ribs did he break, dude? How many split lips and black eyes and cigarette burns? How many trips to the E.R.?

SIMON

(to Doctor, stung)

You told him--you told him--

TODD

Your father hates you.

JEAN

Todd, stop--

TODD

Send him back home. Let daddy beat the gay out of him with a fucking hammer--

SIMON

(Cracking)

Please...no...I'm sorry...

Simon sobs, drops to his knees, broken.

DOCTOR

Simon, you are relieved of Best Boy duties. Effective immediately, Todd is the new Best Boy. Todd, congratulations.

TODD

Thank you, Doctor, I won't let you down.

DOCTOR

Simon, you're on latrine duty for the next month. Sebastian, lend him your toothbrush. Now, all of you, set up for Movie Night. I'll be right back.

Doctor exits. The boys are shattered.

TODD

(To Jean)

I'm Best Boy, can you believe it?

JEAN

Congratulations.

Jean slaps him hard across the face.

Asshole.

End of scene.

BACK AT THE BAR...

COSMO

Asshole--

JACK

Asshole--

TODD

Oh yeah, big time.

DOROTHY

There's lots of ways to beat a kid.

BUD

Yeah, and some of us have the scars to prove it.

TODD

That wasn't me, it was somebody else inside me. I wasn't in control. Jean was right. I was an asshole.

Dorothy becomes Jean.

JEAN

(To Todd)

A major fucking asshole.

SC. 5: SETTING UP MOVIE NIGHT, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

In a hurry, they set up Movie Night; a semi-circle of five chairs connected to electrodes that connect to a common power-strip. Simon sits by himself.

JEAN

What do you think is gonna happen if Simon goes back to his father? How long's he going to last? And Sebastian, he doesn't suffer enough already? Are you trying to kill him? We have nothing down here. We have no life. No escape. All we have is each other. And you betrayed them both.

ORLANDO

Give me a heads up before you throw *me* under the bus, too, willya hon?

JEAN

If you don't have compassion for others, how are you gonna have it for yourself?

(To Sebastian)

Sebastian, come on, hon, help us set up--

Sebastian staggers over to help prep. Todd takes his arm.

TODD

Sebastian, hey man, I'm uh I didn't mean to rat on you.

SEBASTIAN

You're Best Boy, that's your job.-

As the boys prep the room, Todd's eyes are on Simon.

ORLANDO

Motherfucking Movie Night, can you believe it?

JEAN

I hate Movie Night.

TODD
What happens on Movie Night?

ORLANDO
We watch movies.

TODD
And?

ORLANDO
Doctor gives us Aversion Therapy.

TODD
Aversion Therapy?

JEAN
Electro-shock.

ORLANDO, JEAN
(Quoting Doctor)
'It's scientific!'

ORLANDO
Doctor hooks it up to an old lawnmower, rigged up with engine parts and stuff, I shit you not. He starts at 70 volts, but goes up to like 325--

JEAN
Don't bite your tongue off. Not pretty.

TODD
'kay.

JEAN
Make sure the electrode cuffs are plugged in right, if Doctor thinks your faking it...

ORLANDO
Oh my Jesus, help me--

The boys finish up. Todd quietly kneels next to Simon.

SIMON
Fuck you.

TODD
I'm...I didn't mean to say all that shit about your dad.

SIMON

You read my files.

TODD

Doctor made me. He told me everything--

SIMON

Don't hide behind Doctor. You took me down because you wanted to be Best Boy.

TODD

No, you're right. I did, I wanted to be Best Boy.

SIMON

So did I.

TODD

You're right. I'm sorry. But it was his idea.

SIMON

He said I have a spark. He was grooming me. He said it was destiny, the two of us in the jungle helping gay boys go straight, like us, together, him and me.

TODD

But you're not straight. You're gay. And so is he.

SIMON

I can't go back, I can't.

TODD

Your dad?

SIMON

Twelve times, he sent me to the Emergency Room. Broke my arm twice, jaw once; I can't remember how many black eyes. The last concussion was right before I came here.

Stunned, Todd goes to Simon.

TODD

Simon, I'm sorry.

SIMON

Yeah.

TODD

I'm so, so, so sorry--

He goes in for a non-sexual hug, but Simon reflexively grabs Todd's arm and slams him with a Simon Special. Todd is once again on his back, moaning.

TODD

Owwwwwwww--

SIMON

I forgive you. That's what Jesus would do.

Simon helps Todd to his feet.

By the way, you suck at Best Boy.

All the boys race into their chairs, affixing the electrode cuffs. The chords are all plugged in, the boys settle in.

Doctor enters, pushing what once had been a small, electric lawnmower, transformed into a makeshift generator.

He plugs 'generator' into the power strip. It sparks and sputters. The lights dim, then settle.

He grabs his video remote control, and a bowl of Hershey's kisses.

SC. 6: MOVIE NIGHT

DOCTOR

All hooked up, boys? Aversion Therapy utilizes visual imagery to break the homosexual of his degrading impulses. We present you with a pair of options regarding sexual preference, and allow you to choose the right one. At crucial moments, I apply light electrical shocks to help guide your choice. Don't worry, I'm in total control.

Doctor presses the movie remote control; we hear a STRAIGHT PORN MOVIE. Doctor pops a piece of chocolate in each boy's mouth.

WOMAN

Oh, fuck my tits, Daddy, cum for me--

MAN

Ughhh--

DOCTOR

Mmm, Hershey's kisses, good--

WOMAN

Come all over my fucking tits, Daddy, come for me oh yeah yeah ugh ugh ugh ugh

MAN

UUGHHHHHHHH

DOCTOR

Hot, right?

Doctor flicks the remote control: we hear a GAY PORN MOVIE. Lurid music; a younger/older couple go at it.

OLDER GAY MAN

"Suck that cock, boy, suck that cock..."

YOUNGER GAY MAN

"Yes daddy oh fuck yeah--"

Doctor flips a control; 75 volts zip through the boys. They yelp, like being stung by wasps. Lights flicker.

BOYS

(variously)

Owww! Stop! Arrghh!...

DOCTOR

Aversive conditioning rebalances your nervous system via electric shocks. That's only 75 volts. Gradually, we raise the voltage to intensify the treatment. It's scientific.

He raises the current. The lights briefly dim.

SIMON

OOWWWWWWWWWWW--

JEAN

I'm on fire!!

ORLANDO

Jesus Christ make my heart stop!!

I want to die!!

TODD

Auntie Em, Auntie Em!

SEBASTIAN

Doctor flips off the current. The boys fall back into their chairs, relieved of the voltage.

Doctor flicks back to the STRAIGHT PORN MOVIE. More Hershey's kisses.

WOMAN

Oh my God I want your cum in my nasty bitch slut hole, I want your cum in my pussy--

MAN

Baby--

WOMAN

Give me that cum give me that cum oh fuck oh my god--

Doctor flicks on the GAY PORN MOVIE.

OLDER GAY MAN

"I'm gonna fuck that sweet little boy-hole like it ain't never been fucked before UGH."

YOUNGER GAY MAN

"Oh yeah, daddy, fuck me--"

DOCTOR

We're teaching you how to hate the homosexual impulse within yourself, so you can hate it in others. Important stuff.

Doctor ups the voltage, lights flicker. The boys scream.

ORLANDO

Oh Jesus oh Jesus oh JESUS..

JEAN

No no no no no no no--

TODD

Home let me go home--

SIMON

Fuck!!!

SEBASTIAN

Fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck...

Simon and Sebastian grab hands behind their chairs.
Doctor kicks their hands apart, flicks off the voltage. The boys recover, moaning and shaking in their chairs.

DOCTOR

Do not abuse my good nature. Do not countermand me. Do not betray me. Obey me. Trust me. Emulate me. Do you want to be happy, boys? Do you want to be heterosexual?

Doctor flicks on the STRAIGHT PORN MOVIE.

WOMAN

Oh my God your cock is so hard oh my God ugh your cum is so good yeah oh oh uughh I'm so wet cum all over my tits baby so nasty so good you're the king the king uughhh--

DOCTOR

Or do you want to be a self-loathing homosexual the rest of your life?

Doctor clicks to the GAY PORN MOVIE in full throttle.

YOUNGER GAY MAN

"Fuck that ass, daddy, fuck me fuck me fuck me--"

Doctor clamps a large electrode to Sebastian's crotch.

SIMON

No please don't Doctor--

SEBASTIAN

I am but I do not want to be homosexual...

Doctor puts a big baby pacifier in Sebastian's mouth.

SIMON

Do it to me, not him, I'm the bad one, it's my fault--

DOCTOR

This is for your own good, son.

Doctor twists the generator to 250 volts.

The lights flicker and GO OUT. In the darkness, we HEAR the boys SCREAM wildly in their chairs.

Then, silence hangs in the darkness.

End of scene.

BACK AT THE BAR...

They remain in darkness. They sit, stunned. Sip their drinks. Dry their eyes. The light's slowly restore.

SC 7: LIGHTS OUT, BUNK

The bar and camp worlds start to blend.

In a traumatic daze, Todd, Orlando and Jean start to clear away the chairs. Orlando pukes into a waste basket. Bud and Jack watch from the bar.

ORLANDO

Motherfucking movie night...

JEAN

I can't...I can't...

ORLANDO

"How long will you torment me, Jesus--"

SIMON

I can't...

TODD

I missed the prom...

JEAN

I can't--

JACK

(To Bud)

Fuckin' electroshock, on kids.

BUD

I can't believe it. I just can't.

JEAN

(Freaked out)

We got to get out of here, Todd, no, we have to get out of here--

TODD

There's no way out, you said so yourself--

ORLANDO

Please blessed father--

JEAN

You're Best Boy, think of something--

TODD

Right, a plan, like what?

JEAN

Like grab the key from his belt and take the fucking car!

TODD

But I failed my driving test.

JEAN

I'm not gonna make it, Todd. I'm not gonna fucking make it.

TODD

Okay, I mean, let me think--

BUD

(To Jack)

Ex-gay's the only way, right?

ORLANDO

(To Jean)

Pray to Jesus, honey.

JEAN

What am I supposed to be, I don't know what I am, who I am, have I ruined my life??

BUD

(To Jack)

Couple of sessions with the belt'll set her straight-

JACK

Your father did a real fucking number on you, Buddy Boy.

JEAN

Do I need to change who I am to be who I am?

BUD

(To/about Jean)

Yes.

TODD

No, you're perfect. Perfect.

They embrace. But then break apart, unable to withstand the wave of nausea brought up by their physical contact.

Doctor pokes his head in the door.

DOCTOR

Todd? Let's pray, shall we?

Doctor exits. Todd hesitates, exits.

We hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from Doctor's office.

Bud enters the scene as Simon. Shaken, he goes to the door.

SIMON

(Quietly)

What about me?

He takes off his shirt. Exits.

End of scene.

SC 8: DOCTOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir plays.

Doctor sits in his chair. Todd is spread across Doctor's lap; his pants at his ankles.

DOCTOR, TODD

Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come--

Doctor spansk Todd's ass. Todd yelps.

Owww--
TODD

How does that feel, Todd?
DOCTOR

Hurts--it hurts--
TODD

That's good, Todd, that's very good. Thy will be done--
DOCTOR

Thy will be done on earth as it is in--
TODD

Owwwww--
Another big spank.

Simon barges in.

What about me?
SIMON

Todd falls from Doctor's lap, pulls his pants on fast.

Simon, you are interrupting Todd's therapy--
DOCTOR

Simon drops his shorts, stands in his underpants.

I will do anything, Doctor. Please don't send me back--
SIMON

Simon--
DOCTOR

I'm begging you, please--
SIMON

Simon.
DOCTOR

Simon drops to his knees, in tears.

I love you--
SIMON

DOCTOR

You don't love me, you crave me.

SIMON

I love you, I want to be like you, just like you, the two of us, together, like you promised--

DOCTOR

Simon--

SIMON

You gave me a home, a father who loves me, who won't throw me down the stairs, you made me feel safe--

DOCTOR

And you toss that security back in my face.

SIMON

You gave me hope.

DOCTOR

Put your clothes on. You disgust me.

SIMON

You said I could trust you.

DOCTOR

Trust is a vital component of the doctor/patient relationship.

SIMON

But you're just like him, throwing me down the stairs, kicking me in the teeth--

DOCTOR

Rejection is part of the lesson.

SIMON

I let you in, I let you inside me.

DOCTOR

I thought I could help you, but I was wrong.

SIMON

Please, give me another chance.

DOCTOR

Perhaps Sebastian can help you.

SIMON

We didn't do anything! Todd is lying, he wants to be Best Boy.

DOCTOR

Pack your bags. I'm sending you home tomorrow.

SIMON

No!

DOCTOR

Close the door on the way out.

SIMON

You can't send me home, I won't go, I can't go!

DOCTOR

Six A.M. sharp.

SIMON

You said you loved me!

Simon runs out in tears. Doctor composes himself.

DOCTOR

Where were we?

TODD

You cannot send Simon home, his father will kill him, please Doctor, I'm begging you--

DOCTOR

Of course I'm not going to send him home. Let's pray.

TODD

(Calling)

Simon--

Todd runs out the door. Doctor kicks the desk.

End of scene.

BACK AT THE BAR,

COSMO

This shit is criminal.

JACK

These are fucking kids--

COSMO

We're adults, if we're stupid enough to pay for someone to fuck with our heads, that shit's on us.

JACK

These kids have no say in the matter, they're the ones who are gonna suffer.

DOROTHY

Because you'll do anything, say anything to get your parents' love. You're fucked.

JACK

Hey, what happened to Bud?

COSMO

Fuck Bud, what happened to Simon?

SC 9: SUICIDE, MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM

Simon hangs forward, a jump rope wrapped around his throat, anchored to the door knob. His face is puffed up and red. He stares ahead, glazed. He clutches a note.

After a dreadful beat, Todd enters in pursuit.

TODD

Simon—

Todd finds Simon's body hanging from the jump rope.

Fuck no.

Todd lowers him to the floor.

TODD

Simon, wake up, Simon--Jesus Christ--Simon!

Todd gives Simon mouth to mouth. He recoils at the touch of Simon's lips. He forces himself to continue.

Simon sputters to life. He coughs, gagging, groggy. Todd pushes away from Simon. Sees the note on the floor.

TODD

(Calling out)

He's here, I found him, he's alive. He's still alive...

Todd reads the suicide note. Bud rises, grabs the note from Todd; brusquely brushes past him.

BUD

(Through tears)

I'm done. Not even listening. Get me another beer.

End of scene.

SC. 10: BACK AT THE BAR/BUNK, LIGHTS OUT, THE NEXT NIGHT

Bud sits with his empty beer.

DOROTHY

What's the matter, Buddy Boy? Little choked up?

BUD

You think this is funny?

DOROTHY

Yeah, I do.

BUD

Fuckin' dyke--

DOROTHY

Fuckin' faggot.

COSMO

Keep it civil, ladies--

TODD

Simon was sent back home, after he tried to kill himself.

ORLANDO

(barely holding it together)

Madre de dios, at least he got motherfucking out--

BUD
 (Almost to himself)
 I can still feel it--

JACK
 Got to let it go, Bud, we all do--

BUD
 It hurts--

TODD
 Sebastian was put on massive medication.

Sebastian sucks on his pacifier.

SEBASTIAN
 (To nobody in particular)
 I am a non-sexual homosexual and God loves me....

Doctor pokes his head in.

DOCTOR
 Todd? Shall we pray?

Doctor exits. Todd rises, looks at Jean. Jean snaps to, tossing belongings in a pillow case.

JEAN
 We have to get out of here, we have to get out of here, no, I'm leaving, we have to go--

ORLANDO
 --Bendita tu eres entre todas las mujeres--

TODD
 There's no way out--

BUD
 I can't--

JEAN
 What's going to happen to us, Todd!?

ORLANDO
 --y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesus.

TODD/BUD

I don't know what to do--

SEBASTIAN

(Medicated babbling)

Don't worry about me, I don't matter anyway, right, I don't matter, I'm fine--

BUD

(To himself, faltering)

Don't listen don't listen ignore it--

He grabs the TV remote, turns it on mid-game.

SEBASTIAN

I don't matter, I'm fine, I'm good, I don't matter--

BUD

Maybe we can catch the end of the game.

Jack swipes the controls from Bud.

JACK

Give me that fucking thing.

He snaps off the game.

BUD

(About to snap)

I'm sorry, it's me, I'm sorry--

SEBASTIAN

I'm fine, I'm good; I am, but do not want to be a homosexual.

Doctor pokes his head in.

DOCTOR

And Todd? Don't keep me waiting.

Doctor exits to his office.

Todd pauses; follows Doctor, taking his time before joining him. A million thoughts race through his mind.

SC. 11: DOCTOR'S OFFICE

The Mormon Tabernacle Choir sings. Doctor waits.

Todd enters, walks to Doctor, masculine, confident, focused, like Orlando taught him. He peels off his shirt. Then pulls off Doctor's shirt. Doctor is happily surprised as Todd seduces him.

Note: Dorothy, Cosmo, Jack, Bud, Orlando, Sebastian and Jean react in their private thoughts:

TODD

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost--

DOCTOR

Amen.

TODD

Our Father--

DOCTOR

Todd--oh, Todd--

TODD

Who art in Heaven--

DOCTOR

Todd, good, masculine, dominant--

ORLANDO

Santa Maria, Madre de Dios--

TODD

Hallowed be thy name--

DOCTOR

Confident, manly, strong and I, I, I--

COSMO

Just want to be loved--

BUD

I'm sorry--

DOCTOR

I commend your discretion during--Simon stuff--

COSMO
Is that so much to fucking ask--

JACK
Father fucking Dominick--

TODD
Thy kingdom come--

DOROTHY
Fuck Pastor, fuck his wife--

DOCTOR
Thought Simon had it....uughh--

BUD
It hurts, stings--

TODD
Thy will be done--

DOCTOR
Just trying to shake him up ugh--

BUD
Leave me alone--

TODD
On Earth, as it is--

DOCTOR
--in Heaven--Heaven--Yes, Todd, good--

JEAN/DOROTHY
Who am I--

BUD
Stop--

DOROTHY
I can't keep pretending--

SEBASTIAN
Ollie Ollie Olliepants--

I can't do it--	JEAN
Like a fucking whip--	BUD
Breaking my heart--	JEAN/DOROTHY
Stop--	BUD
I want my life back!	JACK/SEBASTIAN
Forgive us our trespasses --	TODD
	Todd gives Doctor's nipple a painful twist.
Uuughh--	DOCTOR
As we forgive those--	TODD
Jesus, help me--	ORLANDO
Help me--	BUD
Help me--	SEBASTIAN
Help me--	JEAN
As we forgive those--who trespass--against us--	DOCTOR
Lead us not into temptation--	TODD

DOCTOR
Temptation oh God--

TODD
But deliver us--

DOCTOR
Yes yes--deliver us--

TODD
Deliver us from evil--

DOCTOR
Deliver us from evil--

Todd plants a deep kiss on Doctor's mouth, as he reaches for the car key on Doctor's belt. In a mad tumble,

ORLANDO
Save me--

SEBASTIAN
Daddy--

COSMO
Stop--

DOROTHY
Please--

BUD
Don't--

JACK
Don't--

BUD
DON'T!

Doctor grabs Todd's hand. They struggle over the key.

DOCTOR
Do you think I'm stupid?

TODD

No, I think you're a fucked-up closet case who can't accept the fact that he's a gay man--

DOCTOR

The shame is real, Todd--give me that key--

TODD

Simon left a suicide note. It said "I love you."

DOCTOR

Simon was a very confused young man.

TODD

He trusted you--you're breaking my hand, let go!

DOCTOR

Give me the fucking key--

Doctor squeezes Todd's hand, crushing it.

TODD

Oowwwwww!

BUD

No--

TODD

NO!

Todd steps on Doctor's foot, slams in a clumsy Simon Special. Doctor spirals to the floor, unconscious.

BUD

Yes--

For a moment, something uncoils in Bud. His belief system is unmoored. Todd holds the keys.

TODD

I don't feel shame because I'm gay. I feel shame because you *make* me feel ashamed!

Todd races back into his shirt. He looks closer at Doctor. Oh my God. He's dead. I killed him. Great. I'm a murderer. *And* I'm gay.

Doctor slightly stirs, still unconscious.
Oh my God, you're not dead. Sigh of relief. Fuck you.

As Todd rushes out, he bumps into Sebastian.

SEBASTIAN
I'm a non-sexual homosexual and God loves me.

TODD
Sebastian, I have to go, before he wakes up--

They look at Doctor. Sebastian's face lights up.

SEBASTIAN
(A faint whiff of *The Wizard of Oz*)
You killed her...

TODD
Knocked him out.

SEBASTIAN
(with adulation)
Best Boy...Best Boy...

TODD
Sebastian, I have to go, focus in, I need you to listen to me.

SEBASTIAN
Focus--

BUD
(desperate for internal anchor)
Doesn't matter--focus--

TODD
Sebastian, your life matters. You matter. Don't forget that, Sebastian. You matter.

Sebastian hears the message through a fog.

SEBASTIAN
I won't forget.

BUD
Doesn't matter.

TODD

Good. When he wakes up, I dunno, stall him or something, oh my God, whatever, 'k bye!

Todd runs out. Doctor groggily revives.

Sebastian traps Doctor in a Schoolboy Pin; his head under Sebastian's knees, crotch and ass. The extra weight of rocks squashes Doctor with a sickening jolt.

DOCTOR

Oooowwww oooooowww....I can't...help...help Help me...Help me...gurgh..

Sebastian stuffs his pacifier in Doctor's open mouth.

SEBASTIAN

I am a homosexual...and God loves me.

End of scene

SC 12: BACK AT THE BAR

Doctor exits. Stunned, the others make their way to their drinks. Cosmo clutches his empty cocktail glass.

BUD

(Shakily, with humor)

See, I was, I was right, you got out.

TODD

(Gently)

Yep, you were right, alright.

COSMO

Drink. Need drink.

JACK

Make it a double.

BUD

(Going for 'hetero')

Come on, woman, shake that big, sexy ass and get me another beer.

He slaps Dorothy's ass. She bends his wrist back.

DOROTHY

Do not fucking touch me. Ever.

BUD

Oww, let go, I'm sorry oww oww oww--

JACK

Bud, is that you trying to act straight?

COSMO

It's all in the approach, my friend.

BUD

Sorry--shouldn't have done that-- rude--Ooww!

Dorothy releases Bud.

DOROTHY

Fucking men. Fuck you all. This whole mountain of shit is created by straight men who hate gay men, and supported by gay men who hate themselves. Between you and the Pastor and my father, this is my fucking life? And now I have to go to the basement to change a fucking keg so John Wayne here can cry into his beer about daddy beating him with a belt? Ex-gay is shit.

BUD

No, it's not. It's *not*.

DOROTHY

Yeah, Bud, it is, it *is*. All the 'networking,' all the exchanged business cards, all the phone numbers I see passed around the bar every night by these 'ex-gay' boys? This place is a fucking mirage.

COSMO

So's your engagement.

JACK

So's your father's love.

BUD

Where's my beer?

DOROTHY

Fuck you, I quit.

COSMO

The job or the engagement?

DOROTHY

Both. Right after I change the fucking keg.

She exits for the basement, her thoughts churning.

TODD

She's right, though. We're part of the problem.

BUD

No, the problem is, you had a sadistic, predatory homosexual in charge of the program. If you had good, Christian heterosexuals in charge, it would have been a completely different story.

Doctor enters, sits at the bar, grabs himself a beer. Todd tries to ignore his presence.

TODD

You're using Doctor as an excuse to ignore the entire gay-conversion-slash-torture industry. You're hiding behind him so you don't have to face the truth.

BUD

But it's *my* truth, it's my choice, this is what I choose--

TODD

And that's heart-breaking, dude.

COSMO

(Changing the subject)

Where did you go after you escaped?

TODD

I went back home.

BUD

Your Dad beat you?

TODD

No, he didn't beat me. We couldn't look at each other, we couldn't talk, the three of us. Mom sat on the couch with her chablis, Dad cried in the garage. I walked around my old streets, looking for normal, suddenly back and totally misplaced and fucked up and outcast, like I escaped, but I'm still trapped. I can still hear his voice.

Doctor gently rubs Todd's shoulders.

DOCTOR

We love you, Todd.

TODD

I hated my past, I didn't see a future I could be happy in. I took a bunch of pills. I was lucky, I woke up; that doesn't happen to a lot of kids.

DOCTOR

We don't want you to kill yourself.

TODD

After that, my parents wore suicide hotline tags around their necks, just in case. Dad stayed bedside three and a half days. When I finally opened my eyes, there he was.

BUD (AS TODD'S FATHER)

Hey, sonny-boy, you're awake.

(Pause)

I'm...I'm glad you didn't die.

TODD

And I'm like okay wow, we're talking, what's he gonna say?

BUD

You gonna eat that jello?

TODD

It was a start, anyway.

JACK

What do you do, for a job, I mean, you're heading off to big some panel, right?

TODD

I'm president of the LGBTQ Student Caucus at Montclair State. I'm a senior, my parents are paying my tuition.

JACK

See, they must love you.

BUD

Hey, no offense, but I really don't want to be lectured to by a student. Get some life experience first, bro.

JACK

Sounds like he's had plenty life experience already.

BUD

Yeah, but he hasn't had *my* life experience. He doesn't know what *I* went through.

TODD

Bud, let me ask you a personal question: are you on Grindr?

BUD

(Lying)

No, I am not on Grindr.

COSMO

Yes, you are.

BUD

No, I am not, Cosmo--

COSMO

Yes you are, too, 'Scruffpup94.'

JACK

Busted.

TODD

You have issues, Bud; being gay is just one of them.

BUD

Of course I have issues, we all have issues.

Doctor stands behind Bud.

DOCTOR

Look in the mirror, Todd. What do you see?

BUD

You never doubt what you are, who you love, what you want?

TODD

Actually, yeah, I do. Every night.

BUD

Well, so do I. And it's fucking ripping me apart.

TODD

It doesn't have to.

Doctor makes a note in his book.

COSMO

Bud, does Todd's story not resonate in some tiny way for you, at all? Not even Simon?

BUD

No. I'm sorry, but no. Nothing.

COSMO

Poor little Orlando? I have gone through the same bullshit my entire life because there's always somebody thinks I'm not butch enough, I'm a sissy. As if throwing a football is going to make you straight.

BUD

You know what we need? Another weekend workshop, Cosmo, all three of us, together--

COSMO

I'm done making believe I'm someone I'm not.

JACK

Bud, those were kids electroshocked!

BUD

I'm sorry for them, but that is not my problem!

TODD

It is your problem! You are the problem!

JACK

We are the problem!

COSMO

We bought into it, Bud, we paid to go to those workshops because we believed we needed to be fixed.

JACK

You know it's true--

BUD

(Nearly caving in)

I, I--I don't care--I don't care if it's true, I don't believe it, I can't...

Cosmo shakes Todd's hand. Todd hides his discomfort and anxiety at being touched.

COSMO

Todd, I know I just met you, but I want to say, I'm with you.

JACK

Hey, me too. I'm with you.

TODD

Thanks. That means a lot, actually.

BUD

(Abandoned)

So, you're choosing him over me?

COSMO

No, Bud. I'm choosing me over you.

BUD

We all play roles, we all hide behind masks.

JACK

Fuck the masks, fuck everybody, just be yourself. Be *happy*.

COSMO

You can do it, Bud--

BUD

Conversion Therapy works for me, it gets me through my so-called existence. Take it away, what do I have?

TODD

An authentic life?

Bud fights tears at the crossroads of faith and fear.

COSMO

Come on, Bud, all three of us, together, you can do it, you want to, I know you do--

JACK

We got each other's backs, pal--

COSMO
All for one, and one for all?

Cosmo, Jack and Todd raise their empty glasses to toast.
Bud raises his mug, peering over the precipice. Unable to
make the leap, Bud puts the empty mug on the table.

BUD
I can't. I'm sorry.

Bud leaves in tears.

TODD
Bud, please, don't go, I'm sorry I yelled.

COSMO
Bud, don't leave, we're your friends--

JACK
Bud.

Bud's exit hits the friends hard; the trio is now broken.

TODD
Fuck. I fucked up. Asshole.

JACK
Bud's got some deep shit.

COSMO
He's afraid.

DOCTOR
You can't help him, you can't help any of them--

TODD
You want to help people, you talk, you listen, you don't chase them out the fucking bar.

DOCTOR
You can't even help yourself.

TODD
God, I suck at this.

Cosmo steps up; raises his right hand.

COSMO

Hi. My name is Cosmo. And I am proud to be an EX-ex-gay man.

Jack and Todd applaud. Cosmo surprises Todd with a big, friendly hug, lifts him off his feet.

Todd shudders violently, pushes away as if from electrical shock. He lurches, gasps; gags, about to vomit.

Jack and Cosmo are shocked. Doctor jots down notes in his notebook.

COSMO

Oh my God, what--

JACK

Are you alright? What can we do?

Todd's breath heaves, his body seizing up.

TODD

Sorry--Don't like to be hugged. Panic attacks, heat flashbacks-electro--

DOCTOR

Feel it, Todd, burning--

JACK

Here, have some water--

TODD

--but in my mind--

DOCTOR

The pain is real--

TODD

--But in my mind--workaround--

DOCTOR

The nausea--

COSMO

Give him room--

TODD

--In my mind, I'm the one hugging him--I'm the one inflicting--the pain--

DOCTOR
 (Thwarted, weakening)
 You think -- so smart--

TODD
 --Because if I don't--

DOCTOR
 --Just like--

TODD
 --If I don't, I might never be able--to be loved, I might not ever be able--to touch anyone.

DOCTOR
 --like me--

TODD
 So, no touching--nothing--personal--

Todd struggles; Doctor weakens.

DOCTOR
 Homosexuality--disease--

JACK
 How can we help you?

TODD
 Distract me, get my attention off--cheerful, happy--

JACK
 What happened to the others?

TODD
 Simon's dead.

COSMO
 Cheerful, happy--

DOCTOR
 Not my fault--

TODD
 Hit by a bus--apparently--

COSMO
Where's Orlando?

TODD
Preaching with his--daddy. Sebastian's got a--permanent hump in his back from the rocks. He's--writing a book.

JACK
What doesn't kill ya...

TODD
...fucks up the rest of your life.

DOCTOR
No escape--

COSMO
What about Jean?

JACK
Yeah, what happened to Jean?

DOCTOR
No escape--

Jean rushes in, late. She is all dolled up. Her presence further weakens Doctor.

JEAN
Jean got caught in traffic. Hi everybody, I'm Jean.

COSMO
You escaped! Yay!

JEAN
Well, *someone* had to drive.

JACK
Jack, hi!

COSMO
I'm Cosmo. We've heard a lot about you.

Doctor sits next to Todd, both panting.

DOCTOR

Freak freak ughh--

JEAN

It's all true. I'm sorry, but we're going to be late. Todd, whats with your breathing, what's with his breathing?

COSMO

I hugged him.

JEAN

Fuck. Todd, sweetie, we don't have time for this--

TODD

You were the one who was late!

JEAN

I couldn't find a motherfucking Uber Driver--

TODD

(With fake rage)

Motherfucking Uber drivers!

JACK

(Quietly)

It's not so bad.

COSMO

What are you going to say on this panel tonight? Tell me, go on, dry run--this is on cable?

JEAN

Live-streamed.

Todd and Doctor start to hyperventilate.

DOCTOR

Failure--

Cosmo retrieves a brown paper bag from his bag.

TODD

(panting)

We have to expose them--stop them--

DOCTOR

--expose--humiliate--

TODD

--eradicate them--

JACK

Uber drivers?!

TODD

God, my heart is pounding I can't do this--I'm sorry--I can't--

Cosmo gives Todd the bag, who breathes into it.

COSMO

Here. Breathe into the bag.

Cosmo sidles in next to Todd. He displaces Doctor, who loses strength, coughs, sits away from the men. Scrawls something into his notebook.

TODD

I'm sorry--sometimes--little things give me--panic attacks--love, trust, touch--

COSMO

The little things. Keep breathing.

TODD

Get used to--pain of hugging, but loneliness is--overwhelming--I'm gay, I'm attracted to men. But every time I start to make out with a guy, I have to stop myself from vomiting. In my mouth. Literally. It makes dating tricky.

COSMO

(With a big smile)

But not impossible.

Todd smiles. His breathing starts to return to normal.
Doctor grows weaker.

TODD

But not impossible.

JEAN gathers Todd's things.

JACK

You made it out, others can, too.

JEAN

He's right.

JACK

You're heroes, both of you.

COSMO

It takes heroes to take down giants.

JEAN

Us, Todd, you and me! Together, we will shut them down.

TODD

Conversion Therapy is a--crime against humanity--

COSMO

You two are going to change the world tonight.

JEAN

Yeah, if we ever get there--

JACK

There's gonna be a lot of people watching you online, what you gonna say?

Todd gulps in a breath. Another.

COSMO

Jack, thank you.

Doctor totters. Todd lays it out, in control.

TODD

I guess--I mean--alright, okay. No matter who you are, you're perfect the way you are. And if you've gone through conversion therapy, have patience, have compassion for yourself, you deserve it. It will get better. Someday, you'll be able to enjoy the touch of a hand again. Or the warmth of a smile. Or fall in love. There's nothing wrong with you. You're just as fantastic and flawed and perfect and happy and miserable and loved and fucked up as everyone else on the planet. And Doctor, if you're listening: You're wrong. Anger doesn't set us free; forgiveness sets us free. So, I forgive you. 'Kay?

Doctor deflates in Todd's forgiveness. He puts his notebook on Todd's table; leaves the stage.

The others applaud. Jack wipes away his tears.

JEAN

You got this, Todd.

TODD

We got this, Jean.

COSMO

Come on, we're going with you. I'll be your therapy dog. Put a leash on me. Woof.

JEAN

Let me call a cab.

JACK

Relax, I'm a motherfucking Uber Driver.

Jack and Jean hug. Cosmo goes to hug Todd, but Todd pulls away. They stand close, unable to touch.

TODD

Sorry. Nothing personal.

COSMO

No. It is personal.

Cosmo gently takes one of Todd's pinkies in his own.

It is personal.

Jean takes Todd's other pinky in hers.

JEAN

It is personal.

Jack takes Jean's pinky in his.

JACK

It is personal.

They stand with resolve, connected, strong.

TODD

Yeah, it is.

It is personal.

Lights fade to black.

End of play.