

ALL TOGETHER NOW

A Play by

PHILIP MIDDLETON WILLIAMS

BBWW Literary Works

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First Edition

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CHARACTERS

PAUL: Late thirties, gay, college professor, in good shape.

ADAM: Mid-thirties, Paul's partner; strong, with a dry wit.

FOX: Fifteen, well-built, smart and polite.

JIM: Mid-sixties; Paul's father.

DOROTHY: Mid-sixties; Paul's mother.

JULIE: Late thirties; Fox's mother.

SCENE

A home in suburban Miami.

TIME

Act One, Scene 1: A morning in September, present day.

Scene 2: An hour later.

Scene 3: Three a.m. the next morning.

Act Two, Scene 1: Later that morning.

Scene 2: That evening.

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

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

All Together Now

Act One

Scene 1

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

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

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

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

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

ADAM: I'll decide when I get there.

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

ADAM: German chocolate cake. Already ordered.

PAUL: My favorite. Thank you.

ADAM: Well, yeah, you asked for it.

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

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

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

ADAM: How about if the clown is a stripper?

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

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

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

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

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

ADAM: That depends on what they want to drink.

PAUL: Scotch.

ADAM: That's it?

PAUL: Yep. Just scotch.

ADAM: Any special scotch?

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

ADAM: Expensive tastes.

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

ADAM: What about the wine for dinner?

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

ADAM: When are they getting here?

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

ADAM: Do we need to tidy up any more?

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

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

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

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

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

ADAM: Y'know, it's not too late to just grab our stuff and head down to Key West to that little B & B on Fleming Street with the clothing-optional pool and a nice quiet room all to ourselves.

Leave a note on the door for your folks – “Have a nice time, see you Tuesday.”

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

ADAM: When was the last time we did that?

PAUL: Been a while, hasn't it?

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

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

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

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

ADAM: I get the point.

PAUL: We'll go.

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

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

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

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

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

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

(PAUL runs off Right to the bedroom. ADAM goes to the front door and opens it. Standing there is FOX. He is a tall, well-built,

good-looking young man in jeans and a t-shirt that are a little too small for him, dusty cowboy boots, and a baseball cap. He is carrying a worn knapsack, and he looks a little travel-weary, but he grins broadly when he sees ADAM.)

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

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

FOX: Are you...?

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

FOX: Oh, okay. I'm Fox.

(FOX offers his hand and they shake.)

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

FOX: Um, no.

ADAM: Are you one of his students?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ADAM: You just got here?

FOX: Yeah.

ADAM: From where?

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

ADAM: You came all the way from Santa Fe?

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

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

FOX: Yeah, I know.

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

FOX: Sounds crazy, doesn't it?

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

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

ADAM: Oh. Well....

PAUL (*offstage*): Be right out!

FOX: That's him?

ADAM: Yeah.

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

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

FOX (*nervously*): Hello.

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

ADAM: No, he showed up all by himself.

PAUL: Oh.

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

PAUL: Can I help you?

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

PAUL: Nice to meet you...Fox.

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

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

FOX: No.

PAUL: Well, then...?

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

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

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

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

FOX: You remember Julie Engstrom?

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

FOX: Denise.

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

FOX: She's my mom.

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

FOX: She does.

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

FOX: Yeah.

PAUL: Okay... Why?

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

FOX: I'm your kid.

ADAM: What?

PAUL (*softly*): What?

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

ADAM: Holy...

PAUL (*stunned*): My God. But we signed all sorts of documents terminating all parental rights and obligations. We got a really good lawyer to make sure that it was all set. Cost a small fortune. (*FOX pulls out a sheaf of documents and wordlessly hands them to PAUL.*) Right. But it didn't happen. We went to the clinic three times and we went through all the motions but each time they said that they didn't implant. And we had a good cry, and then I got the

job here and moved away. The last I heard from Julie was that she was working at a clinic on an Indian reservation. So how can I...? How can you...?

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

PAUL: How old are you?

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

ADAM: You're big for your age.

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

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

FOX: You were the only donor.

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

ADAM: So to speak.

PAUL: So how did you find me?

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

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

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

ADAM: And you don't want to go.

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

PAUL: What about Denise?

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

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

FOX: I only know what Mom told me.

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

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

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

FOX: Supposed to be there on Monday.

ADAM: This Monday? The day after tomorrow?

FOX: Yep.

PAUL: Does Julie know you're here?

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

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

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

PAUL: I still think you should let her know.

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

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

ADAM: Are you kidding?

PAUL: Well, okay. Just....

ADAM: Just what?

PAUL: Just.... Never mind.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL: Staying?

ADAM: For dinner.

PAUL: When's your flight to New York?

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

ADAM: Twelve years.

FOX: Really? Married?

ADAM: No.

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

ADAM: I was one of his students.

FOX: High school?

PAUL: College. I teach history at the university.

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

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

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

FOX: So, what do you do?

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

ADAM: I've got a

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

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

PAUL: Look, we should call Julie.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL: This one doesn't.

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

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

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

PAUL: Then what?

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

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

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

ADAM: Three bedrooms, two baths.

FOX: Sweet. Big enough place.

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

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

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

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

ADAM: So what's the problem?

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

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

FOX: Why not?

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAUL: Who's Susan?

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

ADAM: Jesus.

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

PAUL: Wait, they know who I am?

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

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

FOX: How about I stay with you guys?

PAUL: Whoa. Wait just a minute.

FOX: Why not?

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

FOX: I'm your son.

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

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

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

FOX: What do you want to know?

PAUL: Well, I don't know.... What kind of sports do you like? What books do you read? What makes you happy? Do you believe in

God? What do you watch on TV? What makes you cry? Cats or dogs? Favorite car? Mac or PC? Coke or Pepsi? Boxers or briefs?

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

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

FOX: No.

ADAM: Boyfriend?

FOX: (*chuckling*): No.

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

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

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

FOX: Did you go out with boys?

PAUL: No.

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

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

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

ADAM: Kind of a loner?

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

PAUL: Rituals?

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

PAUL: You believe all of that?

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

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

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

PAUL (*unconvincingly*): No.

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

PAUL: I don't remember.

ADAM: Are you kidding?

FOX: Oh, come on!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ADAM: You got all of that from reading Steinbeck?

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

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

FOX: What?

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

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

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

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

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

FOX: Sure. Thanks.

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

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

FOX: Sure.

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

PAUL: Wow.

FOX: Can I ask you something?

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

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

PAUL: Sure, I would have.

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

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

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

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

FOX: Would you?

PAUL: Would I what?

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

PAUL: Yeah, sure.

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

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

FOX: Got any brothers or sisters?

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

FOX: I know how you feel, then.

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

FOX: Looking forward to meeting them.

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

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

PAUL: What would what have been like?

FOX: If you had raised me instead of Mom.

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

FOX: C'mon, just for grins.

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

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

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

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

PAUL (*chuckling*): I guess.

FOX: What would you have named me?

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

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

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

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

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

FOX: Nah, just playing around.

PAUL: Good. Fox is a very nice name.

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

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

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

PAUL: What about what?

FOX: Can I live here with you?

PAUL: No. You can't.

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

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

FOX: Why not?

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

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

PAUL: Because I'm sure that there are all sorts of people – including your mother – who will say you don't get to make that choice by yourself. You're fifteen. You're a minor. You have no rights. Hell, you'd have better luck if you were a fetus. I have no right to make a custody claim, and I'm pretty sure your mom would not go for it.

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

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

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

PAUL: It's still too early.

FOX: She gets up early to do yoga.

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

FOX: I forgot.

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

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

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

FOX: Great, thanks.

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

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

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

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

CURTAIN.