

LOS YORK

CAST OF CHARACTERS  
(Three actors)

OTIS, 20s, recent college graduate, originally from Oklahoma

WAKE, 30s-40s, an art conservator, originally from Long Island, also plays:

NAKED MAN  
WAITER  
SLOAN  
THOM  
DR. MORLEY  
MAN IN PARK

DEAN, 30s-40s, a painter and arts administrator, originally from Oklahoma, also plays:

PARNELL  
MAN IN PARK  
TOURIST  
IRISH PRIEST  
PAIGE THE PENGUIN LADY  
PROFESSOR RUSSELL

The action takes place in various locations in New York and Los Angeles. The time is the present.

SETTING: Tables and chairs as needed.

NOTE: The two acts may be performed in either order: NEW YORK/LOS ANGELES or LOS ANGELES/NEW YORK. Ideally the two versions would be performed in rep with each other.

NEW YORK

OTIS and WAKE, dressed in winter clothes, stand staring straight out for a long time. Sound of wind. Eventually, OTIS takes a picture with his camera. They turn to the left and look in that direction.

WAKE

You can barely see it from here, but that's the Brooklyn Museum, built a hundred years ago while Brooklyn was pissed off about the consolidation of the boroughs and bursting with bruised civic pride. Incredible Egyptian collection, but it will always be the ignored step-sister of the Met.

OTIS takes a picture. They turn to the left again, facing upstage.

WAKE

Mid-Town, the Chrysler Building, way up there Harlem, then the Bronx. Central Park looks pretty grim right now, but in the spring and summer I used to go there just to take a deep breath of green.

OTIS takes a picture. They turn to the left again, facing stage right.

WAKE

That's...Jersey.

OTIS

Dude, that's America.

WAKE

That it is.

OTIS

And at the other end, LA.

(No reaction from WAKE.)

You glad to be back?

WAKE

Yeah, of course. Who wouldn't be? The greatest city in the country.

As they speak they begin to turn to the left again, facing out.

OTIS

The world.

WAKE

Nothing even close. When I'm here it's like five cups of coffee, buzz like you wouldn't believe. Concentrated, not dissipated like the energy in LA. It's too much for some people.

OTIS

So it gets exhausting?

WAKE

That's when you go to Central Park.

(After a moment.)

Wanna go there? There's a zoo.

OTIS

I'm twenty-two, Uncle Wake.

WAKE

What *do* you want to see? If you're gonna live here, it's best to get all the touristy stuff out of the way right off or you'll never do it.

OTIS

I could fuck up the interview big-time.

WAKE

How about the Statue of Liberty? Ellis Island? Greenwich Village?

OTIS

I wanna go to the Guggenheim. I heard about this artist who let go a bag of marbles at the top of the spiral--

WAKE

That's apocryphal.

OTIS

You want me to choose UCLA, don't you?

WAKE

Otis, of course not--

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

You're just gonna show me cheesy tourist sites. Nothing real.

WAKE

What kind of real?

OTIS

I dunno, like where you work or something.

WAKE

You don't wanna see a conservation lab. It's really boring.

OTIS

(Taking WAKE'S picture.)

Why do you do it?

WAKE

Boring to other people, I mean. You have to be a pretty big geek to care about x-ray spectrometers and Limoges enamels.

OTIS

What's a Limoges enamel?

WAKE

See, you don't know and you don't care.

OTIS

(Taking WAKE'S picture.)

I'm just a dumb goat-roper.

WAKE

Stop with the pictures. I look like shit.

OTIS

Don't freak out, bro.

WAKE

I'm not freaking out.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

Cause you're acting kinda freaked out.

WAKE

And I'm so not your bro.

OTIS

Don't be an anus. Show me an enamel.

WAKE

So we'll go to the Frick Collection. I don't work there, but I conserve their pieces.

OTIS

Great.

WAKE

One thing.

OTIS

What?

WAKE

Don't call him "Uncle Dean." He fuckin' hates it.

Their eyes are drawn straight out again, and they stare in silence.

OTIS

1933, 1976 or 2005?

WAKE

Come again?

OTIS

Fay Wray, Jessica Lang, or Naomi Watts?

WAKE

They're actresses, right?

OTIS indicates the floor, then out, then the floor.

OTIS

Empire State Building, World Trade Center, Empire State Building?

WAKE

(Sadly, after a moment as they both stare out.)

That used to be an easy one.

Lights out on WAKE and OTIS still staring, and up on PARNELL, a museum guard. WAKE and OTIS appear without their winter jackets. WAKE and PARNELL nod in recognition as they pass each other.

WAKE

(Passionate, but in a "museum voice.")

Tourists come here for the Vermeers, but the enamels are the hidden jewels.

PARNELL disappears. They look at unseen art.

OTIS

What's wrong with their heads?

WAKE

We don't know the name of the artist, so he's simply called the Master of the Large Foreheads.

OTIS

(Giggling.)

Jesus as a water-head baby!

WAKE

Some respect, please. It's devotional art.

OTIS

Duh!

(Pointing.)

Gold, frankincense and myrrh—I'm not a total Okie--

WAKE

Look at the myrrh jar.

OTIS

K.

WAKE

It symbolizes mortality, embalming, the human nature of Christ.

(Taking OTIS to another artwork.)

Now this triptych--

OTIS

More bulgy foreheads--

WAKE

Same artist--and look what he's done. What's Mary Magdalen holding as Jesus is taken to the tomb?

OTIS

A myrrh jar.

OTIS AND WAKE

The exact same design.

OTIS

Awesome.

WAKE

There's a whole world locked inside the art if you only have the key.

OTIS

This why you came to New York? Don't they have enamels in LA?

WAKE

LACMA's got good ones, but these are the best in the country. They get corroded around the edges, where the copper is exposed a little bit, so that's where I come in, to stabilize-- what are you grinning about?

OTIS

Uncle Wake, I really--

WAKE

(Overlapping.)  
Enough with the "Uncle--"

OTIS

Wake, sorry, I really admire what you do. You do what you want.

WAKE

Even if nobody else cares.

OTIS

See? Honest. No matter what.

WAKE

(Embarrassed.)  
I'm from New York. We're direct.

OTIS

You never could hide anything. Even from Grandpa.

WAKE

Dean tried so hard to shut me up!

OTIS

Wasn't anything you said. You just...did shit.

WAKE

Like what?

OTIS

Kids pick up more than you know.

WAKE

What shit?

OTIS

Once when you were visiting us in Oklahoma, I saw Uncle Dean--*Dean*--touch you like-- just in passing maybe, getting into the car or something--

WAKE

Touch me?



Like this—casually--

OTIS

OTIS touches WAKE gently at the waist. WAKE  
flinches just a bit.

Sorry--

OTIS

WAKE

No, it's okay, just--he does—*did*—touch me like that, you're right. It's the only casual  
thing he ever did.

I liked that.

OTIS

I did, too.

WAKE

When Dean did it.

OTIS

Yeah.

WAKE

My parents never touch like that.

OTIS

Stop trying to steer the conversation, you manipulative little—

WAKE

OTIS  
(Lifting his camera.)

Lemme take—

WAKE

No, no, you can't--

OTIS  
(Taking a flash picture.)

You look fine.

WAKE  
(Overlapping.)

Inside the museum--

PARNELL  
(Appearing.)

No flash, please!

OTIS

Oh, dude, sorry--

WAKE

(Overlapping.)  
I tried to tell him--

PARNELL

It's okay, sir, just make sure--

WAKE

I'm taking my nephew outside--

OTIS

(Overlapping.)  
I won't do it again.

WAKE

C'mon, kiddo.

OTIS

Sorry!

WAKE drags OTIS away.

PARNELL

(Smirking.)

Nephew.

Sound of a light wind as lights go out on PARNELL and  
up on WAKE and OTIS again in their jackets, walking.  
Sound of crows or other winter birds.

WAKE

(Pointing, variously.)

The Met's over there, the Great Lawn with the Reservoir beyond, the Lake is that way--

OTIS

I see it. Thanks for the jacket, by the way.

WAKE

Don't mention it.

(OTIS takes a picture of WAKE.)

Stop it, goddammit!

OTIS

What's this part of the park called?

WAKE

I don't think it has a name.

(Pointing.)

Bethesda Terrace is up there--

OTIS

Why'd Dean stay in LA?

WAKE

Beg pardon?

OTIS

Why'd Uncle Dean stay in LA instead of coming here with you?

WAKE

That's direct. Sure you're not from New York?

OTIS

Everybody wonders.

WAKE

Everybody?

OTIS

My parents, my sister. We talk about it.

WAKE

Same reason I came here. The perfect job.

OTIS

He works for the City of LA!

WAKE

He's number two at the Cultural Affairs Department. It's a very cool job--he knows everybody in LA and they all love him. A couple small galleries show his paintings fairly regularly.

OTIS

Still, he could have that here eventually.

WAKE

Why don't you ask him?

OTIS

I want to know your theory.

WAKE

Theory!? Of why we broke up? It didn't happen *in theory*.

OTIS

In fact, then.

WAKE

He never trimmed his pubic hair.

OTIS

Never mind, never mind, sorry I asked!

WAKE

No, you had the balls to ask, have the balls to listen.

OTIS

You broke up because he didn't mow his pubes?

WAKE

The contradiction bothered me. He's a big priss about a lot of things--

A MAN appears and gives WAKE and OTIS the eye.

OTIS

Sex?

WAKE

Yes. And then he doesn't trim. It's inconsistent.

OTIS

And irritating?

WAKE

Also he doesn't swallow.

OTIS

Whatever!

WAKE

You asked.

OTIS

He's just health-conscious.

WAKE

It bespeaks a lack of trust.

OTIS

K. I retract the question, all questions--

The MAN disappears.

WAKE

It's unhealthy to assume that sex and love always go together, especially after so many years, it puts too much pressure on love.

OTIS

You quit having sex?

WAKE

Hard to imagine at your age?

OTIS

Duh!

WAKE

Wait till you're pre-geezer like me--

OTIS

You're not old--

WAKE

Eventually it gets to be--

DEAN appears in light, reading some loose pages.

WAKE (CONT'D)

(To DEAN.)

Feel like a poke?

DEAN

I'd love to, but I have to finish reviewing these applications today.

WAKE

(To DEAN.)

Okay, then, do you have any stamps?

Lights out on DEAN.

OTIS

But you love each other.

WAKE

Without a doubt.

OTIS

Then why'd you come here? The right job is key, but--

WAKE

He can't say "I love you." I know that sounds so girly-girl that I need that but if I'm honest with myself--and I wouldn't be if you hadn't made me, thank you very much--I always wished he'd say it. I used to say it all the time--I like saying things--out loud!--but it embarrassed him, I know, so I just stopped. Out of politeness.

OTIS

But if you get everything else you need out of the relationship--

WAKE

We were always very polite.

OTIS

Too polite for sex.

WAKE

We have sex. Just not with each other.

OTIS

You cheat?

WAKE

It's not cheating. We both know we're doing it, we just never talk about it--

OTIS

That would be impolite.

WAKE

Cheating isn't the right word. Kids your age--

OTIS

Kids!?

WAKE

Young guys talk a lot about fidelity, but they don't know what it means, real fidelity, of the heart.

OTIS

So you have sex with other guys but love Dean.

WAKE

Exactly. Very different. Guilt-free mutual objectification--

The MAN reappears.

OTIS

I think this part of the park is called The Ramble.

WAKE

Makes sense--the paths wind all over the place.

OTIS

All leading to mutual objectification.

WAKE

How do you know?

OTIS

We got a park like that in Oklahoma City.

WAKE

You're kidding!

OTIS

Will Rogers Park. He never met a man he didn't like.

WAKE

Public sex is hazardous. Indoors you worry about disease. Outdoors you also worry about the police, mosquitoes, and rattlesnakes.

OTIS

Rattlesnakes in Central Park?

WAKE

In Griffith Park.

OTIS

In LA.

WAKE

Down the canyon from the Observatory, first switchback up from Ferndell.

They both look at the MAN a moment.

OTIS

Dean tells you he loves you all the time.

WAKE

Like hell.

OTIS

When he does this.

OTIS touches WAKE at the waist as he did before.  
WAKE manages not to flinch, but it's an effort.

WAKE

How comfortable are you on the subway?

OTIS

You mean can I find my own way back to your apartment?

WAKE

Uh...yeah.

OTIS

I have a map.

WAKE

You won't get lost?

OTIS

Naw.

WAKE nods at OTIS, then walks past the MAN and disappears. THE MAN looks at OTIS for a few seconds, then follows WAKE and disappears.

OTIS

(To himself.)

But you might.

Lights out on OTIS as organ music begins and WAKE appears with a small lighted taper. He sets it in a holder with other candles, crosses himself, and prays. OTIS appears behind him. They're wearing jackets unbuttoned.

OTIS

That for Dean?

WAKE

Yeah. Maybe.

(Proffers candle.)

Here. My treat.

OTIS

We don't light candles for people.

WAKE

Should have thought of that before you started that Reformation thing.  
(Stepping aside, WAKE stubs his toe.)

OTIS

You okay?



Floor's a little uneven. WAKE  
 You grow up Catholic? OTIS  
 (Taking the candle, lighting it.)  
 Parochial school and all. Till I got kicked out. WAKE  
 What for? OTIS  
 My parents quit paying. WAKE  
 Why? OTIS  
 They kicked me out, too. WAKE  
 For...? OTIS  
 Guess. They're pretty devout. WAKE  
 Then how can you pray? OTIS  
 Things turned out OK. I put myself through NYU. WAKE  
 How? OTIS  
 Some...film appearances. WAKE  
 Anything I mighta seen? OTIS  
*Italian Jocks, Bad Boys of Manhattan and Spank.* WAKE  
 No way! OTIS

WAKE

Oh, yeah, and *Slaves of New York*. Not the Tama Janowitz version.

OTIS

There *were* slaves in New York, you know.

WAKE

(Wistfully.)

Still are. I hear.

OTIS

New York was built by slave trade. They controlled all the shipping between the plantations in the West Indies and Europe.

WAKE

Thanks, Professor.

OTIS

You gotta be honest about history. If you can't be honest about New York, how can you be fair to the rest of the country?

WAKE

I am fair to the rest of the country. I leave it alone.

OTIS

See?

WAKE

Never thought of you as the patriotic type.

OTIS

I can go with the premise of this country. It's just not reaching its—you know—full potential. When you come right down to it, I think I'm becoming, like, an anarchist.

WAKE

An anarchist!

PRIEST

(Appearing. Irish accent.)

Could you lower your voices, please? People are praying.

WAKE

Sorry, Father.

OTIS

Sorry.

The PRIEST disappears, but not without a backward glance.

WAKE

(Quieter.)

You're getting me kicked out of New York's finest attractions.

OTIS

Anarchy shock you, Uncle Wake?

WAKE

No, but you always seemed so...content.

OTIS

Seeming is deceiving.

WAKE

You got this anarchy crap at UT?

OTIS

Naw, from you and Uncle Dean.

WAKE

Now I'm shocked. We never--!

The PRIEST appears and glares at them, then disappears.

WAKE (CONT'D)

(Lowers his voice.)

--We're not anarchists. You don't even know what an anarchist is. Okay, evicted from St. Pat's, let's go.

OTIS

Wait.

OTIS goes to his lit candle and prays.

WAKE

Done?

(As they leave.)

Who'd you pray for?

OTIS

(Smiling.)

Guess.

Lights out on OTIS and WAKE and up on a TOURIST waiting for tickets at TKTS. OTIS and WAKE get in line

behind the TOURIST. Background sounds of traffic and a steel drum band..

WAKE

You gotta be careful about half price tickets. Last ones I got here were for one of those horrible plays where every scene ends with a character screaming "Nooooooooo!"

OTIS

We could just play it safe and get tickets to *Beauty and the Beast*.

TOURIST

(Minnesota accent.)

I'll leave a couple for ya.

WAKE

Excuse me?

TOURIST

For *Beauty and the Beast*. I've been in the Big Apple five days and I've seen all the musicals but that one, been saving it for last. The special effects are sposed to be great.

WAKE

Where are you visiting from?

TOURIST

The Cities.

They all take a few steps ahead in line.

WAKE

I beg your pardon. Which cities?

OTIS

The Twin Cities.

TOURIST

Minneapolis/St. Paul area, Bloomington, actually.

OTIS

The Mall of America.

TOURIST

Oh, you've been?

OTIS

I've a buddy from Burnsville.

TOURIST

You don't say! You're not from New York, are you?

(To WAKE.)

You are--heck of an accent!

WAKE

You like New York?

TOURIST

I have to say it's a little intimidating. Didn't wanna go on the subway after that fellah from Utah got killed--

WAKE

That was twenty years ago--at least!

They all take a few steps ahead in line.

TOURIST

It's fun for a week. Couldn't imagine living here, though.

(To OTIS.)

Could you?

OTIS

Maybe.

WAKE

Guess we're even. I couldn't imagine living in the Midwest.

TOURIST

Not enough excitement for ya?

WAKE

I think I need a coast.

TOURIST

Oh, I'd get nervous being near the edge of the continent like that. At home I'm right in the center. Can't get washed away or shook off.

WAKE

Safe.

TOURIST

Oh, you're thinking I'm some kinda wimp, I can tell. But every place has its dangers, I spose. The East Coast has hurricanes and crime, the West Coast has earthquakes and fires, and we've got tornadoes and winter. And the South--oh, don't get me started on the South!

They all take a few steps ahead in line.

OTIS

Why not?

TOURIST

(Confidentially.)

The politics. Oh, jeez. It's just embarrassing for the whole country, isn't it? They voted away their own education system for religious reasons and handed control to idiots.

(To OTIS.)

You're not from the South, are you?

OTIS

Oklahoma.

TOURIST

Oh, jeez! That's practically the South.

OTIS

And I went to college in Texas.

TOURIST

I knew if I didn't keep my mouth shut I'd offend somebody. I'm a Democrat, admit to being a liberal, even, and that's okay where I'm from, but New York being a tourist destination you never know who might be listening.

(Pointing.)

Oh, my gosh, are we in trouble?

OTIS

What?

WAKE

(Overlapping.)

Why?

TOURIST

That sign says "No Standing" but here's this long line--

WAKE

That's for the cars—no waiting.

TOURIST

That's crazy! Cars don't stand.

WAKE

They do in New York.

TOURIST

What a country! We don't even speak the same language!

Lights out on the TOURIST and up on OTIS and WAKE riding in an elevator. Sound of hydraulics.

OTIS

He was friendly.

WAKE

Reminded me of people in Los Angeles.

OTIS

Okies.

WAKE

They're too nice. Scary nice. Say whatever you want to hear to avoid disappointing you, then they don't follow through.

OTIS

Flaky?

WAKE

Do you consider yourself Midwestern or Southern?

OTIS

My girlfriend said Oklahoma was automatically the South 'cause the Indians there fought on the side of the Confederacy and kept slaves.

WAKE

Did I meet her?

OTIS

Ex-girlfriend. High school.

(Pulls a bag of marbles out of his jacket pocket.)

Look.

WAKE

What's that?

OTIS

Marbles.

WAKE

I said it was apocryphal.

OTIS

Not if we do it.

WAKE

We're not doing it.

Elevator door opens and they step out. WAKE limps noticeably.

WAKE

Put those away.

OTIS shoves the marble bag in a different coat pocket but meets some resistance.

WAKE  
(Looking up.)

Beautiful, eh?

OTIS  
(Looking.)  
Awesome--  
(Discovering a pill bottle in the jacket pocket.)  
--What's this?

WAKE  
(Grabbing it.)

Allergy prescription.  
(Stuffs it in his pocket.)

Do you know anything about Frank Lloyd Wright?

OTIS

Architect.  
(WAKE just looks at him.)

That's it.

WAKE

He died the year the Guggenheim was built, so he never got to see it finished.

OTIS  
(Fumbling with the marble bag.)

Uh-huh.

WAKE

It really is outstanding architecture, but a terrible art museum. Look how awkward rectilinear paintings look hanging above that sloping floor. Either the painting or the building looks crooked--stop that!

WAKE sees that OTIS has taken out the marble bag. WAKE tries to grab it, but the marbles spill. Their eyes meet for a fraction of a second then they dash back into



the elevator. Light change along with the sounds of the elevator and of the marbles gathering speed as they roll down the spiral of the Guggenheim. OTIS and WAKE stare straight ahead in the elevator listening to the sound of the marbles and the shouts and screams of gallery patrons as the marbles careen toward them. OTIS and WAKE cannot quite stifle their giggles as the rolling sound increases and the screams become more frequent, finally ending with a long yell:

VOICE

Noooooooooooooooooo!

Lights out on OTIS and WAKE and up on PAIGE, who is juggling three coffee mugs with penguins on them.

PAIGE

I hate New York. Got marooned here during the dot com crash and I'd give anything to get back to Seattle. I hate my apartment, I hate the people, I hate the coffee. You can't get good coffee here. I order it special from Seattle.

Lights up on OTIS and WAKE sitting down in PAIGE'S apartment. She hands them each a penguin mug and sits down with them.

OTIS

(Looking around.)

Your apartment's cool.

PAIGE

It's dinky! And I pay a fortune--I won't even tell you it's so embarrassing.

OTIS

(To WAKE.)

And *why* did you want us to meet?

WAKE

Paige is a typical New Yorker--from somewhere else.

PAIGE

I'm a terrible example, Wake! Way too old when I came here. New York is for the very young or the very rich.

OTIS

So why don't you leave?

PAIGE

Where would I--? Oh, how's the coffee?

OTIS

Good.

PAIGE

(Without waiting for an answer.)

I mean, I can't go back to Seattle. Still no work there, at least not that pays. And where else is there? San Francisco? The city of red tape! Chicago? Freeze my ass off! Don't even get me started on La-La Land or New England where all those blue-bloods are so snobby no one will speak to you until you've lived there three generations. And it goes without saying I wouldn't be caught dead in any of those flyover red states in the middle.

OTIS

Would you be happy...like...anywhere?

PAIGE

Oh, what an awful impression I'm making. Wake, save me from myself. What makes me happy?

WAKE

Penguins.

PAIGE

That's right. Whenever I get the least bit bummed I run out and buy something with a penguin on it. New York has some good stores, at any rate!

(Shows some penguins.)

Aren't these the cutest?

(Makes penguin noises.)

Awk! Awk! Okay, I know it's obsessive and I'm a bit of a freak about it, but it could be a lot worse. I have a friend who collects Last Suppers.

OTIS

Looks like you get bummed a lot.

PAIGE

It's the city, I tell you. So full of itself! The nasty flat pizza--like it's an *asset* that you can fold a slice and eat it on the street? And what's the big deal about New York kosher? Like you can't get a good bagel or cheesecake or matzoh ball in Seattle? *We've* got Jews!

OTIS

Um...could I...?

(Gestures.)

PAIGE

You need to use the toilet? Listen to me, I'm starting to sound like I'm from Queens. Did you hear how I said toilet?

(Points, as OTIS leaves.)

It's down the hall a whole three steps, the door with the penguin on it, looks like a broom closet with tile.

OTIS takes a few steps away and is isolated in light. Perhaps there are more penguins. OTIS dials his cell phone.

PAIGE

Well, isn't he adorable?

OTIS

(On the phone.)

Uncle Dean?

WAKE

What do you think?

PAIGE

Straight, without a doubt.

OTIS

He's good, I think. Taking me everywhere.

PAIGE

(Overlapping.)

Gay-friendly, though.

OTIS

His friends are kinda whack.

WAKE

(Overlapping.)

Good. You wanna give him a shot?

OTIS

I'm right now surrounded by porcelain penguins.

PAIGE

Jake, I am so not Mrs. Robinson.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

Yeah.

OTIS

No, no, nothing like that.

WAKE

Paige, it's for me. Complete altruism on your part. I have to know.

(His cup slips, spilling coffee on himself.)

Oop.

OTIS

(Pulling a pill bottle out of his jacket pocket.)

Uncle Dean, you really oughta come to New York.

PAIGE

(Jumping up to help.)

Wake, honey, are you okay?

WAKE

My hand just kinda lost its--you know--

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

I can't say exactly.

PAIGE

Oh, right. Let me get you cleaned up.

OTIS

Maybe an emergency—I'm not for sure.

PAIGE

Does Otis know?

OTIS

Dunno.

WAKE

(Overlapping.)

Of course not. He'd tell Dean.

OTIS

But you should.

PAIGE

I've got some spray-on shit in the bathroom.

(Leaves.)

OTIS

Now, if possible. Soon, anyway.

WAKE dabs at himself.

PAIGE

Otis, sweetie, let me in. It's an emergency.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

No, please, really I think you--oh, shit, I gotta go.

PAIGE

Just pinch it off or tie a knot in it. Your uncle's caffeinated himself.

OTIS

(Putting away the cell phone.)

Come on in.

Lights out on WAKE.

PAIGE

(Coming in.)

I'm a terrible hostess, you'll think I just wanna look at your winkie--

OTIS

What's wrong with Wake?

PAIGE

(Rummaging for spray-on shit.)

He's fine--he just spilled--

OTIS

He's okay?

PAIGE

Coffee, that's all. A waste of--

(Looks at him.)

Are *you* okay?

OTIS

Sure, why?

PAIGE

You seem kinda, I dunno, is it the coffee? Sometimes I overreact to it a little bit, but I've got a pretty powerful tolerance and maybe you don't--

(Moving closer to him.)

I just have to--sorry--could I--?

(She kisses him quickly on the lips.)

There. That's it. Now I've done it. Awk! Awk!

(Runs out.)

Call child protective services! Wake! I've just violated all standards of decency, not to mention humiliating myself in front of the penguins!

Lights out on OTIS after a moment and up on WAKE looking up at a dinosaur skeleton casting its shadow on him. OTIS, consulting a brochure, joins him.

OTIS

Now they're saying some dinosaurs may have had feathers, even the big ones.

WAKE

I'm picturing this Allosaurus as a giant penguin.

They both crack up.

WAKE

I'm sorry.

OTIS

Damn! You don't want me here, do you?

WAKE

She's a sweet girl.

OTIS

She's a Toad Ride!

WAKE

I thought you should see how some people react to New York.

OTIS

I'm not gonna start collecting troll dolls or hotel soaps--

WAKE

Her life is kind of empty--

OTIS

So she's stuffing it full of crap. That tiny apartment.

WAKE

That's reality in Manhattan. I just don't want you to have any illusions. It's hard, here. And if you're not hard, or at least resilient, some people, well, crack.

They walk through a forest of skeleton shadows.

OTIS

So be straight with me. What should I do?

WAKE

I can't make decisions for you.

OTIS

K, not decisions—advice. I'm a little freaked about my interview with Professor Russell.

WAKE

Get your finger up his butt right away to let him know who's boss.

(OTIS makes a face.)

I just don't want you to end up like your father.

OTIS

What's wrong with Dad? I mean, I know what's wrong with him, but what do you think's wrong with him?

WAKE

He's too--

OTIS

Lazy.

WAKE

(Overlapping.)

Passive.

WAKE

Harsh. Glad you're not my kid.

OTIS

It's so easy for him to stay in Oklahoma working for Kerr-McGee. Marrying Mom was his last rebellious act. Maybe his last act, period.

WAKE

*Most* people don't try. They dream, they bitch, they piddle around. But without taking the steps, actual actions, nothing happens, or things happen *to* you but not *because of* you. Sometimes you have to be a little more than just assertive. Like a New Yorker.

OTIS

I can be that way if I have to, but—

WAKE

When I conserve an enamel or a sarcophagus or even prevent some disgusting Damien Hirst animal from rotting faster than it should it feels like I'm actually present in the world. Saving it.

OTIS

Saving the world?

WAKE

The art. Saving the art. It's history, tangible history I'm preserving. You of all people *get* history.

OTIS

Wouldn't you rather *make* history? Is it really worth--?

WAKE

Grad school, chemistry, art history, internships, of course! And once you've got a job, you keep current by reading other peoples' research, presenting papers--

OTIS

Going where the work is.

WAKE

Yes.

OTIS

Does Dean understand that?

WAKE

I hope so. I miss him so much, Otis. I can't tell you. But...well...especially now. I've got another paper on decay of red pigments for a conference next month and Dean usually edits for me. I'm a little dyslexic. It's hard to ask that of him from three thousand miles away.

(OTIS is crying.)

Oh, God, Otis, only kids cry in the Natural History Museum. I'll shut up about Dean. You okay?

OTIS

No, no, it's not--that--

WAKE

What? You're prepared for the interview--just be yourself--

OTIS

No, not the interview--it's--

(Laughs.)

WAKE

Okay, kid, you're freaking me out. People are gonna think I wouldn't let you see the IMAX.

OTIS

Wake. Uncle Wake.

WAKE

Yeah?

OTIS

You--what you said about--being present in the world. It's—you're *way* present in the world. In my world.

WAKE

That means a lot to me, Otis. I wish Dean and I coulda been around even more.



OTIS

I was ten you gave me that book of Indian head pennies--

OTIS

Next year the Liberty head nickels--

WAKE

(Overlapping.)

I liked that you were collecting something. I thought you should have some really old ones.

OTIS

I saw more love in one touch between you and Dean than—

WAKE

I had no idea you were absorbing—

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

More kindness--

OTIS

Dude, I been obsessed with you since I was eleven years old.

WAKE

(Laughs.)

Otis, that's adorable!

OTIS

It's not adorable!

WAKE

Okay, normal then. I had dozens of crushes growing up--on my teachers--

OTIS

It hasn't...gone away.

WAKE

(Pause.)

Well...it has to, of course.

OTIS

I know, I know. But...does it?

WAKE

Otis!

OTIS

I'm sorry, I kept shut for eleven years, now--

WAKE

Keep shut another eleven. Forget about it. I should put you on a plane right now.

OTIS

You think I'm still a kid. I'm going to graduate school.

WAKE

You're my nephew.

OTIS

Not by blood. Not in the eyes of the law.

WAKE

Let's just look at the dinosaurs. Look, there's a diplodocus! Wasn't that your favorite?

OTIS

When I was *eight*.

WAKE

Otis, you're a wonderful--young man--but right now you're giving me the creeps. The hair is standing up on the back of my neck. My stomach's all contracted.

OTIS

Why don't you projectile vomit? That would be romantic.

WAKE

Romantic? Jesus! What would I say to Dean?

OTIS

Things aren't exactly resolved, with Dean, are they?

WAKE

Nothing is ever *exactly* resolved. Wouldn't that be comforting!

OTIS

Bro--how you talk about him—

WAKE

You're too young to understand—what's—unspoken—

OTIS

Then speak! Dean won't.

WAKE

Did he ever tell you about swimming with dolphins off Zanzibar?

OTIS

Um...

WAKE

We both swim okay, and I thought it would be more controlled somehow. You know, a shallow lagoon and the dolphins swimming up to nuzzle you and say "Pha loves Pa." Instead, here we were, out in the middle of the Indian Ocean, on a tiny little dhow, wearing snorkels, masks, and flippers--no flotation or life jackets--and these huge waves. The kids in charge of us--probably eighteen or twenty years old--yelled out "Dolphins! Dolphins! Jump! Jump!" so we did. The masks and flippers weren't good fits, and my snorkel leaked. I panicked, swallowed water, started thrashing about, trying to keep my head above water to find the boat. I could hear the kids yelling, but I couldn't see them, and then I felt Dean's hand on my waist. He got me back to the boat.

OTIS

You won't even think about it?

WAKE

No. Not for a second. I don't think about things like that any more.

OTIS

You did in the park.

(WAKE looks blank.)

Yesterday.

WAKE

Nothing happened.

OTIS

You thought I went to the subway, but I snuck under a bridge then followed you.

WAKE

So you know nothing happened.

OTIS

Sure looked like it.

WAKE

Otis, it's habit, okay? Yes, I try to--*live* a little, but nothing happens. At all, anymore. And if you tell Dean, I'll kick your ass.

OTIS

Not at all?

WAKE

You'd have better luck with one of these sauropods. I'm practically extinct.

I'm sorry.

OTIS

WAKE

The last vestige of a dirty old man, not even—

OTIS

You're not a dirty old man!

WAKE

Look, dammit! Here's my best advice: go to UCLA

OTIS

(With great resentment.)

Thanks for the tip. UCLA.

WAKE

You'll never be a New Yorker. You're too nice.

Lights up on PROFESSOR RUSSELL.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

UCLA?

WAKE

Your Uncle Dean needs you.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

(Carefully.)

A very...respectable program.

WAKE

Your real uncle.

Lights out on WAKE as OTIS steps into the light with  
PROFESSOR RUSSELL.

OTIS

Respectable?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Better than that. Very good, I believe. Haven't heard much from them at conferences lately, but ten years ago they were at the forefront--well, very nearly the forefront--of the field.

Professor--

OTIS

Call me Arthur, please.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

OTIS

Arthur. I saw on the website you specialize in Texas history.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

From the antebellum era, yes. That's why I was asked to interview you.

OTIS

And you were at UT for a while.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

That's where you've been, too, isn't it? How's Dr. Respass?

OTIS

Good, he's good.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Excellent.

OTIS

Retiring in a year or so.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

My, my. Already!

OTIS

I was just in San Antonio and saw you were like a consultant on the new education materials at the Alamo.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

It was gracious of them to credit me. I just reviewed a few didactic panels.

OTIS

I was curious--

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Yes?

OTIS

Don't mind talking about your work, do you?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Not at all. I'm flattered by your interest.

OTIS

Seeing as the Alamo is a national historic landmark, you were responsible for the accuracy of the didactics seen by the more than two and a half million people who visit every year.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

It is indeed a large responsibility.

OTIS

Then I gotta ask you--

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Please.

OTIS

How can you let the Alamo frame itself as a symbol of freedom and heroism?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Otis--may I call you--?

OTIS

Otis, sure--

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

As a student of antebellum history--and I have to say we were all impressed with your senior thesis--surely you're attuned to the political power inherent in the notion of men giving their lives--against overwhelming odds--

OTIS

To defend slavery?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Now, now, I understand your bias--

OTIS

My bias?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

--But you're oversimplifying--

OTIS

The Texans were invited by the Mexican government to colonize the territory—

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

You needn't lecture me in my own field--

OTIS

K. But your average Bible-belt tourist has no clue the Texans fought Santa Anna to defend their right to own human beings--a right prohibited by the Mexican constitution--and that Jim Bowie and Davey Crockett died not heroes but merchants of men.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

I'm more than flattered. I'm stalked!

OTIS

Dude, I'm not questioning the quality of your scholarship. Your biography of Sam Houston is like awesome.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

You are questioning, then...?

OTIS

Not really a question, Arthur, is it?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Otis, I have no doubt you are aware that the Alamo site is controlled--

OTIS

By the Daughters of the Republic of Texas, yes.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Imagine--if I had forced the Daughters of the Republic of Texas to acknowledge the human bondage question in the didactic panels of the Alamo, seen, as you have reminded me, by 2.5 million people a year--imagine the reaction of those drawling, bouffant-haired matrons who elected George W. Bush not only as their President but as their very own Governor.

OTIS

A vivid image, for sure. Arthur. But aren't we as historians obligated to report the historic symptoms of our currently cheesy social system?

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

Your opening question—definitely framed as interrogative, I recall--was in fact merely an excuse--

OTIS

A gambit.

PROFESSOR RUSSELL

--A pretense for grabbing me by the academic and ethical balls, a gambit of rare resort during a graduate candidate interview.

OTIS

I presume, Arthur, students may challenge professors in the New York University History Department.

## PROFESSOR RUSSELL

*Students* may. You, however, are a *candidate*. May I be of any further assistance to you this afternoon?

## OTIS

Yeah, how close to campus is the nearest fuck club?

Light fade on them as OTIS and PROFESSOR RUSSELL smile aggressively at each other. Lights up on WAKE standing, staring out. He is wearing his jacket. Sounds of traffic, seagulls. After a moment OTIS joins him, also wearing a jacket. They stare for a while. OTIS takes a picture. They stare some more.

## OTIS

At home it's chairs. Between two limestone walls--one says 9:01 and the other says 9:03--between the walls are rows of chairs, one row for each floor of the building. Smaller chairs for the children. There's like a reflecting pool in the middle, and off to the side a scarred and twisted tree, the Survivor Tree. It's the most beautiful place in Oklahoma City.

## WAKE

Were you there?

## OTIS

I felt it. Eight miles away.

## WAKE

Did you know anybody?

## OTIS

(Shrugs.)

Friends of friends. When we see--this--are we just supposed to *feel*? Or do something?

## WAKE

Make history?

## OTIS

History isn't what happens--it's how the story is told.

WAKE'S hand suddenly twitches in an alarming way.

## OTIS

Or not.

OTIS reaches in his pocket and hands WAKE the bottle of pills.



WAKE

I was looking for those.

OTIS

You got more hidden back of the medicine cabinet.

Silence as they stare.

WAKE

You remember when your grandpa was sick?

OTIS

Dad didn't want us around Grandpa much. We were way young.

WAKE

It wouldn't have been good. I only saw a little bit, flying in when I could, but--

OTIS

Dean hung out for weeks.

WAKE

Months, actually. Almost six.

OTIS

Wasn't a nurse, was there?

WAKE

That was Dean. Taking blood, cleaning up, driving that old bastard to the clinic, the hospital, the hospice. I was glad when your grandpa died, cause the caretaking nearly killed Dean.

OTIS

Gay kids always get stuck with hospice patrol.

WAKE

Mostly, yeah.

OTIS

Not exactly fair, then, is it? Since they won't have kids of their own to take care of them.

WAKE

My family's right here on Long Island.

OTIS

The ones kicked you out when you came out?

WAKE

We're sort of reconciled.

Reconciled enough? OTIS

Working on it. WAKE

What are the pills for exactly? OTIS

WAKE  
(After a moment.)  
Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

Lou Gehrig's Disease. OTIS

Mm-hmm. WAKE

So—what's the, like, schedule? OTIS

WAKE  
Right now I trip on things, my extremities spasm, an occasional slurred word, possibly uncontrollable crying or laughter. But in a surprisingly short time my hands will curl up, I'll need a walker, then a wheelchair. I won't be able to project my voice or be understood at all. If I want to keep breathing, I'll have to be on a ventilator. Through all this, my mind--I'm told--will stay sharp. Comfort or curse, I'm not sure. The whole thing takes three to five years.

(Silence.)  
Don't tell Dean.

Bet he knows. OTIS

He thinks he knows all about me-- WAKE

But he said--! OTIS

WAKE  
He doesn't know this! I saw Dean exhaust himself taking care of your grandfather. I don't want him doing that for me.

He'd cherish every minute of it! OTIS

WAKE

Nobody should have to do that more than once in life.

OTIS

What about *you* taking care of *him*--?

WAKE

If I tell him, I'll become his obligation.

OTIS

Better his than your evil parents'.

WAKE

I keep seeing him everywhere. Maybe that's a symptom.

OTIS

He misses you so much.

WAKE

Which is why you need to go to LA. No, I take that back, you need to do what you want. People do too much for other people--

OTIS

Most don't--

WAKE

Maybe it's a Midwestern thing, then. You and Dean both have it.

OTIS

It's not just Midwestern. It's American. Even Texas opened its arms to the refugees from Katrina. I'd be the last to admit it, but this is still a good country, even the muddled middle bookended by New York and LA. Even witnessing--

(Gestures.)

--This, we still have a chance.

WAKE

You are *so* not an anarchist. Just a bleeding heart like your uncle.

OTIS

That's whack. I'm not like Dean. I speak up, like you.

WAKE

You were too young to know how Dean was when we met. This smart, optimistic, idealistic kid, a little mad at the world but overflowing with compassion, naively thinking he can fix it. So wholesome and Midwestern I had to stifle a laugh so he didn't think I was making fun of him. So willing to sacrifice.

OTIS

And look what it's got him.

WAKE

He made me feel...a little less doomed.

OTIS

He's my favorite uncle.

WAKE

And what am I?

OTIS

Wake.

OTIS touches WAKE on the waist. WAKE flinches, and OTIS takes his hand away.

OTIS

Just Wake.

WAKE

Sorry—it's just hard to let myself be touched—I feel—repulsive—

They stare at each other a moment, OTIS touches WAKE again. WAKE allows it.

OTIS

I think I've decided where I'm going.

WAKE

No, Dean, you can't—

OTIS

I'm Otis—not Dean—

WAKE

(Overlapping.)  
Sorry, Otis—

WAKE suddenly kisses OTIS passionately. Without hesitation OTIS returns the kiss. The kiss is deep and lasts for a while. WAKE starts to cry.

OTIS

No, no, don't! You might not be able to stop.

WAKE

(Crying.)  
Too late.

OTIS  
People are trying not to look at us.

WAKE  
(Crying.)  
It's okay to cry here.

OTIS  
(Looking around.)  
You're not the only one.

WAKE  
There's so much to cry about.

OTIS  
Lotsa bad shit.

WAKE  
Good shit, too.

OTIS  
Which is this?

WAKE  
(Crying.)  
I just--when we--I told you I couldn't--anymore--

OTIS  
Couldn't what?

WAKE embraces OTIS tightly. OTIS laughs.

OTIS  
Couldn't--oh! Ohhh! You dirty old man.

WAKE sobs harder as OTIS embraces him tenderly.

OTIS  
Doesn't matter, what it's for. Just cry it out. Everybody here understands. Cry it all out.

End of Scene.

LOS ANGELES

OTIS and DEAN, wearing shorts and t-shirts, stand staring out. Sounds of waves, wind, seagulls.

DEAN

The oosphere is the sort of, you know, hemisphere--

(Gestures grandly above and around.)

--that surrounds you like a giant, invisible dome, full of people in a big metropolitan area like LA, and it can be a bit, well, oppressive, to be completely honest about it, so when it gets to me, and believe me it does, I come here--

OTIS

Zuma Beach?

DEAN

Any beach--Santa Monica or even Venice--and the oosphere is kinda sorta cut in half.

(Gestures out toward the ocean.)

No people out there, just--empty. You can breathe.

(They breathe.)

And this is winter!

(OTIS takes a picture of DEAN.)

Japan is that way.

(Turns to the right.)

Ventura is up there.

(Turns to the right.)

Beyond Point Dume is Calabasas and the San Fernando Valley.

(Turns to the right.)

And down there Santa Monica, Rancho Palos Verdes, and on very clear days--if you're good--Catalina Island.

OTIS

(Takes another picture of DEAN.)

That supposed to answer my question?

DEAN

Otis. I love my job. I just...love it. I get my own programs to run, to create--the internship program, well, there was no internship program ten years ago and now there is. Eighty students a summer. Did you have an internship?

OTIS

No.

DEAN

It's a real leg up for someone your age.

(OTIS just looks at him. DEAN shrugs.)

I love LA.

(OTIS still just stares.)

You want me to sing it?

OTIS

You love Uncle Wake?

DEAN

You know, he really loves when you call him that. Always did. No one on his side of the family calls him Uncle Wake.

(OTIS just stares.)

Perhaps it wasn't my choice.

OTIS

Wonder what he'd say.

DEAN

It's important to tell the truth, but one shouldn't always ask for it--

OTIS

You could paint anywhere, dude.

DEAN

When did you get to be so proby?

OTIS

K. It just makes me sad you broke up. I don't get it.

DEAN

Imagine...living with someone who doesn't want you to touch them.

OTIS

No way.

DEAN

Who is --well, I don't know if "repulsed" is too strong a word--

OTIS

Repulsed? Damn!

DEAN

That was not spoken. That...is never spoken.

OTIS

Could be it wasn't you.

DEAN

Possibly not. He had...a lot else going on. He was no doubt exhausted.

(OTIS looks unconvinced.)

You have another idea? A better reason?

OTIS

I'm sorry. You're not comfortable with--

DEAN

I'm comfortable. I'm perfectly comfortable. You should feel completely free to--

OTIS

Do you love him?

DEAN

Goodness! How can someone my age talk about love with a kid just out of college? It's a different language.

OTIS

Did you ever say "don't go?"

DEAN

Why do you care so much?

(Pause.)

I'm sorry. It's very—sweet of you—but—

(Silence. A wave crashes.)

You wanna see the campus?

OTIS

Not yet. The interview's soon enough.

DEAN

Otis, I'm sorry. I feel like we're getting off on the wrong foot here. It means a great deal to me that you'd even consider UCLA for grad school—and I really wanna help you make what I consider an incredibly important life decision—

A NAKED MAN walks by behind them. They do not notice.

DEAN (CONT'D)

--And we get to spend some time seeing everything--well, not everything--there's way too much, I mean we could divide it up into themes: Hollywood and star graves, natural features like tide pools and if we go far enough out of town the desert or sequoias--

(Following OTIS' gaze in the direction of the  
NAKED MAN.)

Oh, my. That's sposed to be illegal now.

OTIS

Used to be okay?



DEAN

I don't remember when they cracked down on the--nudity--but--I mean, I never used to come here--

OTIS

Then why'd you bring me today?

DEAN

(Carefully watching OTIS watch the NAKED  
MAN approaching--still out of view.)

Well, truth be told, it was Wake's favorite beach and now you see why. Oh, jeez, of course, he's coming back this way. I hope he doesn't want us to rub lotion on his back or anything like that. No--he doesn't have lotion--he doesn't have--anything. Don't tell my brother I brought you here--he'd kill me. It's just a pretty spot, and on your first day, I thought--

OTIS

(Pointing out to sea.)

Look.

They both look out to sea.

DEAN

Where?

OTIS

They're gone.

DEAN

What?

OTIS

Five of them--they were--yes! Uncle Dean! Look!

DEAN

Dolphins! Now that's what we came to the beach to see!

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

Real dolphins! Fuckin' awesome!

DEAN

Tell your father I showed you--

(DEAN starts to choke.)

Dolphins--

DEAN puts his hand on OTIS' waist, and OTIS turns toward him.

OTIS  
Way cool. Dean? Are you--?

DEAN staggers off with OTIS in pursuit.

OTIS  
What's wrong? You choking? Dean, wait up!

They disappear.

OTIS  
(Off.)  
I can't help you if you don't--help! Help, somebody!

The NAKED MAN runs by on his way to help. A wave crashes and seagulls scream. Lights out on the beach and up on OTIS and DEAN sitting in a white-tablecloth restaurant.

OTIS  
Wake was never faithful for a minute, was he?

DEAN  
Gracious!  
(Pause.)  
He was much more...casual than I am.

OTIS  
Promiscuous?

DEAN  
Faith...means different things to different people.  
(Pause.)

When he moved to New York I heard he joined Bottoms Without Borders. I'm sorry. That was bitter. I hate when I try to be funny and it comes out bitter. I never imagined talking to you like this. You're sposed to be seven years old and talking about dinosaurs. Your uncle's sposed to protect you, not drag you into his personal--

OTIS  
I dragged it outta you.

DEAN  
Very true, very true. This isn't normal for me.

OTIS

What else can faith mean?

DEAN

Faith, for us, I think, meant honoring each other by not talking about stuff.

OTIS

Doesn't sound honest, to me.

DEAN

Honesty gets blurred around the edges after a while, kiddo. It's more than just an old Billy Joel song.

OTIS

Who?

DEAN

Oh, jeez!

OTIS laughs. A WAITER sets down two glasses of wine.

WAITER

Pinot grigio. Fume blanc.

DEAN

Thank you.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)  
Thanks.

WAITER

How's the Cultural Affairs Department?

DEAN

Oh, fine. Were you--?

WAITER

An intern. For LA Chamber Orchestra.

(Off DEAN'S look.)

Don't worry, I'm still playing. Just on the day shift here at the Getty. Some friends and I started a wind ensemble and yesterday we got booked with the Da Camera Society.

DEAN

Congratulations! That's great.

(Indicating OTIS.)

This is my nephew, Otis.

WAITER

Nephew? I would've said brother.

(Shaking OTIS' hand.)

DEAN

Crespin.

OTIS

Mucho gusto.

WAITER

Wow! Great memory. That was nine years ago.

DEAN

You worked on that collaboration between the Chamber Orchestra and MoCA.

WAITER

And that's how we got the Da Camera Society--one of the other interns--

DEAN

Oh, good--it works!

WAITER

I meant to write you--Dean?

DEAN

That's right--

WAITER

I should've--it was--

(Shaking DEAN'S hand.)

--The internship made a huge difference. Thank you.

DEAN

(Embarrassed.)

Oh, thank you. Really nice to hear. I can't tell you.

WAITER

Well--I should--your salads must be--I'll check.

WAITER disappears.

OTIS

Impressive.

DEAN

I'm just so relieved my program has any kind of impact.

OTIS

You seem to have an impact on him. He got all nervous.

DEAN

Oh, he's a kid. Kids get nervous.

OTIS

Hardly a kid. Hot, though.

DEAN

Otis, don't. I don't even think about, you know, stuff like that. Certainly not about interns.

OTIS

He's not an intern any more.

DEAN

Nevertheless--

OTIS

You gave up? After Wake? Nada?

DEAN

It's too soon.

OTIS

It's been two months.

DEAN

(Laughs.)

Two months is practically forever to someone your age. They say it takes half the time of a relationship to get over it once it's done.

OTIS

So, in your case--?

DEAN

How soon's the next millennium?

They laugh and drink their wine. DEAN chokes on it.

OTIS

Dean!

(DEAN gasps.)

Not again!

DEAN

(Recovering.)

I'm okay. I just--it's, you know, anxiety--not real choking. Kind of a psychological disorder that comes and goes. I just gotta be careful, especially in public.

OTIS

Thought I was going to have to ask Crespin to give you mouth-to-mouth.

DEAN

(Setting the wine down.)

I think I'll stick to water.

Lights out on them and up on a POLICEMAN. Sound of a train. After a moment, DEAN and OTIS appear.

POLICEMAN

Tap cards, please?

DEAN

(As POLICEMAN scans their tap cards.)

I'm always glad when someone checks. Ridership is a lot higher than expected. This line to Pasadena's pretty new. People are moving back into downtown from the suburbs--LA's starting to get a center.

OTIS

Dude, you're a booster.

POLICEMAN

Thank you very much.

(Disappears.)

DEAN

People think I'm crazy taking the subway so much. But it's part of the social contract. The air has actually improved since I moved to LA--more people, but better air.

OTIS

Considered rehab?

DEAN

Rehab? For boosterism?

OTIS

That funky choking thing.

DEAN

Oh, I was. Just to find out what was going on. It's not choking, it's fear of choking, which turns into fear of swallowing. There's no physiological problem at all.

OTIS

What are you afraid of? Poison?

DEAN

Water, maybe. A few years ago I had an icky experience snorkeling.

OTIS

Oh?

DEAN

When we went on safari, east coast of Tanzania. We were supposed to be swimming with dolphins, but I almost turned it into drowning with dolphins. I'm not that strong a swimmer anyway, and maybe I was trying to prove something to myself, but I should've just let Wake do it alone. I got disoriented by the waves and forgot every stroke I ever knew except the dog-paddle, which wasn't getting me anywhere. Salt water got in my mask, then into my snorkel, I started to choke. Finally I just grabbed Wake by the waist and he towed me back to the boat.

OTIS

Explains a lot, bro.

Lights go down on OTIS and DEAN and up on SLOAN, a Huntington Gardens docent. He has a British accent. Bird sounds.

SLOAN

A few of you said you were here for the Wollemi pine. We've been getting a lot of visitors anxious to see this rare tree, until recently thought to have died out two million years ago. In 1994 in a rain forest chasm in Australia, a forest ranger came upon a grove of these botanical antiques, and the location has been kept secret ever since. But to ensure the survival of the species, 292 saplings were sold to collectors around the world. We snapped one up right away, of course, because part of our mission at the Huntington is to conserve rare species and make them available for public viewing--

DEAN

(Off.)

Wake, what are you--?

DEAN appears with OTIS and immediately realizes SLOAN is someone else.

SLOAN

Beg pardon?

DEAN

No, my apologies. You looked like--  
 (Mortified, DEAN disappears.)

OTIS

Sorry. Didn't mean to interrupt.

SLOAN

(Smiles at OTIS.)

This strange "pineosaur" has many characteristics of primitive plants. Note the knobby bark, the fernlike fronds in perfect spirals. Perhaps someday this will be a common resident of gardens and golf courses, but for now the Wollemi pine is one of the rarest plants on earth.

(Smiles again as OTIS approaches the pine.)

No touching, of course. Shall we move on to the Desert Garden?

SLOAN lingers a moment as his group passes.

SLOAN

So who is it I look like?

OTIS

You don't wanna know.

SLOAN

Maybe I do.

OTIS just smiles. SLOAN smiles, then leaves, but not without a backward glance at OTIS, who remains looking at the pine. After a moment, DEAN joins him.

OTIS

You ran away.

DEAN

Wouldn't you? I'm kinda mortified.

OTIS

He did look like Wake. We could still catch up to him.

DEAN

Gosh, no. Don't tell Wake. He'd tease me no end.

OTIS

You are so down on him.

DEAN



Otis, he left me.

OTIS

Did you ask him to stay?

(DEAN is quiet.)

Would that have been too forward, impolite?

DEAN

It's not that black and white. If he wanted to stay, he would have said so. Wake is a typical New Yorker--no hesitation whatsoever about telling you exactly what he wants. Selfish, really.

OTIS

He didn't seem selfish when Grandpa was sick. Flew out to Oklahoma like every other weekend. And Grandpa didn't even like him.

DEAN

Grandpa didn't approve of him. Eventually he had to like him.

(With great annoyance.)

Everyone likes Wake.

OTIS

That's where his New York thing was good. Grandpa didn't approve of Mom, and she never got him to like her. Wake didn't let Grandpa dislike him, there wasn't room for it. Wake just pushed on through. You had to admire him for it.

DEAN

Sounds like you got a thing for him.

OTIS

Would that bother you?

DEAN

Otis!

OTIS

Dude. Girlfriend. I'm just saying--

DEAN

(Overlapping.)

Girlfriend? You never talk about her. Have or had?

OTIS

She--well--I know it makes you uncomfortable--

DEAN

It doesn't make me uncomfortable. I'm comfortable with everybody being who they are.

OTIS

Well, don't tell Wake, at least. I know it makes him, like, uncomfortable.

DEAN

I'm glad to know your hero worship is mitigated by some degree of observation.

OTIS

Shit. Was there *anything* you liked about him?

DEAN

There were many things I liked about him. Even in the present tense--things I like about him now. The first time I came here, it was cause he brought me. I didn't do stuff like that before I met him.

OTIS

He took you to Zuma Beach, the Huntington, the Getty--?

DEAN

Yes.

OTIS

Bet he took you on the subway the first time, too.

DEAN

(Reluctantly.)

We were together a long time. We explored LA as new things popped up.

OTIS

And you never traveled before you met him, did you?

DEAN

Not internationally. What are you up to? You're up to something.

OTIS

So Wake took you to Japan--

DEAN

He didn't take me. I paid for myself.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

Thailand, Cambodia, Canada--

OTIS

Scandinavia, England, Italy, France, Germany, Holland--

DEAN

I remember where I've been, thank you.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)  
Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, Canada, Tanzania, Dubai--

OTIS

Alaska, Hawaii.

DEAN

(After a moment.)

You forgot Belgium.

OTIS AND DEAN

Everybody forgets Belgium.

DEAN

It got so we only had sex at World Heritage Sites.

OTIS

You ever go to a TV taping or Spago or Hollywood parties?

DEAN

Oh...I know exactly who you need to meet.

(Pronouncing the "Th".)

Thom.

OTIS

Thom?

Lights up on THOM sitting at a table in a Japanese restaurant. Two mugs of tea, two water glasses and the bill sit on the table.

DEAN

Thom. He's an actor.

Lights out on DEAN as OTIS joins THOM at the table.

THOM

(Heavy Southern accent.)

You okay?

OTIS

Yeah, I think. Some guy in the bathroom told me it's called wasabi.  
(OTIS drinks one of the glasses of water in its entirety.)

THOM

Sure looked like guacamole to me. So, you wanted to know why I came to LA, but I gotta set some context first. I been paying my dues in Atlanta theatre for years--years!--and I started thinking, yeah, everybody in Atlanta thinks I'm great, best roles, terrific reviews, but I'm never gonna make a real living at this unless I take myself serious and get my ass out to LA. I got more of a film technique, anyway, you know--subtle. And friends--more important than anything else I got friends in the Industry, which is the only way anything is gonna happen. And I think I got a lead on a car so then there'll be no stopping me. Plus, I got a lead on some extra work on an independent film project down at USC.

(Peering. OTIS drinks the other glass of water.)

Oh, would you look at that. Blondie over there's had some work done, I can tell. I been thinking about a little something, myself, maybe tightening up the chin or--

(Pulls back the skin around his eyes.)

THOM (Cont.)

--An eyelift, whaddya think? I don't need it yet, do I? Still got a few more years of leading man before I have to do character roles. And sometimes those operations go wrong--you see all these Beverly Hills ladies who look like--

(Makes his face lopsided. OTIS drinks a mug of tea.)

--Picassos or worse yet, Japanese. Maybe that's what I should do. There are a lot more roles for minorities than regular actors these days, the networks are under a lot of pressure, do you think I'd look good Japanese?

(Makes "Japanese" eyes.)

Gotta watch myself, could get kicked out, and this is the trendiest sushi place in LA--wanted you to get a taste of the real thing. They got Japanese in Oklahoma?

OTIS

I have some Japanese friends, yeah.

THOM

Do you trust 'em?

OTIS

Not with my Pacific Fleet.

THOM

(As OTIS drinks the other mug of tea.)

So, anyway, in the meantime I'm developing a one-man show about what it's like to be an actor from Georgia making a splash in LA. I know a stage manager at the Mark Taper Forum and God knows they need a good comedy down there! 'Course, it'd be easy to put it up in one of these postage-stamp theatres on Santa Monica Boulevard, but there's no way I act for free! Done with that fifteen years ago! Hey, I got some great posters from my shows in Atlanta--

(Puts his hand on OTIS' knee.)

Wanna drive me back to my place and take a look?

OTIS

Um, actually--

THOM

(Starts feeling for his wallet.)

You like musicals? I got a videotape of me as Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*--that was a stretch for a lil' old Southern boy. Shit, looks like I left my wallet at home, guess we'll *have* to go there then, unless--

(OTIS gestures.)

Great, great. You are a Southern gentleman, sir, us types gotta stick together. But--one thing--you don't pronounce the "H."

Lights out on THOM. OTIS just sits there, stunned.  
DEAN appears next to OTIS, driving.

DEAN

He's one of Wake's friends.

(OTIS just looks at DEAN, apalled.)

When you first move to LA, you meet a lot of people like that, Hollywood wannabees anxious to be your friend. Pretty quickly you find out why they don't have any others. Wake tries to help them, but they're mostly hopeless. And now that Wake's gone, I'm kind of stuck with his collection of Thoms.

OTIS

Bet it costs you.

DEAN

And not just money. Eventually they drag themselves back to Missoula or Council Bluffs or Yazoo City--

OTIS

Don't worry, I'm not gonna run back to like Texas or Oklahoma or anywhere in the Midwest.

DEAN

You are a much better representative, even if you leave there--

OTIS

It's here or New York. Depending.

DEAN

On what?

OTIS

Not sure yet. And the interview's still coming up. Any advice?

DEAN

We should probably talk about the NYU interview, too.

OTIS

No, I want to focus on now. What do you tell the interns?

DEAN

How you begin and how end is most important. Don't worry about the middle. I had a boss once who could always be swayed by the last person to talk to her before a decision. So make sure your interview ends the way you want it.

OTIS

I get a little hyper on a interviews, come on too strong—

DEAN

New York or LA—either way you'll have me or Wake to look after you. Just avoid the center of the country. You can tell at election time, all the blue states on the coasts, better education systems, smarter electorate--

OTIS

Arnold Schwarzenegger.

DEAN just looks irritated and drives while OTIS looks smug. Lights out on them and up on WAKE entering with a small suitcase, examining some mail in his hand. After a moment, DEAN appears in a painting smock or apron, brush in hand.

DEAN

Oh. Wake.

WAKE

Still getting some of my mail.

DEAN

I have a pile I was gonna forward to you.

WAKE

I can just take it. Where's Otis?

DEAN

Out doing something young and hip that we wouldn't understand. Why?

WAKE

He said he'd be here.

DEAN

Sorry, just me.

WAKE

You all right?

DEAN  
Never better.

WAKE  
Oh. Good.

DEAN  
What?

WAKE  
I guess...Otis said...but you're fine.

DEAN  
I am fine. What did he say?

WAKE  
Something about a disorder. I actually thought you might be in the hospital by the time I got here. Made it sound like an emergency.

DEAN  
The Otis who cried wolf. That was a joke. You never laugh at my jokes.

WAKE  
You're...swallowing okay?

DEAN  
I had a couple of...episodes in front of Otis. It's under control. I'm seeing, you know, somebody about it. Was.

WAKE  
I also need to pick up the last of my stuff.

DEAN  
I could've sent it.

WAKE  
You shouldn't have to pay for--

DEAN  
I'm glad you're here, actually. I need your opinion.

DEAN gets two unframed paintings and holds them side by side.

WAKE  
They're great.

DEAN

Thank you. But I'm trying to decide how they should go together.  
(Holds them up next to each other.)

Like this?

(Switches them.)

Or this?

(WAKE contemplates.)

It makes a difference which direction you're reading them, don't you think?

WAKE

Paintings aren't necessarily read like text. Sometimes you just take in the whole.

DEAN

But these are obviously two separate panels, arranged side by side. Don't we automatically read or absorb or contemplate them in some kind of order?

WAKE

How much space between?

DEAN

None.

WAKE

None? Really? Isn't the space important? What's in between. A pause as you're reading.

(DEAN switches them again, an inch apart.)

That's better.

DEAN

I agree.

(Hands the paintings to WAKE.)

Be sure to hang them that way.

WAKE

What?

DEAN

You need something on your walls, don't you? They don't let you nail up enamels from the lab.

WAKE

Can I hang them the other way from time to time?

DEAN

If you want them to mean something different.

WAKE

How's Otis?



Challenging. DEAN

Really? WAKE

DEAN  
He keeps challenging me. I thought this visit was about his decision, New York or LA, but he keeps asking me questions about you.

Me. Really. WAKE

DEAN  
Wake, I need to ask you, how do you think of Otis?

WAKE  
How? He's turned out okay.

DEAN  
Has he turned out? They say personalities don't cohere until after 30. Big changes still loom.

WAKE  
How do you think of him?

OTIS appears in a separate area sitting expectantly in a chair with a mug of coffee.

DEAN  
We didn't raise him, but--

WAKE  
I *don't* think of him as our child.

DEAN  
I spose that's both unrealistic and hubristic of me.  
(WAKE just smiles in agreement.)  
Let me put these away for now. I'll send them to you.

DEAN disappears with the paintings. WAKE becomes DR. MORLEY and approaches OTIS, who stands and shakes his hand. DR. MORLEY has a distinctive accent very different from WAKE'S New York accent.

DR. MORLEY

Good, Alison got you some coffee. Sorry I'm late.

OTIS

No, I'm early. Nice to meet you, Dr. Morley.

DR. MORLEY

(Pulling up a chair next to OTIS.)

Remind me, where else are you considering?

OTIS

NYU.

DR. MORLEY

Oh, right. So we're competing not just with another school, but another city. First time in LA?

OTIS

First time as an adult, yes.

DR. MORLEY

What do you think of it so far?

OTIS

It's all here, isn't it?

DEAN comes back.

DR. MORLEY

I like to think so.

DEAN

I've still got some of your Tang tea.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

Very different from New York.

WAKE stands.

DEAN

No, no, you're a guest.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

If I went there, I'd have to sell my car.

DEAN disappears. WAKE sits, becoming DR. MORLEY.

DR. MORLEY

I lived here five years without a car. I don't recommend it.

OTIS

What's LA got over New York?

DR. MORLEY laughs.

DEAN

(Reappearing, stirring a mug.)

Granted, he's not our child. But I'd like him to be better than we are.

DR. MORLEY

You might be surprised.

WAKE AND OTIS

How?

DR. MORLEY

LA has more museums than any city in the country.

DEAN

(Handing the mug to WAKE)

I'd like to think he'd be more relaxed.

DR. MORLEY

Thanks, Alison. More books sold than any city in the country.

DEAN

And therefore more, you know, open.

DR. MORLEY

And, believe it or not, more PhDs.

DEAN

And therefore more compassionate.

WAKE

More compassionate? Than you?

OTIS

(Overlapping.)  
More than New York?

DR. MORLEY

I confess I love those stats.

DEAN

Am I too compassionate?

WAKE

Sometimes.

OTIS

Not to mention the weather.

DR. MORLEY gets a sheaf of papers from a briefcase.

DEAN

What do you want for Otis?

WAKE

I want him to be who he is. He's the future.

DEAN

The future? All on that kid?

DR. MORLEY

(Glancing through the pages.)

In your senior thesis you make some startling observations about the modern-day ramifications of Texas slavery.

DEAN

Has he by chance said anything to you about...sexual orientation?

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

Thank you.

WAKE

(While DR. MORLEY peruses the thesis.)

His?

DEAN

Of course, his.

DR. MORLEY

Remarkably promising for a young academic.

WAKE

(Handing DEAN the papers.)

What do you think?

Straight.	DEAN
(Overlapping.) Gay.	WAKE
	DEAN examines the papers and makes notes on them.
We place almost twice as many History PhDs in universities as NYU.	DR. MORLEY
He has a girlfriend.	DEAN
(Overlapping.) I'm not necessarily interested in that.	OTIS
No, really?	WAKE
I think.	DEAN
I just like to learn shit.	OTIS
I don't believe it.	WAKE
(Overlapping.) For its own sake.	OTIS
Why not?	DEAN
(Overlapping.) Why?	DR. MORLEY
	WAKE

Dean, he's you.

OTIS

It seems wrong, doesn't it, to acquire knowledge without a big-deal plan to do something with it--

WAKE

When we first met.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)  
--To make money.

DEAN

We don't look that much alike.

OTIS

If it doesn't make money, we consider it a waste.

WAKE

I see it.

OTIS

And for sure I value the academic knowledge--

WAKE

Dean, I have to tell you something.

OTIS

But education is as much the people you meet as the books you read.

DEAN

(Overlapping.)  
Oh, dear.

OTIS

The professors--

WAKE

I think--

OTIS

Your fellow students--

DEAN

(Overlapping.)

I don't think I want to--

OTIS

People representing your topic of research--

WAKE

(Overlapping.)  
No, I have to tell you.

DR. MORLEY

I'm not sure I--

DEAN

(Overlapping.)  
You don't have to tell me everything!

DEAN turns away from WAKE to edit the paper.

OTIS

You fall a little bit in love with all of them.

DR. MORLEY

--Completely--

OTIS

And they make me want to--

DR. MORLEY

--Understand--

OTIS

--To be...better...than I am. You know? Not successful, not admired, just...better.

Lights out on OTIS.

WAKE

(Slightly slurred.)  
I've got such a crush on that kid.

DEAN

Were you drinking on the plane?

WAKE

No.

DEAN

That is just so--oogie. You wouldn't actually do anything, would you?  
(WAKE thinks a moment.)

Hesitation! You paused! It doesn't matter what you say now--you actually thought about it!

WAKE

Only if he made the first move.

DEAN

He's a generation younger than you. Not that that ever stopped you, I spose, but--

WAKE

It wouldn't be incest.

DEAN

Not technically. But still.

(Shivers.)

Gross.

WAKE

Don't pretend you never thought about it.

DEAN

(Gags.)

Don't--you know--I've got this--

(Gags.)

The doctor said--my own nephew!

(Gags.)

WAKE

You don't remember what you used to look like, but I do. What you used to be like. He's not just the future, he's the middle.

DEAN

The middle?

WAKE

(Slurring slightly.)

The middle of the country. The blank space between New York and LA, the people we'd like to ignore or write off as cross-burners. Decent, thoughtful, good at heart. And as scared about the future of this country as we are. While LA and New York bicker about who's the best, the middle *is* America.

DEAN

What's wrong with you?

WAKE

Nothing.



DEAN

(Overlapping.)

Something's wrong with you.

(Hands corrected papers to WAKE.)

You capitalize too much. People are gonna think you're German.

As WAKE takes the paper, OTIS comes in with a backpack.

OTIS

Wake! Dude!

(Hugs him. DEAN glares.)

WAKE

Otis, you're not getting a tan, are you?

OTIS

(Taking out his camera.)

Dean showed me all your outdoor hangouts.

(Gestures.)

Stand next.

WAKE

(Standing next to DEAN, uncomfortably.)

All of them?

OTIS

Zuma Beach, the Getty, Huntington Gardens--

(Takes a picture.)

DEAN

(As he and WAKE step apart.)

That's not why. I just like those places.

OTIS

Only one left.

WAKE

Which?

OTIS

Let's watch the sunset from the Observatory.

DEAN

Griffith Park?

I just got off a plane.	WAKE
Half an hour.	OTIS
Um...no.	DEAN
C'mon, ya'll.	OTIS
It's closed for winter.	DEAN
(Overlapping.) I'm too tired.	WAKE
It is not!	OTIS
Dean, you go.	WAKE
You, too, Wake!	OTIS
It's best I--	WAKE
Not.	DEAN AND WAKE
Okay, Dean, just zip on over, then I'll take ya'll to dinner, K? To celebrate.	OTIS
Celebrate what?	DEAN AND WAKE
My interview.	OTIS
How'd it go?	DEAN
I'll tell you...at the Observatory.	OTIS

Lighting change. OTIS and DEAN stand watching the sunset. Silence for a while, except for birds, a plane in the far distance, and park visitors in the near distance.

OTIS

Where'll it be?

DEAN

What?

OTIS

LAX, Universal Studios, Disneyland?

DEAN

Where will what be?

OTIS

Not near the beach, Santa Monica, Malibu, Venice. That'd be a waste. Need the full oosphere, not one cut in half by the empty sea. Need a lot of people.

DEAN

Otis.

OTIS

They won't haul it in, try to sneak it past customs officials or security. Just build it in place, someone's basement--

DEAN

We don't have basements--

OTIS

Just in a house, then. If it's big enough--nuclear, say--doesn't need to be somewhere crowded. Anywhere in the basin will do.

DEAN

Otis!

OTIS

(Looks down the hill.)

Where's that path go?

DEAN

Down, I guess.

Toward Ferndell? OTIS

I don't know. Maybe. DEAN

Let's go, bro. OTIS

No, it's too-- DEAN

Too steep? Bet Uncle Wake could make it. OTIS

I'm actually in *much* better shape. DEAN

Prove it. OTIS

Then we'd have to climb back up for the car-- DEAN

C'mon. Aren't you horny? OTIS

OTIS disappears. DEAN hesitates a moment, then follows. Organ music. Lights up on OTIS looking at some votive candles. After a moment DEAN joins him, then lights a candle.

That for Wake? OTIS

What? DEAN

Baptists don't light candles. Must be for a Catholic in your life. OTIS

Not really in my life any more, is he? DEAN

All the more reason. OTIS

DEAN

Otis, I want you to go to New York.

OTIS

Freak you out to think of me here in town?

DEAN

Not at all. I'd love it. But that would be selfish of me.

OTIS

So NYU sounds better than UCLA?

DEAN

I love New York.

OTIS

You can be honest with me, Uncle Dean.

DEAN

I really, truly love it.

OTIS

And Wake's there.

DEAN

That, too.

OTIS

After all the shit you said about him?

DEAN

He needs you, Otis.

OTIS

Maybe he needs *you*.

DEAN

But he doesn't want me. I know him very well, Otis. Better than anybody in the entire world. He's been my study, my field of expertise. And I'm very good at it. I know things about Wake he doesn't know about himself.

OTIS

What things?

DEAN

I know things he doesn't know I know. And I certainly know things about him you don't know. He needs you. Not in the way he thinks he does. But in the way I know he does. Or will.

OTIS

You're scared, aren't you?

DEAN

Scared?

OTIS

Scared to--say things--out loud.

DEAN

Some things don't need to be said. When you get older, your concerns become microscopic, selfish, only focused on one person at a time instead of the whole world.

OTIS

So you're not gonna tell Wake what you know that I don't know and he doesn't know you know? Or some shit.

DEAN

(Looking up.)

That baptism tapestry's my favorite.

OTIS

Jesus is pretty hot.

DEAN

Oh, dear.

OTIS

Tell Wake.

DEAN

That would ruin everything, wouldn't it?

OTIS

Or the opposite.

Lights out on OTIS and DEAN and up on WAKE sitting at a table with two empty chairs and three fountain drinks. After a moment OTIS and DEAN join him.

OTIS

Sorry, dude, we went to the cathedral first.

WAKE

Nice, isn't it? Except for the Robert Graham sculpture.

OTIS

The tapestries are awesome.

DEAN

All those saints modeled on real people from all over LA.

OTIS

They made Dean cry.

DEAN

I was just moved by the, I dunno, contrast between the peaceful people of the world, together, all facing the altar--and reality.

WAKE

The lie.

DEAN

The aspiration.

(OTIS laughs.)

I know—I'm corny.

OTIS

No, here we are debating--

OTIS

--The hypocrisies of Catholicism--

DEAN

(Overlapping.)

We're not debating.

OTIS

In a Jewish deli.

WAKE

You can talk about anything at Canter's.

(To DEAN.)

I ordered you an egg cream.

(To OTIS.)

Almost as good as New York.

DEAN

(Pushing it away.)

I can't drink these any more.

You've *lost* weight. WAKE

No--they're too thick-- DEAN

--To drink in public. DEAN

(Overlapping.)  
His disorder-- OTIS

Oh. Right. WAKE

The chocolate--coats-- DEAN

Dean has something to tell you. OTIS

Otis! DEAN

What? WAKE

No, I don't. DEAN

Something about you. OTIS

Otis--? WAKE

I don't know what it is. OTIS

DEAN

(Seething.)  
Otis, we are very--delicate with you. And I'm taking the liberty of saying "we" because I know Wake does the same.

WAKE



Yeah, I do.

DEAN

You're our nephew.

DEAN

Even if Wake lives in New York and I live in LA, that uncle relationship obligates--constrains--places some limits on how we speak to you. We take care. I would very much appreciate the same--respect from you.

OTIS

Respect is fucked.

DEAN

Respect gets you through the day.

WAKE

Social lubrication.

OTIS

(Overlapping.)  
Not me.

DEAN

Me, then. It gets me through the day.

WAKE

Me, too. Sorta.

OTIS

Respect is fucked if it means not saying.

DEAN

I am often tempted to say.

WAKE

You know I am.

DEAN

There is so much that ought not be said. That doesn't need to be said.

OTIS

Ya'll happy not saying?

DEAN

Don't make other people's choices for them.

WAKE

Otis, it's practically impossible to keep my mouth shut. But sometimes a quiet understanding is better.

OTIS

But if it's a *mis*understanding?

DEAN

(After a moment.)

Otis, would you like to see what happens when you say something that should have been left unsaid?

OTIS

Whatever.

DEAN

Something I would never in a million years *want* to say.

OTIS

K, maybe not--

DEAN

(Overlapping.)

Exactly the wrong thing to say.

DEAN

I'm not at all sure what you're trying to do, even though I imagine--I'm quite sure--your heart's in the right place--but messing with other peoples' lives is--

WAKE

Dean, whatever you're thinking--

OTIS

(Overlapping.)

K, Uncle Dean, never mind--

DEAN

The reason we went to the cathedral today is because we kinda had to.

WAKE

Why?

DEAN

We had a perfectly nice hike--

OTIS

Really, Uncle Dean, you don't have to--

DEAN

(Overlapping.)  
Until Otis insisted on taking a certain path.

WAKE

Which path?

DEAN

You know the path. Down from the Observatory on the way to Ferndell. Straight down, practically. A little treacherous for someone my age, but it flattens out, the grade relaxes after a while. Nobody comes down that way, but it's almost *busy* about halfway down. People coming up. No kids or dogs or families, but busy--

OTIS

When I said you had something to say--

DEAN

(Getting up from the table.)

Otis went...somewhere. Disappeared on me. So I was left alone. Briefly.

WAKE gets up from the table and becomes MAN IN PARK. DEAN and MAN IN PARK stare at each other a while.

DEAN

(To OTIS.)

I don't do things like this. I've never done this. I could hear my heart, and I felt dizzy.

MAN IN PARK strokes his crotch. DEAN looks around as if he doesn't understand.

DEAN

I'm not up on the subtleties of what happens between men in parks, but no subtleties were offered.

DEAN strokes his crotch, awkwardly. MAN IN PARK moves closer to him.

DEAN

I know you're sposed to worry about police entrapment, so I figured I shouldn't be the first to do anything.

MAN IN PARK grabs DEAN'S crotch. DEAN reciprocates.

DEAN

If nothing happened, that would have been fine.

MAN IN PARK kneels and starts to fellate DEAN.

DEAN

But something did. And the blood rushed to my head, it was hard to breathe--but I didn't choke--just kept breathing--and then--

MAN IN PARK pulls out a measuring tape and measures DEAN'S penis.

DEAN

He got all empirical on me. Measuring, documenting, length, girth. I thought anonymous sex was supposed to indulged in and forgotten, but suddenly I was a subject for a record-keeper on par with—what's-their-names—Masters and Johnson.

MAN IN PARK puts away the measuring tape and gets out a small pair of scissors.

DEAN

Then it got aesthetic.

MAN IN PARK starts trimming DEAN'S pubic hair, tossing tufts aside.

DEAN

Trimming--there--seems too self-involved, too conscious of appearances--and whoever sees me--down there? I spose the scissors should have scared me. He could've done anything with them, but he was gentle, even professional, in his—whadyacallit—tonsonial ministrations.

MAN IN PARK puts away the scissors and takes out a cell phone.

DEAN

One final documentary act.

MAN IN PARK takes a picture of DEAN'S crotch with his cell phone.

DEAN

I didn't object. My face wasn't in it. Nobody's going to be able to identify me by my--down there. So I let him. And then, in gratitude for my—I dunno—cooperation--

MAN IN PARK resumes fellating DEAN.

OTIS

(Playing with his drinking straw.)

Nothing lasts, does it? Art can't be conserved forever--eventually it falls to shit. Interns, full of promise, have careers, awesome or cheesy, then die. Countries, kingdoms,

empires, all have lives, done in by their own success, collapsing quickly, way fast. And love doesn't last either, does it? Hot, then cold, maybe hot again, but cold for good some day. So there's only the moment to conjure a little dignity--respect as you would say--in the least dignified situation.

DEAN quietly has an orgasm, and he and WAKE return to the table.

OTIS (CONT'D)

A moment to say I get it, I get *you*, knowing, not just knowing--never forgetting--that death defeats us all. So giving a shit for a moment shows grace, grace in defeat.

DEAN AND WAKE

(To each other.)

What did you *say* to him?

OTIS

The guy in the park--

DEAN

(Wary.)

Yes...?

OTIS

The guy in the park remind you of Wake?

DEAN

(After a pause.)

Yes.

WAKE

You paused.

DEAN

The "yes" was for you. The pause was for me.

WAKE

(After they stare at him for a few moments.)

What? I'm supposed to freak out? Dean in the bushes is supposed to--what?--devastate me? It doesn't.

DEAN

I didn't *think* you'd care.

WAKE

I do care. I'm delighted! Ecstatic!

OTIS

Awesome!

WAKE

You've needed to get sucked off in the bushes as long as I've known you.

DEAN

Have I?

OTIS

You have!

WAKE

Did you like it?

DEAN

(Reluctantly.)

Yes.

WAKE

(Jumping up from the table.)

Good. I gotta go to the john.

DEAN

(Touching WAKE at the waist.)

Wake.

WAKE

(Freezing.)

What?

DEAN

(Hand still on WAKE'S waist.)

Don't go.

WAKE

I just had half an egg cream and two glasses of water before you got here.

DEAN

Don't go back to New York.

WAKE

(Pause.)

Don't...say that...casually.

DEAN

I'm not a casual person.

WAKE

You don't know what it means if I stay.

DEAN

Yes, I do.

(To OTIS.)

Is that what you wanted me to tell him?

(To WAKE.)

I know.

Silence. After a moment, WAKE takes DEAN'S hand and sits back down.

WAKE

I'd have to go back. To get my stuff.

DEAN nods. Silence. WAKE and DEAN turn to look at OTIS. OTIS concentrates on drinking his egg cream. WAKE drinks his as well. Finally DEAN drinks his egg cream. No choking.

OTIS

Uncle Dean! Be careful--you could--!

(DEAN drinks without stopping.)

You're swallowing too much!

DEAN keeps on drinking. WAKE starts to laugh.

OTIS

Dude, you know what happens you swallow in public. This isn't just water. What's in an egg cream, anyway?

DEAN keeps drinking and WAKE keeps laughing.

OTIS

(To WAKE.)

It's not funny. At least not that funny. Uncle Wake, you're freaking me out. Uncle Dean, make him stop.

DEAN keeps drinking as WAKE'S laughter becomes uncontrollable.

OTIS

Get a grip! Both of you! People are looking. Don't you care?

Sound of DEAN finishing the egg cream as WAKE'S laughter continues to crescendo. OTIS watches them both carefully as the lights slowly fade.

End of Scene.