

THE YES LIVES

A New Play by
Dave Osmundsen

Draft: 2-6-2018

CHARACTERS

ALEXANDER

JOHN

RONALD

SHELLY

MORGAN (*played by the same actor who plays SHELLY*)

TOMMY (*played by the same actor who plays RONALD*)

Note on Performance

The stage should be bare, except for the most necessary props (a table, a laptop, a chair, whatever the director sees fit).

The action should bleed from one scene into another. The transitions should be as seamless as possible.

ACT ONE

ALEXANDER, alone on stage, delivering a valedictory speech in a cap and gown.

ALEXANDER

I'm not the kind of person who generally makes big speeches in front of large crowds. Like the best, and in some way the worst student, I prefer to spend my time indoors studying. Some people may tell me, "Why don't you go out? Why don't you have a life? Why aren't you well-rounded?" And the simple truth is, I am. I know so much more about history, math, art, literature, and science than I did coming into this school. I even know the first 98 digits of Pi. Don't worry, I'm not going to recite them.

Unless you want me to.

But honestly, I don't even want to, so.

But of course, there were plenty of lessons learned outside the classroom.

Faith. Dedication. Friendship. But most important, *loyalty*.

Loyalty to our teachers who aren't paid nearly enough to teach us.

Just saying.

Loyalty to our school and the fact that we can attend here at all.

And most importantly, loyalty to our friends, who have our backs every—

Well, at least, *most*,

Steps of the way.

ALEXANDER removes his robe and cap. He looks down at the floor.

JOHN enters, yelling at people offstage.

JOHN

FUCK OFF, YOU ASSHOLES! YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. RUN AWAY, DON'T APOLOGIZE, DON'T OWN UP TO ANYTHING—

NO, *YOU* GO FUCK YOUR DAD. HE'D LIKE IT A LOT BETTER!

ALEXANDER

OK, you can—

JOHN

JUST GONNA WALK AWAY! HOW GROWN-UP OF YOU!!! REALLY MATURE!!!
YEAH WELL YOU KNOW WHAT!? YOU TOO, ASSHOLE! YOU TOO!

...

You OK?

ALEXANDER

I am. Thanks.

JOHN

I hate people like that. Think they're the hottest shit in the world when they're really just shitheads.

ALEXANDER

I just ignore them. Most of them are dumb anyway.

JOHN

You shouldn't let them do that to you. Calling you a faggot, queer... It's not right!

ALEXANDER

That's what I get for being out of the closet.

JOHN

Like I'm *so* not cool about people making fun of gay people. It's like, you guys go through enough, with people thinking that you choose to be gay, that you're a degenerate, that you have sex up the butt...

Personally, I think it's really cool that you're like, *the* gay kid in our school.

ALEXANDER

The gay kid...?

JOHN

Yeah. Like, the fact that you're gay, and people know, and you're OK with them knowing. Like you're not in denial or anything.

ALEXANDER

...thank you.

JOHN

Seriously, if I were gay, which I'm not, I wouldn't want people to know. Especially in this school. I'd be too afraid.

ALEXANDER

Luckily you don't have to worry about it.

JOHN

But I know how it feels.

I was called a "faggot" by some jerk when I was fourteen.

It really hurt.

ALEXANDER

I'm sure it did.

JOHN

It shouldn't matter who you sleep with, as long as you're happy.

ALEXANDER

And you're not spreading syphilis.

JOHN laughs.

JOHN
That's funny. And true!

JOHN holds out his hand.

JOHN
I'm John, by the way.

ALEXANDER
Alexander.

JOHN
Alexander.
Will you be my friend?

ALEXANDER
Uh... Why not.

SHIFT

JOHN
Alexander!
Those guys bother you again today?

ALEXANDER
This is the third day in a row you stopped me in the hallway to ask that.
And again, the answer is no, so you don't need to come to my rescue today.

JOHN
Glad to hear it.
That they're not bothering you. Not that I have to come to your rescue.
Hey, um...
I was wondering if you'd wanna hang out this weekend? Maybe get food or something?

ALEXANDER
Uh... that would be nice.

JOHN
OK. Does Saturday work for you?

ALEXANDER
It should.

JOHN

OK. 7:00?

ALEXANDER
Should be fine.

JOHN
You can say yes, you know.

ALEXANDER
I know I could, I just...
I have a hard time saying Yes to people.

JOHN
Why?

ALEXANDER
It's a long story.

JOHN
You can tell it to me this Saturday at 7:00, if you want!

ALEXANDER
I mean, I do want to.
See you on Saturday at 7:00, I mean.
I would like to.
That better?

JOHN
Definitely. 7:00 Saturday. I'll pick you up. Just text me your address, dude.

ALEXANDER
Please don't call me dude.

JOHN
Why not?

ALEXANDER
It makes me feel so... basic.
Like, *dude*.
Just... call me Alexander.

JOHN
Alright, Alexander.

SHIFT.

JOHN and ALEXANDER sit in JOHN's car eating fast food and looking out at the view beyond them.

ALEXANDER

Because then it's like, I'm putting myself into a bind with them, and if I need to get out of it, I risk hurting them, or offending them. It's like, you say "Yes" to someone or something, you *have* to do what you said you'd do, otherwise you completely betray the verbal contract you signed. Of course, there are instances where it's perfectly excusable to break it. Car accident, grandma dies, getting the runs, some psycho runs over your cat Brando with a BMW.

JOHN

Did that happen to you?

ALEXANDER

No, it happened to the couple across the street from me.

Anyway, so those instances, you back out of and it's perfectly OK. Outside circumstances, right? But what about *inside* circumstances, like you say Yes, then you feel *bad* for saying Yes because you didn't really *want* to say Yes, but everyone *else* was telling you to say Yes because how bad of an idea could it be? But they don't know how much could go wrong *because* you said Yes. Things that you don't even think about, because if you think about them, then you risk going back on your verbal contract without a really legitimate excuse, and how good of a person does that make you? It doesn't. It makes you a breacher of contract-er. Is that even a word? I don't think it's a word.

So like, for me, I've decided it's better to tell people "OK," which gives them the positive affirmation that I would do something indicating that I'm necessarily for it, or "Why Not," implying that there's so plausible risk of doing it at this time, or "I Would Like To," implying that if circumstances are favorable, I would do something. None of these give an affirmative, but none of them give a negative.

Pause. JOHN tries to take it in. Perhaps he eats a fry.

JOHN

That's a lot.

ALEXANDER

Nope. Just linguistics.

JOHN

...did something happen to you?

ALEXANDER

Nope.

JOHN

Like, did you say Yes to someone who asked you out and then jilted you?

ALEXANDER

No.

JOHN

This is just, weird thing your head thinks about?

ALEXANDER

Indeed.

JOHN

You could've said Yes to that.

ALEXANDER

But I didn't.

JOHN

Why not?

ALEXANDER

Because there was another word to communicate what I wanted to say.

JOHN

You're gonna have to say Yes some time.

ALEXANDER

When there are no other words to say, I will.

JOHN

Alright...

So what *do* you wanna do with your life?

ALEXANDER

Survive.

JOHN

That's funny. No seriously, what do you want to do?

ALEXANDER

I'm serious. I just want to survive the homophobic bullshit of Ransfield Township High School, go to college, survive that enough to get a degree, then help other LGBT kids survive.

JOHN

LG what?

ALEXANDER

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender.

JOHN

Right. I didn't know that... I don't know a lot of things...

ALEXANDER

Do you know what *you* wanna do with your life?

JOHN

Go to college, do well, get a good job, get married, have kids, have grandkids...

ALEXANDER

So basically one giant cliché.

JOHN

I mean, I want other things too. I want to travel, see new places, write a book, tell someone I love them...

ALEXANDER

You've never told anyone you loved them?

JOHN

Nope.

ALEXANDER

Really. Not Danielle Nieves?

JOHN

Nope.

ALEXANDER

Not Dena Milliard?

JOHN

Uh uh.

ALEXANDER

Not even Michelle Becker?

You dated her all of freshman year.

JOHN

You remember that?

ALEXANDER

I remember you two making out against your locker like the cover of a trashy Nicholas Sparks novel.

JOHN chuckles.

JOHN

Yeah well... Good times...

ALEXANDER

Why'd you guys break up, anyway?

JOHN

I don't know. It kinda just became whatever.

ALEXANDER

"Whatever"?

JOHN

Like we'd go to a movie or something and it wouldn't be, "How did that movie change your life?" or "How awesome was that one scene?" or "Let's talk about this amazing movie we just spent two hours of our lives watching". It would be like "Where do you wanna go for dinner?" Like, you'd go through this whole experience with someone, and have it not even register with you? Like who can live with that?

ALEXANDER

You think it might be the quality of the film and not the person?

JOHN

I guess. But I just can't stand being with people who don't respond to the world around them. It's like, there's so much going on. Why aren't you taking in every bit of it? When I get married, I hope my wife is one of those people who just... knows how beautiful life is.

ALEXANDER

What else?

JOHN

Well, she'd have to be hot, for one thing. But if she isn't, it's not a big deal. Just smart, good with kids...

ALEXANDER

Has a career...

JOHN sighs.

ALEXANDER

...what, you wouldn't want your future wife to have a career?

JOHN

No, I mean I would, but...
I wouldn't want it to take precedence over me. You know?

ALEXANDER
...that sounds vaguely sexist.

JOHN
I don't mean it to be.
I mean, whoever I marry can totally have a job. I'm not really against that. But...
I'd want to be first in her life. And I'd want her to be first in my life. Like, I wouldn't let my job take precedence over her, you know?

ALEXANDER
Gotcha...

JOHN
That's about it.
So what about you? What would be your ideal husband?

ALEXANDER
I mean, I can't legally call any guy my husband, so...

JOHN
But you'll be able to, one day. When it's not stupid 2006.

ALEXANDER
Honestly I don't know if I even want to get married. Like in general.

JOHN
...really?
Like even if you *could* get married to a man, you wouldn't?

ALEXANDER
I've never really *liked* anyone enough to really want to marry them. And considering I don't really like people in general...

JOHN
You may, though. Someday.

ALEXANDER
Well good luck to that person.

JOHN
If I knew more gay people, I'd totally introduce you, dude.

ALEXANDER

Alexander.

JOHN

Right, sorry. Alexander.

Pause.

ALEXANDER

You seem like you'd make a good husband. And father. And grandfather. And great grandfather. And great-great grandfather. And ancestor.

JOHN laughs.

JOHN

I can see you being a good dad too.

ALEXANDER

Oh God, no! I'd be awful!

JOHN

I can just see you being stern, and sarcastic, and hilarious. You'd be like, the right brain of the couple, and the other would be the left brain, and you'd complement each other perfectly.

ALEXANDER

Or, we'd just be sassy bitches together.

JOHN

Either way.

Pause.

JOHN

Sometimes, I think my life would be better if I were gay.

Like, my family, I love them to death, but they have a really unfair view of the world sometimes.

They're like, far right wing, extremely conservative, basically a bunch of Reaganites.

And it's like, they talk so much about how liberalism and homosexuality and feminism are ruining the world...

Even my mom, she's like, women should be mothers, be responsible for the family. She has a Master's in Chemical Engineering. And she was working in a power plant when she met my dad. But now she's like, a total fifties housewife.

Actually, one time my mom had like five glasses of wine, and told me she experimented with her cousin Lucy in college.

They were second cousins, so it wasn't *as* bad, but...

Then dad came along and pretty much spayed and neutered her.

Then they had me.

And it was like, my dad and I got along when I was little, but then he'd say racist things, like we'd go to a baseball game and he'd say, "They're just cheering louder because they're black" and "That jigaboo doesn't know how to hit worth a cotton field." I mean this was the nineties, but still.

One day, this big black guy overheard him, and they got into a fist fight in the middle of the stands. We were thrown out, and on the way home, he was just ranting about how they're entitled, how the law's always on their side, and I said, "But we used to have separate drinking fountains for them." And he was like, "That was a different time," then we started fighting about that, and...

Then I started noticing all the racist and homophobic things he was saying. Like, when I told him I was hanging out with a gay guy tonight, he was like, "Why don't you hang out with your normal friends?"

But like, if I was gay, I could just give him this epic middle finger of, "Guess what, dad, I'm gay too! Are you gonna call *me* not normal?"

Like, just the chance to *directly* confront him with this sort of thing. Then there would be a chance I could actually have a conversation with him about it. And maybe he'd be more open minded about things.

ALEXANDER

After beating the shit out of you.

JOHN

If it meant I could have a conversation with him...

ALEXANDER

First off, that's *really* fucked up.

Second, you're a straight, white male who is on the football team, has all the girls, blah blah blah.

You don't have people saying "HEY HETERO SUCK MY DICK" in the hallway, do you? You don't have people asking why you *chose* to be straight, right? You don't have your right to get married to the love of your life questioned thanks to an outdated book that people literally take as gospel, right? You don't have your mother saying they love you, but not the decision you made, right?

You seriously *want* all that? Because if you do, you're a moron. If I was given the choice to be me, or normal like you, there would be no contest.

JOHN

Oh, you want to talk about normal now.

A word that *no one* has the meaning for.

I wake up every day with parents I am constantly at odds with, whom I never seem to do anything good enough for.

Some days, I go through the motions at school because I don't know what else to do.

I don't have anyone I can call my best friend. Not really. I have a lot of people I'm friendly with, but no one I can tell stuff like this to.

I don't have a girl I can call my girlfriend.

I fixate more on this stuff more than my grades, so I feel even *more* stupid, and know that I'm never going to do anything good enough to impress my parents.

Then I can't do my homework because I can't remember what I learned that day, and my notes are all scrambled.

You have the grades, *you* don't care what people think of you, and the fact that *you* can remain calm while people throw the vilest shit at you—I'd switch my normal for yours in a heartbeat..

ALEXANDER

Sounds like an eventful heartbeat.

Long pause. Then, JOHN and ALEXANDER laugh, relieving the tension.

JOHN

Yeah...

The two look at each other. A moment, where they look at each other perhaps a little longer than friends usually do.

Eventually, they break their stare from each other.

JOHN

Hey um... I'm not sure how into this you'd be, but Tommy Leone's having a party next weekend. Would you wanna go?

ALEXANDER

Will there be drinking?

JOHN

Probably. Is that a problem?

ALEXANDER

No, just, I've... never been to a party with drinking. Outside my family.

JOHN

First time for everything, right?

ALEXANDER

Uh...

SHIFT.

JOHN and ALEXANDER at the aforementioned party.

JOHN holds a beer. ALEXANDER has a solo cup.

JOHN

Come on! Do a kegstand!

ALEXANDER

I'm fine.

JOHN

BOO! PARTY POOPER!

ALEXANDER

Don't be so loud.

JOHN

I CAN BE AS LOUD AS I WANT, BITCH!!!

ALEXANDER

First, I'm not a bitch.

Second, you don't have to be so obnoxious about—

JOHN

Oh my God! Oh my God Morgan Rascoe's here! Morgan Rascoe's here!

I should go say Hi.

Should I say Hi?

I'm gonna go say Hi.

JOHN starts to go offstage.

ALEXANDER

John—

JOHN

Talk to some people!

ALEXANDER

JOHN!

But JOHN is completely gone.

ALEXANDER sips his drink. Totally alone.

TOMMY enters.

TOMMY

Alexander, right?

ALEXANDER

Wow. You know my name.

TOMMY

Yeah, we've gone to school together since kindergarten.

How're you doing?

TOMMY holds his hand out to ALEXANDER.

ALEXANDER
What's that?

TOMMY
It's my hand.

ALEXANDER
What are you offering me your hand for?

TOMMY
OK...

TOMMY withdraws his hand.

Guess you're not really a handshake person, huh.

ALEXANDER
Depends on the person.

TOMMY
Uh huh...
You having a good time?

ALEXANDER
It's fine.

TOMMY
That's cool...

Awkward silence.

TOMMY
You want me to get you a beer, or...?

ALEXANDER
Already have a drink.

TOMMY
OK...

Pause.

TOMMY

I just want to say, it's OK for you to be gay.

ALEXANDER

Oh?

TOMMY

Yeah. A lot of people here are douchebags about it, but I don't care.

ALEXANDER

Well thank you.

TOMMY

No problem. I never saw what was wrong with it. If that's the choice you want to make, more power to you.

ALEXANDER

"The choice you want to make"?

TOMMY

Well, because I know a lot of people make fun of you in school for it—

ALEXANDER

No no no. Why would you say that's "the choice you want to make"?

TOMMY

Uh...

ALEXANDER

Because if you think I chose to like men, you are *dead wrong*.

TOMMY

OK, no need to get defensive.

But... would you change it?

I mean, if you don't like being gay, why keep being that way?

ALEXANDER

Who said I disliked being gay?

TOMMY

I mean, don't you?

ALEXANDER

It's not really something I can really help, you idiot.

TOMMY

OK, no need to call me names, dude.

ALEXANDER

...what did you just call me?

TOMMY

Sorry. I just... I call people dude. If you want, I can call you Alex.

ALEXANDER

Alexander.

TOMMY

OK. Alexander. I'm... gonna get another uh...

TOMMY exits. ALEXANDER gulps the rest of his drink down. His face scrunches in disgust, but he gets over it.

We, along with ALEXANDER, see JOHN making out with MORGAN.

ALEXANDER goes up to JOHN and taps him on the shoulder.

ALEXANDER

I'm leaving.

JOHN and MORGAN stop making out.

JOHN

Oh hey, Alexander. You know Morgan Rascoe, right?

MORGAN

Hiiiiiiiiiiii! You're gay, riiiiiiight? I'm Morgannnnnn! Hahaha I'm sooooo funnyyyy!!!

Are you funnyyyy?

Like are you one of those funny gaaayyys?

JOHN

(To MORGAN.)

Could you give us a sec?

MORGAN

Suuuure...

MORGAN makes a blowjob gesture, laughs at herself, then stumbles away.

ALEXANDER

I'm leaving. Now.

JOHN

What!?! No, man. Things are about to get good!

ALEXANDER

You're clearly having a much better time here than I am.

JOHN

What about Tommy? I saw you talking to him. He was nice, wasn't he?

ALEXANDER

He said that being gay was a choice.

JOHN

OK...

ALEXANDER

...you don't see what's wrong with that?

JOHN

Should I?

ALEXANDER gives him an incredulous look.

JOHN

Where is Tommy now?

ALEXANDER

I don't know. He said he had to get another "uh," which probably translates to "Beer" in Neanderthal...

JOHN

Don't call him names.

ALEXANDER

I wasn't calling him—

JOHN

Don't call my friend a Neanderthal. It's like if someone called you a faggot.

ALEXANDER

Well *sorry*...

JOHN

It sounds like you were rude to him.

ALEXANDER

It's rude to imply that something is a choice when it isn't.

JOHN

And you don't think you could've told him that?

ALEXANDER

If he thinks being gay is a choice, then there's no reason I should be friends with him. And it's something he should've known on his own.

JOHN

Believe it or not, we don't all know how it is to be gay.

ALEXANDER

Clearly.

JOHN

That doesn't mean you tell people off. Especially when they're trying to be nice to you. Even if, OK, it's maybe a *little* misguided, but that doesn't give you the right to be an asshole. Because that's what you're being, Alexander. You're being an asshole.

Long pause. ALEXANDER doesn't quite know what to say.

ALEXANDER

You're right. I am an asshole. Luckily for you, I knew it already. So I'm gonna go home before I offend anyone else here.

JOHN

Without apologizing to Tommy? It's his house.

ALEXANDER

Apologize to him for me. Don't worry about me getting home. I'll walk. I live like two blocks from here.

JOHN

Text me when you're home.

ALEXANDER

I will.

And use protection with Morgan.

ALEXANDER exits.

MORGAN enters behind JOHN.

MORGAN

Heeeeey...

JOHN

Hey, sorry about that Morgan.

MORGAN

Where did the funny gay guy gooo? Did he stop being funnyyy?

JOHN

Yep.

MORGAN

Too baaad...

Do you wanna like, go somewhere? We can go to my car and I can make you laugh, if you know what I mean...

JOHN smiles.

JOHN

Yes. Let's go.

MORGAN squeals, and takes him offstage.

SHIFT.

TOMMY and JOHN wearing baseball mitts, throwing a baseball back and forth. Silence, initially.

TOMMY

Why are you even friends with him? I get that he's gay and all, but he's kind of a dick.

JOHN

He's not always like that. He just... he doesn't like what he perceives as stupidity, if that makes any sense.

TOMMY

Uh huh...

It's a good thing you're doing, being friends with him.

I couldn't be friends with a gay guy.

I don't have anything against them, but I'd be scared they'd have a giant crush on me and make things really awkward.

JOHN

Uh huh...

TOMMY

If I were you, I'd be careful with Alexander. He's probably jerking off to you every night and isn't telling you.

JOHN

Because I *really* want to picture my friends jerking off...

TOMMY

You get what I mean, though.

JOHN

I do. But Alexander doesn't like me. Not that way, at least.

TOMMY

Are you sure?

JOHN

Pretty sure...

TOMMY

If you say so...

Pause. Baseball throwing.

JOHN

I gotta ask you something.

TOMMY

Shoot.

JOHN

Do you ever feel... I dunno. Like, nervous about graduating?

TOMMY

Dude, I'm fuckin' pumped for graduation!

This summer seriously can't come soon enough. It's gonna be the best summer of our lives, man.

JOHN

I mean I'm excited for summer, but what about college, and after college?

Do you ever feel... scared about it all?

TOMMY

Scared? 'Course not, man. What do I got to be scared of?

JOHN

I don't know...

TOMMY

What do *you* got to be scared of?

JOHN

I don't know.

TOMMY

Man, you gotta focus on *today*. Live in the moment. All sorts of Zen shit like that.

JOHN

Lately I've just been thinking...

TOMMY

That's new...

Ha! Just busting your balls, man.

What's up with you today? You're like, sad and shit.

JOHN

I'm not sad. I'm just... Sorry. Forget I said anything.

TOMMY

You got nothing to be nervous about, man. You got this.

And you got me, and the guys, and Morgan. Right?

JOHN

Actually, Morgan and I aren't hooking up anymore.

TOMMY

Why not?

JOHN

She's hot and all, but... She's kinda like, whatever, you know?

TOMMY

What did you expect with Morgan fucking Rascoe?

JOHN

I guess I just expected more.

TOMMY

You can't expect too much outta girls like that. She's not that kind who's like forever.

JOHN

I might like someone who's forever, though.

TOMMY

I would too, but like, when I'm thirty and have my shit together. Not now, when I can barely fill out a tax form.

Look, we got three months til we graduate high school, then go off to college. This is the time we need to say *yes* to things. We're not gonna be this young again, so we're not gonna be able to

experience life like this anymore. Because that's what life *is*. It's an *experience*. You gotta *experience* it if you wanna live it. And to do that, you gotta be *here*. Not wherever you are. Don't sweat the small stuff. Live in the moment. 'Cause it's all you got.

JOHN

What about the future?

TOMMY

Pass me the fucking ball, man.

JOHN throws the baseball to TOMMY.

SHIFT

Darkness. A cell phone ringing, specially a Motorola (this is 2006, after all).

ALEXANDER checks the caller ID and picks up.

ALEXANDER

To what do I owe the pleasure of this 3 AM phone call?

JOHN

Alexander???

ALEXANDER

That's me.

JOHN

I'm glad you picked up.

...

ALEXANDER

...

OK...

JOHN

No, just... I didn't know who else I could call.

For some reason I just thought you'd be awake, and...

ALEXANDER

Well I wasn't.

JOHN

So I totally ruined your sleep cycle. Great. I'm a total shit and an inconsiderate person. I'll hang up and let you go back to—

ALEXANDER

I'm up now, we might as well talk.

JOHN

Are you sure?

ALEXANDER

...you OK, John? You don't sound like yourself.

JOHN

I was drunk earlier, but I'm sobering up now.

ALEXANDER

That's good...

JOHN

I shouldn't have gotten drunk tonight.

ALEXANDER

You weren't driving, were you?

JOHN

No. I was home all night.

ALEXANDER

Were you with anyone?

JOHN

No...

My dad has a lot of beer in the fridge, and he's gonna notice it's gone in the morning and tear me a new one for it...

ALEXANDER

...then why would you drink his beer?

JOHN

I needed a drink, OK!? I needed to escape. I needed to like... I don't know. I just needed it.

ALEXANDER

You do know he could lose the house for technically serving a minor, right?

JOHN

Don't make me feel worse! I already feel like shit.

ALEXANDER

OK. Um...

JOHN

How do you do it?

ALEXANDER

How do I do what?

JOHN

How do you... be you?

ALEXANDER

I mean, there's nothing really to it? I just be me?

JOHN

But like, how do you come out as gay and deal with homophobic bullshit and still manage to like... be so cool?

ALEXANDER

You think I'm cool?

JOHN

I mean cool as in calm, but yeah, I think you're cool.

ALEXANDER smiles slightly.

ALEXANDER

Well thank you for that.

JOHN

And like, you're smart, and you're gonna go to a good college, and you're gonna get a good job, and I'm gonna be doing some boring office job while you're changing the world...

ALEXANDER

Let's not project *that* far into the future.

JOHN

I'm scared of it.

ALEXANDER

Of what?

JOHN

The future.

ALEXANDER

Why?

JOHN

‘Cause like... it’s there. But it isn’t. You know it’s coming, but you don’t know if it’s gonna be good or bad. There are things you expect, things you don’t expect, and sometimes it makes your life better and sometimes it ruins in completely without asking you what you think. I look at people around me and I think, How are you not terrified? Maybe they do a good job of hiding it. I look at graduation and college, and yeah I’m excited, but what happens after? What am I gonna do that shows for it? I can’t do anything, Alexander. Except throw balls. I can throw balls. But I can’t really *do* anything. I can’t think, I can’t write, I mean I *want* to do those things, but I can’t because I just don’t know, and... I know you’re gonna say I’m privileged, because I’m a straight white guy, but you’re the only person I can tell this to, because every night it’s like this. Every night I lie on my bed, in the dark, terrified about what the future is gonna bring. And what I’m gonna add to it. Because for all I know, I can get struck by a car tomorrow and not do *anything* worth remembering. And if they don’t remember me, then what’s the point of living?

ALEXANDER

That’s... a really big question, John.

JOHN

See? You’re the only one who calls me that.

Tommy, and all those guys, don’t even call me “John.” They call me “man” or “dude” or “bro” like, I HAVE A NAME!!! Use it!

ALEXANDER

Do you tell them to use your name?

JOHN

No...

ALEXANDER

Then tell them you prefer to be called John.

JOHN

Like how you told me not to call you ‘dude.’

ALEXANDER

Exactly.

JOHN

You make it sound so easy.

ALEXANDER

I’ve had a lot of experience doing it.

JOHN

Uh huh...

Pause.

JOHN

Can you do something with me?

ALEXANDER

Now?

JOHN

No, like... sometime in the future.
Will you go dancing with me?

ALEXANDER

Uhhh...

JOHN

Like, line dancing. Not like, couple dancing.
Like at Joyland. I love going, but no one else really wants to go with me.

ALEXANDER

I'm like, the worst dancer ever.

JOHN

But you're gay. Aren't gay people supposed to be, like, *fabulous* dancers?

ALEXANDER rolls his eyes.

ALEXANDER

Not all of us.

JOHN

Was that insensitive?

ALEXANDER

It's OK.

JOHN

Oh God, it was insensitive, I'm insensitive, I'm a terrible friend and a terrible person and I'm gonna hang up now—

ALEXANDER

No, John, you're fine, just...
I'm not comfortable dancing. Especially in public.

JOHN

OK.

ALEXANDER
But... why not?

JOHN
You mean you will?

ALEXANDER
I don't see how any potential harm could come from it.
Except falling on the dance floor and breaking my ankle and having to go to the hospital and get surgery and get my foot amputated.

JOHN laughs.

JOHN
That's not gonna happen. We're gonna have fun!

ALEXANDER
Are we...?

SHIFT

*A blast of country-pop come on, colored lights flood the stage, and we are in Joyland.
JOHN is back to his chipper self. ALEXANDER shifts his eyes, feeling nervous and out-of-place.*

JOHN
ISN'T THIS FUN!?

ALEXANDER
WHAT!?

JOHN
I SAID ISN'T THIS—

ALEXANDER
OH. IT'S A BLAST.

Pause.

JOHN
You wanna go on the dance floor?

ALEXANDER
You go on. I'll stay here.

JOHN

No, I already danced three times with you just looking on. You need to join in eventually.

ALEXANDER

John—

JOHN

COME ON!!!

ALEXANDER

AAAAAHHHH!!!

JOHN drags ALEXANDER on the dance floor. JOHN begins doing the electric slide. ALEXANDER watches him.

JOHN

Oh come on, you don't even know the electric side!?

ALEXANDER

I mean I've heard of it...

JOHN

Have you ever been to a dance, or even a party in your life!?

ALEXANDER

Not one that required me to dance.

JOHN

Well that's all gonna change. Come on, just do what they say in the song, and dance!

The Electric Slide plays (Please get permission from the copyright owners of this song to use it).

JOHN does it with complete fun and confidence. ALEXANDER is much stiffer in his movements, particularly during the Cha-Cha bits.

At one point, JOHN turns around to face ALEXANDER, and give him a thumbs up.

ALEXANDER smiles, and his movements become more confident.

By the end of the song, ALEXANDER is dancing like crazy, and this time it is JOHN who watches.

When the song ends, ALEXANDER is all sweaty and tired, but exhilarated. JOHN claps.

JOHN

Dude. You have *no idea* how awesome that was!

ALEXANDER

What did I say about calling me dude?

JOHN

Sorry, Alexander. But that was seriously awesome!

ALEXANDER
Oh God, was it?

JOHN
It was! Why are you saying “oh God”?

ALEXANDER
I’m just hoping I didn’t embarrass myself too much!

JOHN
We’re in a dance hall! You don’t have to be embarrassed about dancing! Especially if you’re as fierce as you were!

ALEXANDER
Fierce?

JOHN
Yeah! Anything wrong with me saying “fierce”?

ALEXANDER
Nothing, it’s just... I don’t usually hear straight guys say “fierce”.

JOHN
Well this straight guy does!

ALEXANDER
OK then.
I can’t believe I did that...

JOHN
Yeah...
We gotta come back here next weekend. You down for that?

ALEXANDER
Sure!

And thus begins a montage of multiple dances that JOHN and ALEXANDER do. Pretty much any major dance craze of the last twenty years. ALEXANDER gradually turns out to be, yes, a fierce dancer. JOHN is very good too.

The other two actors should absolutely be involved in this dance sequence too. The whole sequence should be exhausting, yet exhilarating at the same time. When the dance lights stop, JOHN and ALEXANDER are breathing heavily.

ALEXANDER

Thank you.

JOHN
For what?

ALEXANDER
Introducing me to this place.

JOHN
No problem!

ALEXANDER
Like, I'm gonna sound *so* treacly and sentimental when I say this, and I'm gonna hate myself for it—

JOHN
Stop right there. Why are you gonna hate yourself for being sentimental?

ALEXANDER
Because it makes me feel like I have emotions, and I don't like having emotions.

JOHN
But emotions are what makes us live. They're like, the fountain of life! Why would you want to suppress that?

ALEXANDER
...OK, Manic Pixie Dream Boy, this isn't what I wanted to say—

JOHN
Right! Sorry, sorry.

ALEXANDER
Like, I never thought I could dance, but being here is like... discovering a new side of myself that's fun. And knows how to have fun. And be fun. So... I just wanted to thank you for that.

JOHN
Awww. Well thank you for thanking me. It really makes me happy to see you break out of your comfort zone, and not be so afraid.

ALEXANDER
I mean, I wasn't really *afraid*, but... I spent a night without my homework and notes! And it was fun!

JOHN
Yeah. Who needs to be valedictorian? As long as you're having fun!

ALEXANDER

...actually, I *am* valedictorian.

JOHN

...what? Oh my God! That's great! When did you find out!?

ALEXANDER

Yesterday. Principal Boone told me. She's gonna announce it soon.

JOHN

Why didn't you tell me earlier!?! I would've bought you a drink or something!

ALEXANDER

Yes, a non-alcoholic drink to celebrate my *great accomplishment*...

JOHN

It is, though! It's incredible! Wow! Come here!

JOHN opens his arms, and ALEXANDER goes in for the hug. The two hug for a long, long moment.

Perhaps longer than two friends usually do.

Eventually, they break apart, and look at each other.

Perhaps longer than two friends usually do.

JOHN

So this is like, the perfect night for you!

ALEXANDER

You can say that...

A moment.

JOHN

You know, Alexander.

You're a really good friend.

And I want to be a really good friend to you.

So um...

...it's OK. If you um...

ALEXANDER

...if I...?

JOHN

You know... I wouldn't be offended.

In fact, I'd actually be extremely flattered.

And I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong idea, and that I can't share the same feelings for you, since I'm not, you know, but I appreciate that you—

ALEXANDER

Wait wait wait, WHAT THE FUCK!?

JOHN

OK, I clearly...

ALEXANDER

You thought I had a crush on you!?

JOHN

I mean, I—

ALEXANDER

No, not even—you basically *assumed* that I was madly in love with you because what, you stood up for me against a bunch of Neanderthals one day in an attempt to make up for being a privileged straight white guy who's *never* had to worry about a homophobic attack in his life!

JOHN

Hey! I was called a faggot when I was fourteen! Remember!?

ALEXANDER

Oh, I'm sure that *one time* in eighth grade must've hurt so bad!

JOHN

It actually did!

ALEXANDER

Christ, I can't believe—

Wait, is this the only reason you became my friend?

JOHN

No! How can you even think that!?

ALEXANDER

Need I repeat what you *just said*—

JOHN

That wasn't the reason! I didn't think how you were being treated was right!

ALEXANDER

If you really thought that, then you wouldn't have left me alone at a party where I knew *no one*, only to be accosted by a total stranger who was like, "*Being gay's a choice, bro,*"—

JOHN

Oh my God, he was just being nice to you!!!

ALEXANDER

While you were off shoving your tongue down Morgan Rascoe's throat!

JOHN

If you were straight, you would've done the same thing.

ALEXANDER

...no.

No no no no no. Being straight does not excuse you from being a shitty friend.

JOHN

Neither does homophobia.

ALEXANDER

Are you saying that homophobia is *my* problem?

JOHN

I didn't say that—

ALEXANDER

Because I'm not the one calling other people faggots.

JOHN

You called Tommy a Neanderthal.

ALEXANDER

That's because he was being one!

JOHN

Well he's not always one.

But you're always gonna be a faggot.

Pause. JOHN realizes what he said.

JOHN

Shit. Alexander, I—

ALEXANDER

You called me a faggot.

JOHN

It just came out—

ALEXANDER

You called me. A faggot.

...

This is why I don't say Yes to people.

...

I have a Valedictory speech to write.

So go fuck yourself, *man*.

ALEXANDER begins to storm offstage.

JOHN

ALEXANDER!

ALEXANDER doesn't stop. He goes offstage.

I'M YOUR RIDE!

ALEXANDER angrily steps back onstage.

He faces JOHN.

SHIFT.

JOHN driving him and ALEXANDER. Silence. JOHN stops the car, and ALEXANDER starts getting out.

JOHN

I'm—

But ALEXANDER is already out of the car.

SHIFT

JOHN exits. ALEXANDER puts on the valedictory robe and cap.

ALEXANDER

But of course, there were plenty of lessons learned outside the classroom.

Faith. Dedication. Friendship. But most important, *loyalty*.

Loyalty to our teachers who aren't paid nearly enough to teach us. Just sayin'...

Loyalty to our school and the fact that we can attend here at all.

And most importantly, loyalty to our friends, who have our backs every—

Well, at least, *most*,

Steps of the way.

We've all journeyed this far in our lives and our careers. Now, we can leave this all behind us, take what we learned from this place, and move forward into the wide, welcoming world.

ALEXANDER removes his robe and puts on a black coat.

In most cases, we will see each other again. Whether by accident, or by planning. Some of these encounters will involve us walking away from each other awkwardly. Others will involve a hug and a “how’ve you been.”

City noises begin to seep onto the stage.

But no matter what, there will always be this shared experience between us. We all attended Ransfield high school, and graduated the Class of 2006. And whether you like it or not, that’s always gonna hold true.

JOHN suddenly enters, in a black coat too.

JOHN
Alexander!?

ALEXANDER looks at JOHN. He then looks to the audience.

Good luck to you all.
And to me too...

ALEXANDER faces JOHN.

ALEXANDER
...John.

JOHN
...
Wow. This is like—

ALEXANDER
Blast from the past.

JOHN
Yeah, oh my God. What are you doing in the city?

ALEXANDER
Work. I’m at a non-profit uptown.

JOHN
Oh, nice.

ALEXANDER
What about you?

JOHN

I work at a hedge-fund. Downtown.
So we're like polar opposites.

ALEXANDER
...way to state the obvious.

JOHN
That sucks that we're going the opposite ways. We could've taken the subway together.

ALEXANDER
Ah well...

JOHN
I wanna stay and talk, but my boss in on my ass about being on time.
Maybe we can get lunch sometime?
I'd love to catch up.

ALEXANDER
Uh... Maybe.
We're planning our annual gala, so things are a bit crazy right now...

JOHN
Oh, I know crazy. Trust me.
But like, I'm not sure if you still have my number. You probably deleted it at some point in the last five years.

ALEXANDER
I did. Actually.

JOHN
I tried adding you on Facebook, but I guess you denied my request.

ALEXANDER
I will neither confirm nor deny that.

JOHN
That means you did.

ALEXANDER
Like I said. I will—
Didn't you say you had to be on time to work, or...?

JOHN
Right! Yes. I do.
Uh... Tell you what. I'll find you on Facebook, you accept my friend request, I'll message you, and we'll talk! OK dude?

ALEXANDER smiles.

ALEXANDER

You know how I feel about being called dude.

SHIFT.

JOHN and ALEXANDER at a restaurant.

ALEXANDER

You still talk to Morgan Rascoe?

JOHN

Oh God no. You hear what happened to her?

ALEXANDER

No, I didn't.

JOHN

She got knocked up by this frat guy during a party and had to get an abortion.

ALEXANDER

Wow...

JOHN

Yeah...

I still talk to Tommy now and then. He's good. He lives in California now. Got a pretty good job out there.

ALEXANDER

Oh OK.

JOHN

So you said you work at a non-profit?

ALEXANDER

I do, yeah.

It's a shelter for LGBTQ teens. Where they can spend the night if they have to, or need somewhere to go...

We also do workshops for them. I do writing workshops with them on occasion.

JOHN

I didn't know you wrote.

ALEXANDER

I don't. But I had to take a basic writing course in college, and my professor liked my writing, so we kept in touch, and they got me this job, so...

JOHN

"They"? As in, multiple professors?

ALEXANDER

No. "They" as in, my professor prefers to use the pronoun "they". As opposed to "he" or "she".

JOHN

That must be a grammatical nightmare. Because when I think they, I think more than one, you know?

ALEXANDER

Well it's how they want to be addressed, so I gotta respect that.

JOHN

Hm... Well that sounds really cool, Alexander.

ALEXANDER

Doesn't pay nearly as much as Wall Street does, I'm sure. But it's good work. And I like the kids. So...

JOHN

Sounds way more interesting than my job. All I'm doing is programming code so someone can make money.

ALEXANDER

Do you do anything else besides coding?

JOHN

No. Coding's pretty much my job, so...

ALEXANDER

No. I meant, like outside of work. Hobbies. Dating. Recreational stuff...

ALEXANDER makes a weed-smoking signal.

JOHN

Oh. Uh...

I date. See women. Go to bars. Hang out.

I still kinda wanna write a novel. I've been jotting down some ideas, but I don't really have time to develop them.

ALEXANDER

What ideas do you have?

JOHN

For some reason I keep imagining a magician and an ostrich.
It's stupid, I know...

ALEXANDER

Well you never know. Someone out there may *really* want to read a book about a magician and an ostrich because, what else do they have going on in their lives?

JOHN laughs.

A moment between the two friends.

JOHN

I've missed you, Alexander.

ALEXANDER

Mhmm...

JOHN

I still kick myself about calling you a...

ALEXANDER

Don't mention it. It's in the past.

JOHN

I've totally erased that word from my vocabulary. That was the last time I ever said it.

ALEXANDER

Good.

JOHN

I will never call anyone that ever again.

ALEXANDER

Glad to hear it.

Pause.

JOHN

I don't assume you missed me?

ALEXANDER

I've... thought about how you were doing.

JOHN

You still have a hard time saying yes, don't you?

ALEXANDER takes a moment, then nods.

JOHN

You gotta let go of that. You never know what you could miss out on. Don't sweat the small stuff. Live in the moment. That's what I'm doing. Just saying yes to everything. Living a Yes Life. Because what kind of life is there, a No Life? A No Life means no life.

ALEXANDER

If only I could say I've never heard crap like that before.

JOHN

It's true, though.

ALEXANDER

Is it making you happy?

JOHN

I'm not missing out on anything.

ALEXANDER

I see...

Pause.

JOHN

So... What about you? What do you do outside of helping LGBTQ (see? I memorized it!) kids? Are you dating anyone?

ALEXANDER

Not right now, no. There were a few people, but my general intolerance of people conquered them.

Besides, I suck at dating.

JOHN

I'm sure you're fine.

ALEXANDER

No, it's terrible. I meet a guy, and in the first few seconds, no, *milliseconds* of meeting him, I can totally determine if he's smart enough for me or not. And so many guys are *so fucking stupid*. It's like, if it isn't Britney or Ke\$ha or Lady Gaga, they don't want to hear anything about it. And it's not like I have anything against them, but there are other things to talk about. It's like, I bring up Elizabeth Taylor, and they're like, "I don't know who that is." Even when I show them a picture of her!

JOHN

...who's Elizabeth Taylor?

ALEXANDER
...you're joking right?

JOHN
No. She an actress or...?

ALEXANDER
Never mind. I just can't stand stupid people, and since the majority of the guys I meet are stupid, I don't date many of them. Not saying that you're stupid, you just don't know who Elizabeth Taylor is. There's a difference.

JOHN
You know... There's this one guy I work with. His name is Ronald. I have a feeling you two would get along.
We're actually getting drinks tonight after work, if you wanna come with us.

ALEXANDER
Uh... I don't know...

JOHN
We can do another time, if tonight doesn't work.

ALEXANDER
No, tonight's fine for me, just...
We haven't even finished our first lunch together in five years and you're already trying to set me up with people?

JOHN
Yeah! Why not? He works at the hedge fund with me, so if anything, money!
But he's actually smart too. And sweet. I think you two would get along.

ALEXANDER
"Smart" I get along with. "Sweet" on the other hand...

JOHN
Would it make you feel better if I told you he already thinks you're cute?

ALEXANDER
You showed him a picture of me!?

JOHN
I did! I showed him your Facebook after you *finally* accepted my friend request, and he thinks you're really cute!

ALEXANDER

Oh John Why.

JOHN

And I may or may not have told him I would ask if you wanted to join us for drinks tonight, soooooooooo...

ALEXANDER

Fine.

JOHN

Yay!

I'm so excited for you to meet—

SHIFT.

RONALD enters.

JOHN

Ron the Mon!

RONALD

John the Mon!

They embrace each other.

ALEXANDER watches.

JOHN

Glad to see you survived today!

RONALD

Ugh, it's was brutal. I'm telling you, I'm wondering if my retirement savings account is gonna be worth it.

JOHN

Why don't we forget about it all, and have some drinks?

RONALD

Sounds perfect to me!

The three of them sit at bar stools.

RONALD

So I assume you're Alexander?

ALEXANDER

You assume correctly, whether you like it or not.

RONALD

John's told me a lot about you.

ALEXANDER

I'm sure he's *shown* you a lot of me.

RONALD

Just what's on your Facebook.

(To JOHN too:)

What are we all drinking? I'll have a whiskey sour.

JOHN

Washington Apple.

ALEXANDER

Whiskey sour.

RONALD

Dude, you like whiskey sour too?

JOHN

What did I say about calling him dude?

RONALD

Sorry...

JOHN

Just call him Alexander. Not Alex, not Xander—

ALEXANDER

Alexander is perfect, thanks.

But yeah, whiskey sour's my go-to drink.

RONALD

Me too.

RONALD and ALEXANDER look at each other.

JOHN

Yay! Things in common. Woo!

The three of them get their drinks.

SHIFT.

JOHN has left RON and ALEXANDER at the bar.

RONALD
So... Alexander.

ALEXANDER
That's me.

RONALD
John told me you do writing workshops at a shelter?

ALEXANDER
Yup...

RONALD
You're doing more noble work than I am...

ALEXANDER
If nobility were measured in payment, I'd be Ted Bundy.

RONALD
I hope not! That guy killed people!

ALEXANDER
...I know.

*RONALD realizes the silliness of what he just said. As does ALEXANDER.
The two of them laugh.*

RONALD
Wow, I just realized...

ALEXANDER
Kind of a...

RONALD
Obvious.

ALEXANDER
Thing to say.

RONALD
Yes.

ALEXANDER

...

They look around them. JOHN is nowhere to be found.

ALEXANDER
Where'd John go?

RONALD
Pretty sure he left with that girl he was flirting with by the bathrooms.

ALEXANDER
So he left the two of us strangers at the bar together because he left with some girl he didn't know.
That... actually doesn't surprise me.

RONALD
This happens every time almost without fail. Guess I have to pick up his tab for him, as usual, and lunch will be on him tomorrow.
That's our system. He leaves and I pay the tab, then he buys lunch the next day.

ALEXANDER
Sounds like a good system...

RONALD
I get free lunches, so yeah it is.
Can I say something really random?

ALEXANDER
Life is random, my friend.

RONALD
Your picture doesn't do you justice.

ALEXANDER
Oh?

RONALD
You're much cuter than I thought you'd be.

ALEXANDER
You're much cuter than *I* thought you'd be.

RONALD
Really?

ALEXANDER

You are.

They look at each other again. Then, RONALD leans in and kisses ALEXANDER. A moment, then ALEXANDER kisses him back. They make out. Things begin to heat up a bit. They separate.

ALEXANDER

Woah...

RONALD

Yeah...

...

Wanna get out of here?

ALEXANDER takes a moment, then nods.

RONALD gets out his wallet. ALEXANDER does too.

RONALD

I got it.

ALEXANDER

No, I can cover my—

RONALD puts his hand on ALEXANDER's.

RONALD

I got it.

They smile at one another. A moment.

SHIFT

JOHN and RONALD sitting in their cubicles.

JOHN

So where am I buying you lunch today?

RONALD

Wanna go to our usual place down the street?

JOHN

Sounds good.

Pause.

JOHN

How'd the rest of last night go?

RONALD

It was nice. Alexander and I had a lot of fun.

JOHN

Is it the kind of fun I'm thinking of?

RONALD

I don't kiss and tell.

JOHN

That totally means it was!

RONALD

We had a very good time.

JOHN

I'm hoping I'm correct in my assumption of what you two did.

If anyone I know needs it, it's Alexander...

Are you gonna see each other again?

RONALD

More than likely. That's what he said when I asked him, at least.

A simple Yes would've sufficed, but...

JOHN

That's Alexander.

RONALD

Are you gonna see that girl again?

JOHN

Which one?

RONALD

The one you abandoned us at the bar for?

JOHN

Oh. Uh...

Probably not.

SHIFT

ALEXANDER waits.

RONALD enters, in a hurry, with a messenger bag.

RONALD

I'm so sorry—

ALEXANDER

No, it's—

RONALD

I had to take care of this stupid thing at work, then the subway had construction, I was stuck there for fifteen minutes, then *no one* knows how to fucking *walk*—

ALEXANDER

You're fine—

RONALD starts rummaging through his bag.

RONALD

And then I bought this for you, but like an idiot I put it in my bag without thinking it would get crumpled—

RONALD takes out a single red rose from his bag and hands it out to ALEXANDER.

ALEXANDER

A second-date rose?

RONALD

Yes.

ALEXANDER takes the rose and smiles.

ALEXANDER

Thank you.

RONALD

You're welcome. So. Hi.

ALEXANDER

Hi.

RONALD

Nice to see you again.

ALEXANDER

Likewise.

They look at one another. They smile.

ALEXANDER

I've... been looking forward to this all day.

RONALD

Me too. You have no idea.

ALEXANDER

(Indicating the rose.)

I think I do...

SHIFT.

JOHN on a date.

JOHN

So...

You doing anything later?

SHIFT.

Another date between ALEXANDER and RONALD.

RONALD

So then my mom goes, "Oh my God you gotta bring him over for dinner some time!" And I was like, "I've only been on four dates with him," and she said, "Four dates should be more than enough time to determine whether you like someone or not!"

So long story short... We might have to go to my mother's for dinner some time.

ALEXANDER

Oh God, I've never done the whole meeting parents thing.

RONALD

Just be yourself.

ALEXANDER

Except don't be myself.

RONALD

No, seriously. Be yourself. My mom can spot fakeness from a mile away.

ALEXANDER

Duly noted.

You don't really seem thrilled at the prospect of my meeting your mother.

RONALD

I love my mother to death, I really do, but she can be a bit... Rahh! You know? Like, no one's good enough for me. One time I brought home a Yale-educated lawyer who came from money, and my mom was like, "Nice guy, but he eats like a squirrel with RLS."

ALEXANDER

That... doesn't make any—

RONALD

I know. But basically, she didn't like him. I didn't really like him either, but that's another story.

ALEXANDER

My mom is still convinced being gay is a choice, so...

RONALD

That sucks.

What about your dad?

ALEXANDER

Not in the picture.

You?

RONALD

He quizzes every guy I date on gay icons. The lawyer from Yale didn't even know who Elizabeth Taylor was. So I hope *you* do.

ALEXANDER

Actually...

SHIFT.

JOHN on a date.

JOHN

So uh...

You wanna go back to my place?

...

Wanna do this again some time?

...

OK. That's fine too.

SHIFT.

RONALD and ALEXANDER.

ALEXANDER

That wasn't too painful.

RONALD

They like you.

ALEXANDER

Really?

RONALD

My dad was very impressed you've even heard of "Raintree County."

ALEXANDER

Glad I impressed your dad with my gay icon knowledge.

RONALD

And my mom likes that you actually have a brain. And a sense of humor.

ALEXANDER

Thank your mother for me next time I see her.

RONALD

I like that you have them, too.

RONALD gently takes ALEXANDER by the hips and kisses him. ALEXANDER kisses him back. As they keep kissing, we see JOHN.

JOHN

So uh...

You wanna do this again some time?

...

Because I'd really like to see you again.

Full disclosure, I get with *a lot* of women, and you're one of the best I've had in... I don't know how long.

And I feel like there's a point where I should just ask for something more with someone, and I think that person could be you.

I know this all sounds like a line, or a monologue, but like...

I don't want this to end tonight.

OK Trina?

...

Shit! I mean, Tina?

...

Tricia?

SHIFT.

ALEXANDER and RONALD making out.

RONALD pulls away.

RONALD

Will you be my boyfriend?

A long moment of silence. ALEXANDER and RONALD look at each other, neither of them knowing what to say.

ALEXANDER then smiles.

ALEXANDER

Why not?

RONALD

...is that a yes?

ALEXANDER

Just keep kissing me, boyfriend.

RONALD laughs and keeps kissing ALEXANDER.

SHIFT

ALEXANDER and JOHN at a bar.

JOHN has had quite a few.

JOHN

So like. I'm going down on her, and she smells *awful*. Like, not even good fish. Like, blowfish or something.

ALEXANDER

You know what blowfish smells like?

JOHN

I dunno, I just made that up.

Anyway, I'm going down on her for like *ten minutes*, then she's like, "Eat me, bitch, eat me."

And I *really* don't like being called a bitch.

So I get up, and then say, "You wanna call me a bitch?"

Then I took my dick and just *rammed* it inside her, and was like, "Now who's the bitch?"

And we just went at it all night. She was awesome. Wish I remembered her name...

ALEXANDER

That's not creepy or rapey at all.

JOHN

Oh no. If she said No, or started crying or something, I would've stopped. Because nothing shrinks my boner quicker than tears. But she said she liked it, so...

ALEXANDER

Hopefully you used protection...

JOHN

...

ALEXANDER

John.

JOHN

What? She said she was on the pill.

ALEXANDER

That doesn't mean you—

This means she could call you up and say "Hey, I'm pregnant."

JOHN

No.

I didn't even get her number.

ALEXANDER

Facebook.

JOHN

I mean it was four months ago, so if she was gonna get pregnant, I would've known by now...

ALEXANDER

Not always...

JOHN

Anyway, let's talk about *you*. How's good ol' Ronnie doing?

ALEXANDER

He's doing very well, thank you.

JOHN

Six months. That's a long time to be dating someone.

ALEXANDER

It hasn't felt like that.

JOHN

Time must fly when you're having good butt-sex! Get it!? BUTT!?

JOHN laughs hysterically.

ALEXANDER

I'm glad you find that funny.

JOHN

Let me get you another drink.

ALEXANDER

No thanks.

JOHN

Just one more—

ALEXANDER

Not for me, not for you. You're cut off—

(To Bartender, offstage)

He's cut off!

JOHN

No, just one more—a rum and coke, something not too crazy—

ALEXANDER

No.

JOHN

Oh, don't me a No Man now—

ALEXANDER

I'm not being a No Man. You're being an ass.

JOHN

Yeah, you like my ass, don't you!?

JOHN smacks his ass.

JOHN

Come on, let me have another drink.

ALEXANDER

No!

JOHN

Give me a reason not to go into work tomorrow.

ALEXANDER

Quit.

JOHN
Whaaa?

ALEXANDER
If your job is making you so miserable as to get wasted on weeknights, quit!

JOHN
I can't. Need money to keep getting drunk...

ALEXANDER checks his phone.

ALEXANDER
It's almost eleven. I'm gonna take you home.

JOHN
No—

ALEXANDER
I'm calling you a cab, and you're going—

*ALEXANDER grabs JOHN.
JOHN forces him off.*

JOHN
LET GO OF ME, FAGGOT!

*Quick pause.
ALEXANDER then **SMACKS JOHN**.
A long, long moment.
JOHN realizes what he's said.*

JOHN
Oh shit dude...
Shit shit shit—

ALEXANDER
It's Alexander.
Not. Dude.

JOHN
...Alexander...

ALEXANDER
I'm getting you a cab.

SHIFT.

ALEXANDER and JOHN in the cab. Silence. When the cab stops:

ALEXANDER

You got it?

JOHN

I'm sorry. I just... I just don't know what I'm doing with my life.

ALEXANDER

You called me a faggot, John.

JOHN

I'm drunk.

ALEXANDER

You called me a faggot.

Long pause.

JOHN

Can you forgive me?

ALEXANDER

Get some sleep.

JOHN

...

SHIFT.

JOHN on a date.

JOHN

Yeah, I mean, it's fine. It's a cool job. I get to do a lot of cool things. Like...

Coding and...

You know...

...

(Sexy) Oh, you think so?

Well I think it's pretty sexy myself...

In a way. When I'm out of the office.

Which is rare, since I do spend a lot of time there, but...

That's what weekends are for, right?

Sometimes.

When I don't have to go in on the weekends.

...

Sometimes, yeah. I need to go in.
In case there's a deadline I need to meet.
That, or I'm always on call, so sometimes I'll get a call at like four in the morning being like...

...

Yeah, it is really tiring.

...

Actually, I'm pretty tired right now.
I think we should get the check, if you don't mind.

...

No, I think I'm gonna call it a night.

So...

SHIFT.

RONALD and JOHN.

JOHN looks especially vacant.

Silence.

RONALD

John?

...

John the Mon?

You OK?

Earth to Jon the Mon?

What's going on?

JOHN

I think I'm gonna quit.

RONALD

That's abrupt.

JOHN

...I thought I was living a yes life.

With this job, the girls, the money...

But now, I'm just... There's so much I thought I'd have done by now.

But instead I program code for people whose appreciation is only financial.

I... I can't live like this anymore.

I feel like there's just... *more*. More I could be doing, more I could be seeing, more I could be...

And I don't know how to start. Except for quitting, but after I quit, what then? Will I start my book, or will I be lazy and stare at a blank laptop all day, or...

I don't want to make a stupid decision. I can't make a stupid decision. I made a stupid enough decision with Alexander last weekend, and I'm just like...

I'd understand if he never wanted to speak to me again, but...

RONALD

It wasn't cool, what you called him.

JOHN

I know. And I'm kicking myself so hard for it. And I know it's been a few weeks, and maybe he's cooled down by now, but...

RONALD

Give him a call. See what happens.
Apologize again.
And if he doesn't accept your apology, then...

JOHN

Then what?

RONALD

I'll still be your friend.
And if you decide to quit, I'll still be your friend. As long as you have enough money saved up, you might as well.

JOHN

I should have enough saved up to get me through a year or so.

RONALD

That's good.
I wish I could quit with you, but I don't know if I can do anything else. So...

JOHN smiles.

JOHN

Thanks, Ron the Mon.

RONALD

You got it, John the Mon.

SHIFT.

Cell phones ring. JOHN and ALEXANDER on their iPhones (2012, after all).

ALEXANDER

To what do I owe the pleasure of this call?

JOHN

Do it.

ALEXANDER

Do what?

JOHN

Tear me a new one. Call me an idiot. A bigot. A Neanderthal. Scold me. Call me names. Tell me I'm a horrible person. Tell me I shouldn't have been born.

ALEXANDER

That's a tall order...

JOHN

Just do it.

ALEXANDER

Um... you're a belligerent moron when you're drunk?

JOHN

...that's it?

ALEXANDER

Mhm?

JOHN

Did I get off the hook, or...?

ALEXANDER

No. I was just being honest.

JOHN

Well you'll be glad to know that I'm quitting drinking.

ALEXANDER

Good.

JOHN

Yeah. I also quit my job.

ALEXANDER

Congratulations.

JOHN

Yeah. And I'm gonna spend all this time I suddenly have to write that novel.

ALEXANDER

Oh?

JOHN

Yeah. I'm working on the outline for it.

ALEXANDER

I hope it comes out well.

JOHN

Yeah...

Sooo this is the part where I apologize for calling you a...

ALEXANDER

You really should've known better.

JOHN

You're right.

ALEXANDER

You should've known better.

JOHN

I should have. Yes.

And I want to make it up to you.

ALEXANDER

OK...

JOHN

So if there's anything I can do to make it up to you...

I mean, it can't be like a private jet, because of the whole no-job thing, but if you wanna do dinner tonight...

ALEXANDER

Ronald and I were gonna see a show tonight for our six-month, but tomorrow?

JOHN

That's right. You and Ronald have been together for six months.

ALEXANDER

Yeah. It's a miracle I've found a guy who can stand me for that long.

JOHN

And who introduced you to this guy?

ALEXANDER

OK. You don't have to rub it in.

But tomorrow should be good.

SHIFT.

JOHN and ALEXANDER at a restaurant.

JOHN

So the book.

I finished a rough outline for it.

ALEXANDER

Let's hear it.

JOHN

So there's this magician who's actually really terrible. At least, he thinks he's really terrible. But in actuality, everyone thinks he's brilliant. And it's about how like, he tries and tries and tries to improve himself, but how much can he really improve, you know? So one day, he accidentally turns his girlfriend into an ostrich.

Don't ask why, that was just the first thing that came to my mind.

And she can talk! This ostrich can talk.

Because she knew how to do so beforehand.

So instead of trying to figure out a way to get her back to human form, the magician decides to take her on the road. But of course there are people who want to take the ostrich and display her in a museum, because money, and—

ALEXANDER

Why doesn't she run away?

JOHN

What?

ALEXANDER

Why doesn't the ostrich just run away?

JOHN

...

Because she loves the magician.

ALEXANDER

Then she's a fucking idiot.

JOHN laughs.

JOHN

She's an idiot in love, though.

ALEXANDER

Aren't we all idiots in love?

JOHN

Are *you*?

ALEXANDER

...way to put me on the spot there...

Semi-awkward pause. Then:

JOHN

So that's the basic plot. So it ends with—

ALEXANDER

Wait! Don't tell me. I wanna be surprised.

JOHN

Fair enough. Prepare to be surprised!

ALEXANDER

I'm proud of you. That you're doing this.

JOHN

I just hope it adds up to something.

ALEXANDER

I hope it does too. For your sake.

JOHN

If, in the crazy event, that my book gets published, I'm going to dedicate it to you.

ALEXANDER

Why?

JOHN

Because no one else would tell people when they're being "fucking idiots".

And...

I can't think of many other people who would still be friends with me after calling you a...

ALEXANDER

I mean, you're besties with my boyfriend, so...

JOHN

And we were besties before then, right?

ALEXANDER

For a time.

JOHN

And we'll be besties in the future.

ALEXANDER

I guess we will!

JOHN raises a glass. ALEXANDER does the same.

JOHN

To friends we love enough to dedicate books to.

They clink glasses and freeze.

A woman, SHELLY, enters with a copy of a book.

SHELLY

"The Magician and the Ostrich" by John Laurence.

Dedicated to Shelly, my love, my life.

SHELLY holds the book to her heart.

JOHN and ALEXANDER drink.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

ALEXANDER reading from a sheet of paper and holding a glass of champagne.

ALEXANDER

John was the best friend any friendless, insecure, and just generally cynical gay guy could have in high school. He's an even better friend now that we've graduated. He is living proof that surviving high school makes you a better person. His goal in life has always been to be happy, and here, he has made the right decision.

So some advice for you, Shelly. And this is gonna be basic and cliché, but it's still worth adhering to: Treat. Him. Well.

Someone who treats people with as much generosity, kindness, and compassion as John does deserves to have all of that returned to him. And I have every hope, and *expectation*, that you will do that.

Alright. All of that mushy stuff being said... LET'S PARTY FOR THESE TWO!!! Wooooo!

SHIFT

JOHN on another date.

JOHN

So there are these people that want to take the ostrich and display it in a museum, because money, and they follow the magician and the ostrich—that would be a good title for it, actually. “The Magician and the Ostrich”.

So they follow them all around the country, and finally they meet at the Beacon Theatre in New York, and there's this whole epic showdown there, and...

I don't want to give anything else away because, spoilers.

Assuming of course, that you even read it.

Which is a lot to assume, considering that uh...

Assuming you'd want anything to do with me after tonight.

Which is totally fine if you don't, but it would be nice to see you again, Shelly.

...

Wow.

I actually got your name right.

Suddenly, SHELLY joins him at the table.

SHELLY

...double wow.

JOHN

Double wow?

SHELLY

Yeah. One wow, because that story sounds beautiful, and I'd definitely want to read it.

JOHN

You would?

SHELLY

I would.

JOHN

Then I'll make sure to write it.

SHELLY

And the second wow, because you actually got my name right.

JOHN

How do people get Shelly wrong?

SHELLY

By calling me Kelly, or Melanie, or for some reason Kendra.

(I mean, *Kendra!* Blegh!)

Maybe I just have one of those faces that makes people think of those names.

JOHN

Your face looks like a Shelly to me.

SHELLY

Technically, it's Michelle. But I prefer Shelly.

JOHN

Any particular reason, or...?

SHELLY

Not really. I've just always preferred being called Shelly.

The only one I allow to call me Michelle is my mother, and that's only when I've done something *really* bad. Like killed her cats or set her house on fire or joined a terrorist group.

JOHN

So I guess she calls you Michelle often!

SHELLY

(*Dry.*)

Ha ha.

SHELLY smiles and sips on her drink.

JOHN

My best friend is also really particular about his name.

SHELLY

It's not particular, I just like people getting it right.

JOHN

That's what I mean—he likes it when people get his name right.

Although, I think most people like their names being gotten right...

But anyway!

My friend Alexander. When we were in high school, I would call him dude, and he would always say *My name is Alexander*.

SHELLY

He must be particular if he wants to be called *Alexander*.

JOHN

He's awesome. You two would get along.

SHELLY

That means I'm not gonna get along with him.

JOHN

What?

SHELLY

I know, but every time someone says I'll get along with someone, I never get along with them.

It's like I'm cursed to never like people other people think I'll like.

Except you.

Because I... actually like you so far.

Granted, the thing that told me I'd like you was OKCupid—

JOHN

96% match!

SHELLY

But like... I actually want to get past the first date with you.

Which is a total anomaly.

...

But of course I could be wrong.

JOHN

I hope you're not.

They smile at each other.

Suddenly, a DING from her cell phone.

She takes it out.

SHELLY

Sorry, it's work...

JOHN

That's alright. I was gonna go to the bathroom anyway.

SHELLY

I promise I'll be done by the time you get back.

JOHN

OK.

JOHN exits.

SHIFT.

ALEXANDER and RONALD join SHELLY at the table.

SHELLY is looking at her phone.

Awkward silence.

ALEXANDER

Anything interesting?

SHELLY

...

Sorry?

ALEXANDER

On your phone. Anything interesting?

SHELLY

Not really. Just checking e-mails for work...

ALEXANDER

On your *phone*. In the middle of *dinner*.

You don't think that's a little *rude*?

RONALD hits ALEXANDER. "Cut it out."

SHELLY

Yeah. I just got promoted to senior analyst, so I have to make sure everything's taken care of.

ALEXANDER

Way to talk yourself up there...

RONALD

Congratulations on the promotion. That's really exciting.

SHELLY

(To RONALD:)

Thank you.

(To ALEXANDER:)

And I'm not really talking up myself. Just stating the fact that I've recently been put into a position of power and responsibility. I don't make six figures for nothing.

ALEXANDER

I make five figures. You only make one more than I...

SHELLY

Weren't you the valedictorian of your class?

ALEXANDER

I was.

SHELLY

Me too.

ALEXANDER

Good for you. I mean it didn't prevent the student loan bills from hitting, but...

SHELLY

I got a full ride to college.

ALEXANDER

Rub it in my face, why don't ya?

RONALD

Alexander...

SHELLY

Not rubbing it in your face. Again, just stating facts.

ALEXANDER

Well you don't have to show off your facts so much.

SHELLY

I'm not being a show-off.

Don't be jealous.

ALEXANDER

I'm not jealous.

SHELLY

Clearly you are. If you weren't you'd be a bit more civil.

ALEXANDER

I am civil!

I'm so civil... that... you can't even tell I'm civil.

SHELLY

At least you're right about something.

SHELLY checks her phone.

JOHN returns.

SHELLY puts her phone away.

JOHN

Alright, who's gonna get dessert?

ALEXANDER/SHELLY

You are.

JOHN

In sync. I knew you two would get along!

SHIFT.

RONALD and ALEXANDER.

ALEXANDER

I mean, he's dated *how* many girls, and the one he manages to stay with long enough to introduce us to is *her*?

RONALD

You weren't exactly Mr. Amiable yourself.

ALEXANDER

Not like she really gave me a reason to be.

RONALD

She's John's new girlfriend! That should be enough of a reason. And she was probably nervous about meeting us. It's always nerve-wracking, meeting your new boyfriend's friends. It's like after you impress one person, you have to impress a whole new set of people.

ALEXANDER

If I was more of a snob, I'd probably be more impressed with her *major accomplishments*.

RONALD

No snob would stay with a guy who's taking time off to work on his book.

ALEXANDER

And what if the book fails? She's going to *castrate* him.

RONALD

Or, she could be proud of him for completing it. And maybe she won't care that it fails because... they'll turn out to be the loves of each other's lives!

That would make me happy-cry so much. John the wandering soul finally finding someone who grounds him and allows him to be his best self, shy yet successful woman who finally finds a man who will loosen her up...

ALEXANDER

Ugh. The clichés! All the clichés!

RONALD

But John seems really happy with her. Doesn't he?

ALEXANDER

I'm sure Sid and Nancy were happy together.

RONALD rolls his eyes.

RONALD

Oh, Alexander...

ALEXANDER

No, if John asks me if I approve of her, I'm gonna say I—

SHIFT

JOHN and ALEXANDER.

JOHN

—approve of her?

I mean, I know you guys got off on the wrong foot, but once you get to know her, she... You should've seen her on our first date. She was like...

I promise she's not always like that. Shelly has a side of her that's just...

I can't even describe it. It's fun, but it's more than fun. It's romantic, but it's more than that. It's... more than any word can give meaning to.

Like, I really hope that Ronald makes you happy like Shelly makes me.

Just... With not having a job, and writing full time, Shelly's been such a rock for me. And she doesn't allow me to stop. It's like, I want to give up, but she says "No, you started this, now you're gonna finish it."

Pretty soon I'll have a first draft of my book! Which isn't something I thought I'd ever say.

I don't know if I would've gotten this far in the book without her there.

And... she makes me feel like... the world makes sense. You know?

ALEXANDER

I do.

JOHN

And I've never felt like that about anyone. Ever.

So...

If you don't approve of her, well, I don't want to say that you'll *have* to deal with her, but she is gonna be a part of my life. For a little while at least. Maybe forever. Typically at this point it's too early to tell, but right now, I feel like this might be the one that lasts. So...

Do you approve of her?

ALEXANDER

...

If you like her, and you think she's good to you, then... that's great.

SHIFT.

JOHN typing at his laptop. Late at night.

SHELLY enters.

She wraps her arms around his shoulders and looks at what he's writing.

JOHN

Sorry.

SHELLY

For what?

JOHN

For the sheer and utter crap you're subjecting your eyes to right now.

SHELLY

It's just a first draft. It doesn't have to be perfect.

JOHN

At least I'm the last paragraph...

SHELLY

You're almost there!

JOHN

Almost...

SHELLY

Can I watch you complete the first draft of your first novel?

JOHN

Of course.

*JOHN finishes typing. He types, types, then...
He sighs. He is done.*

JOHN

And there we go.
A shitty version of what is to be my book.

SHELLY

You mean a first draft of what is to be your book.

JOHN

Same difference.

SHELLY

I'm proud of you. The first draft!

SHELLY and JOHN kiss.

SHELLY

So I guess I can tell you now.

JOHN

...tell me what?

SHELLY

Sooooo you know my friend Marie?

JOHN

Yeah?

SHELLY

I was telling her about your book, and she said that whenever you had a draft, she wanted to read it.

JOHN

...what?

SHELLY

Yeah!
...you're not mad, are you?

JOHN

That you already pitched my book to a literary agent?

SHELLY

Well not pitched, just told her about it.
But yeah, kind of pitched too.

JOHN

...wow. That's... Shelly! I'm not even close to ready to have anyone read it!

SHELLY

I didn't say you'd have it right away. She said whenever you have *a* draft. Not the *first* draft. If you don't feel it's ready now, don't send it til you're ready.
But she did say that fantasy like this is really in right now, and it won't last forever, so...

JOHN

In that case, I'll start revising right now!

SHELLY

No, no. You've done enough work for one night.

SHELLY closes his laptop.

You need to rest, relax, and bask in the major accomplishment of your first novel!

JOHN

Does "bask" partly mean go to bed with my beautiful girlfriend?

SHELLY

It can, if you want it to...

*They kiss. Then they kiss again, more passionately.
JOHN then leads SHELLY to the bedroom offstage.*

SHIFT.

ALEXANDER and RONALD.

ALEXANDER reads from a manuscript.

ALEXANDER

"The ostrich tried its best to stretch its wings to say goodbye to the magician, but it..."

ALEXANDER makes a mark in the manuscript.

ALEXANDER

That should say "turned"... "Out to only result in a strained effort to raise its wings. The magician didn't look back, realizing that if he looked at the ostrich, he would become more of a pillar of salt than he already was, and the tears he was holding back would've only amounted to the salt."

ALEXANDER puts the manuscript down.

ALEXANDER

Well, that was a cheerfully depressing, somewhat overwritten, unabashedly romantic story.

RONALD snuffles.

RONALD

Sorry, I just... You know me, I'm a romantic.

ALEXANDER

I know you are.

I mean it's not *awful*. He'll have to revamp the grammar like gonzo, and there are a lot of plot holes, but I'm glad he finished—

RONALD grabs ALEXANDER by the face and kisses him.

RONALD

Will you marry me?

ALEXANDER

...I uh...

This is... surprising.

RONALD

I don't want us to be like the magician and that ostrich, unable to be together due to circumstances beyond their control.

ALEXANDER

But... It's 2015. Gay marriage is legal now. It's not really the same.

RONALD

Stop! I'm trying to have a romantic moment with you!

We've been together for four years, and I don't intend on leaving you any time soon. So I think maybe, we should start thinking about our future.

That is, if you want it. Want to. Marry me. Yeah.

Long, long pause.

ALEXANDER

...can I think about it?

RONALD

If you don't want to marry me, then—

ALEXANDER

No, I mean it's—

It's not that I don't want to.

I just... never thought I'd be married to someone. I need time to adjust to the thought.

RONALD

Did you ever think about marrying me once?

ALEXANDER

I mean... as a theory, but not like an actual...

RONALD

Well this is an actual...

ALEXANDER

I know, it's just...

I promise I'll give you an answer. Soon.

SHIFT.

JOHN and ALEXANDER.

JOHN

...why did you say no?

ALEXANDER

I didn't say no. I just said I'd think about it.

JOHN

That's usually something you say yes or no to right away.

ALEXANDER

...I know, I'm just...

Still trying to process it.

Like, he wants to *marry* me.

He wants to spend the rest of his *life* with me.

JOHN

And do you want to spend the rest of your life with him?

ALEXANDER

I mean I could totally see it happening.

JOHN

Then why don't you say—

ALEXANDER

I'm going to say it.

I'm not going to say No.

I'm just... waiting til I can absolutely say Yes. Without any doubt or whatever.

JOHN

What's stopping you then?

ALEXANDER

What if I say Yes, and regret it?

Or what if I say No, and regret it?

JOHN

You can't live your life with regrets.

Don't you think Ron would be worth it?

ALEXANDER

He's... amazing, but...

JOHN

So what's the problem?

ALEXANDER

What if I don't...

JOHN

Don't...?

ALEXANDER

What if I don't... give him the answer that he wants?

JOHN

That's something you'll have to live with, then.

ALEXANDER

...

You're not gonna tell Ron any of this, are you?

JOHN

'Course not. But he's gonna need an answer soon.

ALEXANDER

I know. And I'll give it to him.

Just... I don't want it forced out of me. OK?

Now. Change of subject.

JOHN
Oh God...

ALEXANDER takes out the manuscript.

JOHN
Tell me. How bad was it? Really? Be honest.

ALEXANDER
I printed out a copy and marked all the typos and such, as well as some plot suggestions. But overall, it was fine.

JOHN
...fine?

ALEXANDER
Well it made Ronald ugly-cry and propose to me, so it has *some* merit.

JOHN
I'm assuming you didn't cry?

ALEXANDER
No. But I never cry at anything.

JOHN
Fair enough... what else?

ALEXANDER
I did have one question, about the story...

JOHN
Yes?

ALEXANDER
I mean, it's kind of a question and a comment.
Did the ostrich and the magician have to be a straight couple?

JOHN
...what do you mean?

ALEXANDER
Like, I get that it's a fantasy and all, but why do they have to be straight?

JOHN
...uhh... You got me there. It's not something I really thought about.

ALEXANDER

I mean, the story takes place in 1932, right?

JOHN

Yeah.

ALEXANDER

There are so many stories about gay people from that time period that we haven't heard. And yeah, this is a fantasy, but I think it could just raise the stakes so much more for the characters. Like, not only will Wilma possibly not transform back to a human, but what if Wilma was, say, Will? Because not only do we have to worry about Wilma possibly not transforming back into a human, but what could be the ramifications if their love is forbidden even in human form? You know? I just think it would be so interesting.

JOHN

...wow, that's... a lot.

ALEXANDER

I mean, it's just something I'm throwing out there.

JOHN

Well yeah, but...

I'm not gay. So... I don't know if I'd be the best person to write that story.

ALEXANDER

Somebody's got to.

JOHN

Why don't you?

ALEXANDER

I don't write.

SHIFT.

RONALD and ALEXANDER walking. A song plays.

RONALD

I love this song.

ALEXANDER

Me too.

RONALD

Wanna dance?

ALEXANDER reluctantly takes RONALD's hand. RONALD takes ALEXANDER in his arms. They sway a bit to the music. It is romantic, tender.

But all of a sudden, we hear "GO DIE, FAGS!" from offstage.

The song cuts out.

ALEXANDER and RONALD separate.

Wordlessly, they exit.

The song starts up again.

JOHN and SHELLY enter. They stop at the music.

JOHN

I love this song.

SHELLY

Me too.

JOHN

Wanna dance?

JOHN holds out his hand. SHELLY reluctantly takes it. The two of them sway gently, slowly to the music. It is romantic, it is sweet. Just then, someone screams, "GET A ROOM!"

The song continues.

JOHN and SHELLY laugh, then kiss each other.

JOHN

Well that was a mood ruiner.

SHELLY

Yeah it was.

JOHN

Seriously, you plan to propose to your girlfriend and...

SHELLY

...wait, what?

JOHN

I was gonna wait til the end of the song, but then we got interrupted, so....

JOHN gets down on one knee.

JOHN

Shelly Farnsworth. The last three years we've been together has been one of the most productive, and happiest of my life. It's because of you that I got a literary agent, and that my book is actually being published. I don't want to write another book without you by my side. So...

Will you marry me?

SHELLY

...

...

...

I uh...

I don't know what to say.

JOHN

...this is usually something you say yes or no to right away.

SHELLY

No, I know, it's just...

I didn't expect it.

JOHN

What, am I not worth saying yes to?

SHELLY

...yes.

JOHN

OK, so then why aren't you—

SHELLY

Yes.

JOHN

Yes?

SHELLY

Yes.

JOHN

Say it again.

SHELLY

Yes.

JOHN

Again!

SHELLY

Yes!

JOHN

One more time!

SHELLY
YES! YES! YES YES YESYESYESYESYESYES!!!

*JOHN kisses SHELLY, picks her up, and spins her around.
He then puts the ring on her finger.*

SHIFT

ALEXANDER
OK.

JOHN
That's not the same as a yes!

ALEXANDER
I mean, I'm OK with being your best man! As in, it's totally fine with me. As in, I will 99% be your best man.

JOHN
I guess 99% is better than 2%.

ALEXANDER
OK, how is 99.99999% fine with being your best man?
That's almost 100, right?

SHIFT.

JOHN and SHELLY.

SHELLY
He might as well have said no.

JOHN
That's just Alexander.

SHELLY
No, it's not just Alexander. It's basic human etiquette. If someone asks you to be your best man, or maid of honor, or whatever, you say Yes or No. No black and white there. This is a guy who can't even say yes when his boyfriend proposes to him.

JOHN
You weren't exactly jumping up and down when I asked you either.

SHELLY
Because I was surprised.

JOHN

Maybe that's what Alexander was.

SHELLY

I want to tell him he either says yes to being your best man, or doesn't do it at all.

JOHN

He already said he was 99.99999% certain he'd do it. For Alexander, that's yes.
So lay off on him, OK?

SHELLY

...OK. Sorry. If you *really* want him to be your best man, OK, whatever.
But he should seriously give Ron an answer. It's been a month.

JOHN

He'll come around. He just needs time.

SHELLY

How much, though?

JOHN

As much as he needs.

SHIFT.

ALEXANDER and RONALD. ALEXANDER with a laptop.

ALEXANDER

'Of the two of us, I was always the one who excelled at public speaking.
So when John asked me to be his best man, it was like, "I know *exactly* why..."
That's meant to be a laugh line.

"OK, awkward, self-deprecating jokes out of the way.

John was the best friend any friendless, insecure, and just generally cynical gay guy could have in high school. He's an even better friend now that we've graduated. He is living proof that surviving high school makes you a better person. His goal in life has always been to be happy, and here, he has made the right decision.

So some advice for you, Shelly. And this is gonna be basic and cliché, but it's still worth adhering to: Treat. Him. Well.

Someone who treats people with as much generosity, kindness, and compassion as John does deserves to have all of that returned to him. And I have every hope, and *expectation*, that you will do that.

Alright. All of that mushy stuff being said... LET'S PARTY FOR THESE TWO!!! Woooo!"

...

What do you think?

RONALD

It's fine.

ALEXANDER

It's a wedding speech. It doesn't exactly have to change the world.

RONALD

No, but... I don't know. It's fine.

ALEXANDER

No, what?

RONALD

Nothing. It's fine. Use it.

ALEXANDER

No, seriously. What were you gonna say?

RONALD

It has nothing to do with the speech.

ALEXANDER

Then why did you say it was fine?

RONALD

Because it's fine. It's a fine speech.

ALEXANDER

So what's going on?

RONALD

I don't know... it's been two months since I...

ALEXANDER

Oh.

RONALD

So... I guess I'm wondering if you have an answer?

ALEXANDER

...no.

RONALD

OK.

ALEXANDER

I haven't been able to prioritize it, with everything going on.

RONALD

...what?

ALEXANDER

I'm sorry. Let me rephrase—

RONALD

No, no rephrase. Prioritize?

ALEXANDER

I just mean like... when things are less... When I'm not planning a bachelor party and being John's best man. When I can focus on this, on us, more.

RONALD

If you want to say no—

ALEXANDER

No! No, no no no I don't want to say no. I just... You've been really patient with me, and I'm so thankful—

RONALD

Yes I have.

ALEXANDER

Just... please keep on being patient. I'll come around. I promise.

ALEXANDER holds up his pinky.

ALEXANDER

Pinky promise.

RONALD

...sure. Fine.

ALEXANDER puts his finger down.

Long pause. Neither of them can say anything.

ALEXANDER

...maybe I'll change a few things in the speech. Maybe expand on some things.

RONALD

Yeah.

SHIFT.

ALEXANDER, JOHN, and SHELLY.
Dead silence.

ALEXANDER
How's the dress situation look—

SHELLY
It's good.

JOHN
If you can call \$5,000 good...

SHELLY
John. Seriously?

JOHN
Well it is.

SHELLY
You don't need to advertise—

ALEXANDER
You know, America spends more money on weddings than anywhere else?

SHELLY
Really.

ALEXANDER
Yeah. They plan so many little details like centerpieces, a reception hall, a DJ, a photographer, it's like, I just feel like a wedding should be more intimate. Like, you're expressing your love to each other. That's such a personal, intimate moment between you two. Shouldn't the occasion reflect that?

JOHN
He kinda has a point there.

SHELLY
Maybe some of us want our friends and family to *believe* our love.

ALEXANDER
...there's a slight in there, but I don't care enough to find it.

SHELLY
Where is Ronald tonight?

ALEXANDER

Working late. He has some presentation to do tomorrow about... something.

SHELLY

Something?

ALEXANDER

Yeah. Something. He didn't really give me details.

SHELLY

Huh. Interesting...

ALEXANDER

...what?

SHELLY

I just think it's interesting. That's all.

ALEXANDER

I'm intrigued as to why you say that.

JOHN

I was gonna use the bathroom, but I'm kinda terrified—

ALEXANDER/SHELLY

We'll be fine.

JOHN

OK....

JOHN leaves. Then:

SHELLY

When are you going to answer Ronald?

ALEXANDER

...sometime. Soon. Ish.

SHELLY

Want to be more specific?

ALEXANDER

I... when I have a specific answer, you will be among the first to know it.

SHELLY

Among the first?

ALEXANDER

Well Ronald deserves to know first, don't you think?

SHELLY

He needs to know in general.

ALEXANDER

I know. And he will. Soon enough. I've gone over this like a thousand times with him. I don't need you prying into *our* business.

SHELLY

Ronald is my friend too. I don't want to see him get hurt.

ALEXANDER

I understand that.

But if you'll just let us figure this out in our own time that would be *amazingly* appreciated.

SHELLY

It would be amazingly appreciated if you didn't keep leading Ron on like this.

ALEXANDER

I'm not leading him on! I was very honest about how I felt.

SHELLY

Is that your excuse? Being 'honest'?

ALEXANDER

Would you rather I say Yes and lie to him?

SHELLY

Now *that* I find interesting...

ALEXANDER

I mean, I wouldn't be *lying* if I said Yes to him, but like...

SHELLY

No. I *totally* get it.

ALEXANDER

You don't get anything.

SHELLY

No. I do.

ALEXANDER

No. You don't.

SHIFT.

JOHN and SHELLY.

JOHN holds a copy of his book.

JOHN

Look.

SHELLY sees it.

SHELLY

OOooh...

She takes it and holds it.

I'm so proud of you!

JOHN

Look at the dedication page.

SHELLY turns to the dedication page.

SHELLY

"The Magician and the Ostrich" by John Laurence.

Dedicated to Shelly, my love, my life.

SHELLY holds the book to her heart.

But...

Weren't you going to dedicate this to Alexander?

JOHN

I was, but I was thinking about it, and if it weren't for you, this book wouldn't have made it to the page.

SHELLY

Well, I'm honored to have a book dedicated to me, but how does Alexander feel about it?

JOHN

I haven't told him yet.

But I'm going to, before the book comes out.

SHELLY

Think he'll still be willing to be your best man?

JOHN

The wedding's not for three months. That should be enough time for him to come around.

SHIFT.

SHELLY and RONALD.

SHELLY

But what if he doesn't come around?

It's been eight months. What if this drags on for another year? Or even more?

RONALD

Then it drags on.

SHELLY

If he was going to say yes, don't you think he would have done it by now?

RONALD

That's not how Alexander works. He just... needs time.

SHELLY

But there eventually comes a point where you need to make up your frickin' mind already!

RONALD

It's none of your business, Shelly.

SHELLY

It is my business when I see someone leading one of my friends on. And that's what I think Alexander is doing to you.

RONALD

He's not leading me on. He's been really honest with me.

SHELLY

Now you're excusing him for treating you like you're disposable.

What if, all this time, and all this waiting, ends in a no? Wouldn't it be better for you to end it before that happens?

...

In the time you've been with Alexander, you could've gotten with a guy, proposed to him a year or so later, and have gotten an answer right away. Right now, you could be picking out wedding suits, scouting locations, tasting wedding cakes, making wedding invitations, you could be preparing for the gay wedding of the century. You could be happy.

Are you even happy?

RONALD

...

I like waiting for him.

SHELLY

You're one of the sweetest people I know, Ron. But that doesn't mean you should be his doormat.

Of course, it's up to you. I'm not trying to convince you to break up with him. But just saying. There are other people out there who won't keep you waiting.

Silence.

SHIFT.

RONALD and ALEXANDER.

ALEXANDER

I'm sorry *you* can't *stand* waiting—

RONALD

I didn't say that—

ALEXANDER

You implied it. You said you were tired of waiting—

RONALD

Well I am! I've been so patient with you, Alexander, so fucking patient, and the fact that you—

ALEXANDER

What made you decide to suddenly lose your patience? We're just sitting here one second, then the next you decide to throw a hissy fit at me—

RONALD

You call this a hissy fit!?

ALEXANDER

I mean, maybe not a *hissy* fit, but—

RONALD

No no no no, Alexander. You can't back out like that. Why did you think I was throwing a hissy fit?

ALEXANDER

I don't think you were throwing a hissy fit.

RONALD

Then why did you say I was!?

ALEXANDER

Because this... you... It's extremely immature.

RONALD

Immature to ask why my boyfriend hasn't accepted my marriage proposal after fucking *eight months!*?

ALEXANDER

It just came at the worst time. I'm in the middle of planning this bachelor party, a benefit for work, I'm just tearing my hair out—

RONALD

What if the timing didn't matter?

ALEXANDER

But it does, Ronald! You're not making this any easier.

RONALD

Neither are you! You never make anything easy! You make things as difficult as possible. And I've spent years trying to figure out why.

ALEXANDER

Because...

Because I don't know another way of doing things.

RONALD

You could say Yes.

Just fucking. Say. Yes! That one monosyllabic word that could put *everything* to rest.

ALEXANDER

Will it, though?

RONALD

You won't know until you say it.

...

You know what?

If you're going to say Yes to me, do it right now.

If you're going to say No, do it right now.

If I don't have an answer from you in the next ten seconds, I'm gonna take it as a No.

Ten seconds pass. ALEXANDER doesn't say anything.

RONALD sighs.

RONALD

Alright.

RONALD starts to leave.

ALEXANDER
Ronald.

RONALD stops.

ALEXANDER
There isn't... anyone else, is there?

RONALD
Not as long as I've been with you.
But now there can be.

*RONALD leaves. ALEXANDER lets him.
ALEXANDER attempts to say the word "yes".
It's a slow, arduous process for him. But finally...*

ALEXANDER
Yes.

SHIFT.

*ALEXANDER and JOHN.
JOHN is trying on tuxes. He tries his best to cheer up ALEXANDER.*

JOHN
Be honest, does it make me look fat?

ALEXANDER
...

JOHN
I thought you liked men in suits.

ALEXANDER
...

JOHN
What, do I not look awesome and hot and sexy in this suit?

ALEXANDER
...

JOHN

You can't be quiet all day.

ALEXANDER

Sorry. Just don't really feel like talking.

JOHN

Well... you know you can talk to me. Right?

...

Right?

...

Alexander, you're scaring me. Please answer me.

ALEXANDER goes to JOHN and embraces him. He then breaks out in tears.

JOHN embraces him back.

SHIFT.

SHELLY enters.

JOHN

Before that, he was quiet all day. He barely said more than two words at a time.

SHELLY

It's been a month. I'm surprised he isn't over it.

JOHN

I'm just worried what he's gonna say when I tell him about the book.

SHELLY

You haven't told him yet!?

JOHN

No. I was going to today, but then this happened, and—

SHELLY

Well you have to tell him like, now. What if he picks up a copy in the store, and—

JOHN

I know, I know. It just... It has to be the right time.

SHELLY

Before the book is released. Which is next week, by the way.

JOHN

I'll tell him before then. Promise, Shelly.

They kiss.

SHIFT.

JOHN and ALEXANDER. ALEXANDER has a copy of the book.

ALEXANDER
Shelly!?

JOHN
Calm down—

ALEXANDER
No, you told me five years ago that you would dedicate this book to me, and you're dedicating it to *Shelly!*?

JOHN
Just let me explain—

ALEXANDER
What can you possibly have to explain!?

JOHN
She's my fiancé.

ALEXANDER
Oh, and friends are insignificant next to fiancés? Is that it?

JOHN
Stop being so dramatic.

ALEXANDER
What, I don't have a right to be dramatic when my *best friend* goes *behind my back* and—

JOHN
I didn't go behind your back!
Is this about the whole gay thing?

ALEXANDER
What gay thing?

JOHN
Remember when you first read the book, and you were like, "Oh, why aren't they a gay couple?"
Is this because of that!?

ALEXANDER

Why would you think this has *anything* to do with—

JOHN

Because you're obviously butt-hurt about—

ALEXANDER

I'm not butt-hurt! I wasn't even *thinking* about that—

JOHN

You read one draft of this book. One draft, that—

ALEXANDER

That I slugged through, that I proofread, that I edited—

JOHN

And I appreciate that.

ALEXANDER

I told you to quit your job! That gave you the time to write your book, didn't it? Or were you too drunk to remember?

JOHN

If it weren't for Shelly, this book wouldn't exist.

She's the one who told me to keep doing with it.

When I was stuck, and didn't know where to go with the story, she was there to guide me through it. When I needed someone to support me when I needed more writing time, she gave me that. Whenever I felt really good about writing a particular section, she was there to have sex with me to celebrate. And when I *finished* the book, you can imagine...

ALEXANDER

Well I'm glad she at least *liked* the insipid, hetero-normative, boring, mainstream, irrelevant, lacking-in-any-emotional-resonance *trash* that is "The Magician and the Ostrich".

Silence.

JOHN

...I thought you said you liked it.

ALEXANDER

Yeah well... now I don't.

JOHN

Glad you decided to be honest now.

ALEXANDER

Then I'll continue:

I *never* liked, or approved of, Shelly.

JOHN
Don't bring her into—

ALEXANDER
I didn't say anything because *somehow* she was able to make you happy.
But I always thought she was a snobby, rude, bitchy *cunt*.

JOHN
You're gonna fucking—

JOHN attacks ALEXANDER. The two end up rolling on the ground, fighting. This goes on for a few minutes. Eventually, they stop and separate.

JOHN
I don't want to be your friend anymore.

ALEXANDER
Likewise.

JOHN
And I don't want you to be my best man anymore.

ALEXANDER
Thank God.

JOHN
I'm gonna make Ronald my best man. He'll actually *support* me and Shelly.

ALEXANDER
Great!

JOHN
And he'll throw a better bachelor party than you ever could.

ALEXANDER
Fantastic! Enjoy your privileged life that you did nothing to deserve, aside from being a straight white man.

JOHN starts laughing.

JOHN
OK. My sexuality, skin color, and gender are *totally* the reason I have my life.
I used to not want to get out of bed every morning. Now I have a reason to. Many reasons, actually. My writing. My book. My fiancé, soon to be my *wife*.

All because I said *yes* to these things.

You could've said yes to Ronald a long time ago, and avoided all this, but you had to be all like "I don't know if I want to say yes", and it annoyed Ronald to the point of leaving you. Which he was right to do.

And I'm not getting married to purport some white privilege narrative. I'm doing it because I've found a person, who in this case is a woman, who makes me so happy that I want to spend the rest of my life with her.

I get that you still have some hang-up about how you never thought gay marriage would be an option for you, so you just accepted that you would be alone for the rest of your life, but you had Ronald. He wanted to spend his life with you. And you blew it. So don't be bitter over something that *you* had control over.

I am done with you, Alexander. Not only because you *still* can't say Yes to *anything*, but also your complete inability to be happy, either for yourself, or for anyone else.

And I don't need that in my life.

I'm going to be happy. With Shelly. With or without you.

So do me, and all of us, a favor, Alexander. Go fuck your miserable, self-sabotaging, and completely narcissistic self.

JOHN and ALEXANDER look at each other a few moments longer.

Then part ways.

SHIFT

Wedding music.

SHELLY enters in a white wedding dress.

JOHN and RONALD enter, and embrace each other.

SHELLY takes JOHN's arm. As the wedding march plays, they walk around the stage, boundlessly happy.

RONALD follows them.

ALEXANDER enters, and watches on the periphery.

He then stops the proceedings. He looks at the audience. Silence.

He addresses the audience.

ALEXANDER

After our fight, I dove into my work. What else could I do?

Eventually, I took over as the Director of Community Organization for the Shelter.

I see all of these teens who were kicked out of their homes, and they look at me with this... disdain, that I'm better off than they are.

And I know that I don't deserve to be.

In that time, "The Magician and the Ostrich" was a *smash*. New York Times Bestseller list for twenty weeks consecutively, film rights bought by Scott Rudin, his second book shaping up to be a big success...

It was surreal to think that at one time, I was friends with this guy. Sometimes I'd see a copy of his book in the store and think about high school. Fast food in his car. Joyland. New York City bars.

Ronald.

All faint remnants of my past.
Until an email sent John smack into my present.

A phone dings. ALEXANDER picks it up. He reads an e-mail from JOHN.

JOHN
Dear Alexander,

Long time no talk. I know I'm probably the last person you expected to hear from today.

ALEXANDER
Definitely the top five.

JOHN
I'm hoping this e-mail finds you well. I wanted to tell you that I'm doing a book signing for my new book, and... I hope you'll be there.

ALEXANDER
What...?

JOHN
I totally understand if you're thinking of the many ways you can tell me to fuck off right now. But if you could at least consider being at the signing, that would mean a lot to me. There's something I want you to hear. It's from a book I'm working on. And I think you'll like it better than *The Magician and the Ostrich*. I hope you're happy. Sincerely,
John.

ALEXANDER considers the e-mail.

ALEXANDER
Eh. Why the hell not.

SHIFT.

A book signing. JOHN reads from a copy of his new book. ALEXANDER watches.

JOHN
"Perhaps being honest with Monica and Dawson would have been the best thing. It wasn't that I hadn't thought of just outright telling them before. But I didn't want to make things awkward. As complicated as I saw our situation, they were still my friends, and I didn't want to disturb anything between us."
So that's an excerpt from my new book, *A Thousand Words*.

JOHN sees ALEXANDER and smiles.

Now... Since you've been such a great audience, I'm going to read you a little something from another piece I'm working on.

It's still rough, just warning you.

But I think you'll like it. At least, I hope.

Working title is "Will You Be My Friend?" It's a memoir, so...

JOHN reads.

"I was heading to my English class when I heard screams down the hall.

'Faggot! Pervert! Creep!'

At the end of the hall were some football players yelling and dancing around a boy.

So I rushed to the end of the hallway and told them to knock it off.

After chasing them off with arguably worse insults than they were throwing at the boy, I asked him if he was OK.

He said he was fine.

The verbal vitriol didn't faze him, which I found astonishing. If someone called me those names, I don't know what I would do, except it probably wouldn't end well for anyone.

I knew this kid's name—Alexander. But I didn't think he knew my name.

After telling him how much I admired him, I told him that I had once been called a faggot myself, and that I didn't like it.

But I realized as I was saying it that I only had to deal with that once.

He had to deal with that every day.

Whether it was my obligatory straight white male guilt, or because I admired this kid's servitude, I asked him a question that would end up changing both of our lives:

"Will you be my friend?"

JOHN stops reading.

JOHN

Yeah, it needs some work. I promise by the time you all have your hands on a copy, it'll be much better.

Thank you all for coming out today. You were a great audience, and I hope to see you all again in the future.

We see JOHN signing autographs and mingling with fans. ALEXANDER looks on.

Once the noise fades away, ALEXANDER approaches JOHN.

A moment. They take in each other.

ALEXANDER

You read very well.

JOHN

Thank you.

Silence.

ALEXANDER/JOHN

I just thought—

ALEXANDER

Sorry. You go.

JOHN

No, I just... I'm glad you came.

ALEXANDER

Yeah. Quite a turnout, huh.

JOHN

Meh. I've seen bigger.

ALEXANDER

Still. The fact that you warranted a book signing...

JOHN

Yeah, well...

What were you gonna say?

ALEXANDER

Oh, just that I... thought that was an interesting second piece you decided to read.

JOHN

Did you like it?

ALEXANDER

Like you said, it's a bit rough.

JOHN

It is. I literally just started writing it the other night.

Right before I e-mailed you.

ALEXANDER

I think it could be something.

JOHN

I'm glad you think that.

Pause.

JOHN/ALEXANDER

It's so good to see you again.

Their mutual words hang in the air. They smile.

JOHN

Yeah. Thanks for coming.

ALEXANDER

My pleasure.

JOHN

So uh...

How are things?

ALEXANDER

They're... about as good as they can be.

How's Ronald? Do you talk to him anymore?

JOHN

Yeah. We have dinner with him and his husband now and then.

ALEXANDER

Husband.

JOHN

Yeah. This really great guy, named Greg.

ALEXANDER

Good... I'm glad that he found someone to say yes to him.

JOHN

He did.

Pause.

ALEXANDER

How's Shelly?

JOHN

She's good. Pregnant.

ALEXANDER

By you, I assume?

JOHN laughs

JOHN

Yes. By me.

ALEXANDER

Congratulations.

JOHN

Thank you. We just found out the gender. It's gonna be a boy.

ALEXANDER

Great.

JOHN

Shelly really wanted a girl, but we plan on having at least two kids, so...

ALEXANDER

Cool.

Pause.

JOHN

I've just been thinking a lot. About the baby, about what kind of dad I was gonna be, and I wondered... What if he turned out gay?

ALEXANDER

(Not sure where this is going.)

Uh huh...

JOHN

And like... what kind of world would he have to face? I mean, a lot has changed since we were growing up, but what if things haven't changed as much as I thought? What if he gets bullied for that? Or worse?

ALEXANDER

I see...

JOHN

So then I started thinking of you, and how you were bullied, and I started writing, and...

It reminded me a lot of the things we used to do together.

And how much I missed you.

ALEXANDER

Oh?

JOHN

Yeah.
Ronald and Greg are great, but...
They're not you.

Pause.

ALEXANDER
Well... That's um... I don't know what to say.
Except...
I'm sorry

JOHN
(*Knowingly*)
For what?

ALEXANDER
So many things.

JOHN
Like...?

ALEXANDER
Like... everything with Shelly. And everything with Ronald. And even that thing with Tommy
back in high school.

JOHN
Oh yeah. You never did apologize for that, did you?

ALEXANDER
I didn't think I had a reason to.

JOHN
No time to start apologizing like the present.

ALEXANDER
Yeah... *Mea culpa*, and all that...

JOHN
You've always forgiven me for being an ass, so... I forgive you in return.

ALEXANDER
Thanks.

Pause.

JOHN

I know this is forward, but...

JOHN holds out his hand.

JOHN

Will you be my friend again?

It's a **yes** or **no** question. Maybes, Sures, and Why Nots will not be accepted.

Long pause as ALEXANDER considers.

ALEXANDER turns to the audience.

ALEXANDER

My default answers being pre-invalidated, I find myself at a loss for words.

But I'm taken to another question John asked. A question he asked when I barely knew him.

JOHN is back to his high school self.

JOHN

Will you be my friend?

ALEXANDER

And I remember what I said.

"Why not."

But now I think... what if I just simply said...

Yes!

Suddenly, lights flash. Time and characters from the play swirl around ALEXANDER.

JOHN

Do you wanna hang out?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

JOHN

Do you wanna come to a party tonight?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

TOMMY

Do you wanna be my friend?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

MORGAN

Do you mind if I steal John away?

ALEXANDER

No! Which is technically how you're supposed to say Yes to that question!

JOHN

Do you wanna go dancing this weekend?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

JOHN

Then let's dance!

ALEXANDER

Yes!!!

JOHN and ALEXANDER do the dance they did in Act One. The other two characters join in.

JOHN

It's totally OK if you like me that way, OK?

ALEXANDER

I don't, but yes!

JOHN

Do you forgive me for being a moron?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

RONALD

Will you be my boyfriend?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

SHELLY

Are you going to be civil now?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

JOHN

Do you approve of Shelly?

ALEXANDER
Yes!

JOHN
Will you read my book?

ALEXANDER
Yes.

JOHN
Did you like my book?

ALEXANDER
We'll talk.

VOICE
(From Offstage)
GO DIE, FAGS!!!

ALEXANDER
Yes, we are fags! And no, we will not die! We are here to stay, MOTHERFUCKER!!!

ALEXANDER kisses RONALD. Maybe one of them dips the other?

RONALD
Will you marry me and face whatever adversity confronts us together?

ALEXANDER
Fuck Yes!

The four cast members dance.

ALEXANDER
OK, now my best man is gonna make a speech!

JOHN
Alexander.
You've never believed in the possibility of love.
But now, hopefully, you're being proven wrong.

ALEXANDER
Yes I am!

JOHN
Ron, you better treat him well.

RONALD

Yes!

JOHN

Now let's PARTY!!!

More dancing.

JOHN

Shelly and I are getting married. Will you be my best man?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

The four cast members dance as if they're at a wedding. Again.

JOHN

OK, everyone! My best man is gonna make a speech!

ALEXANDER

OK, so...

I actually wrote a speech, but since speeches like these should come from the heart, I'm just gonna improvise.

John...

You are an amazing guy who picked a good woman to be with.

No, not good. Great!

And Shelly, the guy you picked to marry is OK too.

Just kidding.

Seriously, though, you two balance each other so beautifully that the scales of justice can never be tainted with again.

Did that metaphor even make sense?

Oh, whatever. You're still married!

And we all know they're just gonna make the world a more beautiful place, both inside and out.

Shelly, take care of John. I know you will.

John, take care of Shelly. Now that I'm saying it, it kinda sounds like I'm taking out a mob hit on you both.

Which I'm not!

I'm wishing you two the best, because that's what you deserve.

Now let's PARTY!!!

The cast continues dancing. Then:

JOHN

Is it OK if I dedicate my book to Shelly?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

JOHN

Can I dedicate my next book to you?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

JOHN

Shelly and I are pregnant. Will you be our child's godparents?

ALEXANDER/RONALD

Yes!

RONALD

Do you wanna have kids with me?

ALEXANDER

Yes!

SHELLY

Do you think you could babysit?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

RONALD

Could you watch the baby tonight?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

JOHN

Can I take your kid to the game?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

SHELLY

Can we arrange a playdate?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

RONALD

Do you wanna do something for your birthday?

ALEXANDER

Yes.

RONALD

Do you want to grow old with me?

ALEXANDER

Yes...

RONALD

Will you never leave me?

ALEXANDER

Yes...

JOHN

Will you be my friend again?

Everything stops.

A moment. ALEXANDER then takes JOHN's hand, and finally says:

ALEXANDER

Yes.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY.