

# **The War at Home**

## Characters

Bill Early 50's. Senior pastor of a large Southern Baptist church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Dinah Late 40's. Bill's wife. An attractive woman who takes pride in her appearance.

Jason About 24. Bill's son. Good-looking. Gay. An actor and playwright.

Danny About 35. Bill's associate pastor.

Reese About 25. Black. Artistic Director of a small Charleston theatre.

## Setting

Charleston, South Carolina. May 2005.

## Music

### Act I

"Will The Circle Be Unbroken?"	ALL
"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"	Danny, Jason
"Farther Along"	Danny

### Act II

"Breathe on Me, Breath of God"	Danny, Bill, Dinah, Reese
"There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood"	Dinah
"Just As I Am"	Bill

Act I. Prologue.

*ALL sing a Baptist hymn. They harmonize beautifully and sing with genuine meaning.*

ALL

*Will the circle be unbroken  
By and by Lord, by and by?  
In a better home awaiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky?*

*You remember songs of heaven,  
Which you sang with childish voice,  
Do you sing the hymns they taught you--  
Or are songs of earth your choice?*

*Will the circle be unbroken  
By and by, Lord, by and by?  
In a better home awaiting  
In the sky, Lord, in the sky?*

*When they finish the woman kisses the young white man on the forehead.*

Act I. Scene 1.

*Pastor's office. A large Southern Baptist Church on the outskirts of Charleston, South Carolina. BILL, about 55, the church's senior pastor, looks over a large architectural drawing. Nearby is a large architectural model.*

BILL

Where are the showers? They've got to have showers, for heaven's sake.

*He examines the drawings more closely, then peers inside the windows of the model. DANNY enters. He is about 35, youthful, energetic, attractive, dressed in a golf shirt and khaki pants.*

BILL

They forgot the showers.

DANNY

Sorry I'm late.

BILL

Where've you been, Danny Boy? The architects left twenty minutes ago.

DANNY

I got hung up downtown. Bill, are you aware—

BILL

Look at this. They left out the showers.

DANNY

Are you sure?

BILL

Take a peek in here (*referring to the model.*) There's no showers.

*They peer inside the model.*

BILL

How can you have a gym without showers? What are the kids supposed to do—play basketball all afternoon then come in for worship sweating all over the sanctuary? What are these architects thinking of?

DANNY

Well, we did say we wanted these Praise Services to be casual, kinda come-as-you-are.

BILL

Sweating like a pig? Oh, that's going to draw a lot of newcomers. The whole point of the Christian Life Center is to attract new families.

DANNY

The great unwashed masses...

BILL

These drawings have got to go back. And I don't want them telling us about cost over-runs. How can you build a gymnasium and not put in showers? (*Beat.*) So, why did you miss the meeting?

DANNY

We've got a major issue happening downtown.

BILL

What? The strip bar again? I thought we got the Mayor to get it out of the historic district.

DANNY

This is worse. Frankly, I can't believe it—except, you know, the whole country is going to hell in a handbasket.

BILL

Sliding right down the toboggan slide to ruin.

DANNY

The what?

BILL

My first senior pastor, back in Texas, used that phrase, oh, probably every Sunday. *(Puts on Texas preacher's voice.)* "Take care lest you find yourself sliding right down the toboggan slide of ruin." Sometimes I kinda miss the ol' hellfire and brimstone.

DANNY

This country truly is in real moral decay, and there's nothing quaint or funny about that.

BILL

*(Pointedly)*

What's happening downtown?

DANNY

It's with that Festival. Spoleto, or Piccolo Spoleto, whatever they call it.

BILL

You haven't been around for one yet, have you? Just wonderful. For three weeks Charleston's is overflowing with performances. Music and dance and theater...

DANNY

Well, they've got one show that's gonna turn your stomach. Local group, too. High Velocity Theater, or something like that.

BILL

High Velocity?

DANNY

I think that's it. Know what the show's gonna be? Glorification of gay marriage. Right here in Charleston! Can you believe it? New York, yes. San Francisco, of course. But here? I don't think we should stand for it. We gotta do something.

BILL

There's always some hullabaloo or other with the Festival every year, and then it blows over. I wouldn't get too worried about it.

DANNY

Not get worried about it? The homosexuals are pushing their agenda in every community in this country. If we can't hold the line here in South Carolina, then God help us.

BILL

I'm sorry. Tell me again. What is the problem?

DANNY

For God's sake, Bill, there's a bunch of fags wanting to put on a play about homosexual marriage. *In favor* of it! Blasting the Baptist Church, to boot. And did you know that there are now *two* gay bars downtown?

BILL

There always have been. Same ol' guys every night. Except during Spoleto, they get a few more.

DANNY

How come you know about all that?

BILL

Because I've lived here for twenty years. Danny, it's just a play.

DANNY

That's about two guys from Charleston who fly to Boston to get married, come back, there's a big scandal, they lose their jobs, lose their home—

BILL

You don't think that could happen? Seriously.

DANNY

It makes them into heroes! Whose side are you on, for gosh sake? And *we're* the enemy. A Baptist preacher, I guess, hounds 'em out of town.

BILL

Which theatre did you say this was? High Velocity?

DANNY

I think that's it. Why?

BILL

No matter. (*Beat.*) To tell you the truth, I think we should be a lot more concerned about reaching the folks around us for Christ than getting all riled up about some little play that's gonna be over in a couple a weeks anyway. We've got hundreds of unchurched families in these new developments. How many kids around here have you and I met, kids who've never been to a Sunday School, who've never heard the name of Jesus outside of a swear word, who have no idea about the plan of salvation. That's what we need to worry about Danny Boy. What some drama troupe is doing downtown is just not our first priority.

DANNY

So, you're *for* this play?

BILL

I haven't read it yet.

DANNY

Read it yet?

BILL

But from the way you describe it, I'm sure I wouldn't approve.

DANNY

Then, let's do something. In Birmingham—

BILL

Birmingham. Danny—

DANNY

In Birmingham we had leadership that drove this kind of perversity out of town. We closed down three abortion clinics; we shut at least two gay bars; and we pushed the strip parlors outside the county line. It can work, Bill. It takes determination. It takes mobilization. And it takes *leadership* to make it happen. That's what this church wants. They want to make a difference in Charleston.

BILL

What this church wants is growth, evangelizing the community. What I wanna do is have more revivals like the one last month. The night you preached we had twelve new families come in, six rededications, *fourteen* people professing their faith in Christ. Now, that's where I see the Spirit moving, Danny.

DANNY

You can't do that when the pornographers and queers and abortionists are swamping the city. You can't plant the seeds of the Gospel in a garden overgrown with weeds. That's what Jesus said in the parable.

BILL

Don't preach at me, Danny, come on. What did you have in mind, exactly?

DANNY

Picketing, protests.

BILL

That isn't the way we do things here. Birmingham, maybe. Charleston, no.

DANNY

Once upon a time, I suppose, I wouldn't know. Times are changin'. Charleston's changin'. We gotta keep up.

BILL

You protest and all you're gonna do is draw more attention to the show. And the Mayor isn't going to like it one bit. Controversy is not good for tourism. And the Festival is Charleston's number one tourist draw.

DANNY

Protests are effective. That's what I'm talkin' about. *And* we can take pictures of everyone buying a ticket and post it to the Web. We can call for a boycott of their businesses. We can demand that they be ostracized from their churches. We can publicly denounce anybody who attends this show as wantin' to attack the sanctity of marriage and destroy the moral underpinnings of this country.

BILL

Is that legal?

DANNY

Of course it's legal. We're just exercising our first amendment rights. This could be major. Ashley River Baptist Church could make the news big time. You won't have to worry about reaching the unchurched, Bill. If we do this right, get in the paper, maybe even on TV, people will be flocking through these doors. We'll get the money to build our Christian Life Center and the gymnasium—with showers.

*He picks up the model.*

DANNY (Cont'd)

Heck, we could even put in a Jacuzzi.

*End of scene.*



Act I. Scene 2.

*Later that day. BILL's comfortable home. Early evening in summer, it is still light. The home sits on the edge of a salt marsh and commands expansive views of a tidal creek. JASON, about 23, sits on the deck with a laptop and a worn manuscript. BILL enters from inside the home.*

BILL

Hey, Jason. Where's your mother?

JASON

Choir.

BILL

Choir? Is it—of course it is, it's Wednesday. What are you working on?

JASON

Rewrites. Draft eight.

BILL

Can I read it?

JASON

Um, when it's done.

*JASON turns back to his work.*

BILL

What do you want to do for dinner?

JASON

Mom made a casserole.

BILL

I was thinking steaks might be nice.

JASON

Well, the casserole's already made.

BILL

I'll see if we've got some steaks in the fridge.

*BILL goes into the house. JASON continues working on his manuscript.*

BILL  
*(From offstage)*

How's David?

JASON

David?

BILL

Do you hear from him?

JASON

Uh, yeah. Like almost everyday. He's working on a case out West, remember?

BILL

That's right. And he does civil rights law?

JASON

Right.

BILL

That must be interesting. And he's out where now, Colorado?

JASON

Utah.

BILL

We do! Two nice T-bones!

JASON  
*(Politely)*

Great.

BILL

Utah? That's pretty conservative out there. All those Mormons.

JASON

I guess. Kinda like here. Minus the Mormons.

*BILL emerges with a bottle of wine, two glasses and a wine opener.*

BILL

Glass of wine?

JASON

Wine?

BILL

I thought it would go with the steaks. It's a—what do they call it—(*pronouncing the "t"*)  
a merlot?

JASON

(*Correcting him gently*)

A merlot.

BILL

Your mother's sister left it when she was here.

JASON

Let me take a look.

*JASON examines the bottle.*

JASON

Not bad. So, you're—you're drinking wine these days?

BILL

You know what they say about Baptists. We're the ones that never drink. In front of  
each other.

*BILL tries clumsily to open the bottle.*

BILL

Boy, they really put these things in here...

JASON

Here, let me. I do it for a living.

*BILL hands him the bottle. JASON opens it deftly and pours two glasses.*

BILL

Did you know there are some Baptist churches using real wine now for Communion?

JASON

You're kidding me. And they're still in the Convention?

BILL

You know... No. I don't think they're calling themselves Southern Baptist anymore.

JASON  
Kicked out?

BILL  
Not just for that.

JASON  
Well, the Episcopalians serve it up, you know, every Sunday.

BILL  
So, you like your church in New York?

JASON  
Uh—sure. Yeah.

BILL  
You're still going.

JASON  
Uh—not really. You know. Easter.

BILL  
Because of your work schedule, or...?

JASON  
No, I'm just, you know—I'm not going.

BILL  
I see. *(Beat.)* You know, I never get tired of this view. The marsh. The creek. Filling and emptying every day as the tide flows in and out. And beyond the creek, the river, and then the ocean. So vast. Which always makes me think of God, I guess. The enormity.

JASON  
It's beautiful.

BILL  
*(After a beat.)*  
Does David go to church?

JASON  
He's Jewish.

BILL  
That's right.

JASON

But he's got a congregation that he likes. It's pretty liberal I guess.

BILL

Oh, that's great.

JASON

*(Teasing)*

You don't have to look so evangelical.

BILL

I just think it's best when people find a community of faith.

JASON

*(Teasing gently)*

Well, of course you do.

BILL

I worry about you.

JASON

You shouldn't. I'm sure God doesn't worry.

BILL

You do still believe.

JASON

Um. Well, I'm not an atheist exactly. More like a—a romantic, transcendental agnostic.

BILL

Not exactly a resounding confession of faith.

JASON

Well, that's the best I've got.

BILL

*(After a beat.)*

Weren't you telling me about a new theater your old pal Reese opened up downtown?  
High Velocity, isn't it?

JASON

High Velocity, yeah.

BILL

And they've got a new play in the Festival, right?

JASON

Yeah, Piccolo. You know, the fringe part. Why?

BILL

Do you know it? The play?

JASON

Well, I—you know, I've watched a couple of rehearsals.

BILL

And?

JASON

Well... I'm not the most objective observer. You know what a harsh critic I am.

BILL

Especially on yourself.

JASON

*(Unsure of his intent)*

I guess so.

BILL

Danny's pretty riled up about it.

JASON

Figures.

BILL

He thinks we should do something. The church.

JASON

Do something?

BILL

About the play. Protest.

JASON

Protest? Like, how?

BILL

Pickets, you know, people in the streets, that sort of thing.

JASON

Here? You're kidding me.

BILL

Danny's a whole new breed. Times are changin', he said. Charleston's changin'.

JASON

Yeah? And what did *you* say?

BILL

I told him I haven't read the script.

JASON

I've always hated Danny.

BILL

That's pretty strong.

JASON

I do. I hate him.

BILL

Alright, alright.

JASON

Why did you hire him?

BILL

The deacons. They liked his "zeal."

JASON

Yeah? And what did *you* think?

BILL

He *is* energetic.

JASON

He's a Nazi.

BILL

Jason.

JASON

He is.

BILL

He has strong political views.

JASON

Which you don't share.

BILL

The church is changing.

JASON

It changed a long time ago.

BILL

Not so long. When I went into the seminary—

JASON

That was thirty-something years ago. Come on.

BILL

We were protesting the Vietnam War, not new plays in little theaters.

JASON

Yeah, well, the war's at home now.

BILL

That was a real war. People were dying.

JASON

People are dying in Iraq. I don't see you protesting that. There's lots of real wars, Dad. I don't see you guys protesting those. You're all for them, most the time. How Christian is that?

BILL

Did you write this play?

JASON

What play?

BILL

The one in the Festival.

JASON

The author is Stephen Kane.



BILL

Oh.

JASON

I'm not the only gay playwright in the world, you know.

BILL

You're the only one in Charleston.

JASON

Not.

BILL

Alright, I'm not an expert. *(Beat.)* Want some more wine?

JASON

I'm fine.

*BILL pours himself another glass.*

BILL

They're going to take people's pictures. Put 'em on the Web.

JASON

Who is?

BILL

Danny and his gang.

JASON

Pictures of who?

BILL

Folks attending the play. They're gonna picket and protest and personally attack anybody attending the show. Tell people to boycott their businesses. Shame them on the Internet... Danny's got people thinking this is the worst thing since—

JASON

They haven't even seen it yet. Nobody has. For God's sake, I'm still rewriting the second act!

BILL

*You* are. I thought you told me...

JASON

Yeah, well... (*Points at himself*). Stephen Kane. It's a pseudonym.

BILL

You wrote the play.

JASON

I didn't want to embarrass you.

BILL

You didn't want to embarrass me.

JASON

Yeah, that's why I'm, you know, using another name.

BILL

And you really believe no one's going to find out? This is a small town, Jason.

JASON

I'm trying to be discreet.

BILL

And that's why you came back from New York City to put on the play right here, under my nose, a play that glorifies gay marriage and attacks the Baptist Church, because you're trying to be discreet?

JASON

Reese is my friend. He thought it was a cool idea to do it for the Festival.

BILL

A cool idea?

JASON

Well, you know, what's the point of putting on the play in Manhattan for a bunch of liberal queers? You're just preaching to the choir. But if we did it down here, maybe we could—

BILL

Humiliate me.

JASON

Make a difference or something.

BILL

Oh, it'll make a difference, all right. It'll make a hell of a difference.

JASON

Nobody'll know it's me.

BILL

Come on, Jason. People will know. It's going to get out. And then, how am I supposed to react to this? Officially. What kind of stand am I supposed to take—as pastor of Ashley Memorial Baptist Church, as a friend of the Mayor, as the father of the writer whose new play is attacking Christian values and pushing the “homosexual agenda”—that's what Danny calls it. How am I supposed to react to that?

JASON

I don't know. I guess you should do what you think is right. That's what you always told me. What I think is right is not what a great many in my church thinks is right, I can tell you that. It's certainly not what Danny thinks is right. How naive are you, Jason? I could lose my church. You know how people think here.

JASON

Yeah. They're bigots. They're hate-mongers. They're a bunch of homophobes, Dad.

BILL

They're conservative, yes. They're traditional. You haven't given them a chance.

JASON

I've heard what they've said. I've heard what *you've* said. From the pulpit. Danny frothing at the mouth...

BILL

Whatever I said, that was before I knew, before you—you told us—about you.

JASON

Just last Sunday.

BILL

Last Sunday?

JASON

Yep. You don't even hear it.

BILL

What did I say?

JASON

It doesn't matter.

BILL

What did I say?

JASON

It doesn't matter.

BILL

I don't remember. I don't remember saying anything. What did I say?

JASON

It was your tone. It was just so...

BILL

What?

JASON

Hateful.

BILL

What did I say?

JASON

Sick. (*mimics*) "Sick." Just like that.

BILL

In what context?

JASON

You were talking about gay marriages, Dad. You were talking about what's happening in Massachusetts and you called it, (*mimics*) "sick." Which got a big "Amen!" from Danny.

BILL

Now I remember. (*Beat.*) I have to say, I don't approve of these marriages.

JASON

Oh, clearly.

BILL

I've tried to be open-minded. Ever since you, uh...

JASON

"Came out." That's what you call it.

BILL

It hasn't been easy. I ask about David.

JASON

Yes, you do.

BILL

I'm trying.

JASON

I believe that. And then I hear, "sick," you know?

BILL

We disagree. You and I disagree about a number of things. Politics, abortion, movies...

JASON

This is different, come on. This isn't about candidates, or movies, for God's sake. This is about *me*.

BILL

I love you.

JASON

Even though I'm sick.

*Silence.*

JASON

Did I show you this?

*JASON reaches inside his shirt and reveals a wedding band hanging around his neck.*

BILL

What's that?

JASON

What's it look like? David and I were married, Dad. Really married. In Boston. Right after Christmas.

BILL

But—No. You live in New York. You have to live in Massachusetts to get married there.

JASON

David's parents live there. We used their address in Cambridge. We're married. Sick, huh?

*A moment while BILL takes this in.*

BILL

Why didn't you tell us?

JASON

I just did.

BILL

Beforehand. You were here at Christmas time.

JASON

Why do you think? I didn't want to fight about me getting married. I mean, that's not what you want before your wedding. You want people to be happy for you, you know?

BILL

How long have you known him?

JASON

David? About a year and a half, I guess.

BILL

And you think that's long enough to base—

JASON

We love each other, Dad. We want to spend the rest of our lives together. That's what being married is, isn't it? (*Silence.*) Isn't it?

BILL

In part. It's also a sacred institution. Maybe the most sacred institution.

JASON

Meaning... what? David and I don't qualify?

BILL

I believe you love each other...

JASON

But...?

BILL

I didn't write the book, Jason.

JASON

Oh, "God did."

BILL

Jason.

JASON

There's a whole lot of unholy marriages out there, you know. What's God think about that?

BILL

People are fallible. There's a whole lot of bad churches, too. That doesn't make the institution any less holy.

JASON

But no matter what, even a bad marriage is too good for me and David, right?

BILL

Jason. Your mother and I are trying our best—

JASON

*(Overlapping)*

“Your mother and I...” Uh, oh.

BILL

Why are you doing this? We didn't kick you out. We're still sending you money, for heaven's sake. I ask about David out of interest. We didn't come chasing to New York to pry into your private life. Why are you doing this?

JASON

Doing what?

BILL

Trying to ruin me. You write this play. You get your friend to show it here. You could have done it in New York. You could have done it anywhere in the country. But you bring it here.

JASON

What do you mean I could do it anywhere in the country? I can't just snap my fingers and get a production. I know these guys. Reese and I have been friends since—

BILL

*Then* you launch this latest piece of news. Not that you're gay—you've already leaked that all over downtown, I'm sure. No, your real headliner is that ring your hiding under your shirt.

JASON

I'm not hiding it. I'm trying to be—I don't know—careful—for you and Mom.

BILL

When were you planning to make it public? Opening night? Put it in the press release? Maybe it's in the marketing materials. Very clever. That's why you're doing this play here. Gay marriage. The nasty Baptist Church. No one's going to bat an eye in New York. But here in Charleston, where your father's the pastor of Ashley River Baptist Church, oh, that's bound to draw attention. Especially if you do it during the Festival when you know you've got all these papers in town, and you've got Danny to raise holy hell to bring you some attention. Brilliant. And then, to top it off, you announce you just got married yourself. You whip out your ring, Danny and his folks go berserk, and your father's made to look like a fool, while you go back to New York City with your newspaper articles and controversial new play that stirred up the Old South. Nice work, Jason. Really. Excellent. Congratulations. Of course, in the process I'm completely screwed—excuse my French. Either I can refuse to speak out against you, and I lose my church—we got a coupla deacons who'll make sure of that, believe me. *Or, I do* denounce you and your play, and I'm made out to be some heartless hypocrite who puts politics before blood. Well done, buster. I don't know what I've done to deserve this, but well done.

JASON

Dad...

BILL

Where's my fucking wine?

*End of scene.*



Act I. Scene 3.

*The theatre, later that night. REESE, black, about 25, is seen on a stage, straightening up after a rehearsal. JASON enters in a rush.*

JASON

Reese. Good. You're still here.

REESE

Bucko. You missed it. Man, they nailed the second scene tonight. But I swear, if Eric doesn't stop that fucking whining thing he's doing... I thought you were taking the night to work on rewrites.

JASON

I was.

REESE

And? Are we gonna have the new scene for Saturday?

JASON

There's kinda a big problem.

REESE

We've gotta have that new scene soon, Jason. The actors are getting nervous.

JASON

My father's church is going to protest.

REESE

Oooo. Protest what? The Victoria's Secret on King Street? Pretty naughty stuff.

JASON

The show. They're going to protest the show. It's not my dad's fault. He doesn't want it, but—

REESE

What do you mean protest?

JASON

You know... pickets, people on the street screaming. Stuff like that.

REESE

Oh, come on. They don't do that here. These bluebloods? It's tacky.

JASON

We're not talking about bluebloods, we're talking about my father's congregation. They're not exactly South of Broad.

REESE

So when is all this supposed to happen?

JASON

Every night, I guess.

REESE

Every night. *(Thinks for a moment.)* You're sure?

JASON

That's what they're planning.

REESE

Every night?

JASON

My father's trying to stop it, but, you know—

REESE

The play?

JASON

The protests.

REESE

Does he know you wrote it?

JASON

Yes. And he's in a—

REESE

You told him?

JASON

Yes. He's—

REESE

Oh, this is unbelievable! We couldn't have asked for more! The papers will be all over this. The evening news. Father and son battle it out. They love that sort of thing. Nice work, bucko!

JASON

What? No! They can't know I wrote it. Nobody can.

REESE

We've even got the New York Times in town! Unbelievable!

JASON

They can't find out about me. I told you that from the beginning. That's why I'm using another name, remember?

REESE

Man! Do you know what this kind of publicity can do for a show? *And* its author? Look what happened to "Corpus Christi" in New York. The Cardinal raised a fit, and suddenly everybody in the country is reading about it.

JASON

Bucko, I'm not Terence McNally and my father's certainly not Cardinal O'Connor.

REESE

Same principle. Do you want a career, or don't you?

JASON

Fuck. *(Beat.)* This whole thing has put my father in a horrible position.

REESE

You should have thought of that before you asked me to try to get this play in the Festival.

JASON

He could like lose his church because of what we're doing.

REESE

What *we're* doing? Your daddy's rednecks are the ones planning to bring out the bullhorns. Which will put *us* in a fucking awesome position.

JASON

Reese, we agreed. I wouldn't be named. That's what you said.

REESE

We both wanted to do your play, down here, during the Festival, cuz we hoped it would raise a ruckus. And it is. Hallelujah.

JASON

We wanted to raise a ruckus because of what we were *saying*—and *where* we were saying it, yes—*not* because my name was on it. You promised.

REESE

It's different now. They already know.

JASON

We're going to ruin my dad. We're going to ruin his life.

REESE

Tough shit.

JASON

Reese!

REESE

Tough shit. Really, Jason. I don't give a fuck.

JASON

He's my father.

REESE

Cool, and if he decides to support us, that makes news, too. It's all good.

JASON

My dad's not the one who wants the protests, it's that damn associate pastor of his.

REESE

Whatever. If your father doesn't like the publicity, doesn't want the protests, he should tell his assistant to can it.

JASON

It's not that simple.

REESE

Jason. Man. There's two basic things here. One: The great thing about this Festival is you've got all this press in town. The bad thing is, how in the hell do you get 'em to review *your* show when you're part of the fringe, and there's so much else going on. So if this protest thing gets big enough, gets in the papers and stuff—then, shit, yeah, they'll definitely want to come check us out. I mean, like maybe even the New York Times. That's what we were hoping for! Your play. My theater. Two: Come September you're going back to New York City, right? Sweet for you. The rest of us who actually live here will have to deal with these fucking fundamentalists and the politicians who kiss their asses day in and day out. We don't get to escape to our little liberal bubble. So, not only do I not give a shit if we ruin people like your daddy, I hope we do.

*A furious silence.*

JASON  
I'm pulling the play.

REESE  
Wha'd you say?

JASON  
I'm pulling it. You can't do it.

REESE  
Too late, bucko. We've gotta contract.

JASON  
I don't care. I won't allow it.

REESE  
Yeah? Well, whadaya gonna do? Sue me?

JASON  
It's *my* fucking play!

REESE  
So? It's *my* fucking theater. I can do whatever I want.

JASON  
Reese! You promised me.

REESE  
Go home, Jason. You've gotta scene to rewrite.

JASON  
Reese!

REESE  
I'm locking up.

*End of scene.*

Act I. Scene 4.

*Later that night. Living room. DINAH, a handsome and carefully-kept woman approaching 50.*

DINAH

It's a phase.

BILL

It's not a phase.

DINAH

It's a phase.

BILL

I don't think so.

DINAH

He'll grow out of it. Like acne. He's just rebelling. All kids do. Especially preacher's kids. We should be glad he's waited so long. It could have been drugs. It could have been almost anything.

BILL

Dinah.

DINAH

Jason has an artistic temperament. I've always said that. He's a writer. An actor. He's exploring. Learning about life. The world. It's not what I'd like him to be doing, of course, but that's what they do, right? They all do that. Writers, actors, artistic types. Most drink too much. Thank God it's not that. I remember back at Baylor, lots of kids in the Music Department got a little wild. They're all married now and settled down. Jason will be fine. Don't worry.

BILL

Jason *is* married, for God's sake. Didn't you hear me? He married that David fellow in Boston.

DINAH

That's not real. You know it's not real. God doesn't think he's married. Neither does the state of South Carolina. Why should I?

BILL

Dinah, I don't think you're listening.

DINAH

You've been drinking. You shouldn't have had that wine.

BILL

Oh, for heaven's sake.

DINAH

It's true. You get morose. It's not like you.

BILL

We've got a serious problem. Stop being such a Pollyanna for just one second and face it.

DINAH

What problem?

BILL

Jason's play. The protests.

DINAH

Oh, that. So silly. We don't do that here.

BILL

It's not silly. How are we supposed to respond? It's going to get out.

DINAH

Then stop it.

BILL

The protests? Danny's going full-steam ahead.

DINAH

The play, of course. Talk to the Mayor. He owes you.

BILL

What's he going to do?

DINAH

Oh, Bill. How long have you lived here? I don't know... Fire permits. Zoning. Who knows? Anyone of a number of things. He can shut down that little theatre just like *that* if he wants to. Talk to him. Tell the Mayor he doesn't want this kind of trouble during the Festival, and he'll take care of it. The man hasn't been in office for 30 years for nothing. This is why we don't have protests.

BILL

I suppose he could always get it done somewhere else.

Who? DINAH

Jason. His play. BILL

DINAH  
Dear Lord, I certainly hope not. What are you thinking of? You really have been drinking. *(Beat.)* Rub my feet?

*BILL rubs her feet.*

Cindy Connors. DINAH

What? BILL

DINAH  
Laura and Joe Connors oldest girl? She's home from college.

Oh. BILL

DINAH  
She was at choir tonight. What do you think?

About what? BILL

For Jason. DINAH

*End of scene.*



Act I. Scene 5.

*Next morning. JASON speaks on his cell phone. As he does, LIGHTS come up on another area of the stage. REESE is seen responding on his cell. DINAH and DANNY can be seen and heard playing a piano duet inside.*

JASON

Goddamn it, Reese, I'm serious.

REESE

What the hell are you thinking about?

JASON

Keep my name out of the production!

REESE

Calling the cast? Telling them to quit the show? Like they're gonna.

JASON

Eric's thinking about it.

REESE

That whiner. Whatever. I'll play the part myself.

JASON

You can't play every part yourself.

REESE

Man, you're cute and all, but their loyalty's with me, okay? It's my theatre. If they want to act again, they stick with me.

JASON

I've got four more calls to make.

REESE

Do your fucking best.

*LIGHTS down on REESE. JASON enters the living room. Notices DINAH and DANNY at the piano.*

JASON

Oh, Christ.

DINAH

Jason! There you are!

JASON

I was just looking for my laptop.

DINAH

What timing! Danny and I were going over the music for Sunday.

DANNY

Hey there, Jason. How's the Big Apple been treatin' you?

DINAH

Oh, marvelously! Isn't that right, darlin'? Jason just had a new play of his produced Off-Broadway.

JASON

Last fall, and it was off-off-OFF-Broadway. A church basement.

DANNY

Well, that's just super.

DINAH

Seemed kinda appropriate, somehow. Reminded me of all the theatricals we'd put on together here at church, at camp. You remember, Danny.

DANNY

That was before my time here. You should write some more for us, Jason.

DINAH

You know, my favorite play was the one Jason wrote his senior year, that one about John the Baptist. Jason's got such a knack for humor.

JASON

It wasn't all that funny. He gets his head chopped off.

DINAH

Oh, in the end. But it was sweet. Wholesome. And so funny!

JASON

Mom...

DANNY

Sounds super. We should do it again.

DINAH

Now that you're home again, darlin', we're going to put your talents to use! I was saying to Danny that I found this lovely arrangement that would be just perfect for you all as a duet.

JASON

I really wasn't planning on church this Sunday.

DANNY

Ah, come on down. We've missed you, Jason. The youth group always loves seein' you.

DINAH

And I know you're not working brunch this Sunday, so it's all settled. You all haven't sung together in church in I don't know how long.

DANNY

What's the piece, Dinah?

DINAH

Right here. "Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

JASON

*(Gets the irony)*

Mom, I—

DINAH

You both know this song, don't y'all? Jason, you're baritone, Danny, you've got the melody. Ready? Here we go.

*DINAH plays the song and DANNY sings robustly. Gradually, reluctantly, JASON begins to join in. The song is lovely, and as it goes on, JASON sings more strongly. DINAH revels in the two of them singing together.*

DANNY / JASON

*Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll, while the tempest still is high.  
Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide; O receive my soul at last.*

DINAH

Oh, my. The two of y'all... wonderful! Jason, I don't understand why you're not on Broadway. With your talent and your looks. My Cary Grant.

JASON

Well, there's a couple other people auditioning for those jobs, you know?

DINAH

Oh, you don't have to tell me about competition, I know. After Baylor, I went to study in New York—Danny, have I told you this?—and I found the best piano teacher in the city, too. Dr. Bella Slovic. She believed that I could have a concert career, that I could get into Julliard. And I very nearly did.

JASON

I know.

DINAH

But the competition is fierce. Fierce. But, Jason, *you* are going to make it. I know you are. You can do whatever you want.

JASON

Mom...

DANNY

Well, I should be going. That's a lovely duet, Dinah. See you Sunday, Jason. Congratulations on all your success up there in New York. Sounds just super. Glad to have you back.

*DANNY exits. JASON hardly waits until he is out of earshot...*

JASON

Prick!

DINAH

Jason!

JASON

He is such a two-faced bastard.

DINAH

I don't care to hear those words in my home. I don't know where you learned them.

JASON

He hates me just as much as I hate him.

DINAH

I don't know what you are talking about. Danny is a perfectly nice man, and he thinks very highly of you.

JASON

I gotta go to work.

DINAH

You sure you don't mind working at a restaurant? I thought maybe a bookstore. Somewhere you could use your mind.

JASON

In a bookstore?

DINAH

Well, surrounded by all that literature and all. It just seems more intellectual.

JASON

The money's no good.

DINAH

No, I suppose not.

JASON

Like minimum wage.

DINAH

Well, I'm so glad you're home.

JASON

Just for the summer.

DINAH

I know. We've got to get you back to New York and on to your career.

JASON

Mom. Did Dad tell you about David?

DINAH

Who?

JASON

*David.*

DINAH

What about?

JASON

That we're married.

DINAH

You're not married, honey.

JASON

In Boston.

DINAH

You're not married, dear.

JASON

I've got the ring right here.

*He pulls the ring from his shirt.*

DINAH

You're not married in the eyes of God, and those are the only eyes that matter.

JASON

It was legal, a real wedding. We've got a marriage license.

DINAH

Well, it's not valid in the state of South Carolina, and not in any other state for that matter. And certainly not in my mind. So, I don't care to hear any more about it.

JASON

Dad got it. He didn't like it, exactly, but he understood.

DINAH

Your father's talking to the Mayor this morning.

JASON

The Mayor?

DINAH

About this play you're doing. So ashamed of it you won't even put your real name on it.

JASON

I'm trying to get—

DINAH

Well, your father's taking care of this whole mess. He'll have the Mayor shut it down.

JASON

What do you mean shut it down?

DINAH

The theatre. They can always find something. Those old buildings downtown. Some violation or other. And close it down. Permanently, I hope.

JASON

Permanently? This is *Reese*. It's his theatre!

DINAH

He should be more careful of the offerings he presents. We don't need that kind of thing here. This is *Charleston*.

*DINAH turns from JASON and busies herself.*

DINAH

Now, once all this is over, why don't you write something wholesome again. Sweet. You're so talented. And funny. You can be so funny.

*No response. JASON has gone. DINAH turns to find him.*

DINAH

Jason?

*End of scene.*

Act I. Scene 6.

*The theatre. Later that morning.*

REESE

Don't worry about it.

JASON

He's talking to the Mayor right now!

REESE

It's cool.

JASON

It's not cool. They could shut you down today!

REESE

Ain't gonna happen, man. Not when my Uncle Traperre practically controls the whole black vote. I mean, he speaks, black folks jump. And we all know why this Democratic Mayor has stayed in office for five terms in this red state. And so does he. I mean, your daddy may have a pulpit, and what, maybe a thousand white folks? My uncle's got the ear of nearly half the vote in this town. And the Mayor knows that. So. Close down Charleston's only black run theatre, and, kin to Reverend Traperre? I don't think so. I'm just glad they're payin' attention. And, shit—who are *you* to be talkin'? *You* were tryin' to get all the actors to quit on me just this mornin'.

JASON

I'm sorry.

REESE

And now?

JASON

Fine. Fuck it. Let's take my name, my dad's position, and see how far this story can go. I mean--fuck!--my own parents! I don't believe them. My dad, who thinks he's the supportive one, and now he's talking to the Mayor? And my mom—my *mom*... So, I told her about David and me this morning? Know what she says? "You're not married, honey. You're not married, dear."

REESE

She's always been like that, man. Your mama has the most fucking amazing ability to just block out whatever she like doesn't want to think about. Whatever might rock her pretty little Christian world—it's like, it doesn't exist.

JASON



“I don’t care to hear any more about it.”

REESE

She’s a trip, man. Remember that time in the bath tub when we were kids? Middle school, I guess? We were out in the marsh—shrimpin’ or something—came back covered with pluff mud, and your mama plunks us both in the bath. Why bath, I don’t know, but she does. And I’m sittin’ behind you in the tub, and I’m gettin’ this total hard-on lookin’ at your cute little white ass. And it’s totally freakin’ me out, so I’m just like, rub-a-dub-dub, tryin’ to ignore it. And your mom comes sailin’ back in, gets a good look at my, you know, big ol’ black boner, and she’s just like, “Oh my, some boys certainly do grow up faster than others, don’t they?”

JASON

Well, you *were* a year older.

REESE

And then she just throws us both a coupla towels, remember? And ten minutes later we’re downstairs eating hamburgers.

JASON

Even in high school she was clueless. All those “sleep-overs” we had?

REESE

‘Course you were dating that geeky Becky girl. Like seriously.

JASON

Just for a year. And Becky was smart. What about you and Carida?

REESE

Carida was hot.

JASON

Well...

REESE

She was!

JASON

Kinda.

REESE

Kinda?

*REESE starts tickling JASON mercilessly.*

JASON

She was, she was. Where is Carida now?

REESE

Atlanta. She's with this big PR firm there. I got her doin' some publicity for us. Pro bono. Carida's gonna love the news we've got for her. Charleston will never forget it.

JASON

Why don't you ever leave, Reese?

REESE

And give up the pluff mud?

JASON

You could stay with me in New York.

REESE

Yeah, David's gonna love that.

JASON

He trusts me.

REESE

I'm not goin' to New York. I like it here. Besides I don't give a shit about changing the world unless it's changin' right here, you know? If I've got something to say, these are the people I wanna say it to. You know. The crazies. Like your mama.

JASON

Well, I hope we get our message across loud and clear.

REESE

You swear you're back in?

JASON

Yeah, I'm in.

REESE

No more tryin' to get the cast to quit and shit?

JASON

I swear.

*They engage in a "secret handshake" to seal the pact. REESE gazes longingly at Jason.*

What? JASON

Whadya think? REESE

Reese. JASON

I can't help it. REESE

I'm married. JASON

I know, I know. Congratulations. You're beyond the pale now, I guess. REESE

I'm sorry. JASON

That you're married? That's pathetic, man. REESE

That you're... JASON

What? REESE

I don't know. That you're still in love with me. JASON

Don't pity me, man. Don't fuckin' pity me. REESE

I'm sorry. JASON

Uh! uh! uh! REESE

Sorry. JASON

Uh! REESE

Sorry. JASON

Uh! REESE

*JASON and REESE continue on like this until both burst out laughing. They strike each other affectionately. Their mocking fighting ends with them holding each other. A kiss. That's held. JASON kisses hungrily, desperately, then abruptly breaks it off and turns away.*

Fuck. JASON

Back to work. REESE

*End of scene.*

Act I. Scene 7.

*LIGHTS up on DANNY in the church office, he rehearses a song for Sunday, "Farther Along."*

DANNY

*Tempted and tried, we're oft made to wonder  
Why it should be thus all the day long,  
While there are others living about us,  
Never molested, though in the wrong.*

*Farther along we'll know all about it,  
Farther along we'll understand why;  
Cheer up my brother, live in the sunshine,  
We'll understand it all by and by.*

*PHONE rings.*

DANNY

Reverend Barnett. Hey, Doris. *(Beat. Listens)*. Well, that's super. Then, I'll put you in charge of getting the Missionary Union behind this. *(Beat. Listens)*. Yep, it's all comin' together. Helen Simmons has the Altar Guild makin' signs. Bob and Gail Thompson are getting' the Young Adults to work on the Web site. We're almost ready to go. You remember the openin's this Friday, right? God bless, Doris.

*BILL has entered and overheard part of this. He is clearly in a foul mood. He picks up the architectural model.*

BILL

So, what did the architects say?

DANNY

The architects?

BILL

About the showers? You were gonna call them.

DANNY

Oh, right. I haven't had a minute. But I think we've got everything about ready to go for the protests.

BILL

That's what I just heard.

DANNY

Lining up three weeks of mobilization—it's not easy.

BILL

Don't forget the architects.

DANNY

Anything wrong?

BILL

Why?

DANNY

Well, let's just say, your cup doth not runneth over with the joy at the moment.

BILL

It's not up to you to judge my measure of joy, Danny.

DANNY

I'm just jokin', Bill, for gosh sake.

BILL

I had a meeting at the Mayor's Office. I tried to get him to close that theatre down.

DANNY

Close it down?

BILL

Stop the whole thing before it even starts, but—no go.

DANNY

I'm not sure that's the best strategy anyway. We wanna make a statement, don't we? I mean, that's the opportunity we have here.

BILL

I thought you wanted to stop the play.

DANNY

Well, that, and—there's a bigger issue here. You know, I really hope that when my little Zack gets to be Jason's age, he won't have to live in a world as full of perversity and, just, danger as we've got today. I want us to make this country a place where values like family and wholesomeness are honored again. You know, a sweeter country, a Christian place, again. I'm not just worried about this play, I'm concerned about what kind of world I'm raising my little boy in.

BILL

I am, too, Danny.

DANNY

Well, sure. We all are. I gotta make a few more calls.

*DANNY looks up a phone number.*

BILL

I want us to start using wine.

*DANNY starts to dial.*

BILL

Did you hear what I said?

DANNY

I'm sorry?

BILL

For Communion. I want us to start using real wine. We're not following the Lord's command.

DANNY

Sure we are. We have the Lord's Supper once every quarter.

BILL

With Welch's Grape Juice! How authentic is that? Do you think that at the Last Supper the disciples were communing with Welch's Grape Juice? No! They were drinking wine. Real live wine. But at Ashley Memorial Baptist Church—in fact at every Southern Baptist church I can think of—we defy the Lord's command and use the same sickeningly sweet syrup you serve to kindergartners. It's blasphemous! When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me," he wasn't talking about cookies and Kool-Aid. He used bread and wine.

DANNY

Actually the gospels say "cup."

BILL

And what the hell do you think was in that cup, Coca-Cola?

DANNY

Bill—

BILL

See, Danny, the problem is we've set ourselves up as being holier than God Himself. It

makes me sick to my stomach, this attitude.

DANNY

Bill. Where in the world is all this coming from?

BILL

Jason wrote the play, Danny.

DANNY

What play?

BILL

The one downtown. The one you're protesting.

DANNY

Your Jason?

BILL

He's gay. In fact, he's married.

DANNY

Married? Well, that's—that's a hopeful sign.

BILL

To David Klein. He just showed me the ring last night.

DANNY

Bill... I—I'm so sorry.

BILL

We can't do the protests.

DANNY

I know this—I know this has gotta be hard. My Lord, if my little Zack were—that way—I don't know. I don't what Teri and I would do. I can't imagine anything worse.

BILL

It's not all *that* bad.

DANNY

But, I believe the Lord gives us strength to git through these things.

*JASON enters. Stands in the doorway, unnoticed.*



BILL

We can't have the publicity. Do you understand? We can't have the publicity these protests are going to kick up. We have to just let this thing come and go. Unnoticed,

BILL (Cont'd)

hopefully. By and large. And by the end of summer, Jason will be back in New York. Nobody will remember a thing about it.

JASON

Oh, they might remember for a while.

BILL

Jason.

JASON

Turn on your TV tomorrow morning. Reese and I are gonna be on "Today in Charleston." We're taping the interview this afternoon.

BILL

Son.

JASON

Just thought I'd tell ya'll to tune in. I won't be coming home tonight, Dad. Oh, Danny? You better get your protests ready. We're lining up the papers. God bless!

*JASON exits.*

BILL

Jason. Jason! *(Beat.)* Oh, dear Lord. *(Then angrily to DANNY)* Do you see what you've done!

DANNY

What *I've* done?

BILL

You and your damn protests! This never would have happened.

DANNY

Bill.

BILL

Call them off, Danny.

DANNY

We can't call them off now. I'm sorry for how this will affect your family, Bill, I

really am. But it's gonna be all over the news now. And that is *not* my fault. We gotta take a stand. It's a question of moral leadership. I'm sorry to say this, Bill, but especially if Jason wrote that thing. Especially then. We have got say somethin'. 'Cuz if we stay silent? We're makin' a very strong statement in *support* of what

DANNY (Cont'd)

that play is sayin'. And that's just somethin' neither I nor this church can possibly do. It's not somethin' *you* can afford to do.

BILL

Jason's my boy. I'm not going to have my own church attacking him in public.

DANNY

I know it's difficult, but Jesus said "I have come to turn father against son, mother against daughter..."

BILL

Telephone everyone you spoke to today and tell them the protests are cancelled. Tell them I said so.

DANNY

No.

BILL

Call them off.

DANNY

I'm gonna lead those protests—

BILL

Not as my associate pastor, you're not.

DANNY

With or without you, I'm gonna do it. I have to.

BILL

Then you're fired.

DANNY

*(Almost amused)*

Oh, Bill...

BILL

I mean it.

DANNY

I know this will affect you all personally, but there's a bigger picture here.

BILL

I couldn't be more serious.

DANNY

You're upset. You should go home and relax. Play some golf.

BILL

You're fired.

DANNY

Bill.

BILL

You're fired, Danny.

DANNY

You don't have the authority to fire me. You know that. You have to go to the deacons and then to the congregation.

BILL

You better go. *(Beat.)* Now.

DANNY

We'll see what the deacons have to say.

BILL

After more than 20 years as their pastor, this congregation will do as I ask. Now, pack up your things and get out of here. I mean it. Get the hell out of my church!

*DANNY picks up a few items and put them in his bag. BILL stares away, furious. DANNY starts to leave, then turns.*

DANNY

Bill?

BILL

*(Doesn't turn.)*

What!

DANNY

I'll pray for you.

*End of Act I.*

Act II. Scene 1.

*LIGHTS up on BILL and DINAH in their living room. DANNY in a pool of light. REESE and JASON under a bed cover in the theatre. It is early morning. BILL, DINAH and DANNY devotionally sing the hymn, "Breathe on Me, Breath of God." The hymn is repeated with REESE joining the second time.*

DANNY / BILL / DINAH / REESE

*Breathe on me, breath of God.  
Fill me with life anew.  
That I may love what Thou dost love  
And do what Thou wouldst do.*

ALL

*(Singing)*

Amen.

*DANNY and BILL point a remote and click. The three remain visible throughout the remainder of the scene.*

*LIGHTS up on the theatre. A bed (or bedding) has been set on the stage. REESE and JASON lie together. A television plays, set to mute. REESE watches. JASON snuggles sleepily against him.*

REESE

Bucko? You sleepin'?

JASON

Are we on yet?

REESE

Weather's next.

JASON

Then us?

REESE

That's what they said.

JASON

Why don't you turn up the sound?

REESE

So you can rest. Don't worry. I'll wake you.

JASON

You're sweet.

*JASON snuggles closer, tries to sleep. Beat.*

REESE

Bucko?

JASON

Hmn?

REESE

It was nice sleepin' together again.

JASON

Mn, hmn.

REESE

Like old times. Sorry we couldn't go to my place.

JASON

Mmn.

REESE

Go back to sleep.

*Beat. Then REESE starts caressing JASON erotically. JASON opens his eyes.*

JASON

What are you doing?

REESE

Thought you might have an itch.

JASON

Reese. We can't. I'm married.

REESE

You used to like this.

*REESE continues caressing JASON.*

JASON

Reese...

REESE  
Hmnnn....?

JASON  
You know what that does to me.

REESE  
You bet I do.

*REESE continues, JASON gives in, passionately pulls REESE on top of him.*

JASON  
Oh, God, I want you.

REESE  
Bucko.

*JASON holds REESE as tightly as he possibly can, kissing him ferociously, then suddenly pushes him away.*

JASON  
We gotta stop. We gotta stop.

REESE  
Goddamn.

JASON  
I can't!

REESE  
You know what you're doing to me?

JASON  
We've been very good. We made it all the way through the night.

REESE  
Chaste as a coupla fuckin' nuns.

JASON  
*(Tries to lighten things)*  
That's right, sister.

REESE

Don't jerk me around.

JASON

Reese.

REESE

Don't you be jerkin' me around.

*He turns away angrily. Lights cross fade to BILL and DINAH.*

DINAH

Oh, turn it down. I can't stand all that chattering.

BILL

They could be on any minute.

DINAH

When they are, then we'll listen. But for now, please turn it down. *Bill.*

*He does. DINAH starts to leave the room.*

BILL

*(Sharply)*

Where are *you* going?

DINAH

I'm just getting some coffee. For heaven's sake.

*DINAH goes to kitchen. BILL watches TV. Beat.*

BILL

Oh, my Lord.

DINAH

*(From kitchen)*

Are they on?

BILL

There's a hurricane.

DINAH

What?



BILL

A hurricane. Off Grenada.

DINAH

A hurricane? It's not even June.

BILL

Global warming.

*DINAH returns with her coffee.*

DINAH

Oh, there's no such thing.

BILL

Frequent and violent cyclonic storms are one of the signs.

DINAH

You're sure it's not the Second Coming?

BILL

Dinah.

DINAH

You just have to parrot everything you hear on NPR.

BILL

Are you listening to Rush Limbaugh again?

DINAH

Oh, give me some credit, please. One unseasonable hurricane does not equal the end of the world.

BILL

You don't believe that we are destroying this planet God gave us?

DINAH

Please, Bill, it's too early for sermons.

BILL

Open your eyes. We've got hurricanes now in *May*.

DINAH

I don't believe in doomsday. I never have. I just don't believe God will do that to us.

Not if He loves us.

JASON

I'm not trying to jerk you around.

REESE

You couldn't be doing a better job. What the hell—comin' over here last night, sleepin' next to me, pullin' me on top of you? Whadya think you're doin'?

JASON

It's still there.

REESE

What is?

JASON

You know.

REESE

What.

JASON

The way I feel about you.

REESE

Like I ever knew what that was. Shit. And what about your "husband?"

JASON

I love him. I do.

REESE

That's way too big city for me, man.

*REESE turns angrily away.*

JASON

Reese...

BILL

Oh, God. There they are.

DINAH

Oh, Lord.

*They watch. REESE sulks, his back to the TV. JASON sees they are on.*

JASON

Reese. Reese! We're on!

*REESE whirls away from JASON and grabs the remote. We see both couples watch the program. The action is frozen. Then,*

REESE

Fuck! Yes! Yes!

DINAH

Bill.

REESE

Yes!

DANNY

Good Lord.

DINAH

Turn it off.

REESE

The whole interview! They played the whole fucking thing!

DINAH

Bill. *Bill.*

*BILL turns off the TV.*

REESE

Bucko! You were amazing! The way you pulled out that ring, right on cue, just like we practiced. Cocked it right at the camera. Award winning, bucko! Are you watching, New York Times?

DINAH

What are we going to do?

JASON

My wedding ring.

*Cell phone rings. REESE reaches for it.*

REESE

See, they're callin' already.

DINAH

Bill.

REESE

*(On the cell)*

Carida! You saw it? *(Beat while he listens.)* Yes! Okay, so, you got Charleston, now what about Atlanta? You go, girl! And, if you can get me the New York Times... *(Beat while he listens)*. If anyone can, you can. Go, do your magic, sister!

DINAH

Bill. Say something.

BILL

What would you like me to say?

DINAH

Tell me what we're going to do.

BILL

Do?

DINAH

Do. What are we going to do?

*JASON gets out of bed, goes to his bag.*

REESE

Better clear your calendar, bucko. Carida's lining up the papers right now.

*BILL, agitated, gets up and goes toward the deck.*

DINAH

Bill. *(Beat.)* What are you doing?

REESE

Whatcha doin', bucko?

BILL

I'm going outside.

JASON

Making a call.

REESE

A call?

DINAH

Outside?

JASON

I'm calling David.

DINAH

Bill.

REESE

David?

JASON

It's his wedding ring, too.

BILL  
*(Gruffly)*

I'm going outside.

REESE

Bucko.

JASON

I need to talk to David.

DINAH

Bill?

BILL

I need to pray.

DANNY

My Lord.

*End of scene.*

Act II. Scene 2.

*The porch. Noon that day. DINAH, dressed impeccably, sits with a pitcher of iced tea and two glasses. She tries to suppress her anxiety.*

DANNY  
*(From offstage)*

Dinah?

DINAH  
I'm out on the porch.

*DANNY enters.*

DANNY  
Dinah.

DINAH  
Oh, Danny. Thank you for coming over.

DANNY  
Well, of course. You look lovely. As always.

DINAH  
I doubt it. But thank you for saying so. Tea?

*She pours two glasses.*

DANNY  
*(Sincerely)*  
How are you doin'?

DINAH  
You saw the news this morning?

DANNY  
I did.

DINAH  
I tell you, Danny, I never expected anything like this to happen to me.

DANNY  
I can only imagine how hard it's got to be. I'm so sorry.

DINAH

He was always the model son, you know? Excellent grades. Never got in trouble. Everyone loved him. Such a beautiful voice. And so funny...

DANNY

Jason's a fine young man, Dinah. He still is. He just got in with the wrong crowd, that's all.

DINAH

Do you think so?

DANNY

"Train up a child in the way he should go," says the Book of Proverbs, "and he will not depart from it when he is old." Jason isn't anywhere near *old* yet. It's like a phase.

DINAH

A phase, yes. That's what I tried to tell Bill.

DANNY

A very dangerous phase, though, let's not kid ourselves. But there's people who can help. I know some folks who specialize in this sort of thing.

DINAH

What sort of thing?

DANNY

Recovery ministry.

DINAH

Which is?

DANNY

Helpin'—boys like yours—to straighten up. So to speak. A Christian program.

DINAH

It's not brainwashing.

DANNY

Brainwashin'? Dinah. It's the power of God to change people's hearts.

DINAH

Of course.

DANNY

We can get Jason signed up right away, if you help.

DINAH

And it works? They're—cured?

DANNY

I'll get you a brochure.

DINAH

Thank you. (*Beat.*) Danny, about, about this play. I know you're planning some—protests.

DANNY

I'm goin' to lead them. I hear the Lord's voice very clearly on this.

DINAH

I want you to stop it.

DANNY

Dinah, I'm sorry for ya'll, but as I told Bill, this is somethin' I just have to do.

DINAH

The play. You've got to stop this horrible production.

DANNY

That's exactly what I'm trying to do.

DINAH

You have to, Danny. You *have* to.

*DANNY places his hand on hers.*

DANNY

I'll do everything I can.

DINAH

I know you will. You're very loyal.

DANNY

Dinah.

DINAH

To Bill and me both. I appreciate it.

DANNY



Dinah, you do know that Bill wants to git me fired?

DINAH

Fired?

DANNY

We were arguing about the protests. He doesn't want me to do them.

DINAH

When was all this?

DANNY

Yesterday afternoon. He didn't tell you?

DINAH

No, he—Bill was upset when he came home, but he didn't—he wouldn't say why. Oh, Danny, it'll all blow over. Don't you worry. I'll talk to him.

DANNY

I'd be more worried about Bill, if I were you. I've already spoken to the deacons. They believe these protests are the right thing to do. What they really want is strong leadership. A decisive direction, not hemming and hawing.

DINAH

What exactly are you saying?

DANNY

They're havin' a meetin' tonight to discuss the options.

DINAH

What "options?"

DANNY

For the leadership of this church.

DINAH

Danny. Please. Bill has been like a father to you. You can't—Don't do this.

DANNY

I believe there's something you can do to help.

DINAH

That *I* can do?

DANNY

Don't worry. The Lord will be with you. He always is. And I'm gonna be right beside you.

*End of scene.*

Act II. Scene 3.

*LIGHTS up on JASON calling on his cell phone. He is leaving a voice message.*

JASON

David. I've been trying to call you all morning. I really need to talk. Just to hear your voice. Do you have your phone off again? Maybe you're out of range? Anyway, I just wanted to say I miss you, and I can't wait to see you again. *(Shuts off the phone, then speaks to self)* And I just spent last night with Reese Trapper. Oh, Christ. What am I doing?

*LIGHTS down on JASON. LIGHTS up on living room. Early evening, it is still light. DINAH plays the piano and sings. BILL enters with a bottle of wine and two glasses. DINAH doesn't notice and continues singing.*

DINAH

*There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Emanuel's veins,  
And sinners plunged beneath that flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.  
Lose all their guilty stains,  
Lose all—*

*BILL sneaks up behind to surprise her.*

DINAH

Bill!

BILL

Glass of wine?

DINAH

Wine?

BILL

I'm trying something new. A—gewurztraminer. *(He mangles the pronunciation.)*

DINAH

Bill.

BILL

German, I guess. Except it says Oregon on the bottle. Oh, well... I've got a lot to learn.

DINAH

Is this becoming a habit.

BILL

Maybe so. None for you?

DINAH

Certainly not.

BILL

You sounded lovely. You always do.

DINAH

What have you been doing?

BILL

Praying.

DINAH

Your shoes are covered with sand.

BILL

Oh, dear.

DINAH

Where have you been?

BILL

The ocean. I walked all the way around the east end of Folly Beach. Started at the center of the island and just kept on going.

DINAH

That's miles and miles.

BILL

Did you know the old light house is almost on dry land again? There it's been, stranded in the middle of the inlet for how many years? And now sand's building up again at its base. Folks walk right up to it at low tide.

DINAH

That's crazy. The currents in that inlet are treacherous. Someone drowns out there every year. You know.

BILL

They walk right across now.

DINAH

Foolishness.

BILL

I wonder if the lighthouse will reconnect with Morris Island again. Or form a new island of its own...

DINAH

Bill.

BILL

So awesome. The work of God in nature. Moving the islands. Changing the very geography.

DINAH

I talked with Danny today.

BILL

Oh?

DINAH

You shouldn't be threatening to have him fired.

BILL

He was being insubordinate.

DINAH

Oh, for heaven's sake, Bill. You run a church, not the Navy.

BILL

I'm the senior pastor and I'm in charge.

DINAH

Danny's got the deacons on his side. The whole lot of them. They're meeting tonight.

BILL

I'm aware of that.

DINAH

How did you know?

BILL

Fred called to warn me. Danny doesn't have quite the *whole* lot of them.

DINAH

So, you're going to meet with them.

BILL

They haven't invited me.

DINAH

Bill. They're gonna try to get the congregation to fire you.

BILL

I have spent the whole day watching God re-form the coast of South Carolina. I've got better things to do with my time than listen to the deacons belly-ache.

DINAH

So, you won't stand up for yourself?

BILL

I have done nothing.

DINAH

Exactly! Our world is falling apart, and you've done nothing. Nothing! No wonder the church wants new leadership. Danny, at least, is planning to protest.

BILL

I understand that.

DINAH

Oh, Bill. Tell the deacons you support the protests. Just tell them. That's all you have to do, and all this will go away.

*DINAH fights back tears. JASON enters.*

BILL

There's our celebrity.

JASON

*(Noticing DINAH)*

Mom?

BILL

Your mother's had a hard day, Jason. We both have.

JASON

Mom...

DINAH

*(Composes herself with anger)*

Well, you got your wish, young man, I hope you know. Your father's going to lose his job.

BILL

Dinah, don't be dramatic.

JASON

They're gonna fire you?

DINAH

Of course, they're going to fire him! You and that damn play of yours. Parading your perversity about like it's something to be proud of. Like it's some great achievement we should all celebrate. Like when you won the poetry contest. All the high schools in the state, and you, winning when you were only in the ninth grade. You think we should be proud now like we were then? I'm ashamed. I'm ashamed of you both. You, Jason, perverse and willful. Ungrateful to your parents. Thinking only of yourself and your ridiculous little career. And *you*, sir, you the senior pastor, the great fisher of men, leader of the community. *You* do nothing. Nothing! You can't even control your own home. Look at your son. The Apostle Paul says you're not fit to lead the church!

BILL

That's enough.

DINAH

You're not *fit*. Danny will take over this church and make it into something you never could. He's decisive. He understands the will of God, and he does something about it. Like a real man of God.

BILL

That's quite enough.

DINAH

You two are some kind of pair. Father and son. I never believed it, but this thing? Maybe it *is* hereditary.

*DINAH exits. The men are silent.*

BILL

She's upset.

JASON

You're not?

BILL  
Want some wine?

JASON  
All right.

*They drink.*

BILL  
Funny taste, don't you think? What do they call it? Ge-wursh—

JASON  
Gewurztraminer.

BILL  
You couldn't use it for Communion. The blood of Christ.

JASON  
They're really going to fire you?

BILL  
I expect we'll know before long.

*JASON looks at him questioningly.*

BILL  
The deacons are meeting right now.

JASON  
Fuck. *(Beat.)* I'm sorry.

BILL  
I've heard the word before.

JASON  
About all of this mess. I didn't mean to—

BILL  
You did what you believed was the right thing.

JASON  
I don't know.

BILL  
You don't know?



JASON

*(Angry)*

You tried close down the theatre! What has Reese ever done to you? *I'm* the one who wrote the play. Punish me!

BILL

I wasn't trying to punish anybody. I just wanted—I don't know—I was trying to protect...

JASON

Yes?

BILL

Myself. I was trying to protect myself. Your mother's right. She's right to be ashamed. Of me, anyway. I *have* done nothing. I've done nothing for the last twenty years. You know, I've spent the entire day walking around Folly Beach, thinking about how the church I knew began to drift—or not drift. The Southern Baptist Convention was taken over, systematically.

JASON

By a bunch of fascists.

BILL

Starting with the presidency and moving to every board and commission. And I just watched as colleagues, friends of mine, good men—women, too, women especially—got pushed out of their pulpits. Whole congregations expelled from the Convention. And I said nothing. Not a word. I was afraid if I spoke up I'd lose my pulpit. So I did nothing.

JASON

You grew this church.

BILL

Oh, yes, I grew this church. I took a bigger salary. We bought this house. We put you into private school. Then college. I played golf. The congregation grew larger. We hired Danny. But things had changed.

JASON

That fucking Danny.

BILL

You can't blame Danny. I felt things shifting. "Hate the sin and love the sinner," we said. You know very well that never appears in the Bible. Do you think Jesus would have hated anything at all?

JASON

He got pretty pissed off in the Temple. The money changers and all.

BILL

Yes, he did. Very good. I could have gotten pissed off. I could have done *something*. You wrote a play. (*Beat.*) What does David say? About your interview. You're both famous now. At least in Charleston.

*Beat.*

JASON

I have to tell you something. I have to tell someone.

BILL

Yes?

JASON

I slept with Reese Traperre. Last night.

BILL

With Reese?

JASON

At the theatre. Reese's sister had people over at their house, and I didn't want to stay here, so, anyway, yeah, on stage.

BILL

On stage, you say?

JASON

Alone, you know, after everyone left. Oh! No sex. We didn't have sex.

BILL

Ah.

JASON

We used to. In high school we were practically—but...

BILL

High school?

JASON

Yeah, we were—you know—sort of like—well, we did it—a lot.

BILL

You and Reese Traperre?

JASON

I don't know what's going on.

BILL

And last night—no sex you said?

JASON

But I wanted to. I don't understand this. I'm married!

BILL

Yes, well, you—you're considering adultery. I suppose.

JASON

How could I do that?

BILL

You're not the first.

JASON

I *love* him.

BILL

David.

JASON

Reese.

BILL

Ah. Well, that's—confusing.

JASON

I love them both.

BILL

I'm not sure I'm the best one to be advising you. First, you tell me you're gay. Then you announce you're married. To another man. Now, you're saying you're in love with Reese Traperre? That's a lot to digest.

JASON

I'm in love with David, too. It's different.

BILL

In my experience, I've found it's best when people choose to love one person at a time.

JASON

Right.

BILL

As a pastor, I would tell you to be true to your husband.

JASON

Yeah. Of course.

BILL

Unless the marriage was a mistake from the start.

JASON

I love David, I do. He's brilliant. He knows like everything about the Constitution and the history of civil rights in this country, from, like, Frederick Douglas to Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King, you name it. But with Reese—I don't know.

BILL

How old is David again?

JASON

40.

BILL

Hmn.

JASON

That's not so old.

BILL

No. Certainly you respect him. I have a question: What did you intend when you and David were married? What exactly did you vow?

JASON

To love each other for the rest of our lives.

BILL

And now you love Reese Trapper? *(Beat. JASON is silent.)* Now, don't take offense—but isn't this exactly the kind of thing people like Danny say about you all? That you aren't capable of real love or commitment, that the homosexual lifestyle, or whatever you call it, is just about sex?

JASON

I loved Reese first. Ever since high school. Maybe before.

BILL

Then, marrying David, was what?

JASON

It seemed right at the time. We'd been going out for almost a year. And, like David was saying, gay marriage is the defining civil rights issue of our times. Like slavery in the 1850's. We wanted to be part of that—that huge moment in history.

BILL

So you got married to make a political statement?

JASON

No.

BILL

Jason.

JASON

Well, of course, it was a political statement. How could it not be? I mean, when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to some white man, she knew she was making a political statement. But she was also just tired and wanted to sit down right where she was. Why shouldn't she have been able to?

BILL

Now you're comparing yourself to Rosa Parks?

JASON

I'm just saying why shouldn't we be able to marry? We live in this country, like everybody else, we should have the right to marry, like everybody else. For whatever reason.

BILL

Well, it's true people get married for all sorts of reasons. I'm just wondering about you and David.

JASON

I told you. I love him.

BILL

You also told me you wanted to be part of a political movement. Nothing wrong with that. Wanting to change the world—it's a wonderful part of youth.

JASON

You're patronizing me.

BILL

I wanted to change the world, too, you know, when I was your age. I'm beginning to realize, I still do.

JASON

Reese doesn't want to change the world, he just wants to change Charleston.

BILL

Good place to start.

JASON

So, you think I'm really in love with Reese. And David's like a mentor, or teacher or something. That the whole reason we got married was to make a political statement—we might as well have carried a placard and marched on Washington.

BILL

I didn't say that at all. *You* did.

JASON

What am I gonna do?

BILL

You'll have to search your own heart, Jason, I can't do that for you.

*JASON is silent.*

BILL

I could do one thing, though.

JASON

Yeah?

BILL

I could pray for you—if you want.

JASON

*(After a beat)*

Please.

*BILL touches JASON gently. DINAH enters.*

DINAH

Well... I've made up my mind, and I don't want either one of you to try and stop me. Someone's got to save this family, and I guess it's gonna be me. I'm gonna make a statement with Danny.

BILL

What kind of "statement?"

DINAH

On TV, honey, just like you, Jason.

BILL

Dinah.

DINAH

I'm just gonna say how I feel about all this. It's not like it's a secret to *you* all. And if I do, on the news tonight—

BILL

Tonight?

DINAH

11:00. Channel 7. And if I do, your daddy will keep his pension—that's what Danny tells me—and we just might be able to hang onto this house.

BILL

Honey, you're overwrought.

JASON

Is that true? Dad?

DINAH

I'm quite calm.

JASON

You guys are going to lose the house?

DINAH

One has to make mortgage payments, darlin', and one has to have money to do that.

BILL

You're going to denounce our son on television?

DINAH

I'm goin' to do what has to be done.

BILL

You're his mother.

DINAH

And it's my duty to instruct him, and correct him, when need be. When Jason was a child and we'd take him to the beach, I watched him like a hawk to make sure he didn't go out too far. And when you did, young man, I used to paddle your behind. You both remember. Because it's my job to protect you, as best I can, from danger. It's no different now.

JASON

Protect me? From what?

BILL

They're using you, Dinah, Danny and all.

DINAH

These are *my* feelings. Don't insult me. You both know what I think about Jason and his—relationship. And you all know how I feel about this play.

JASON

That you've never even read.

DINAH

And I never will.

BILL

Dinah.

DINAH

Someone's got to do something. I'm savin' this family.

BILL

What are you saving? This house maybe.

DINAH

Jason, can you go upstairs and get my suitcases? They're by the bed.

BILL

Suitcases?

DINAH



I'm goin' up to the mountains, to my family's house in Montclair.

BILL

Dinah, come on.

DINAH

Jason, please. Could you get my bags.

JASON

Mom.

DINAH

Jason.

JASON

Yes, ma'am.

*(JASON goes.)*

BILL

It's too late. You can't be leaving tonight.

DINAH

Oh, Lord, Bill. I'm a grown woman. I can drive after dark.

BILL

It's five hours up there.

DINAH

Oh, alright. I'll stay with my sister in town tonight and drive up in the morning.

BILL

I won't let you go.

DINAH

If you think I'm goin' to stay here and watch this circus unfold...

BILL

I know it's difficult.

DINAH

Difficult? It's humiliating. Worse, I have to witness my son ruinin' his life. I know it's partly my fault. We must have done something, you and I. With Jason, I mean. Maybe we should have insisted he play Little League. I don't know. We tried to raise him right. Lord knows he was in church enough.

BILL

Don't blame yourself. There's nothing to—

DINAH

Danny says, "Raise up a child in the way that he should go, and he will not depart from it when he is old." And Jason is still so young, he could change.

BILL

He's not going to change.

DINAH

*(Furious)*

You're supporting him!

BILL

I'm just saying—

DINAH

I don't know what has happened to the two of you.

*(JASON enters with two suitcases.)*

DINAH

Either of you.

*She picks up her suitcase and starts to leave.*

BILL

Are you leavin' me?

DINAH

I'm just goin' to Montclair.

BILL

For how long?

DINAH

I don't know. We'll see. You'll need to find someone else to play the organ and lead the choir. Oh, but that probably won't be *your* decision, will it?

JASON

Mom—I'm sorry.

BILL

You're not saving this family, you're destroying it.

DINAH

Now, darlin', don't be dramatic. Ya'll 'll have to take care of yourselves for a while—but ya'll are havin' a nice time with your wine and all, you won't even miss me.

*She picks up her bags and exits. JASON calls after her.*

JASON

Mom!

BILL

Let her go, Jason.

JASON

Mom!

BILL

I'll call your mother when she gets to Montclair.

JASON

Oh, my God.

*BILL pours himself more wine.*

BILL

Did you know the old Morris Island lighthouse is practically on dry land again? I saw it this afternoon. It's an amazing thing to me, how God keeps changing things. Changing things all the time. First the island is eroded away, and now it's being...

JASON

Restored?

BILL

Yes, indeed, it is. It's being restored.

*End of scene.*

Act II. Scene 4.

*BILL sings to himself the revival song "Just As I Am."*

BILL

*Just as I am, though tossed about  
With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

*LIGHTS down on BILL. LIGHTS up on the church office. DANNY addresses the unseen deacons.*

DANNY

Well, gentlemen, I just spoke with Dinah. She says she's committed to supportin' us and makin' a statement on the news tonight—and I'll be with her to make sure it all goes well. So, in light of these developments, I'd like to move that we consider Bill as having resigned, effective immediately, with a full pension to commence—

*BILL enters. DANNY notices him.*

DANNY

Bill.

BILL

Glad ya'll are still here.

DANNY

We're just finishin' up.

BILL

I was hoping I could say a few words.

DANNY

It's gettin' kind of late.

BILL

I promise I'll get ya'll home before the news starts. Never know who's gonna be on it. Ya'll know I've been at this church for quite a while. A couple of you even remember when I first got here—gosh, I guess 22 years ago now. Not many of you were around back then. Lots has changed since those days. The church has grown. Charleston's grown. We built the new sanctuary, and now we've got plans for a gymnasium, too—a whole Christian Life Center. All very exciting.

DANNY

No one's denyin' that you've helped grow this church, Bill. That's not the issue.

BILL

Oh, I know the issue, Danny. I think I know it pretty well. I'm just not sure ya'll do.

DANNY

Bill, the decision's already been—

BILL

Ya'll think the issue is about taking a stand. That it's about fighting evil and speaking up for God's ways in a godless time. That it's about doing what the Lord would have done. And I agree with you, that *is* the issue. There's always a war to be fought for the Lord, if you like fighting wars. When I dedicated my life to Christ we were right in the middle of the Vietnam War—Danny, you're too young to remember that, I believe.

DANNY

I know about the Vietnam War, Bill.

BILL

From movies and whatnot, I'm sure you do. Anyway, I was at camp that summer, our church youth camp down in the Texas Hill Country. I was 17, about to go into my senior year in high school, and I was scared to death. Every night on the news they'd show the names of the soldiers killed that day in the war—politicians don't like it when they do that. Bad for morale, bad for the politicians. Anyway, I'd see these names on the television, and I'd think, that could be me. We all did. All of us boys of that age. Whether we talked about it or not, whether we were for the war or against it, we all thought it: that could be me. I'd already accepted the Lord a few years earlier—at that very same camp—so I wasn't worried about heaven or hell. I just wanted to live. On this earth, right here, for a while longer. But the names of all those young boys, all those dead young men, told me that life had to be about something, that I had to do something with my life that would have *meaning*.

It got to be Friday night, the last night at camp, before we all went home. The service on Fridays was always the biggest for rededications, professions of faith, and for commitments to the ministry. We were all pretty worked up. The singing was great. We had guitars...

DANNY

We got a camp just like that at Edisto, Bill.

BILL

I know we do. The thing for me at that service—I don't even remember the sermon, to tell you the truth—the thing for me was seeing all these kids crying and hugging on one another and praying together.

*JASON appears in the door. He hears his father and stops. The others do not see*

*him.*

BILL

Seeing these kids *loving* each other, because of the Lord, because of the way we were all going to live our lives differently when we got back home. The way we were going to share our lives together, in love and fellowship, with the intention of saving all the kids in our schools, of bringing them into God's family. And I felt the Lord calling me. There was nothing else that could have more meaning than that. Than bringing this love to every single person we knew.

This is the calling of Christ! Not protesting little theatres! Not condemning people or new plays. "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone," Jesus said. Have I never preached this to you? Have I failed to show you where the real battle lies? It's here. At home. Our job, our true struggle, is to build the Kingdom of God. To establish His peaceable kingdom right here. Where all people—*all* people—can hug on each other, and cry, and sing together, loving one another. Just loving one another. And without that, without that love, all the rest of this is just—an abomination! (*He takes a Bible and destroys the model of the Christian Life Center.*) Jesus Christ, ya'll! Jesus Christ! (*Beat. Then with restrained fury.*) Jesus came and ate with sinners. He ate with sinners. That's what got him crucified. That, and refusing to kow-tow to the pious and the politically connected. Jesus ate with sinners. Not with the self-righteous.

It makes me wonder, Danny. Would Jesus be eating with *you* all tonight?

*End of scene.*

Act II. Scene 5.

*LIGHTS up on DINAH in a TV studio. She stands stiffly and speaks to an offstage camera.*

DINAH

Testing. Is this all right?

*LIGHTS up on the theatre. REESE has just finished a rehearsal. JASON enters, clearly agitated.*

JASON

Reese. We've gotta talk.

DINAH

Testing. Um—I, I wonder—can we wait a bit? I'm not quite ready. I thought Danny—uh, Rev. Barnett—would be here, by now, but...

REESE

Statement?

JASON

Tonight. My whole family's on TV now. Starting with me waving my wedding ring around, when I'm—when I'm still in love with *you*.

REESE

In love with me? Since when?

JASON

Since always.

REESE

Shit. There is way too much goin' on here.

*DINAH sits erect and is about to begin when DANNY enters in a rush.*

DANNY

Dinah!

DINAH

Thank God you're here. We're about to start.

DANNY

I wrote up a statement for you.

DINAH

You wrote one *for* me?

DANNY

Just to help you frame your thoughts a bit.

DINAH

You are so sweet. I'm so nervous, I don't know what might come out of my mouth.

JASON

I've always been in love with you. Even in middle school. Remember the bath tub?

REESE

Then, what's with David?

JASON

I need a divorce. I don't even know how you do that.

REESE

You need a divorce. Because of me.

JASON

Because of how I feel about you. It's not fair to David. Or you. Or me.

REESE

And you figured all that out—just since this morning.

JASON

Well—my dad helped.

REESE

Your daddy? Shit. (*Beat.*) So now you want to be with *me*. And how do I know you're not just jerkin' me around again? How do I know you're not gonna go runnin' back to David? There must be somethin' there. You did marry the dude.

JASON

I made a mistake.

REESE

A pretty big-assed mistake.

JASON

I'm aware of that.

REESE



I don't know, man.

JASON

I told you, I'm in love with—

REESE

*(Interrupting)*

Yeah, yeah. You're *sayin'* that...

JASON

I'll marry you.

REESE

Oh, fuck that.

JASON

I mean it.

REESE

Fuck that. Really. You know—Black folks, for the first 200 years that we were in this country, we weren't allowed to get married. Could not do it. Do you think we didn't love each other? Didn't stick by each other? Just cuz the State of South Carolina said we weren't *worthy* of getting' married? I don't need a judge or some preacher to tell me what is real in my heart.

JASON

*(Fondly, even amused)*

I love you—when you get worked up like that.

REESE

You do.

JASON

I do. *(Then, intentionally echoing the marriage vow)* “I do.”

REESE

*(Understand the vow being offered)*

Ah, fuck. *(beat.)* I do, too. “I do.”

JASON

*(Softly but with barely contained excitement)*

Wahoo!

*JASON passionately kisses REESE.*

REESE

*(Calming him down.)*

Look, man, one thing at a time, okay? We've got a show to open here. We got protests happenin'. We got papers comin'. We got your mama goin' on TV—

JASON

My mom! Fuck! It's time.

*While REESE turns on television in rehearsal hall, LIGHTS rise on BILL watching TV in the living room. LIGHTS up on DINAH in TV studio.*

DINAH

*(To the offstage camera, she reads from DANNY's text)*

I believe the Bible's teaching on homosexuality is clear.

BILL

Except that Jesus never said a word about it.

DINAH

It is a moral pestilence, a contagion.

BILL

A contagion?

JASON

Where is she getting that?

REESE

She's like reading from something.

BILL

Danny.

DINAH

In the Gospels, Jesus says, "If your right eye offends thee, pluck it out."

REESE

Ow.

JASON

Stop!

DINAH

To protect our children—(*she repeats the phrase uncertainly*) Our children? (*She reads the rest flatly with waning conviction.*) To follow the word of our Lord, we must drive out the homosexuals wherever we find them: from our communities, from our churches,

DINAH (cont'd)

even from our homes. There should be no refuge anywhere for this kind of depravity, for this insidious evil. (*Looks up from the script, emotional*) No. Jason is my son. He's a good boy. He's a good boy. He's—he's good!

REESE

Whoa.

JASON

Mom.

BILL

Now there's my Dinah.

DANNY

Turn the camera off!

*Blackout. End of scene.*

Act II. Scene 6.

*The next day. The church office. BILL at his desk. He reads the Bible. After a moment JASON enters.*

JASON

I got your message.

BILL

Thanks for coming down.

JASON

When do they get here?

BILL

The television crew? They're on their way. Should be just in time for church. You know, this just might be my last chance to speak from this pulpit—maybe any pulpit. Danny and all will be in the streets, screamin' and shoutin' and claimin' they've got the "Christian" point of view. "Christian" being a purely political term these days. And a rather narrowly defined one at that.

JASON

Amen.

BILL

At least today I can say, right into the cameras, "Here's one pastor who believes otherwise."

JASON

How come the deacons are meeting?

BILL

They are?

JASON

In the conference room. What's that about?

BILL

Well, after my performance last night, and your mother's—improvisation—on TV, I'd say, they're voting to renege on my pension.

JASON

Or maybe they'll vote the other way?

BILL

And keep me? I'm glad to know you still believe in miracles.

*LIGHTS up on the living room. DINAH enters carrying her luggage. She drops them, sits at the piano and stares.*

JASON

*(Notices the demolished model of the Christian Life Center.)*

Hey, what happened to this?

BILL

Oh, I—I pulled out some of my old hellfire and brimstone last night.

JASON

Jesus in the Temple, huh?

BILL

Like “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

JASON

I hate that song.

BILL

You do?

JASON

“Marching as to war?” Kinda militaristic, huh?

*DINAH begins to play “Amazing Grace.”*

BILL

Ah. So, now you're a critic of hymnology, I see. Tell me, what are your feelings about “Amazing Grace,” professor?

JASON

Better. Except for that “wretch like me” part.

BILL

Just be careful of pride. Even gay pride. It's bad for your soul.

JASON

*(Affectionately)*

Bad for my soul—you *are* a preacher.

BILL

Yes, indeed, I am. And I gotta statement to make. Join me?

*BILL and JASON exit. LIGHTS down on church office. LIGHTS up on living room. DINAH continues playing "Amazing Grace." JASON enters and crosses to her, placing his hands on her shoulders. DINAH looks up at him and smiles, continues to play. BILL enters and pauses taking in DINAH and JASON together.*

*End of play.*