

LOVE *v.* MARRIAGE

A Play by William J. Cataldi

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This is a four scene, two act play for five actors. Unfortunately, two of the characters, Patrick, David's partner, and Bobby, Bill's and Edgar's son, only appear in part of the third and fourth scenes respectively. David, Bill, and Edgar are much larger roles, as the action of the play revolves around them. The action stretches over nineteen years, from July 4, 2015 to sometime winter 2034. The actors will have to be made up as appropriate to show them age. The same actor should play each role through the entire play, instead of having one "young Bill" and a different "older Bill," for example. I'm including the use of music, permissions for which the individual production will have to retain. If this can't be done, I hope the production will make alterations which preserve the integrity of the script.

CHARACTER LIST

BILL

At the start, Bill is a 27 year old gay man, fairly masculine, but not butch; slim to moderate build, but not heavy. He would be sexually desirable for many men who are looking for "youthful" guys. He should progress through the four scenes, becoming older and always more feminine, until the last scene in which any trace of masculinity is gone. He is not transgender; it's just that life causes him to lose touch with his masculinity. By the last scene, he is 46 and suffering his fate. Bill is a thoughtful, contemplative, perceptive guy. He is always thinking, but all that thinking doesn't enable him to avoid his destiny.

DAVID

David begins the play at 30 years of age. He is a gay man, quite masculine, but boyish, bubbly, good-build. David gets around and loves sex. He suffers pain, indeed, he is far more mature than most would give him credit for, but he projects happy good-humor all the time. That's because he is happy, and becomes more so through the play. He does not hold back, and he is unafraid of life. He appears in the first and third scenes.

EDGAR

Edgar, or Ed, begins as a 32 year old, mustchioed, older-looking gay man. He's a lawyer working for same-sex marriage, and eventually gets made full partner at a prestigious law firm. He is sure of himself, certain even, and he changes very little over the course of the play. He is intelligent, but lacking in self-understanding or insight. He never understands Bill or Dave, but he doesn't care.

PATRICK Patrick only appears in the third scene as David's partner. There, he is a 43 year old gay man, a versatile-bottom with feminine aspects. He is oblivious, or he doesn't care about, Bill's, David's and Edgar's issues. He and David love each other profoundly. He likes his life with David, and that's all that matters to him.

BOBBY Bobby is 22 years old in the final scene, the only scene in which he appears. He is straight, cute and naive. The actor playing him can make the character his own, as long as he preserves the integrity of the script and reads the lines as written.

IMPORTANT NOTE: This play is about gay men. Gay men, gay culture, gay experiences, gay vernacular, and the theory behind gay men's lives as a group are givens of this play. I wrote the play imagining gay white men, because that is my fantasy, but it doesn't matter on the face, what the racial makeup of the cast is. As long as they can be thought of primarily as comfortable members of the gay men's community, any race will do.

I know enough about women and people of other races, that I know how much I don't know. A black man is fundamentally different from me, because thousands of details of his childhood that shaped his life experience are absent from mine. And vice versa. Therefore, in my art, I am extremely reluctant to put words in black people's mouths, or women's mouths, because I feel I have no right to. Doing so might be perceived as being culturally imperialistic.

If a production team wishes to include men of races other than white, it can be done with minor alterations to the script. All I ask, is that any script alterations do not interfere with the theory of the play. This is not a play about racism, for example, it is about an internal issue in gay men's culture, other than racism, or alcoholism, or fetishism, or whatever. The focus of any production should be consistent with the theory of the play. Thanks, WJC

ACT 1**SCENE 1**

The interior of a middling art gallery in Manhattan, Stage right: a store front with simple glass ceiling-to-floor walls and a door to the street perpendicular to the edge of the stage. It's July 4, 2015, night, and dim yellow street lights shine into the space. The stage depicts the front portion of the store, close to the glass doors. It's moderately lit, not bright.

On the back wall are three paintings, evenly spaced. There are dozens more in the rear portion of the gallery, offstage. They are all male nudes. The artist (Bill) obviously loves men, but is too young to have a deep appreciation of them. But, he is a promising artist, so they are worthy of some gay man's art collection. Parallel to the front door, at stage right, is an ordinary, fairly cheap desk with a chair facing the desk and doorway beyond. The room is quiet. Bill is standing, at an angle to the rear wall, gazing at the paintings. His arm is bent at the elbow. He holds a pen in his mouth.

David enters. He's wearing a white t-shirt and black jeans.

DAVID

Bill (Exuberantly, as if to say: Buddy ol' pal!) Billy. This is great.

He surveys the room. Bill turns to face him.

BILL

(Smiling warmly) Do you really think so?

DAVID

Look at you, you've got your own show . . . in Manhattan. That's a big fuckin' deal.

BILL

Perhaps the 4th of July wasn't quite the best time.

DAVID

What's wrong with that?

BILL

Look, David. There's no one here.

He smiles indicating that it's alright with him. He isn't crushed by it.

DAVID

Well, I'm here.

BILL

Are you going to buy something?

Still smiling. They're very casual with one another, as if they're both in on a private joke.

DAVID

(Frowning) Ach, dude, you know I don't have any money. But if I *were* going to buy one, I'd buy *that* one.

He points to a nude that has a sleazy aspect to it. Bill turns to look at the one he's pointing out.

BILL

Oh, yeah? Do you really like that one?

David comes around the desk and attempts to embrace Bill, who still has his pen in mouth. There's an awkward moment, then Bill reaches to embrace David.

DAVID

How's it goin', Buddy? (They separate.)

BILL

I'm really fine. You're right. This is a milestone, and it will help get another show having had this one.

DAVID

Exactly.

David swings the office chair around and sits in it, slumped back, with his legs solidly planted on the floor.

DAVID (*cont.*)

Come 'ere. Sit on daddy's lap. (He grins up at Bill.)

BILL

(Bill chuckles slightly, and sits on his legs.) So, you're in daddy mode today?

DAVID

I'm 30 now you know.

BILL

That's 72 in gay years.

DAVID

Or 18 in dog years. (He grins.)

BILL

(Bill looks perplexed for a moment.) No, Dave, I think that would be a little over four in dog years.

DAVID

Thirty is perfect. The twenty-somethings are all my boys, and the forty-somethings are all my daddies. I love it. Whatever I'm in the mood for. There it is.

BILL

Yes, whatever you're in the mood for. Look at me, David. (He glares lovingly down at David.) Maybe thirty . . . It's time to settle down.

DAVID

Yeah, I'm gonna' settle down. What kind of man would I be? Would you still love me if I "settled down?"

Bill looks away thinking about it.

No. Really.

David shifts in the chair, causing Bill to get up.
Bill stays close to him.

Think about it.

He sits up in the chair.

DAVID (*cont.*)

I wouldn't be the same man if I settled down. I'd be someone else, and I really have to wonder if you'd like me as much. Look at those paintings. Was it just three weeks ago, you partied with me at Lou's club? How many dicks did you suck that night?

BILL

I was high.

DAVID

You were having fun.

BILL

All right, it was fun, but there's a time and a place for everything, David. You're thirty, I'm twenty-seven. Maybe it's time to start thinking about the *rest* of our lives.

DAVID

Is this because of gay marriage?

BILL

Same-sex marriage. It's making me think. It's making me think about permanence, security, eternity. I want something more than just sex.

DAVID

More than just sex. What the fuck? The reason the Supreme Court issued their decision on Pride weekend was to ruin my good time. All anybody could think about was gay marriage this, and gay marriage that. Everyone had fuckin' stars in their eyes.

BILL

It's same-sex marriage, not gay marriage. And *no*, the decision was not all about *you*, Dave. It was about love.

DAVID

Love! (mocking tone.) You think I don't love? Me? Really? I wept when I saw "Titanic."
(They laugh together.)

BILL

I know, Dave. You've told me a million times. You love every dick and ass you come across. You love everybody. You're like Jesus. Except Jesus wasn't about sex, Jesus was about love. And same-sex marriage is about love. Real love between two men or two women. It's about the right to love.

DAVID

No one ever discriminated against John because John loved Tom. They discriminated because John sucked Tom's dick.

BILL

(Spoken as written.) Blah, blah . . . bla-bla-bla.

They've moved away from one another with Bill now standing downstage and David upstage near the paintings.

DAVID

Thanks.

Neither of them is smiling now. They both pause as they think things through.

You've sort of ruined my moment.

He smiles again, and motions with his body to capture Bill's gaze again.

I came here to see you and to ask you two things.

BILL

What?

DAVID

I wanted to know if you would like to party with me tonight to celebrate your show.

BILL

What's the other thing?

DAVID

Come on. Can we celebrate?

BILL

I don't think so, David. I've got to get these paintings out of here tomorrow morning. I have to be out by noon. If I party with you, I'll be a mess at 8 am. Can I take a rain check?

DAVID

Fair enough.

He becomes serious now. Even somber. During this next speech he grows increasingly animated, enthusiastic. At the end, he's grinning broadly.

DAVID (con't)

The second thing is. Well, I've been doing my own thinking about life. I love you. I thought maybe we could be partners. Just try it out, see how it goes. I can't *marry* you, because I have no intention of being monogamous, but I do love you. And what's wrong with being *just* partners. It would be everything to me. To wake up every morning with you by my side would be a dream come true. We'd be free. I wouldn't hold you back. I'd help you with your career. I'd support you as much as I could. We could take turns cooking. We'd create a loving home for two *men*, who stand guard over one another's freedom and independence. It could be really great, kid. I love you. I don't want you to disappear after we have sex, like with all those other guys. I want you to cuddle with and receive my affection. I want to laugh and get old together. I want to party with you for the rest of our lives. What do you think?

BILL

That's very sweet. I believe you when you say you love me. I believe you, but what kind of stability and solidity would we have if we're both out sucking cock in public parks during the off time?

DAVID

I don't understand why we can't have it all. I don't understand why love means ownership to so many people. I can't sell you my soul, Billy. My soul belongs to me. All I want is to share my bed, my apartment, my life with you. That's a huge deal.

BILL

It is. I know. Coming from you, this is a big deal. I love you too, Dave. Can you marry me?

DAVID

No. (He frowns down at the floor.)

BILL

Let me think about it. I really don't know if I can trust this. I won't be your "one and only." I'll be "one of many." I don't know if I'm able to live like that. I'll think about it. I promise.

DAVID

OK.

He smiles affectionately, and embraces Bill. Bill doesn't embrace back, but he also doesn't pull away.

I gotta' go. I'll stop by to see if you want to party later after all. (He gestures around.) This is really awesome, Billy. Keep it up. (He exits.)

There is a lengthy pause here, during which Bill walks over to the sleazy nude David liked so much. He bends the arm and cups his chin with his hand and wrist. He's contemplating David's proposal. Soon, he says out loud:

BILL

I'll give this to you, Dave. You like it so much, I'll give it to you.

He continues staring at the painting. Eventually, Edgar enters through the front door.

EDGAR

Billy. How 'ya doin' my little chick-a-dee? Didn't anybody come?

BILL

It's the 4th of July, Ed.

These two don't smile much to one another.

EDGAR

I'm so sorry.

BILL

I thought you were staying in DC for the 4th.

EDGAR

I got tired of drinking with lawyers. Besides, you couldn't come down because of your show, so I thought I'd come to New York to surprise you.

BILL

I haven't seen you in over a month. Congratulations, Edgar. Congratulations. I'm so proud of you. I'm so proud of all of you.

EDGAR

When the court issued the decision, I got one of the first copies. I couldn't believe it. I was overjoyed. We all went out and got drunk right then and there. Someone said: "Go look at the White House." They lit it up with the Pride colors, Bill. It was lit up with our Pride colors. We've arrived. It was the greatest moment of my life. (He grins slightly.) Now, of course, I'm out of a job.

BILL

Nice reason to be out of a job, though.

EDGAR

Absolutely. (He hugs Bill. No kiss.) How's Billy?

BILL

I'm good. I partied a little with Dave while you were gone, but my heart hasn't really been in it lately. I'm tired of the hangovers.

EDGAR

You shouldn't do drugs, Bill. And now you won't have to. I met with Sam Goldman this afternoon. I was welcomed into his firm with open arms. So I have a new job!

BILL

Excellent. You won't miss a paycheck. Do lawyers get paychecks like the rest of us?

EDGAR

I got one while I was working on marriage equality. I don't know. The Goldman firm is pretty high-profile. (He grins.)

BILL

What will you be doing there?

EDGAR

Corporate stuff. If I manage to climb the ladder, I'll eventually, hopefully, do some patent work for pharmaceuticals, that sort of thing.

BILL

Eeww. (Bill makes a face.)

EDGAR

It pays the bills, and we're gonna need the money.

BILL

We, Ed?

EDGAR

We've been dating now for over a year.

BILL

Six months of which you've been gone. Not that I don't think it was worth it.

EDGAR

I was fighting for *us*, Bill. You and me.

BILL

I thought you were fighting for marriage equality. For all gay people.

EDGAR

Of course, but you were on my mind the whole time. Every time you came into Union Station for a visit, my world lit up.

BILL

I didn't realize. You've been so preoccupied.

EDGAR

Now that same-sex marriage is the law of the land, I want to know . . . I hope . . . Will you marry me?

Bill casts a sharp glance. He was not expecting this quite this way.

BILL

Really, Ed. You want to marry me?

EDGAR

Edgar reaches into his pocket and pulls out a ring in a jewelry box. He opens it up to show Bill. He does *not* get down on one knee.

Will you marry me?

Bill stares at the ring openmouthed.

We had an agreement. You could date other men, have sex if you liked, all the while you and I were seeing each other. Now, if you consent, you'll be mine and mine alone. I fought for marriage equality so gay men everywhere could have this honor. Gay men no longer need to prowl around town looking for love wherever they can find it. Now we can have honor. Our love will be honored by the people of the state we live in. We can have everything straight people have. We can be just like them.

BILL

But why do you want to marry *me*, Ed?

EDGAR

Because I think you'll be a good spouse. You're smart and sincere and you want the same things I want. We'll have that house in Westchester that we've always joked about having. I think you'll make a good parent for my child. We can adopt a boy. If we marry and adopt a child, my career can advance to the point where I can provide you with a good, easy life. And you'll be spared the pain of waking up to a different man every morning, hungover and blue. You're respectable. You're educated and you can help us both achieve the respect and honor that the Court said was ours if we just reach out and take it.

BILL

You want me to make you into a good man.

EDGAR

Over Pride weekend, I went out to a bar and got drunk, as usual. I met a hispanic guy who looked really hot in his white shorts and wifebeater and he had muscles. He invited me back to his place and we continued to drink. Eventually he started kissing me, and he got me all hot and bothered. He put his legs up in the air and begged me to

BILL

Fuck him?

EDGAR

I started crying. I couldn't stop. I told him I was sorry to ruin his night, but I had to leave. He was pissed, but I got dressed and left. I felt so awful. So cheap. So worthless. But then I thought of you. I thought, I'll ask Bill to marry me and then I'll never have to feel this way again.

BILL

You're sure my marrying you will make you into a good man? I always thought of you as a good, solid man anyway, Edgar.

EDGAR

Please, Bill. Please marry me.

BILL

Will you fulfill your marriage vows? To have and to hold, monogamously intertwined forever, and all of that?

EDGAR

We'll write them together. I'll promise you anything you want. We'll have no prenup. (He chuckles) Leave it to a lawyer to think of that. (Looking ashamed) Please, Bill.

BILL

Yes, Edgar. I'll marry you.

Edgar gives a cheer and hugs Bill. This time he kisses him on the lips, but he doesn't linger on Bill's mouth. He slips the ring on Bill's finger.

Outside the sound of firecrackers right near the gallery snaps like gunshots. Some people nearby shout "Happy Independence Day. Happy Fourth of July." Just then David enters through the front door. He sees Edgar and Bill in a loose embrace. He hesitates and frowns.

DAVID

Sorry. Oh, it's you Edgar. I thought you were in Washington. How's it going?

EDGAR

I came up for Bill's show. Look: Bill and I just got engaged to be married. (He's enthusiastic.)

DAVID

Oh, wonderful. Congratulations. I guess that means you don't want to chill with me tonight. (He's suffering, but he hides it.)

BILL

I'm sorry, Dave. This just came up. I didn't even know Ed was in town.

DAVID

No. It's fine. I'll take off then.

BILL

No, wait, Dave. Edgar, can we have the space for a minute? I need to talk to David alone. (Edgar exits.)

BILL

David, I'm so sorry it happened this way.

DAVID

No. It's OK. I understand. Edgar can give you a whole hell of a lot that I can't give you.

Bill looks at him with a pained expression on his face that says, "Yes, that's right, but saying that would be painful for both of us."

BILL

Please forgive me.

DAVID

(His face brightens suddenly.) Of course. You can do anything you want, my love.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2

A room in Bill's and Edgar's Westchester home. Summer 2024. The room is a simple rectangle. In the center of the rear wall is a large picture window, bright light shining in. There is a large double doorframe stage right, with a sliding door which is fully open now. Stage left is where Bill is working. There is no furniture. The room is being redecorated, and Bill is working on painting the walls. There is a radio playing music, but the music should be fairly loud, so it should come from the sound booth. Bill plays this scene with somewhat more effeminacy than he had nine years previous. He is weary from decorating the huge house, and then redecorating all over again. The house is in constant flux. Bill has just finished putting primer on the right wall. The music playing is "Vera" from Pink Floyd's *The Wall*.

MUSIC

Does anybody here remember Vera Lynn?
Remember how she said that we would meet again
Some sunny day?
Vera, Vera
What has become of you?
Does anybody else in here, feel the way I do?

BILL

(Bill sings along with the last stanza. His voice traces the pain in the song.) Vera, Vera. What has become of you? Does anybody else in here, feel the way I do?

As the drum corps music begins from the next track, Edgar enters in a suit with briefcase and shuts off the music abruptly. Bill turns around.

EDGAR

Well, this room is coming along nicely. (He sets the briefcase down.)

BILL

I fucked up this corner with the paint. There's a line. (Edgar looks. But there's nothing there.)

EDGAR

I'm sure you'll make it right, honey. Did you pick up Bobby from school?

BILL

Yes. And I got the red cabbage from the store. I know that's your favorite.

EDGAR

I love it with that dressing you make.

BILL

It will be yours.

Edgar bends down and takes some papers from his briefcase. He begins to read them. Bill is still looking at him.

EDGAR

Bobby has been a little withdrawn lately. What do you think is the matter?

BILL

I think he's discovered his penis.

EDGAR

(He drops the arm holding the papers to his side.) What? (He looks incredulous.)

BILL

I think he's masturbating.

EDGAR

He's only ten years old.

BILL

No. We got him when he was four. It's been eight years. He's twelve, not ten.

EDGAR

Oh, sure. Of course. How time flies. He's twelve. Isn't that a little young for that sort of thing?

BILL

No, Edgar. It's right on schedule.

Neither of them is smiling or really engaged in the conversation. They both seem distracted.

BILL (*cont.*)

He seems to like girls.

EDGAR

What makes you say that?

BILL

He gets a pained look on his face when girls come up. He doesn't hang out with the girls. He hangs out with the boys and told me he wants to get ready to try out for football in the Fall. All the standard stuff for straight twelve year old boys.

EDGAR

Excellent. That's one less thing we have to worry about. Maybe I should have a talk with him.

BILL

About what?

EDGAR

About having respect for women. About saving sex for marriage or at least a girlfriend he cares about more than anyone else in the world. That sort of thing.

BILL

Edgar, fuck you. You're not going to "have a talk with him" about anything. You're too busy saving pharmaceutical companies from generic medications. (Edgar gives Bill a sharp glance. Then Bill settles down.) I'll talk to him.

EDGAR

He thinks of you as his mom. Don't you think I should talk to him?

BILL

He calls me "mom," but he's well aware I'm a man. I can talk to him. Unless you're certain that you can find the time. That you'll really do it.

EDGAR

I'll do it, Billy. Don't worry.

BILL

If he's really masturbaing he's already talking to his friends at school.

EDGAR

(Firmly) I'll talk to him.

Edgar goes back to his papers, standing near the doorway. Bill stands looking at the floor with slightly dropped shoulders.

BILL

Do you like this color?

EDGAR

(Absently) Love it. (He doesn't look up from the papers.)

BILL

You wouldn't have rather had something else?

EDGAR

I love the color.

BILL

Well, we can change it again next year, when I do the whole house over again. (Edgar doesn't look up.) You know. You wanted this huge house, and you said you wanted it to change all the time. And I do it, but you never seem too enthused. Do you even *like* living here?

EDGAR

(He finally looks up.) Yes honey. I love this house and I love all the work you do on it. You're an artist and you do a wonderful job. I knew you would do a great job when I married you and bought the house. You've created a showplace for us to live in and entertain in. I'm very proud of the house and I'm very proud of you. Why do you think I bring so many clients and colleagues home for dinner?

BILL

I'm an artist.

EDGAR

Yes.

There is a pause as Edgar returns to his papers, and Bill contemplates what Edgar said.

BILL

I've been thinking about painting again.

EDGAR

You're painting now I thought. Or are you going to wallpaper?

BILL

No, I mean portraits. I miss it and I thought I could set up a studio in the attic.

EDGAR

Do you mean nudes? Or portraits?

BILL

Either one. What difference does it make?

EDGAR

I don't want nude models or nude portraits in the house with our son.

BILL

It's art, Edgar, not pornography. Besides, since pornography came up, wouldn't it be better if Bobby jerked off to porn magazines than trying to get into a girl's pants? Maybe you should get a conspicuous subscription to Playboy or Hustler or something.

EDGAR

(Smiles for the first time.) Playboy or Hustler? Do those even exist in 2024?

BILL

(Bill laughs.) I really don't know.

EDGAR

I'll talk to him.

BILL

What else are you going to talk to him about?

EDGAR

The importance of self-control. I might also talk to him about drugs.

BILL

What are you going to say about drugs?

EDGAR

I'm going to tell him he can try marijuana or alcohol when he turns twenty-one and beyond that drugs are bad news.

BILL

Edgar, you don't even know the difference between art and pornography. Maybe I should talk to him.

EDGAR

You just keep wallpapering, momma. What do you know about a twelve year old straight boy? (Grinning. Pauses thinking.) When was the last time we made love?

BILL

Three Sundays ago.

EDGAR

Let's try to dump Bobby on one of his friends this weekend. I think we need a romantic evening to ourselves.

BILL

(Grimacing) Missionary, in the dark.

EDGAR

(Defensively) What, you don't like sex with me anymore?

BILL

Let's just cuddle and watch a movie. I think that's what I need right now.

EDGAR

That's fine with me. Let's do it. It's a date. (Pause.) In other news, Paul cheated on his wife.

BILL

How do you know?

EDGAR

Because the woman he cheated with told his wife, Karen. She, in turn, got pissed and told Sam Goldman. If Paul can't work things out with her, he's out.

BILL

How do you know that?

EDGAR

When you become a partner, you sign an agreement, an iron-clad agreement, tried and tested, that you will be married as long as you're a partner. If you divorce, or somehow split up, unless death is involved, you lose partner.

BILL

I didn't know that. You never told me that before.

EDGAR

They want responsible partners. Responsible partners are married partners.

BILL

I feel bad for Karen. But I feel bad for Paul too.

EDGAR

Well, he cheated on his wife. With a woman who he couldn't trust. He was a fool.

BILL

Would you ever cheat on me?

EDGAR

Never, ever, in a million years. We have a whole-life commitment. Remember our wedding?

BILL

You were drunk. And you took me aside and told me you would cut off your penis if you ever cheated on me. (Bill smiles, but grimaces at the thought of castration.)

EDGAR

And I have no intention of ever having to fulfill that promise. (Grins.)

BILL

No, I suppose not.

EDGAR

I really don't mind if you convert the attic into a studio, but could you paint water lillies or something instead of naked men?

BILL

I'm thinking I want to paint face portraits, but nudity might come up. I'll keep the nudity to a minimum. Besides, after this room, I'm going to completely redo the library. That will be a major project. I won't have time for any male models. (He grins.)

EDGAR

You can do anything you want, my love.

END SCENE 2

ACT 2

SCENE 1

The sun room in the house in Westchester, late summer, 2030. The room is again rectangular, the walls are painted a bright yellow. The rear wall has two or three large rectangular windows that look out on trees in the yard. The trees give the room some shade. Stage left is a door that leads to a deck and another window. Stage right is a door that leads to the kitchen. The room is very bright and warm. White furniture scatters around the room, chairs and small tables all painted white. They are the sort of thing found in preppy Westchester homes. Downstage right is a large white table, but it can't block the furniture in the rest of the room. Bill is sitting at the table reading a cookbook. He is considerably more feminine in attitude and clothing, than he was fifteen years earlier. He is alone. Edgar enters from the kitchen.

EDGAR

They're going to be here soon.

BILL

(Doesn't look up.) I know.

EDGAR

So when was the last time you saw David?

BILL

I think it was five years ago. Was it five years? I saw him when Patrick was in that play. They invited me to opening night, and I went into the city.

EDGAR

Oh, yeah. I vaguely remember that. You didn't like the play.

BILL

No. (Laughing) It was incredibly jejune.

EDGAR

What made you think to invite them?

BILL

They've never been here. We like to show off the house and entertain. I'm tired of your colleagues and clients. I wanted to entertain *my* friends for a change. They're going to love the house.

EDGAR

You're making pork chops?

BILL

I'm making schnitzel with beets and green beans, red cabbage salad, because you like it so much, potato and macaroni salad, and raspberry jell-o for dessert. It's too hot for anything more exotic than that.

EDGAR

No. That's great. (He sits down at one of the chairs, but not at the main table.) We'll eat in here?

BILL

Yeah, I thought so. This room is comfortable.

EDGAR

The rest of the house is air conditioned.

BILL

This is my favorite room. It makes me feel happy.

EDGAR

That's fine. Everyone likes this room, and there's a breeze coming in off the lake.

They sit in silence for a minute, enjoying the room.

Is Bobby joining us?

BILL

No. He's gone to his friend, Rob's. He's spending the night there. Rob lives a ways away, so you'll have to pick him up tomorrow sometime.

EDGAR

That's fine. Is this a band friend?

BILL

Yes, he's a band friend.

EDGAR

Fuck.

BILL

Being in the band makes him happy.

EDGAR

He's gonna do drugs and have casual sex.

BILL

Maybe one of the girls he has sex with will get pregnant and ruin his life. (Bill grins at Edgar.)

EDGAR

(Laughing) Very funny, Billy. That's just what I need, to get some girl an abortion.

BILL

Edgar, please. Don't assume disaster where none need be.

The doorbell rings. Edgar gets up and exits to the kitchen. A minute or so later he reenters with David and Patrick in tow. Bill gets up to greet them.

Oh, David. Patrick. So great to see you.

They all hug and kiss, while Edgar goes over to a small bar to pour drinks.

How was the ride up?

DAVID

It was great. The train was nearly empty, probably because we were leaving the city early. And you've got a zillion cabs at the station here. It was a breeze.

BILL

We should have picked you up at the station.

DAVID

Nonsense, we could have missed the train. The train could have been late. It's easier if we just take a cab.

BILL

Patrick, how are you?

PATRICK

Great. Nice to see you again, Bill. We've been excited to get out of the city, since you asked us.

EDGAR

Would you all like a drink?

DAVID

Ed, I'll have a whiskey, neat.

EDGAR

Sounds good. I'll have the same. Patrick, Bill, you guys want margaritas?

PATRICK

That sounds awesome. Thanks. Bill, is a margarita good for you?

BILL

Sounds great. (To the guests) You guys make yourselves at home. Anywhere you like. The room is very cozy.

DAVID

(To Billy) You've got to take us on a tour of this mansion you've been working on for the last fifteen years, Billy. From what I can see, it's a real jewel.

BILL

Of course. So, where are *you* guys living now?

DAVID

The Chelsea apartment above Old Homestead. I've lived there since I came to New York at twenty-four. Patrick and I have fixed it up so it's comfortable, anyway.

PATRICK

But teensy-tiny.

BILL

I remember.

DAVID

I forgot your son's name.

EDGAR

Bobby.

DAVID

Is he going to be here?

EDGAR

No. He went to spend the night at his band friend's.

DAVID

What's a band friend?

BILL

Bobby's in a rock band.

DAVID

Way cool.

EDGAR

It's not so cool.

DAVID

Why? It's creative.

BILL

Ed's afraid he'll take drugs and get a girl pregnant.

DAVID

Gotcha.

PATRICK

Do you like Westchester, Bill?

EDGAR

He used to be on the football team.

BILL

It's very quiet, and lonely. Not like the city.

DAVID

Football players take drugs and get girls pregnant, too, Ed.

PATRICK

The city can be very lonely as well, Bill.

BILL

He's a good boy, Edgar. Just like you always wanted. He doesn't even have a tattoo.

DAVID

I'm sorry. Difficult subject. (Changing the subject) Patrick auditioned for a new play last week. We haven't heard back yet. I don't think they're in any hurry.

PATRICK

The guys who hand the parts out are *never* in a hurry.

EDGAR

How do you guys live in such an expensive city with no money?

PATRICK

We have enough money for the basics. I wait tables and bring home a lot of cash on the weekends. Dave still works in graphic design. We've got what we need.

EDGAR

Do you want to get old in the city?

DAVID

As long as Manhattan has dick, I'm happy.

This goes over like a lead balloon. Everyone falls silent for a few seconds.

PATRICK

(Changing the subject) I'm happy to help in the kitchen later, Billy.

BILL

(Smiling at him, thankful.) No need. We're having a very simple meal. I thought I'd cook around five or six. It's only one-thirty now. We have the whole afternoon.

EDGAR

Have you guys thought about getting married and settling down? Married life is great.

BILL

Were you guys aware that Edgar was on the team of lawyers that argued Obergefell before the Supreme Court? My pride in him is everlasting.

DAVID

We don't feel like monogamy is for us, Ed. Nor do we want to have to get a divorce if it comes to that. Nor would it pay financially, because we aren't rich. We're free agents. We love each other hugely, but we don't believe in owning each other.

BILL

I was just reading that over half of all gay male marriages are non-monogamous.

DAVID

The punishment for adultery in New York State is a \$500 fine and/or a three month jail term.

BILL

Who gets arrested for adultery these days?

EDGAR

It *is* the law, Billy. Adultery is a class B misdemeanor. Back in the day, we made a solemn promise to the straight world that we wouldn't try to upend the institution of marriage. That we'd be good married people. That we wanted monogamy and children. A big part of winning marriage equality rested on that promise. Gay men who get married and sleep around are betraying the spirit of marriage equality, they're betraying other gay people, and they're betraying the people of the State of New York.

BILL

Bullshit! Who does it hurt? What a couple decides to do with their marriage in the privacy of their own home is their business. The two of you, David and Edgar, are so hopelessly doctrinaire.

PATRICK

I don't want to get married necessarily, but I agree with you, Bill. This is the modern world. Kingdoms are not hanging in the balance. People should run their lives the way they want.

DAVID

And we don't *want* to get married. Right, lover?

PATRICK

That's true. I have no need to get married. But I'm not *against* marriage per se.

DAVID

Me neither. (He looks Bill in the face.) When you guys got married, I was so happy. I scrounged up the money and bought you that gorgeous blue bowl. Do you remember that? Do you still have it?

BILL

It's in our bedroom. We keep this and that in it. Every now and then I clean it. It's one of the most beautiful decorative artworks I've ever seen.

EDGAR

Is that where that came from? I forgot about that. It's very attractive. Thank you, David.

BILL

When it's clean, it looks like the sky. Clear blue crystal, it looks like a cello sounds.

DAVID

I'm not against marriage. I'm pro marriage ... for some people. It looks like it agrees with the two of you.

EDGAR

Absolutely. And it earns a man respect. You can trust a man who's married, he's responsible. Marriage is the backbone of the state.

BILL

What about Paul?

EDGAR

Who's Paul?

BILL

Your colleague at the firm. Don't you remember? The one who cheated on his wife and got fired. Anybody can be trustworthy and responsible. And anybody can be an asshole, married or not.

EDGAR

It matters, Bill.

Edgar delivers the line with firmness, as a commandment. The room falls silent once again.

I'd love to show you our boat. We have a boathouse about a mile down the road. If we all go now, we can be back in plenty of time for dinner.

PATRICK

I wouldn't mind seeing the boathouse and the boat. Let's take a pitcher of margaritas with us.

BILL

I really don't feel like it, honey. You and Partrick go. David and I will stay here and catch up on old times. I'd really like that a lot. Unless you *want* to go, David.

DAVID

No. I'll stay. They can go. I wouldn't mind chatting, just us.

EDGAR

I'm game. I'll put the margaritas in the thermos.

PATRICK

Wonderful. I like walking, and it's a beautiful day.

Edgar pours the margaritas into a thermos, and in a minute they say their good-byes, leaving David and Bill alone. They sit that way for a minute in silence, relaxed, but unsure of what to say.

DAVID

This is the first time we've been alone together since you had your show.

BILL

It is, isn't it.

DAVID

Do you miss ... us?

BILL

Of course. Sometimes. I miss you. I miss the city. (He smiles broadly.) Sometimes, I miss Lou's club.

DAVID

Oh, you dirty guy. Have you cheated on him?

BILL

No. Never. I took an oath at my wedding. You were there for that. You heard me. I stand by my vow.

DAVID

Is he taking care of you?

BILL

I take care of him.

DAVID

From what I can tell, you operate this household by a kind of 1950s stereotype. He goes off on the hunt every day, and you stay here and do all the women's work. Are you happy with that arrangement?

BILL

All the art I used to put into my painting, I put into creating this household. He asked me to keep the house in a constant state of flux; something's always being redecorated. More . . . better. I thought it would be fun, and it was fun. When people come here, they're impressed. We've spent hundreds of thousands on redecorating.

DAVID

Are you happy with that arrangement?

BILL

And, of course, I got put in charge of raising Bobby. Edgar has his nose buried in his legal papers almost all the time. Bobby has called me “mom” since the first day he walked into our lives. At first it started as a joke. He’s always known I was a man. But it stuck. Bobby’s mom put him up for adoption at four years old. He can remember her. Bobby needed a mom, and Edgar needed a wife.

DAVID

I’ll ask you again. Are you happy with that arrangement?

BILL

There’s something you don’t understand, Dave. You’ve never understood this, and I don’t know if it’s been your salvation or your downfall, but it’s a simple fact of life. Sometimes you do things that don’t necessarily make you happy—out of necessity. Sometimes you have to go through a great deal of pain and suffering, because you have no other choice. Edgar is a man. I married him. I know a lot about him that you don’t know. I have compassion for him. Yes, I love him. But Bobby? I raised a fucking child, David. Bobby is a beautiful boy, who I love more than my own life. I would die for him. I would kill for him. And I certainly am willing to stay in this life to finish the job of raising him. I’m not happy David. I’m not happy, because I’m hoping Bobby one day will be.

DAVID

Wow. I didn’t see that coming. I’m sorry. I was only looking at it from my point of view. But I know what you’re saying. When I look at Patrick I feel a lot of those things too. I decided not to quit my job, but to stick with it so I could sock money away for our retirement. I worry about him. Just like I want you to be happy, I want him to be happy.

BILL

In yang is a little bit of yin. In yin is a little bit of yang.

DAVID

In lighter news, for every dick there’s a hole. (He grins big. He’s trying to change the subject. It works.)

BILL

(Laughs.) You’re eternally you.

DAVID

You used to love giving head. Is blowing just him enough for you?

BILL

David, that's private.

DAVID

Really? It's private? Between us?

BILL

He doesn't let me blow him. He thinks it's undignified ... or something.

DAVID

He doesn't let you suck his dick? How do you two fuck around?

BILL

Missionary position. Lights off. I don't really feel comfortable with this conversation.

DAVID

Lights off? You used to love it with the lights on, the brighter the better. You said you wanted to see everything.

BILL

He doesn't like the lights on. He doesn't want to see anything. (Changing the subject) I think I should boil the potatoes and make the salad.

DAVID

(Tenderly, with love) No, please. Stay here with me.

He gets up, crosses to Bill, and sits. He crouches down, so his head is below Bill's.

I love you. I want you to be happy.

BILL

I'm happy enough. Look at this house. I have a beautiful son. We have three cars ... Mercedes. We're respected in the community.

DAVID

Fuck the community. Do you want a divorce?

BILL

Oh, God no. If I divorced him, he'd lose his position with the firm. He'd lose his self-respect. I'd lose everything. What am I going to do? Go back to blowing guys in the restroom at Chelsea Piers?

DAVID

Did marrying him make you feel good about yourself?

BILL

(Hesitantly) Ultimately, no. Do you feel good about yourself?

DAVID

I'm very happy. Patrick makes me happy. My apartment makes me happy.

BILL

So you feel good about yourself.

DAVID

Around the time when I met you, I was sitting on the floor in my apartment watching the news. They were talking about how the Governor of Texas had compared homosexuality to alcoholism. Immediately I got that painful knot in my stomach. You know it. I know it. We all know it. Part anger and frustration, and part hurt. I turned off the TV. I sat there in that room and started to cry. I looked at the dead TV screen and I could see my reflection. Not like in a regular mirror, but darker like the surface of the ocean. I stopped crying and looked at myself. Then I said, "Fuck you. Fuck you for giving shrift to that idiot. Fuck you for believing what they say. Fuck you." My mirror image didn't respond of course, but all of the sudden the heaviness lifted. All of the sudden, I didn't give a fuck what the Governor of Texas thought about me. I'm actually a great guy. I fart and burp . . . and I sin, but I'm no better or worse than anybody else. And my sex life isn't one of my sins. I bring a lot of guys pleasure, and I, in turn, get pleasure. That's a hell of a lot better than . . . a lot of people.

BILL

Sudden revelations have a tendency to wear off.

DAVID

I know what you mean, and to a certain degree it did, but I haven't been ashamed since. My job is a pain in the ass, but it pays the bills, and we all have to suffer for our art.

BILL

And your art is dick?

DAVID

My art is flying through life, high in the sky, looking down on the earth, and being free, and loving everything and loving life itself.

Bill contemplates this. David stands up and takes
Bill's hand.

DAVID (*cont.*)

Come on. Suck my dick. It's gotten bigger than it was when I was 30.

BILL

(Reluctantly) No, I can't. I can't, David.

DAVID

Come on. They won't be back for hours. (David tugs at Bill's arm. Then lets go.) Has *he* cheated on *you*?

BILL

Garlic powder sprinkled on buttered pasta is too spicy for Edgar. He told you earlier how he feels about marriage and adultery. He cheats on me with his job. His job is the other woman.

DAVID

I'll bet he and Patrick are doin' it right now in the boathouse.

BILL

I highly doubt it. I know Edgar.

DAVID

(Laughing) ... and I know Patrick.

Bill looks at him concerned. Then he realizes he doesn't care, and he looks back down at the table.

Come on. (He pulls on Bill's shoulder.)

BILL

(Angrily) I told you, no. I'll go in the kitchen if you keep this up. And you'll be banished in here.

David thinks it over and withdraws back to his original seat. Bill gets up and follows to the companion chair with a small table between them.

DAVID

It's nice to get out of the city. Last year we went to Provincetown. What a blast. The hotel had a maze out back with slings and glory holes. This year we only got as far as Fire Island. We stayed at the Belvedere. At night, that place rocks.

BILL

I'm glad you're having a good time. We went to Paris last winter. I wanted to see the Louvre, but we went for a pharmaceutical convention. He wouldn't let go of me. He kept saying we'd go later, that he needed me to stay with him at the convention. I never got to the Louvre. But Paris was beautiful, and dirty.

DAVID

(He sings.) Love and marriage. Love and marriage. Go together like a horse and carriage. Ask the local gentry. They'll tell you it's elementary. Love and ...

BILL

Shut the fuck up, David. Just shut the fuck up.

DAVID

I still love you.

BILL

You love every Tom, Dick and Harry.

DAVID

You're one of my favorites. In fact, the only man I love more than you is Patrick. Is that okay? Is it all right that I love Patrick more than you? *He* didn't abandon me.

BILL

(Bill gives him a sharp glance.) I made you no promise.

DAVID

So, is it okay that I love Patrick more than you?

BILL

Of course. Patrick is your partner. And I make no claims on you.

DAVID

Then suck my dick.

BILL

Is it okay that I want to but I'm not going to?

DAVID

No. It's not okay. You've violated the oath you made to me.

BILL

I never made an oath to you.

DAVID

Yes, you did. It was on Sunday morning, March 31, 2013. We had been up for two days playing. We had ten guys in my apartment, sucking and fucking, and they had all gone home. We had been high as a kite all weekend on Ecstasy and Crystal. We were tired but we couldn't sleep, because we were still tweaked.

He's becoming emotional now. He really means everything he's saying, and he's not smiling. He's looking directly into Bill's face.

Bright sunlight was flooding the room, and a porn tape was playing on TV. We were all alone and you looked up at me from between my legs. You were twisting from your seat on the floor to look up at me. (Crying now) And you said to me: "I love you, David. I love you so much. I know we're tweaked, but I want to be with you always. I love you so much." ALWAYS! ALWAYS! You said you loved me. You said you wanted to be with me ALWAYS! And I took you at your word. I took you at your word. And you didn't mean it.

BILL

I don't even remember. We were high, baby. Please. We were just high.

DAVID

(Extremely angry, almost screaming) I have always been true to you. Now, suck my fuckin' cock!

BILL

No, David. No. I can't. I've got to go in the kitchen. I've got to cook. Please forgive me. Please, please, forgive me. I have to excuse myself and go in the kitchen and cook.

DAVID

You can do anything you want, my love.

END SCENE 1

SCENE 2

The attic art studio in the Westchester house. It is winter 2034. The attic is cold but there are space heaters around. The wooden ceiling, supported by wood beams, slopes down toward the back wall. There is a staircase that comes up from that back wall. The wall at stage left contains a small window. Stage right has no wall, the space continues into other parts of the attic. There are art supplies around, and vegetable crates to sit on. Just to the left of the staircase is an easel with a painting. It is the sleazy nude David liked so much. Bill is staring at it, back to the audience. Bill has completely lost any trace of masculinity now. After a moment, Edgar climbs the stairs and enters the room.

During the exchange between Edgar and Bill in this scene, Bill's attitude should be cold and rational—like a lawyer laying out his case for the court. Think cross-examination.

EDGAR

It's fuckin' cold up here, Bill. Don't you want to come down?

BILL

No. (Bill continues to stare at the nude.)

EDGAR

I'll make you some hot cocoa. Come down with me.

BILL

Cocoa? Edgar, you don't know how to make cocoa. You don't even know where the cocoa is.

EDGAR

(Edgar chuckles.) Well, I worry about you, Billy. Lately you spend all your time up here in this God-forsaken attic staring at your paintings.

BILL

Bobby is gone. He's done with college. You read briefs all day. I'm done with the house ... no more renovations. What is there for me to do? I've done everything. I've gotten old. All I want to do is look at my paintings.

EDGAR

Are you working on something new?

BILL

No.

EDGAR

Do you want some kind of classes? Do you want to start your own business? You can do virtually anything, Bill, 'cause we have more money than God.

BILL

(Laughs.) Don't be an idiot all your life, Edgar.

EDGAR

(Edgar starts toward the stairs.) Well, I don't have to take abuse. Stay up here if you want.

BILL

Edgar, wait.

EDGAR

Yes.

BILL

Why did you spend all these years working so hard?

EDGAR

I dunno'. Sometimes I wonder that myself. There's a conference room on the 68th floor of our office. It rarely sees action, but it's kept for special occasions. I go up there sometimes and just look out. You can see all of lower Manhattan. It makes me exhilarated. I feel like I own all I survey. The other partners all treat me as their equal. I'm respected. I don't even take my sexuality to work with me in the morning. I'm one of the partners. The support staff treats me with deference. I don't have to be "gay" at all.

BILL

Edgar, why did you turn me into your wife?

EDGAR

What?

BILL

You play "big man" all day, and I stay home and cook and clean and redecorate. Well, I used to redecorate. You use me as a maid to impress your friends.

EDGAR

I needed someone to cook and clean and redecorate. Everybody works, Bill. Marriage for me has been about having the dream. Having what straight people have always had. Would you rather be creeping around Manhattan, drugged out and full of STDs?

BILL

So I became your wife because that's what you really needed the whole time.

EDGAR

I wanted to be just like straight people. And I've achieved it.

BILL

Edgar, do you remember a few years ago when Dave and Patrick came to visit us, and you and Patrick went out to the boathouse, and David and I stayed back and talked?

EDGAR

Yes.

BILL

Did you have sex with Patrick?

EDGAR

(Edgar hesitates) Yes. (Bill turns back to the painting.) He never meant anything to me, Billy. It was just a little fun. That's all. It's not like I cared about Patrick. He just got his hand down my shorts, and he was wiggling his ass around, and I don't know what came over me. It meant nothing.

BILL

Did you fuck him?

EDGAR

Billy, I really don't see what this has to do with anything ...

BILL

How did you fuck him, Edgar?

EDGAR

What do you mean *how*?

BILL

Did you lie down on the ground? Did you do it standing up? How did you do it?

EDGAR

He bent over the rail and held onto the boat, and I entered him from the rear.

BILL

I see. (Bill hesitates.) Were there others?

EDGAR

Others?

BILL

Other men, Edgar. (He sounds exasperated. Edgar shakes his head *yes*.) How many?

EDGAR

Maybe twelve.

BILL

Twelve.

EDGAR

None of them meant anything to me. They were all garbage.

BILL

Oh, Edgar. I am absolutely certain that none of them meant anything to you. I am absolutely certain that none of them ever posed a threat to me or my place in your life.

EDGAR

Good. (Bill looks at him like he wants to kill him. Then he looks back at the painting.)

BILL

You can go down now, Edgar. (Then he thinks twice.) David wanted to have sex with me that day too. I didn't do it.

EDGAR

Well, you could have.

BILL

I could have.

EDGAR

I wouldn't have blamed you if you had a little fun.

Just then, we can hear the sound of a young man's voice way downstairs on the first floor, shouting. It is Bobby. He is twenty-two years old.

That's Bobby.

BILL

What is he doing here?

EDGAR

He has news.

BILL

What news, Edgar? Don't play games with me.

EDGAR

I'll let him tell you. It's very good news. (He shouts down to Bobby.) Up here, son. We're in the attic.

Shortly Bobby climbs the stairs and enters the attic. He's beaming.

BOBBY

Mom, Dad, Cheryl's in the car. Dad, can you help her with the suitcases?

BILL

You're *staying*?

BOBBY

Yeah, isn't that alright?

BILL

Of course, yes. Edgar, go down and help Cheryl.

Edgar exits and Bobby and Bill are alone.

What's your big news, Bob? A world-tour with the band?

BOBBY

I haven't been with the band since I left for college, Mom.

BILL

I'm sorry about before. Your father and I were having a little disagreement, and I was upset. I'm always glad to see you.

He sits down on one of the vegetable crates stage right in front of the window.

BOBBY

Mom, Cheryl and I are getting married. (Bill sits staring dumbfounded.) We're going to get married in Jamaica. Dad said he'd pay for the whole thing. We're going to make it next winter, long enough in advance so all our friends and everyone can come. It's going to be beautiful.

BILL

What happened to the band?

BOBBY

You know I haven't been in the band for four years now, Mom.

BILL

I'm not your *mom*, Bobby. I'm a man.

BOBBY

(He seems taken aback. He doesn't understand where Bill is coming from.) But I've always called you "Mom." It's just what I call you. I know you're a man.

BILL

Don't you want to join another band, now that you're done with college? You always liked skiing. Maybe you could go to Colorado and become a ski bum for a few years. I'd pay.

BOBBY

Mom, I want to marry Cheryl, and get a good job, and be a solid, respectable citizen like you and Dad. Aren't you happy for me?

BILL

(Angrily) Your father's gotten to you, hasn't he? He ignored you for the first sixteen years of your life, and now he's gotten to you. He's been breathing in your ear ... solid citizen, respectability, "You don't want to be a piece of garbage, son." (Shouts) Hasn't he?

BOBBY

What's gotten into you? What's wrong?

BILL

(Very angry) Do whatever the hell you want, boy. But, I have just one thing to say, something I picked up along the way. You have but *one* life, my son. *One*. You'll never be twenty-two again. *Ever*. If you wrap yourself in chains now, you may regret it when you're too old to do anything about it. Think! Think!

BOBBY

Cheryl's not chains, Mommy. Cheryl is a beautiful, smart, loving woman. I want her to be the mother of my children. I want to dress her in the finest gowns, and give her the finest jewelry, with money I earned. I want to be a good man. Do I have your blessing, or not?

BILL

Of course. (He's searching for the right thing to say, but he's in unimaginable pain.) Of course, you can do anything you want, my love.

END SCENE 2**CURTAIN**