

THE JAMB



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Gay punks Tuffer and Roderick are turning forty. Neither wants to face it.

While Tuffer continues to smoke, snort and screw his way through Manhattan's much younger gay male population, Roderick's gone as strait as possible by embracing activism and martial arts. With the arrival of Tuffer's latest boy toy, Brandon, Roderick can take no more. After a disastrous quasi-intervention, Tuffer agrees to a sobering-up at Roderick's mother's house in rural New Mexico.

But when Roderick's mother Abigail, a formerly successful folk singer, throws the guys a very organic birthday party, twenty years of tension comes to a head. They must confront one another, and themselves, in a kind of spiritual exile on the high desert. Each is on the verge of something new, almost somewhere, in the jamb.

TUFFER is a very charming thirty-nine, but can pass for much younger in a bar at closing time. He's a trust fund baby, an ivy league flunkee, a gay New York native who continues to party like it's nineteen ninety-nine.

RODERICK is Tuffer's best friend, and probably secretly in love with him. After years of reckless behavior, Roderick did a three-sixty in preparation for his fortieth. Now he's taken up the challenge of reforming Tuffer too.

BRANDON is a twenty year old college student and part-time go-go boy who is likely a lot smarter than he lets on. He may not be entirely innocent but he is certainly still green enough to be a romantic.

ABIGAIL is Roderick's mother. Once a successful singer-songwriter, she has mostly retired to a hilltop in rural New Mexico. She's an energetic sixty who appreciates organic produce and wears too much turquoise jewelry.

May 2008.

Act One: New York.

Act Two: New Mexico.

ACT ONE

Roderick, 40, tightly wound, in great shape, with a severe haircut. Boots, always. He pounds on his best friend's apartment door.

Tuffer. Tuffer, open the door. RODERICK

No response.

Christopher!

What! TUFFER

Please open the door. Now. RODERICK

Okay! TUFFER

He does. Roderick bursts in.

Tuffer. RODERICK

Yeah. TUFFER

Are you okay. RODERICK

Yeah. TUFFER

You're cool. RODERICK

Yeah... TUFFER

But when you called. RODERICK

Yeah? TUFFER

RODERICK

You said there was someone in the apartment.

TUFFER

I did?

RODERICK

You said there was someone here.

TUFFER

Shit...

RODERICK

And you were scared.

Enter Brandon, twenty years old and adorable, in boxer briefs.

TUFFER

Yeah. I think everything's alright.

Roderick looks out at the audience:

RODERICK

It's not. Here's what happens. Light!

Two doors, no walls - Tuffer's place in New York. One of these freestanding doors serves as the apartment's entry, the other leads to a bedroom. A sofa and coffee table littered with beer bottles, but not much else. Around the playing space, actors can be clearly seen through the apartment's 'walls' approaching entrances or retrieving props. Tuffer is a very charming thirty-nine, but could pass for younger in a bar at closing time. He flirts with the audience.

TUFFER

Hey my name is Christopher and I'm a meth addict – 'Hi, Christopher' – and a sex fiend, and a Gemini. And so am I. That's a little Gemini humor for ya.

He drinks. Killer smile.

Okay, it's springtime 2008, nearly sunrise. Manhattan is gently pulsing around me. There's a beautiful boy in my bed. I put my hands on his ass and I am eighteen all over. Manhattan is cake on my fork.

RODERICK

Wow. You could sell rowboats in the Mojave.

Roderick this is Brian. TUFFER

Brandon. BRANDON

Brandon. He goes to NYU. TUFFER

Parsons, actually. BRANDON

This is your intruder? RODERICK

I guess. TUFFER

This is the big emergency. You're afraid he's gonna, what, redecorate? RODERICK

I'm sorry, I don't even remember calling. TUFFER

I don't hear from you for eight months- RODERICK

Not my fault- TUFFER

...come all the way in from Bushwick at five in the morning- RODERICK

Wow is it five in the morning? BRANDON

Excuse me but, what are you, thirteen? RODERICK

Um, no. God... BRANDON

Okay, thanks for stopping by, Roddy, but I'm entertaining, so... TUFFER

RODERICK

Dude, you're babysitting.

BRANDON

Most men your age like younger guys.

RODERICK

Whoa. Men *my* age?

BRANDON

It's not exactly my fault I'm so much younger than you.

TUFFER

Ouch.

RODERICK

My problem with younger guys is not their youth. It's their ignorance.

BRANDON

You have a lot of anger.

RODERICK

And you have none at all. That pisses me off.

TUFFER

Roddy's what you call an 'activist'.

BRANDON

Guys my age can be activists.

RODERICK

A guy your age recently explained to me how the gay rights movement was originated during the Civil War by a drag queen named Stonewall Jackson.

BRANDON

Oh, well, that's like not how it happened at all-

RODERICK

Never heard of Larry Kramer. Not a clue who Bella Abzug was.

TUFFER

Actually I'm not sure who Bella Abzug was.

RODERICK

But that's not because you're a self-obsessed nineteen year-old, it's because you're a speed freak with about twelve functioning brain cells. Say goodnight, Brandon.

BRANDON

I know who that is.

RODERICK

Bella Abzug.

BRANDON

Yeah. I know who she is.

RODERICK

Good for you.

BRANDON

She's one of Madonna's back-up singers. The Black one.

Brandon exits to bedroom.

RODERICK

Is he even legal?

TUFFER

Legal? You used to keep an eight-ball in the freezer. We had like Pez dispensers full of Ecstasy back when you lived here. Who knows what we squirreled away. Jesus, he'd be the least of my worries.

RODERICK

Okay I can't do this right now. I'm flying to New Mexico in eight hours.

TUFFER

Holy Moses, is it Passover already?

RODERICK

Passover was two weeks ago and I had to work. No, my mother hasn't been feeling good. I told her I'd come for Mother's Day, she said Mother's Day was too consumerist, so...

TUFFER

God I love your Mom.

He shares with the audience.

Last time I saw her, she goes 'As a dog returns to its vomit, so too a man to his folly.' She was holding my tie out of the toilet.

RODERICK

My sister's wedding. He tried to seduce the groom.

TUFFER

She's like Yoda in a peasant skirt.

To Roderick:

When's the last time you...? Have you even been home since you went all straight-edge?

Roderick ignores him.

RODERICK

This has happened a hundred times. Tuffer calls and says he doesn't know where he is but it might be 16th Century England. We determine he's in Queens, and I rescue him.

TUFFER

You haven't seen your mother since you got clean.

RODERICK

Tuffer calls from a sex club at four in the morning. His wallet's been stolen, his keys are missing, cops are reading his mind. And I rescue him.

TUFFER

God, how many of these are there?

RODERICK

Tuffer wakes up after a bender to find a strange woman in his bed. He thinks he's missed an entire year, and fears he may have become heterosexual. He begs me to come over -

TUFFER

I did not.

RODERICK

And to this day he denies it ever happened.

TUFFER

Hey I may not remember making the call, but I'm pretty sure I didn't ask you ride in on your high horse and give me another fucking lecture about my quote-unquote problem.

RODERICK

You look terrible.

TUFFER

I was just getting my beauty sleep when you rang.

RODERICK

All-nighters with college kids? You couldn't aim a little higher?

TUFFER

Oh babe I gave up on Jake Ryan sometime in the mid nineties.

RODERICK

Sorry?

TUFFER

Sixteen Candles.

RODERICK

Right.

TUFFER

Jake Ryan and his red car, making my birthday wish come true? Not holding my breath.

RODERICK

That kid is twenty-one, tops. He's probably been in the City for about a minute.

TUFFER

That so-called kid had his hands in my pants before we left The Phoenix. Dude, look at him. Brody?

Brandon peers around the bedroom door's frame.

BRANDON

Yeah it's Brandon.

TUFFER

Right. Could you come out here for a second?

Brandon comes through the door and stands at center.

Look at that. Hot buttered biscuit. On my plate. Thank you, Brandon.

Brandon grins and goes. Tuffer opens a beer.

Cheers, motherfucker.

RODERICK

Okay, maybe you should take a break. Get out of the city.

TUFFER

Yeah just hop on a plane to New Mexico.

RODERICK

Exactly what I'm thinking.

TUFFER

Oh sure. And who the hell's gonna pay the rent around here?

RODERICK

Your parents, like they always do. How I met Tuffer:

The sounds of a busy bar. Music, laughter. Images of Tuffer projected upstage.

Christopher Lansing Anders comes from a *very* good family. He never had to count his blessings. There was always someone on staff for that.

TUFFER

Insert crack about a silver cock in my mouth here.

RODERICK

Descended from a long line of ground-breakers and ribbon-cutters, his Ivy League acceptance was guaranteed.

TUFFER

I was dealing weed of out my dorm room at Columbia.

RODERICK

While I was busting ass at Fordham.

TUFFER

Journalism.

RODERICK

Social Work. This was pre-Guiliani, when clubs didn't bother to card. I was at Crobar.

TUFFER

Boybar.

RODERICK

Wonder Bar, whatever, and I watched Tuffer strip off his shirt without taking the cigarette from his mouth. Then he started to do The Twist. I'm standing there staring and he goes like this:

Tuffer demonstrates, twisting and smoking. It's pretty sexy.

When I caught up to him at the bar, he was arguing with some meathead gym rat who was about ready to kick his ass. He's going-

TUFFER

You're talking to me? *You* are talking to *moi*?

RODERICK

Like he's the gay Travis Bickle. I heard the bartender tell him 'You know, you'd catch more flies with honey.' To which Tuffer replies,

TUFFER

Who wants flies? I don't want flies, I wanna shot of fuckin' Jager!

RODERICK

Wasted. I should have known he always would be.

TUFFER

So were you.

A gesture to the booth cuts the music.

I watched you smoke, screw, and snort your way through an entire decade.

RODERICK

And then I grew up.

TUFFER

Right, I know, I'm supposed to be like you and eat spelt and do karate and shit.

RODERICK

Krav Maga.

Brandon returns with jeans and begins to dress. Roderick can resist no longer – he has to clean this place up.

BRANDON

What's Krav Maga?

RODERICK

It's an Israeli system of hand-to-hand combat.

TUFFER

It's an excuse to grapple with sweaty straight guys.

BRANDON

Sounds hot.

RODERICK

Listen kid, Tuff's got stuff to do. He'll have to see you another time.

BRANDON

But I thought we were gonna hang out and go to Frat Party tonight.

RODERICK

Frat Party?

BRANDON

Oh you don't have to actually be in college.

TUFFER

It's true, you don't.

RODERICK

You tell him about your college days?

TUFFER

One time about twenty of us got high and shaved each others heads and had a full-on orgy that lasted eleven days.

RODERICK

And with few exceptions, those boys are now dead, imprisoned, or clinically depressed.

BRANDON

What about the exceptions?

RODERICK

The exceptions are pushing strollers around Rockland County.

BRANDON

Ya'll know that's not normal, right?

TUFFER

Queers pushing strollers through Rockland County? I'll say.

BRANDON

No. I mean, there are a lot of middle-age gay guys who are, like, normal happy people.

TUFFER

Oh it's not actually Roderick's intention to be like a normal happy person.

BRANDON

I mean not everybody is dead or depressed. There's a couple of older gay guys who live right down the street from my parents. I see them walking their Westies.

RODERICK

Yeah, we didn't really aspire to the whole heteronormative suburban assimilation thing. We had green hair.

TUFFER

We were not exactly Vogue-ing.

RODERICK

We weren't interested in setting trends, let alone following them, you know what I mean?

BRANDON

Yeah, I know exactly what you mean. You don't have to have green hair.

RODERICK

Right. A-B-Z-U-G. Google it.

BRANDON

Oh we learned all about that stuff in my school's Gay-Straight Alliance.

RODERICK

Your high school.

BRANDON

Yeah.

RODERICK

His *high school*, Tuffer.

TUFFER

The only gay-straight alliance in my high school was between me and the fat girl who took me to prom. Now they have 'em all over the place. We grew up in the... I don't know, in the jamb.

RODERICK

The jam?

TUFFER

The doorjamb.

RODERICK

Nope, sorry, not a clue.

TUFFER

Post-Stonewall, pre-Will & Grace. We weren't exactly stuck in the closet, but we hadn't fully entered the room yet either. We were in the doorjamb. Of the closet.

RODERICK

The doorjamb of the closet.

TUFFER

Yeah.

RODERICK

That's so meta.

TUFFER

I'm just saying things change, babe. They got gay versions of TV commercials now.

RODERICK

I don't watch TV.

TUFFER

Yeah you do.

RODERICK

No I don't.

TUFFER

Everyone watches TV.

RODERICK

Not me.

TUFFER

Okay, liar, well if you did then you would know that there's gay versions of commercials now. Like you'll have a hot straight guy changing a tire or whatever, and some horny bitch is looking at him and licking her lips and you hear an announcer say 'Tires. Tires are sexy so you should buy some'. And then you go to the gay channels and there's a hot gay guy changing a tire. And some horny dude is checking him out and licking his lips and the announcer goes 'Tires. Tires are sexy so you should buy some.' Exactly the same! Except in the second one –

RODERICK

Who *are* you?

TUFFER

That's awesome, right?

RODERICK

We can't get married. We can't serve in the military –

TUFFER

Only you would wanna serve in the –

RODERICK

But we can buy the same tires as straight people. Yeah that rocks.

BRANDON

Well I think his point is that major advertisers and media outlets are now recognizing the buying power of –

RODERICK

Yeah I know what his point is, Zac Efron.

TUFFER

Wait. I know who she was. With the hats.

RODERICK

Who, ‘Madonna’s back-up singer?’

TUFFER

Bella Abzug. She wore hats. Ran for mayor a million years ago, made speeches at bathhouses. But you weren’t around back then, neither of us-

RODERICK

I didn’t say we dated. You don’t have to have slept with Walt Whitman to know something about the history of queers in America!

BRANDON

That’s exactly what I’m saying!

Roderick returns to direct address.

RODERICK

Tuffer calls from the high rise apartment of a closeted pop star who likes to be tied up, panicking because he’s done too good a job. I bring along some surgical shears for severing the ropes, and I rescue him. The pop star and Tuffer too.

TUFFER

Okay look, the truth is I don’t really know how to do it. I don’t know how you...

RODERICK

Turn forty? Nobody knows how to turn forty, bro, but they do it, every day.

BRANDON

Wait. I thought you said you were twenty-nine. You’re forty?

TUFFER (to Roderick)

I’m going to kill you.

BRANDON

My Mom is forty.

Tuffer turns to the audience too.

TUFFER

I used to have these moments of knowing.

RODERICK

It's true. He did. Very Sixth Sense.

TUFFER

But they weren't really visions. More like transmissions. This flood would wash over me and I could feel something coming. Sometimes I'd even know what it would be.

RODERICK

God, this time after seeing Social Distortion – we were getting the N train downtown from Times Square. We walk into the station-

TUFFER

I know something's wrong.

RODERICK

We're coming down the stairs and out of nowhere he goes

TUFFER

We're not getting on that train.

RODERICK

Then someone screamed. A woman was pointing.

TUFFER

There's a flash of panic ripping along the platform.

RODERICK

Just when I turn to see what everyone's watching, a train comes blasting in.

TUFFER

Sudden confusion, people running, Roderick wondering what the fuck is going on...

RODERICK

But Tuffer knew.

TUFFER

There's someone under the train.

RODERICK

It comes to a screeching stop and I look down. Through the gap between two cars, I can see him. Part of him. His lower leg, severed just below the knee. Still wore a sneaker. Blood was pooling on the tracks. We weren't getting on that train.

TUFFER

I went back there the next day. They put down sand to soak up the blood and rush hour trains had stretched it into the tunnel. Some of that guy went all the way to Coney Island.

BRANDON

Some of him's still here.

Tuffer begins searching the sofa for something, pulling an assortment of lost objects from the cushions: a shirt, a pair of scissors, a dildo...

RODERICK

Tuffer's what my mom calls 'selectively psychic.' He can see almost anything but the impending consequences of his own bad actions.

TUFFER

I can also sense when there's a bag of tina somewhere. Sometimes I hide it from myself.

RODERICK

Who even does crystal meth anymore, except rednecks, trailer trash...

BRANDON

It's like vinyl records and new wave haircuts. It's so lame it's cool.

RODERICK

Seems sort of disingenuous for someone with a huge trust fund.

TUFFER

Well you can blow my huge trust fund.

RODERICK

Why do you insist on acting like you're in a Gus Van Sant movie?

TUFFER

Why do you insist on being a hypocritical dickhead?

RODERICK

Okay, not important. I could spend the rest of your life trying to figure out how you ended up like this. What matters now is that we fix it.

TUFFER

We?

RODERICK

Yeah.

TUFFER

You just said you could spend the rest of *my* life figuring out how I ended up like this.

RODERICK

No I didn't.

TUFFER / BRANDON

Yeah actually you did. / That's what I heard.

TUFFER

Stop spending my life, it's not your time to take.

RODERICK

Then go to a meeting! Something!

TUFFER

I did! It was depressing. 'My life is unmanageable, I'm powerless, I sold my baby for baking soda.' Boo-hoo-hoo. Fuck, who wouldn't wanna smoke a rock after that?

RODERICK

You need a sponsor.

TUFFER

Yeah, Stoli should sponsor me. Least they could do, considering.

RODERICK

Okay, fine. You're on your own.

TUFFER

Oh so now you're just gonna go?

RODERICK

You just told me to!

TUFFER

Fine!

RODERICK

Look, if you want some help-

TUFFER

Hey, don't tell me what I want, alright? What do you know about it anyway?

RODERICK

I work in a long-term care facility for addicts with AIDS!

TUFFER

Nobody's comparing *you* to ten generations of all-American overachievers! When's the last time you were rushed into a hospital under a plaque with your Dad's name on it?

RODERICK

No. You don't get to drag that out now-

TUFFER

I don't mean while I was high, but when I wasn't, okay?

RODERICK

What?

TUFFER

Yeah, apparently I ran out into Second Avenue completely naked and went all Britney on a taxi cab. They carted me off to Bellevue, put me in restraints. And not the nice kind either.

RODERICK

Oh man.

TUFFER

I had a 'psychotic break.' At least that's what they said. So I quit partying and everything got very heavy and gray - you'd have loved it. They gave me antidepressants, I took that shit for a month and nothing happened except I slept for three fucking weeks. The only thing that got me out of bed was the idea of going to a bar - I was sad so I went to happy hour. I mean, that's really very rational, if you think about it.

RODERICK

When was this?

TUFFER

Fuck I don't know. Six months ago? You were off saving spotted owls or some shit...

RODERICK

Now you tell me?

TUFFER

You weren't speaking to me.

RODERICK

Because you told me to get lost!

TUFFER

Why are you mad? I just told you I had a psychotic break!

RODERICK

And I'm supposed to, what, feel sorry for you? God I am so sick of hearing how queers are pre-disposed to self-destruction. I work to dispel that idea every day and here you are reinforcing the stereotype: poor little damaged faggot just can't help himself...

TUFFER

Poor little damaged faggot? Really?

RODERICK

What? No, not...

TUFFER

You think I'm a damaged little faggot, wow...

RODERICK

I'm not saying *you*, I don't-

TUFFER

Sorry my psyche doesn't conform to your vision of a strong gay America.

RODERICK

I'm saying you're *not*, but you're acting like-

TUFFER

A self-indulgent sissy bitch. Got it. Thanks.

Tuffer exits to his bedroom, slams the door, puts on music. Probably The Smiths' Unhappy Birthday.

RODERICK

That's not what I meant!

Roderick tries the door but finds it locked.

Come on, Tuffer.

TUFFER (offstage)

Fuck you.

RODERICK

I'm sorry, okay? Come out and talk to me.

Tuffer peers around the doorframe.

TUFFER

I said fuck you.

BRANDON

Oh my God you guys are total soul mates. No I'm serious. You've been doing this for like the last seven lifetimes, you're gonna keep at it til you finally get it right.

RODERICK

Are you still here?

BRANDON

You know, some people can't help themselves. My brother, for one. I think the point of people like that is to show the rest of us something.

RODERICK

Like what?

BRANDON

Our own addictions maybe? I mean, we're all addicted to something.

RODERICK

Speak for yourself.

BRANDON

Including you. You're addicted to anger. You're addicted to him.

Tuffer leans in through the 'wall' again with a little bag of meth.

TUFFER

I found it!

Roderick runs to stop him. Tuffer ducks away. The door's still locked.

BRANDON

Have you ever read The Immoralist? We had to read it in my Erotic Lit class.

With a gesture he changes the music to something more seductive.

The Immoralist is about this guy who's like a scholar, right? And he's really boring and repressed so he marries this boring and repressed but well-intentioned type of girl who gets sick. They go to Morocco so she can get better, but it's all steamy and exotic and he starts checking out the boys. He gets totally obsessed by all these hot young Arabs running around and it starts to freak him out. One of these boys is called Bachir and he steals a pair of scissors.

He finds a pair of scissors...

The guy watches him do it, sees him in a mirror, secretly, and it's all totally voyeuristic. He fantasizes about confronting the kid later. And you know the whole time he's just dying to take Bachir and dog him right there under a palm tree.

Brandon strokes his own chest and abs, and then Roderick's, with the shears.

It goes on and on with him trying to choose between worrying about what people will think, and what he really wants. By the time he gets the balls to kiss some guy I'm like 'Come on, just do it already...' Personally I think Bachir knew the guy was watching when he took the scissors, and it was a total invitation.

He gets close. Very.

James Dean played Bachir on Broadway. The Immoralist by Andre Gide. It's a classic.

Roderick suddenly grabs Brandon, hard. Pins him to the sofa. Music off.

BRANDON

Ow! What are you doing?

RODERICK

What do you think.

BRANDON

Let go of me!

RODERICK

Isn't this what you want? You want to play with the big boys?

BRANDON

No! Not like that!

RODERICK

Then why are you here?

BRANDON

Is that any of your beeswax?

RODERICK

Yeah! It is.

BRANDON

Let. Go.

Roderick releases him

RODERICK

Once his buzz wears off, he won't be into you anymore.

BRANDON

He likes me.

RODERICK

He can't remember your name!

BRANDON

He knows my-

RODERICK

Hold on. Is he paying you?

BRANDON

For what?

RODERICK

Don't be blonde with me.

BRANDON

Why would you ask me that?

RODERICK

Cause you're a gay male undergraduate at Parsons. And he isn't.

BRANDON

No, I am not a rentboy.

RODERICK

Well then you're an idiot.

BRANDON

You're wrong. We can get married in Massachusetts. And in about eight hours from now, it will be legal in California too.

They look at each other.

RODERICK

Yes, I have read *The Immoralist*. Bachir is not the one who steals the scissors.

BRANDON

You didn't have to get all *Wrestlemania* on me, God...

RODERICK

You said that Tuffer can't help himself.

BRANDON

Yeah.

RODERICK

I could help him. If it weren't for distractions like you.

BRANDON

How long have you been in love with him?

RODERICK

Shut up.

BRANDON

I'm just sayin'...

Tuffer bursts back in with a glass pipe. He speaks to the audience.

TUFFER

The Dulka brothers were a couple of gay-for-pay bad boys I picked up on West Tenth. They were each like six-seven, high school basketball stars, who had mistaken the work of Jim Carroll for a lifestyle manual. I used to rent us a room in this seedy no-tell motel on the Westside Highway: front desk in chain link, shared bathrooms down the hall. One night I nearly got my throat slit in the shower. Another time I soaped up a pro hockey player before heading back to my room and doing the brothers Dulka too. We got all kinds of high in that flophouse, I lost weeks at a time. But at some point the brothers disappeared and I forgot about it.

He produces a lighter and takes a hit from the pipe.

Then I was invited to the birthday party of a certain famous sitcom star at a fashionable nightclub in the Meatpacking District. I don't recognize the address, so when we get there, my jaw just about hits the sidewalk. It's the Hotel Fuck Me Up, completely rehabbed, all lit up with limousines lining the block. I could not believe this shit, I thought I was being punked. At one point I actually said the words 'Hey Lucy Liu, I used to smoke crack here.'

RODERICK

Oh, nice...

TUFFER

A couple days later it comes out that the bartender had Hepatitis, and people freak. It was on the news. Jay Leno made a joke about it. They said everyone who was at the party

should get vaccinated right away. Oh please. I shot cocaine directly into my cock in the exact spot where you're eating your duck leg empanada, I used to fuck junkie strangers with nothing but spit and confidence, and you're worried about Hep A? People in that place got way worse than a tainted Appletini, you know what I mean?

RODERICK

Excuse me?

TUFFER

Roddy knows what I'm talking about.

RODERICK

Tuffer, listen man-

TUFFER

His buddy Russ wrestled with Hep C for years before finally ODing in some trick's bathtub.

RODERICK

I shouldn't have said what I-

TUFFER

Rotted there for three days before anyone found him.

RODERICK

I take it back, okay-?

TUFFER

Then there was Mitchell who got AIDS and figured there just wasn't anything he could do, so he basically committed slow-motion suicide.

RODERICK

It just pisses me off when you shut me out-

TUFFER

Or that kid Jordon. He *wanted* to get sick, chased that bug down.

RODERICK

And my anger gets misdirected at-

TUFFER

But I'm not them!

RODERICK

You're every one of them!

TUFFER

I'm the exception! I am exceptional!

Tuffer is too-far tweaked. Roderick gives up.

RODERICK

Forget it. Goodbye.

TUFFER

Wait. That was the whole intervention?

RODERICK

Hey you wanna go back upstate? We'll arrange it.

TUFFER

Oh right, back to Serenity Ridge or whatever. Sober Meadow. Boring Forest.

RODERICK

You need some help.

TUFFER

Fuck that, you are not packing me off to tweaker camp with a bunch of pathetic faggots and their quote 'higher power' kool-aid drinking bullcrap, hell no. The only bottom I'm about to hit is the one chilling on my sofa, okay? I refuse to waste my Saturday nights sitting in a circle drinking shitty old Catholic coffee in some musty fucking basement talking about God like we have any clue what God may be if God even exists! It's bullshit! Like we could possibly comprehend God. Do you comprehend God?

BRANDON

I don't think you really have to *comprehend* God...

TUFFER (to Roderick)

Have you ever broken a promise?

BRANDON

I think you just have to *connect* to God.

TUFFER (To Roderick)

No. You've never broken a promise cause you don't make them in the first place. That's cool for you, dude, that's nice and safe.

RODERICK

Just stop talking, T.

TUFFER

You think you're so brave. 'I'm Roderick, I'm queercore. I wear army drag.' You're just a cocksucker like all the rest of us.

Brandon narrates. Roderick and Tuffer act the scene he describes. Quickly:

BRANDON

And it goes on like this for a while. Roderick demands that Tuffer get sober, Tuffer accuses Roderick of meddling. They argue and stuff, while I basically stand here. Roderick talks about social responsibility, Tuffer goes-

TUFFER

Yeah you're a regular Jedi warrior.

BRANDON

And then Roderick's all-

RODERICK

At least I've done something with the last five years of my life!

BRANDON

Which makes Tuffer like-

BRANDON & TUFFER

Whatever.

BRANDON

And that pisses Roderick off. He storms into Tuffer's room and starts packing him a bag to take to rehab. Wait.

Roderick stops, holding a toothbrush.

That one's mine.

Roderick drops it on the floor.

Tuffer has a monologue that starts out-

TUFFER

The thing about giving head in the reference stacks of a library...

BRANDON

And ends with-

TUFFER

That's why I can't cross the border of Portugal now.

BRANDON

Roderick comes back in and announces:

BRANDON and RODERICK

It's either rehab or my mom's place, bro.

BRANDON

And Tuffer's like 'Fuck that, who wants to sit around singing Kumbaya on the edge of the Grand Canyon?' and Roderick says 'The Grand Canyon's in Arizona you moron!' and Tuffer is all 'Why do you have to be such a prick?' and Roderick goes-

RODERICK

Stop! I can't take it anymore.

TUFFER (To Brandon)

It is a bit annoying, babe.

RODERICK

Sorry kid, you gotta give us a minute.

Roderick pushes Brandon toward the door and out of the apartment.

BRANDON

Hey wait a –

Roderick slams the door. Brandon is locked outside without his shirt.

TUFFER

Right. From 'Why do you have to be such a prick.'

RODERICK

Cool. Go.

TUFFER

Why do you have to be such a prick?

RODERICK

One way or another, we're gonna set you straight.

TUFFER

We couldn't set a table straight. Wait a minute. This has something to do with my family. Did my mother send you?

RODERICK

You called me!

TUFFER

How do I know that?!

RODERICK

What?

TUFFER

My mother has you spying. She said she would give my inheritance to PBS if I didn't produce a legitimate heir by next Christmas. I didn't believe her...!

RODERICK

You are trippin'.

TUFFER

Shut up! Is this place bugged?

A phone rings. Tuffer finds his cellular, answers it.

TUFFER

Who is this!

BRANDON

It's Brandon.

TUFFER

What?

BRANDON

Brandon dammit.

TUFFER

Brandon who?

Brandon leans in from around the doorframe.

BRANDON

Brandon!

TUFFER

Oh thank fuck. I thought you were someone else.

BRANDON

Can I come back in and get my shirt at least?

TUFFER

Yeah hold on.

He hangs up, takes a couple of deep breaths, lets Brandon back in, locates a leftover beer and drinks.

Okay. Okay. I think everything's okay.

RODERICK

No, it's not! Your life is insane! You're coming with me to New Mexico.

TUFFER

Hey, what am I supposed to do? I'm forty fucking years old –

BRANDON

Well not yet...

TUFFER

I'm thirty-fucking-nine years old. Not the white picket fence type. I mean, what do you do if you're not acquiring kids or adopting antiques? Yoga? I think you're telling me to 'grow up' but I'm not too sure what that would look like, you know? What are we talking about, a Costco membership? Khaki pants?

RODERICK

Do I look like I drive a minivan? I'm not asking you to join the Log Cabin Republicans.

BRANDON

Oh I could never live in one of those. A log cabin? Fuck that.

TUFFER

You are adorable, you know that?

RODERICK

Oh no...

TUFFER

You are one hot little fucker.

BRANDON

Yeah, you've said.

TUFFER

You like me, don't you?

RODERICK

Tuffer.

TUFFER

You like me.

BRANDON

Yeah.

TUFFER

You got off didn't you?

BRANDON

Wasn't it, like, pretty obvious?

TUFFER

You got off with my big daddy cock up your tight college boy ass.

RODERICK

Please make it stop...

TUFFER

You want a drink?

BRANDON

A drink?

TUFFER

Just beer.

BRANDON

Um, I guess so.

TUFFER

Open your mouth.

BRANDON

You mean right here in front of ...

TUFFER

Oh you're all shy now?

BRANDON

Maybe.

TUFFER

Cause you sure weren't shy last night. Open your mouth.

Brandon does. Tuffer takes a swig of beer, tilts Brandon's head back, and slowly fills Brandon's mouth from his own.

RODERICK

Enough!

Roderick pulls Tuffer from Brandon, pushes him away. They square off.

TUFFER

Aw, fuck off, Roderick...

RODERICK

What are you doing?

TUFFER

The kid wants my cock.

RODERICK

Stop.

TUFFER

He wants my great big booze-stewed tina-fueled dick just like you-

RODERICK

Shut up!

TUFFER

Hey! I'm Hamas, okay? I am not El fucking Chapo!

RODERICK

What the-? I'm trying to help you!

TUFFER

Help me? Or fix me. Fuck, you're always trying to save someone, somebody needs saving, Roddy's your man. Whales, seals, underage Thai hookers, kittens in trees...

He gets right up on Roderick, close enough to kiss, or bite, or both.

He can save anybody! Except himself.

RODERICK

Excuse me?

TUFFER

Except yourself. I bet you're gettin' a stiffy right now.

RODERICK

I'm not the guy subsisting on crystal and beer and energy bars, I'm not getting barebacked by circuit boys-

TUFFER

Oh get off it! You quit partying for the same reason I keep doing it. So you're all bad-ass now, you do Jewish judo, so what! I fuck NYU twinks.

BRANDON

Parsons.

TUFFER

Whatever! It's the same thing...

RODERICK

Okay, give me the stem.

TUFFER

Come and get it.

He lights it up and takes a good long pull.

RODERICK

Oh really?

Roderick goes for the pipe. A quick bit of keepaway before he burns his hand.

TUFFER

Careful, it's hot.

Roderick is not playing now. He chases Tuffer around the room.

Oh he's mad now.

RODERICK

Give me the pipe.

TUFFER

He's serious!

RODERICK

Gimme the pipe!

TUFFER

You want it?

BRANDON

Cue sound!

TUFFER

Here!

BRANDON

Sound go!

The sound of shattering glass as Tuffer 'smashes' the pipe on the floor - without actually releasing it from his hand. Tuffer passes the pipe off to Brandon and grabs a bottle. Things begin to move very quickly.

TUFFER

You come in here and tell me to hang it up? Tell me I'm too old?

Tuffer raises the bottle. Brandon takes cover.

BRANDON

Cue sound!

TUFFER

To aging disgracefully!

RODERICK

Sound go.

Tuffer 'throws' the bottle. The sound of shattering glass as the imagined bottle hits an invisible wall.

TUFFER

I bet you spent every day of the last eight months jerking off about how you're gonna come in here like Superfag and save my life. The whole idea of being the hero gets you so hot you can barely breathe.

Roderick tries to take the bottle. Tuffer swings it at him. Roderick ducks, knocks Tuffer back, grabs the bottle, and tosses it to Brandon. Tuffer grabs the scissors, holds Roderick at bay. Roderick stops, looks at them, then at Tuffer, at Brandon...

RODERICK

Those are *fabric shears!*

BRANDON

Ding. Ding. Ding.

RODERICK

How much stuff do you have here?

BRANDON

More than you do, dad.

Roderick steps toward him. Tuffer discards the scissors and pounces. He takes Roderick to the floor. They wrestle.

Oh my God!

RODERICK

Oh, you wanna go?

TUFFER

Yeah come on tough guy!

RODERICK

I told you!

TUFFER

You're full of shit!

RODERICK

I told you I would straighten your ass out!

BRANDON

Stop!

TUFFER

Ow! Fuck! Ow!

BRANDON

Stop it!

Tuffer finds himself hopelessly pinned. Roderick is not letting up.

TUFFER

Avril Lavigne! Avril Lavigne!

Roderick finally releases Tuffer and steps clear of him.

BRANDON

Jesus are you guys crazy? Oh my God what is wrong with you?

RODERICK

He's a sorry self-indulgent drug-addled excuse for a –

BRANDON

Not him. I know what's wrong with him, we all know what's wrong with him. What's wrong with you?

RODERICK

Me.

BRANDON

Yeah. What is this?

RODERICK

This? Is an attempt to save his life.

BRANDON

Oh. I see. Why.

RODERICK

Why?

BRANDON

Why do you care, exactly.

RODERICK

He's my friend.

BRANDON

Okay number one? That doesn't answer my question. Number two, um, you almost just killed him. You guys don't really act like friends. Is this some kind of morality thing?

RODERICK

Hey it's not that I think there's anything wrong with spending every night smoking meth and snorting poppers with barely legal Abercrombie rejects -

BRANDON

Yes you do, of course you do. You're probably right, so what. If you weren't so fucking judgmental, maybe you could get laid too.

RODERICK

I don't need advice from someone named after a 90210 character. How old are you?

BRANDON

Twenty. Two.

RODERICK

Well which is it.

BRANDON

I'm twenty-two.

RODERICK

Yeah? When Tuffer here was 'twenty-two' he was quite the pretty party favor himself.

BRANDON

Is that supposed to freak me out? Cause I'm just fine with where I'm at. But you guys? Are pretty lame if you think turning forty is such a gigantic tragedy. I mean, you could be turning forty in Darfur. You could be turning forty in fucking Afghanistan.

Brandon collects some things and prepares to leave.

Call me when he's gone.

He goes. A moment.

TUFFER

So I'm in London, right? I've been up for a couple days, can't sleep, figure I ought to get some culture before I head back to the states. So I'm wandering around the V&A and I come around the corner and they've got records and posters and stuff from when I was a teenager. They've got a copy of The Queen Is Dead in there like it's a relic. Right there with Trajan's Column and Henry the Eighth's favorite inkpot. It's like the British have plundered our adolescence for fucking artifacts.

RODERICK

He lives here?

TUFFER

What do you care?

RODERICK

Is he your boyfriend?

TUFFER

We don't *do* boyfriends, remember?

Roderick stares at him.

Sort of. Sometimes. Yeah pretty much.

RODERICK

Well, that's great.

TUFFER

Yeah, it is.

You using condoms with him? Roderick

Going through, like, a case every week. Tuffer

Good. I'm really glad. Roderick

Thanks. Tuffer

Yeah. Roderick

So then I guess you won't mind if he comes with us. Tuffer

What? Roderick

To your mom's. New Mexico. Tuffer

You'll go? Roderick

Were you gonna take no? Tuffer

No. Roderick

Okay then. But the kid comes with us. Tuffer

That's the deal? Roderick

He has a spatial design exam at ten but after that he's free til next semester. Tuffer

Avril Lavigne? Your safe word is Avril Lavigne? Roderick

Tuffer waits.

You're paying his way.

TUFFER

Of course I'm paying his way.

...

ACT TWO

Two doors, no walls. The courtyard patio of Roderick's mother's house overlooking a canyon in New Mexico. Outdoor furniture, a few clay flower pots, but not much else. Both doors lead inside – one to the kitchen, the other to bedrooms. Abigail strums a guitar and shares with the audience.

ABIGAIL

The heaviness of May always catches me off guard. Even here, where I go days without seeing another human soul, I feel it. The dogs get low and touchy. Everything including the houseplants will try my patience and when they do finally bloom, there are days in May when I get mad at the flowers for being less beautiful than I thought they'd be.

Sings:

Desert spring / Water from a stone / The heaviness of May / Makes me feel... weird

Speaks:

Of course, spring is all about growth, and growth is uncomfortable.

RODERICK (Offstage)

Mom!

ABIGAIL

On the patio!

Sings:

Desert road / I call you home / Travelling forever / Destined to...wander

Roderick enters, followed shortly by Tuffer.

RODERICK

Hi.

ABIGAIL

Roderick, my rock. It's been much too long.

They embrace.

RODERICK

Didn't have to be.

ABIGAIL

I was about to say the same thing.

RODERICK

How are you feeling.

ABIGAIL

So much better now.

And a hug for Tuffer too.

And welcome to you, Christopher! I haven't seen you since-

TUFFER

Your daughter's wedding. Where I tried to seduce the groom.

ABIGAIL

I wish you had. He's campaigning for Ron Paul.

TUFFER

I'm voting for LaBamma.

RODERICK and ABIGAIL

Obama.

TUFFER

The Hawaiian one.

Brandon enters.

BRANDON

Wow this whole house is made of mud!

RODERICK

Mom, this is-

BRANDON

Brandon. Hi. Thanks for having me. This place is really cool.

ABIGAIL

Well thank you Brandon. Wait til you see it in the morning. The desert's in bloom.

BRANDON

Awesome.

ABIGAIL

I'm Roderick's mother. Friends call me Abigail, and you are my friend.

RODERICK

So like I said, we need to put Tuffer back together before his fortieth.

ABIGAIL (To Tuffer)

Yes! And you are a meth head, and a sex fiend, is that right?

TUFFER

According to Roderick I'm also a drunk.

ABIGAIL

We don't judge. You've come here for healing. You've come to rediscover yourself.

RODERICK

He's here to get sober, okay? Simple.

ABIGAIL (To Brandon)

Yes. And you?

BRANDON

Me? Oh I'm just here for decoration.

ABIGAIL

Well then you are doing a masterful job.

BRANDON

Isn't New Mexico where all the aliens are?

ABIGAIL

Oh no honey there are undocumented immigrants in all the Border States and well beyond.

BRANDON

No I mean the space aliens.

ABIGAIL

Oh. Yes. Yes it is.

Brandon points to the horizon.

BRANDON

Is that like the Aurora Borealis?

ABIGAIL

That is the new golf course. I hate it. That whole ridge is lit up like Las Vegas now. It's never dark enough to see the stars. Contaminación lumínica.

TUFFER

Must get lonely out here sometimes.

ABIGAIL

Well, the high desert has always been my spiritual home. Except for my time in San Francisco, where Roderick was conceived. The Summer Of Love. It was nineteen sixty-seven, right in the middle of Golden Gate Park. His father and I-

RODERICK

Mom!

ABIGAIL

I don't know why you're embarrassed, it's a beautiful story. Oh I can hardly believe it's been more than forty years now.

RODERICK

Barely.

Abigail shares with the audience.

ABIGAIL

Roderick Dylan Goldstein-Reyes arrived with the new moon of Aries, and has been at war with authority ever since.

Music. Something of the Seventies. Images of Roderick projected upstage.

We home-schooled both our kids until the age of thirteen.

RODERICK

While most kids were giggling at Judy Blume, we were reading Lolita.

ABIGAIL

Roderick had some trouble adjusting to public school, but he learned to love the structure. His senior year he won a big award for a piece he wrote on the benefits of compulsory

community service. He would have graduated in the top ten percent of his class but he refused to take an American history exam.

RODERICK

The teacher basically taught us that white people invented the Western Hemisphere. I refused the test on ethical grounds.

ABIGAIL

I was so proud. Since then he's been opposed to a great many things: China's occupation of Tibet, Israel's occupation of Palestine, and the U.S. occupation of Iraq. He's against offshore drilling, on the job drug testing, the AMA, HMO's, and VH1...

Music off. Projections out.

But I can't say exactly what he's *for*.

RODERICK

I'm for getting on with it.

ABIGAIL

Well, then. Christopher, just how soon will you turn forty?

TUFFER and RODERICK

June first.

ABIGAIL

Well that's less than two weeks away!

TUFFER

Thanks for reminding me.

ABIGAIL

We should celebrate now.

RODERICK

Mom...

ABIGAIL

Pinata!

RODERICK

Mom!

ABIGAIL

I should bake something!

RODERICK

No brownies.

ABIGAIL

Christopher, it's your re-birth day!

She starts to exit.

And we'll get some Daikon radish into you. It's very cleansing. Opens the spleen.

She goes.

TUFFER

I love her. She's like the Auntie Mame of organic produce.

BRANDON

Um, your Mom knows we're all gay, right?

RODERICK

Yeah she's pretty sharp.

BRANDON

That is so cool. I didn't like make a point of coming out, I just decided I wouldn't deny it if my parents ever asked.

RODERICK

I told my mother the day I turned seventeen.

TUFFER

Mine still have no clue. And I just can't bring myself to dash their hopes.

RODERICK

I think that's cowardly.

TUFFER

Yeah well you were raised by Stevie Nicks.

Abigail returns with wine and glasses.

ABIGAIL

I have been saving this for a special occasion and this is it!

RODERICK

Mom, he's an alcoholic.

ABIGAIL

Sorry! Force of habit. We had wine in our Wheaties.

BRANDON

I can.

RODERICK

Well I *can*, but...

ABIGAIL

Well Christopher doesn't have to drink it if he doesn't want to.

RODERICK

But he does want to. A lot. That's the problem.

ABIGAIL

Tuffer do they sell wine in New York City?

TUFFER

Indeed, Abigail, they do.

ABIGAIL

So I suppose you'll have to look after yourself, eventually.

RODERICK

But the whole point was to get him past all that.

ABIGAIL

Honey if he's an alcoholic he's never going to 'get past it'. He'll have to make a choice, every day. So will you. Simple.

She leaves the wine and exits.

TUFFER

Like Mary Poppins on peyote. Anyway, the closest my mother ever got to acknowledging my queerness was when I was in college. I dated this girl for a while.

RODERICK

I never knew that.

TUFFER

And on the way to dinner with my grandparents, this girl announces she has herpes and is extremely sorry for not telling me sooner. So I dumped her. My mother was crushed. At dinner she got very drunk and when I asked her to pass the sweet potato soufflé, she just started weeping. 'Oh Christopher! We were so glad your girlfriend was a female...'

RODERICK

And that's why we're not doing this in East Hampton.

TUFFER

That and the jar of Oxycontin my mother keeps on the breakfast table.

RODERICK

You look tired, Tuff. You think you can sleep yet?

TUFFER

Maybe after a glass of wine. Kidding! Kidding. Yeah I'm crashing.

RODERICK

You wanna go in?

TUFFER

Not yet..

Tuffer snuggles up to Roderick and eventually dozes off.

Hey look at me, not drinking wine...

RODERICK

One day at a time.

TUFFER

I'm gonna wake up sad, aren't I?

RODERICK

Probably.

TUFFER

And then I'm going to get fat.

RODERICK

You'll live.

TUFFER

Sounds like a plan. Hey Bryson, you should do a speech about coming out.

BRANDON

Okay. Well, it was all pretty Midwestern, I guess.

He turns downstage.

My mother asked me, I told the truth, and two hours later I'm sitting with our youth minister, a nice guy with a perfect comb-over who went around to all the teenagers

saying 'Who loves ya sport? Jesus, that's who.' He didn't believe that I was gay, asked me how I could be sure. I was afraid he was about to tell me it was just a phase, that plenty of normal red-blooded American boys 'experimented' and I would say 'Yeah, well, tell that to my school's football team...*please*'. But he was seriously asking me for evidence. What do you mean, how do I know? He tells me that he knows he's hetero himself, because when he sees a picture of a naked woman, he gets an erection. Okay. First of all, Reverend Ed just said erection. Second, he looks at pictures of naked women? My whole brain turns over and goes yuck. But there's something else about this that really bothers me, and it's that he seems to be saying that being gay is all about boners. Even as a horny seventeen-year-old, I knew there was something wrong with that. Even then I had this sense that my soul was queer, you know, cause God wanted it that way. Maybe being straight is determined by your dick's involuntary response to porn, but my gay ass is divine, okay? Finally, I had to ask. 'You ran a test to see if you were straight? I just don't think that will be necessary for me.'

RODERICK

I guess I'm lucky. My mother would have been devastated if I'd turned out straight.

BRANDON

Does it both you I'm drinking?

RODERICK

You mean am I triggered?

He scoffs.

BRANDON

Is he asleep?

RODERICK

Yeah. He can sleep anywhere.

BRANDON

You're Mom's nice. She's a singer?

RODERICK

Was. One of her old songs sells cheeseburgers now.

BRANDON

So she was pretty successful.

RODERICK

Rickie Lee Jones played my sister's Bat Mitzvah.

BRANDON

I don't think I ever heard of him.

Roderick just smiles.

You kinda want to kill me, right?

RODERICK

Kinda.

BRANDON

You guys used to fuck?

RODERICK

Really?

BRANDON

Did you?

RODERICK

Tuffer and I probably tag-teamed about fifty guys in a single summer. Seriously, whoever followed us home from The Lure. One time he was passed out on GHB and a couple of these guys started writing stuff on him. 'Pussyboy' right across the forehead. Made me so mad I tossed one of them through a coffee table. He slept through the whole thing. So I have spent many nights like this, with Tuffer unconscious in my arms.

BRANDON

But you never actually...

RODERICK

No. You're ahead of me there.

BRANDON

Oh. I just figured... I mean, most of the time he gets so high that he-

RODERICK

Can't get it up. Irony.

BRANDON

Mostly we watch porn. We stay up until he comes down. He tells me about his family.

RODERICK

He must really like you.

BRANDON

He talks about you. Actually it's nice. I mean, he doesn't like *cook* for me or anything. But he took me to see Hairspray.

RODERICK

Wow. He must *really* like you. Why didn't he tell me?

BRANDON

Probably cause you would freak out and karate chop our whole relationship.

RODERICK

You must think I really need a boyfriend.

BRANDON

Or, like, a slave.

RODERICK

I had a slave. My slave was a computer geek from Staten Island. Did a whole Powerpoint presentation on why I should collar him, it was very convincing. And Tuffer didn't mind. In fact, Tuffer didn't even notice him for about three weeks.

BRANDON

This was back when you guys lived together?

RODERICK

Slept on the floor at the foot of my bed, fixed all my friends' computers...

BRANDON

So what happened with you guys, if you don't mind my asking.

RODERICK

I do.

Brandon backs off, but Roderick decides to let him in.

Okay. The last time I got one of those middle-of-the-night calls, he said he was scared, and alone, and couldn't keep living the way he was, and I thought he was telling me he wanted get sober. When I found him, he was completely unresponsive.

BRANDON

Shit.

RODERICK

You up for that? Cause I cleaned up and moved out years ago but...here we are. Again.

BRANDON

I'm not gonna hurt him.

RODERICK

Good.

They eye each other until:

TUFFER

Roderick? I fucked your slave.

Roderick pushes him to the floor. Tuffer laughs.

RODERICK

You bastard!

TUFFER

Like twelve times!

Abigail enters with a smudge stick and waves it around Tuffer.

ABIGAIL

My yoga teacher says that sometimes our inner vision gets blurry. And we need some third eye drops. This should help.

She exits. Tuffer turns to the audience.

TUFFER

How I met Brennan!

BRANDON

Brandon.

TUFFER

Brandon, right. Music!

Music. Brandon dances on a chair. They shout above the sound.

I walk in and I spot him right away, dancing on the bar. He's wearing those briefs that look like Underoos for grownups. With rainbows or something.

BRANDON

Unicorns.

TUFFER

He's like a motherfucking Bel Ami video, just watching him is like having an entire boy band for breakfast.

RODERICK

You're such a perv.

TUFFER

I'm not the one who wears combat boots to bed.

Roderick gives him the finger.

I love the way he moves so I pull out a cigarette, spark it, stroll up next to where he's dancing. He leans down to me and says -

RODERICK

Liar.

Music off.

Smoking in New York City bars was outlawed by a municipal ordinance in March 2003.

TUFFER

Okay, God, it was a nice image though. Sexy.

Music on.

Anyway I was watching him, and I could tell he was showing off for me.

RODERICK

He's a go-go boy!

TUFFER

He leans down and says

BRANDON

I like the way you look at me.

TUFFER

And I stuffed a fifty-dollar bill in his shorts.

BRANDON

I loved the way he held his beer in a chokehold, with his fist around the bottleneck.

RODERICK

Like a jerkoff.

BRANDON

Like a cowboy. Or a construction worker.

RODERICK

Yeah Tuffer is two-fifths of the Village People.

Abigail enters with a cake topped with three candles.

ABIGAIL

Oh turn that music off so we can sing the birthday song.

Music off. Abigail lights candles.

BRANDON

Well I liked that he looked at me straight on. Not sideways like most guys.

RODERICK

Like a bullseye.

BRANDON

Like a man.

ABIGAIL

Alright, alright. It's time to sing.

BRANDON (sings:)

Happy Birth-

ABIGAIL

Oh no we don't sing that one. We have our very own royalty-free, spiritually clean, non-consumerist version.

She plays her guitar and sings:

On this the day celebrating your birth / We wish you peace, and great joy and mirth
Trust you are loved and know that you are / The light of the stars and a child of the Earth

Applause.

Now make a promise and blow out the candles.

TUFFER

You mean a wish?

ABIGAIL

No dear, I mean a promise. Make a pledge to do something positive.

Tuffer blows out the candles. Abigail serves cake. Brandon includes the audience:

BRANDON

My big brother was a total fuck-up. He was on Ritalin before Ritalin was cool. He had long hair and a dragon tattoo. Ate nothing but Lucky Charms. Everyone thought he was

insane including at least one psychiatrist but really he was just, like, thinking of something else. He'd forget stuff like house keys, or what time school started, or pants.

ABIGAIL

Sounds like a shaman.

BRANDON

Maybe. Around the time he turned eighteen, he started praying these spontaneous prayers. Out of nowhere he would be deep in communion with God. One day he's just walking through the kitchen and all of a sudden he stops and says 'God, there will come a time when my brother Brandon needs a popsicle. A dark day when nothing but a popsicle will do. I beseech thee, oh Lord, to grant my brother Brandon that popsicle, even if it means taking from me every popsicle I might have otherwise enjoyed in my lifetime.' He looked out for me that way.

ABIGAIL

Well it's too bad there aren't more people like your brother, the world would be a better place. My generation complained endlessly about the state of things, and then did very little to improve them. I take responsibility for that. We must follow through on our birthday promises.

RODERICK

No you don't.

ABIGAIL

Beg your pardon?

RODERICK

You don't take responsibility for it. Mom you sit up here on this ridge...

BRANDON

I bet she recycles. You recycle, right?

ABIGAIL

Well, yes-

RODERICK

That's not responsibility, that's compliance.

TUFFER

If I talked that way to my mother she would hire someone to slap me.

RODERICK

I'm just saying it's easy to be spiritual all alone with your incense and dream catchers. It's a lot harder down there among the mixed multitude.

TUFFER

Excuse me but what, precisely, the fuck do you know about being spiritual?

RODERICK

Okay, I won't have my consciousness questioned by someone with seven different profiles on dick-now-dot-com.

TUFFER

At least I don't get off on violence.

RODERICK

At least I don't get off on teenagers.

ABIGAIL

Alright let's all breathe. Now. We are only a couple of weeks from Tuffer's birthday, and Roderick's was just March 30th.

BRANDON

Hey mine's in March too, March 8th.

ABIGAIL

Well isn't every day a birth day? Every morning a chance to be reborn!

TUFFER

Oh my God, Roderick, were you possibly adopted?

Roderick turns to the audience.

RODERICK

Whenever I come down here my dreams get ugly. I'm fifteen years old again, intensely aware of being the only gay Jew named Roderick in all of New Mexico.

TUFFER

You're probably the only gay Jew named Roderick in all of, um, ever.

Roderick pushes him away and continues.

RODERICK

I knew these boys, a couple years older, not smart but very sexy, and I thought for a while I was one of them. Growing up on granola, just being near these hard-ass guys got me hot. So when Todd said we were going hunting... By the time I heard the word 'faggot' it was way too late. I would rather my mother didn't hear this.

ABIGAIL

Oh. I'll put a kettle on. Brandon honey I wonder if you could help me?

BRANDON

Yeah. Sure.

ABIGAIL

There's a green glass jar at the back of the pantry. The label says 'Love from Right Turn Clyde...'

They're gone.

RODERICK

We drove into Albuquerque, to this place I'd only heard about, and circled a while, all of them bragging about the damage they'd do. It sounded completely stupid, I didn't believe a word until we pulled up next to this preppy looking dude and Todd asked him where the bar was. The second he started to give us directions, everyone was on him, around him, backing him up against a brick wall. Todd slapped him, demanded he admit to being a fag, to taking it up the ass, to wanting to suck Todd's dick. Every time he speaks, they smack him. One of the guys nails him hard in the gut, he doubles over. Todd holds the dude's arms behind his back while the other boys beat him. He's grinning. Tells the guy he's 'not gonna die tonight but if they ever catch him out spreading his AIDS again they'll ram a rifle up his ass.' It went on forever. Tons of blood.

TUFFER

Roddy?

RODERICK

The guy's eyes didn't look right.

TUFFER

Is that what happened to you?

RODERICK

And I just stood there.

TUFFER

Is that why you work in a hospice? Is that why you're always trying to control stuff?

RODERICK

I do not 'get off' on violence.

TUFFER

Shit happens. Fags get bashed. You think if everyone quits partying? Stops having sex-?

RODERICK

Some guys never have the chance to get their act together. You almost didn't. I hope you're serious.

TUFFER

I came here, didn't I? How else am I supposed to prove it to you?

RODERICK

Well, you could start by apologizing.

TUFFER

Apologizing?

RODERICK

Fearless moral inventory time.

TUFFER

Oh Jesus. I hate all that twelve-step crap...

Roderick waits.

Alright. Okay, I am achingly painfully crushingly sorry for hurting you with my selfish blah blah blah. Cool?

RODERICK

You suck.

TUFFER

You know what? Fuck it. I actually am. Fully fucking remorseful. We admit that we are a powerless fuck-up, and that our fucked-up life has become unfuckingmanageable. But I need you to stop torturing me.

RODERICK

I'm not torturing-

TUFFER

You're *parenting* me. You have this thing about what your mother went through-

RODERICK

Well, if you would just act like a grownup-

TUFFER

That right there. That's what I'm talking about. I just can't with that.

RODERICK

Don't touch that bottle.

TUFFER

Roddy! Okay. Look. I think...I have to do this by myself.

RODERICK

What?

TUFFER

This is not gonna work.

RODERICK

Not gonna... Wait. I bring you all the way to New Mexico so you can detox in my mother's house, and now you're telling me to take a hike?

TUFFER

I'm just not ready.

RODERICK

Oh my God.

TUFFER

We'll go in the morning. I was thinking Brandon's never been to Vegas...

RODERICK

Yeah that's a really excellent place to begin your sobriety.

TUFFER

It's not your battle.

RODERICK

I can't accept that.

TUFFER

I know. That's the problem.

RODERICK

It's so easy for you. You didn't actually go through it. I shook you, screamed in your face, stood you up – your whole weight – bounced your head off the bathroom door...

Tuffer opens it up to the audience.

TUFFER

He could have just called 911.

RODERICK

I did call 911!

TUFFER

I wake up to him standing at the foot of the hospital bed with his arms folded across his chest saying 'I hope you learned your lesson.'

RODERICK

He was blue.

TUFFER

Wagging his finger-

RODERICK

How could I wag my finger with my arms folded across-

TUFFER

When I told him I hadn't done it on purpose, he said that was worse.

RODERICK

He was cracking jokes! 'Hey, I'm also addicted to brake fluid, but I can stop anytime.'

TUFFER

He was pissed off I checked out without his permission.

RODERICK

When the paramedics got there, you were gone. And I was...

TUFFER

Finished, I know.

RODERICK

I was gonna say helpless. That night in Albuquerque, when I watched that guy get his head bashed in, I swore that no one would ever make me feel that way again.

He heads out.

TUFFER

And there you go. Walking away. Again.

RODERICK

I'm taking that hike.

Roderick exits. Tuffer looks out.

TUFFER

The morning after we met, I found Roderick out on the fire escape, in his underwear, reading the New York Times and smoking a fucking pipe. I thought that was cool as shit. He used to smoke a cigar sometimes too. He doesn't smoke anything now.

Abigail and Brandon enter with tea.

ABIGAIL

Greenthread tea!

BRANDON

It's delicious!

ABIGAIL

And greatly appreciated by an overburdened liver.

BRANDON

Hey Tuffer, all the floors in this house have ox blood in them.

TUFFER

Ox blood?

ABIGAIL

Yes the blood hardens the floor as the adobe dries. It's the traditional way. The clotting agents in the blood give it a good seal, and it's completely natural.

TUFFER

That can't be kosher.

ABIGAIL

Except in New Mexico. Where is my Roderick?

TUFFER

He went out for a while.

ABIGAIL

Oh well he wouldn't eat the cake anyway. Neither of my kids eat cake anymore.

BRANDON

I totally eat cake.

ABIGAIL

My daughter Estrella lives in Los Angeles where, apparently, cake is forbidden. She writes for one of those medical dramas about autopsies. Can you imagine? I wouldn't have much of an appetite either.

She pours tea, and shares with the audience.

Roderick and Estrella can both seem so hard, but under all that armor they have very warm hearts. Now their father was the other way round. He looked kind, but inside he was a rat. He was addicted to superiority, among many other things, used to get high on cocaine and a sense of entitlement. He had a string of cheap affairs and blew all of our savings attempting to start a llama farm. But what bothered me most was his disregard for

little things. One night he left a dirty plate in the sink after years of my asking him not to, and it was over. I looked at that plate and I just didn't love him anymore. That's what I told the lawyer too.

BRANDON

My Mom says she could never get Botox because she can't imagine intentionally putting poison in her system. She smokes a pack and a half a day.

TUFFER

I knew this guy who would spend a week working out, wax his chest, tan, manicure, the whole bit, all for a totally anonymous no-names one-night stand. One time I said 'Hey you have enough money to get someone to do this shit for you. Go to a spa for God's sake.' He wouldn't do it because he didn't want some stranger's hands all over him.

BRANDON

It's totally you, isn't it.

TUFFER

Yeah. Gemini. God, Roderick would give me some shit about that.

ABIGAIL

What Roderick would tell you, if he could, is that you're worthy. No matter what, you are worthy of love and loyalty.

BRANDON

And God's popsicles.

ABIGAIL

And God's popsicles.

A moment.

TUFFER

Roderick is hurt.

ABIGAIL

Tuffer you can't take on the burden of Roderick's anger -

TUFFER

He's hurt. He just got hurt.

ABIGAIL

You mean he's hurt.

TUFFER

Yeah.

How do you know? BRANDON

Tuffer, where is he. ABIGAIL

He said he was taking a hike. TUFFER

A hike? He didn't drive? ABIGAIL

No. He went out of here all Grizzly Adams and shit. TUFFER

Oh no... Roderick! ABIGAIL

She peers down into the canyon.

Damn it, there are rattlesnakes out there...

Rattlesnakes? BRANDON

I'll be back as soon as I can. Christopher drink your tea. ABIGAIL

She grabs a camp lantern and rushes out.

How did you know he was hurt? BRANDON

I just did. TUFFER

Shit. BRANDON

If she hurries he'll be okay. TUFFER

How are you feeling? BRANDON

TUFFER

This is about when I usually switch to painkillers. Or vodka at least.

BRANDON

Is the tea helping?

TUFFER

Um, yeah. No. The tea is disgusting.

They laugh.

You know, I could just keep going. I can afford it. And what's the point of having a cake if you're not gonna eat it too. What else would you do with it?

BRANDON

You share it, Tuffer. Nobody needs a whole cake.

Darkness. Abigail appears in the canyon with a camp lantern.

ABIGAIL

Roderick? Are you out here? Roderick!

RODERICK

Yeah I'm here...

She finds him in a dim pool of light.

ABIGAIL

My God you could have fallen down an abandoned mine shaft!

RODERICK

Mom there are no abandoned mine shafts out here.

ABIGAIL

How do you know that?

RODERICK

Because I would have found them when I was a teenager. I spent hours looking for these abandoned mine shafts you kept warning me about. There aren't any.

ABIGAIL

But you're hurt, aren't you.

RODERICK

My ankle. I turned it on a rock or something.

ABIGAIL

Let me see it.

RODERICK

No.

ABIGAIL

Do you need a doctor?

RODERICK

Of course not.

ABIGAIL

It's not the most ridiculous notion, that you might need help. People do.

RODERICK

Tell that to Tuffer. God, I don't understand why he won't just...

ABIGAIL

Sometimes we have to allow people to ask for what they need.

RODERICK

You mean me. Is that what you were doing? Waiting for me to tell you I needed help? It wasn't obvious?

ABIGAIL

Yes, it was obvious. But it was not clear to me that you would accept it.

RODERICK

You stopped talking to me!

ABIGAIL

You weren't yourself at all! It wasn't doing either one of us any good. It broke my heart-

RODERICK

Pretty sure it was *my* life spinning out of control.

ABIGAIL

Now don't act like a victim, it's not your style. If you had just said the word-

RODERICK

I couldn't!

ABIGAIL

Well maybe Tuffer can't either!

RODERICK

It's not the same!

A tense silence.

ABIGAIL

You love him a lot, don't you.

RODERICK

Oh my God I can hardly stand it.

Roderick relents, and Abigail begins to perform Reiki on his injured ankle.

ABIGAIL

Oh sweetie I know. Welcome to exile, my love. You are leaving Egypt.

RODERICK

Mom I can't take a Biblical allegory right now.

ABIGAIL

You know how long it would take to walk from Egypt to Jerusalem? About three days. But the Israelites spent forty long years...forty years, wandering the desert, at the mercy of cosmic circumstance...

RODERICK

It took them forty years because they stood around complaining about each other. It took them so long because they doubted themselves and kept second-guessing God.

ABIGAIL

Yes. Exactly.

RODERICK

Don't home-school me like that! I've spent the last eight months wondering if he's dead or alive. Waiting for any signal that he might be ready to clean up. You have no idea.

ABIGAIL

Now wait a minute, I was there for the great cocaine invasion of Laurel Canyon, in case you've forgotten! I packed everything I could in that little Saab and hightailed it out of Los Angeles *through the rain* - and there's nothing as treacherous as the 101 during a thunderstorm, let me tell you - because I saw it first hand! I will never forget driving through the desert, you and Estrella sleeping in the back seat, and hearing on the radio that Elvis had died. Everyone knew why. And I thought 'Good. I am doing the right thing. This will protect them.' But it didn't. The first time you called asking for money, I knew. I could hear it in your voice, just like I could hear it in your father's. And I spent most of the next eight *years* wondering if you were dead or alive. So I know. All about it.

RODERICK

I'm sorry.

ABIGAIL

I know you are. I should have got on a plane. I wanted to, so many times.

RODERICK

But you knew it was up to me to make the decision.

ABIGAIL

Yes. But that's not why. I was afraid I'd get there and you wouldn't need me.

Roderick groans and collapses.

I don't want to fight about what happened, or should have happened, years ago. That's not why I asked you to come.

RODERICK

Happy Birthday, by the way. Sorry about the surprise party.

ABIGAIL

No, I don't do birthdays, not my own. And I think that Brandon's a sweetheart.

RODERICK

He's a toddler. Responsible adults don't just run off to rural New Mexico with...

ABIGAIL

Angels don't wear crash helmets.

RODERICK

Angel? Trust me: not.

ABIGAIL

No? Who is it watching over Tuffer while you're off gallivanting through the wilderness? Let's get you back inside. Can you stand?

RODERICK

It's not like I have much choice.

ABIGAIL

Oh honey we always have a choice. That's the problem. Light!

Back on the patio, Tuffer and Brandon. To the audience:

Here's what happened during our desert scene.

RODERICK

I don't want to see this.

Roderick heads into the house. Tuffer and Brandon will act out the scene that Abigail describes. Quickly.

ABIGAIL

Brandon and Tuffer drink tea. They talk about music and money and their favorite scary movies. Brandon takes his shirt off and performs a monologue that begins

BRANDON

I kissed Bobby Kubiak on a Christmastime field trip to Powell Symphony Hall.

ABIGAIL

And ends with

BRANDON

That's why they call me the Hallelujah Chorus boy.

ABIGAIL

Tuffer feeds Brandon cake. Brandon pulls at Tuffer's shirt.

TUFFER

Hold on.

ABIGAIL

He takes a pipe from his pocket.

BRANDON

Let's just try it straight this time.

TUFFER

I don't remember the last time I had straight sex.

BRANDON

So to speak.

TUFFER

I don't know if I can.

ABIGAIL

Brandon takes the pipe and goes for Tuffer's belt.

BRANDON

I really want you to fuck me.

I really want you to kiss me. TUFFER

He does. ABIGAIL

They do. Abigail exits.

Oh, Brecken... TUFFER

Brandon pulls away.

Brigham?

Uh-uh. BRANDON

It's a game.

Brighton. TUFFER

Nope. BRANDON

Bratislav? TUFFER

Shut up, he's not here, you can say it. BRANDON

You mean...Brandon? TUFFER

Bingo. BRANDON

Tuffer is rewarded.

Brandon, Brandon, Brandon... TUFFER

Tuffer's pants hit the floor, and Brandon goes down.

Oh wow. Oh fuck. Okay. Stop. I can't do this.

BRANDON

Oh yeah, believe me, you can.

TUFFER

No that's not what I mean. God your mouth is a fucking miracle.

BRANDON

Thanks.

TUFFER

But I can't.

BRANDON

Of course you can. Why wouldn't you?

TUFFER

You won't understand. Stop. Stop!

Brandon stands.

BRANDON

Why? Give me a reason! You can't tease me for three months, bring me all the way to New Mexico, finally show me a boner like that and just go 'I can't do this.'

TUFFER

Jake Ryan.

BRANDON

What?

TUFFER

I'm saving myself for Jake Ryan.

BRANDON

Who the fuck is Jake Ryan?

TUFFER

Jake Ryan is not a who. I mean he is, but... I think Jake Ryan is my higher power.

BRANDON

You're right, I don't understand.

TUFFER

I'm sorry.

BRANDON

No. No, you can't just sorry this away, I have been fucked with here. I'm pretty sure everyone who ever cared for you has been fucked with, at least a little. And you need to gay the fuck up and acknowledge that fact right now.

TUFFER

I'm making you sad.

BRANDON

Yeah!

TUFFER

You're right. Yes, you have been fucked with.

BRANDON

By you.

TUFFER

By me.

BRANDON

I mean, I thought you really liked me. Until about forty-eight hours ago.

TUFFER

I do like you. And I don't mean just sex... Listen, we can still hang out. I mean, we could go to shows and stuff?

BRANDON

I'm not really looking for a mentor.

TUFFER

Come on, you always knew we couldn't be-

BRANDON

My brother was aiming for the pool when he jumped off the roof. Just missed by inches. Whenever I hear 'close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades,' I think of him. Believe me, close counts when it comes to concrete pool coping. They said when his head hit the edge it sounded like a balloon popping. I don't think he was drunk but he could have been. I'm not really sad, I'm just regretful we didn't spend more time together. I think I could have learned a lot from him, like what God thinks of the new Coldplay album. Whether hummingbird have heavy souls... Yeah, I knew. I just didn't want to miss out. Because *maybe*, you know? I don't want to wake up one day when it's too late and think 'Damn, he was the one.' You know?

Tuffer nods.

Yeah. I mean, he's got issues.

TUFFER

You're telling me.

BRANDON

Mid-life crisis.

TUFFER

Gay rage.

BRANDON

I wonder what that guy Stevie did to him

TUFFER

Stevie?

BRANDON

Yeah, you said he was raised by-

TUFFER

Stevie Nicks?

Brandon looks at him blankly.

Stevie. Nicks.

Brandon shrugs.

Oh my god.

BRANDON

I'm kidding! I'm totally fucking with you, I know who Stevie Nicks is!

TUFFER

You do?

BRANDON

Yes! Bitch, please!

TUFFER

You better. I mean, Bella Abzug is one thing...

Roderick returns, assisted by Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Chiron, the Wounded Healer. It's okay, he just tripped over a pile of hubris.

TUFFER

What up, G.I. Josephine? You lose the battle?

RODERICK

Fuck you.

TUFFER

Please note. This is the first time in sixty-eight minutes that Roderick has cursed.

Abigail takes Brandon under her wing.

ABIGAIL

March 8th. That would make you a Pisces.

BRANDON

What? Yeah.

ABIGAIL

The dreamer, the open heart.

She guides Brandon to the door.

The sky should be darker looking north. If we go out the front, I can show you Jupiter.

BRANDON

Cool. Hey, did you know that before Neptune was discovered, Jupiter was thought to be Pisces' ruling planet?

They're gone. Roderick takes a swig from the wine bottle.

TUFFER

Okay...

RODERICK

I'm not alcoholic.

TUFFER

Right.

RODERICK

And you're not getting sober, so.

TUFFER

You okay?

No answer.

Why do you do shit like that? If I didn't know you were reckless I'd say you were stupid.

RODERICK

Pot. Kettle. Black.

TUFFER

I mean what kind of asshole climbs down into a canyon, alone, at midnight?

RODERICK

Dude, I really don't need it from you right now.

Tuffer shares with the audience.

TUFFER

Roderick takes up kickboxing. Trains for two whole days before challenging the Korean national champion, loses a tooth in the very first round. I took him to the hospital, I paid the bill. Roderick marches in some fuck-the-police demonstration. Refuses to move for the mounted cops. One of them raises a nightstick, Roderick catches the full force of it with one angry hand.

RODERICK

Still no feeling in these two fingers.

TUFFER

See? You're an asshole!

RODERICK

I spend twenty years of my life fixing yours every time you break it, and I'm the asshole?

TUFFER

Oh get off the cross, you're not all that and a martyr too.

RODERICK

I put you in rehab, I bailed you out of jail, I steamed fucking vegetables for you, and you still haven't changed!

TUFFER

You change!

RODERICK

I have changed!

TUFFER

Oh shine my knob! I've seen you blow crack up a stranger's asshole, don't start puffing smoke up mine.

RODERICK

Ten years ago maybe.

TUFFER

You're still no saint, babe. Brandon told me how you went all sado-pornstar on him.

RODERICK

I wasn't going to do anything.

TUFFER

You tell me not to mess with him and then you pin him to my sofa? You're the one in denial, I should be putting *you* in rehab.

Abigail appears on the periphery.

RODERICK

You keep talking about my sordid past but you don't seem to get that I used to be where you're at now.

TUFFER

Right...

RODERICK

And I would like to show you that there's more to life!

TUFFER

Well I'd like to show you there's more to life than showing me there's more to life, but you are so hung up on my shit, and so afraid of your own, that you can't see it!

Abigail hands Roderick a wine glass.

ABIGAIL

Cue sound...

RODERICK

I don't know what else to do!

ABIGAIL

Sound go.

Roderick 'throws' the glass at a wall, but without actually releasing it from his hand. The sound of shattering glass.

Fuck! Yeah I wanna fix you!

RODERICK

Why!

TUFFER

Why?

RODERICK

Why do you want to fix me?

TUFFER

Why do you think?!

RODERICK

Abigail leans in through a doorway with a pony-shaped piñata, just as Roderick raises the glass.

Cue sound...

ABIGAIL

Why can't you say it?!

TUFFER

Sound go.

ABIGAIL

Crash. Abigail ducks behind the door just as an imaginary glass shatters against it. Roderick throws open the door, hands off the glass, grabs the piñata.

Happy Birthday.

RODERICK and TUFFER

Thank you!

Roderick slams the door. Abigail goes. He hurls the piñata to the floor and stomps on it, hurting his injured ankle.

Fuck!

RODERICK

Tuffer goes to him but Roderick pushes him away. Tuffer pushes back. Roderick throws the piñata at him.

Get the fuck away from me!

TUFFER

You get the fuck away from me!

They rush at one another and grapple until Tuffer takes Roderick's face in his hands and kisses him.

Say it! Say it!

RODERICK

I hate you. I fucking hate you.

TUFFER

I hate you too.

They make out even as they pummel each other.

RODERICK

Do you really want to toss our entire twenty-year history?

TUFFER

Of course that's not what I want!

RODERICK

Then what do you want?

TUFFER

You're asking me what I want?

RODERICK

Yeah!

TUFFER

Well I don't know, you never asked me that before!

RODERICK

I haven't?

TUFFER

Not really!

RODERICK

But that's so fucked up!

TUFFER

I know!

He brings in the audience.

It was at Boiler Room! Where we met. And I was watching him too. I thought, there is one cool fucker. There's someone who knows who he is. I wanted to be just like you. Hell I wanted to be you. But being you is really hard.

RODERICK

Oh God I'm so embarrassed.

TUFFER

Hey, sometimes you just gotta throw a wine glass.

RODERICK

No. I literally just beat a dead horse. So clichéd. Can we go back?

TUFFER

You wanna take it from the piñata? It's pretty wrecked but maybe we could...

RODERICK

I was thinking more like 'Tuffer, open the door.'

Finally, they see each other.

TUFFER

I was just really... I thought if I could do it on my own, if I could prove to you... you would be... I'm sorry.

RODERICK

Me too.

Tuffer shares another memory with the audience, but it's different this time.

TUFFER

So, um, we used to get our hair cut by Barber Mike up on the roof at The Eagle. This one time, Roderick was getting his Mohawk cleaned up and...he had this guy, under the barber cape, blowing him-

RODERICK

Oh God.

TUFFER

He's got his head back, eyes closed, twenty-eye Doc Martin's splayed out...

RODERICK

Oh, shit...

TUFFER

He's groaning like a porn star, Barber Mike buzzing the sides of his head... and

Tuffer starts to giggle. Roderick smiles.

I go get a cup of ice water from the bar, and I sneak down under the cape with this guy?

RODERICK

I had totally forgotten about this-

TUFFER

Roderick's up there going 'Fuck yeah, suck that dick, boy' and then, just when he's about to get off, I plunge his nuts into this freezing cold water. Roderick screams like a girl, the buzzer skids across Roddy's hawk, takes out a huge chunk, we're laughing our asses off-!

They laugh. Roderick shares one too.

RODERICK

Okay, okay, Tuffer decides he wants to get his nipple pierced –

RODERICK and TUFFER

'Just the left one' -

RODERICK

So I take him to the woman who did mine. Big biker dyke, tough as nails. She tells him 'Don't worry, you can squeeze the racquetball if you're nervous' but T's playing it super cool, he goes 'Give it to me straight.' So she clamps his tit – and I can see he's turning green – lines up the cork, raises the needle, and suddenly his hands just sort of shoot out in all directions, wild, and land on her motorcycle helmet, which he basically dives into-

TUFFER

I didn't want to get it on her rug!

RODERICK

Buries his face in it...and pukes an entire Indian buffet!

They're both nearly crying with laughter.

TUFFER

I was almost murdered by Xena Warrior Princess!

RODERICK

He just starts rolling out bills. 'Buy another helmet, please don't hurt me.'

TUFFER

Oh! Oh! My favorite New York memory!

RODERICK

The time when you mistook Liza Minelli for a Liza Minelli impersonator?

TUFFER

No! No, that's my second favorite! No, this was about twenty years ago, right around when we met. It was winter and I was walking uptown from the East Village.

RODERICK

You were drunk...

TUFFER

Well of course I was drunk but that's not the point. It's about four in the morning and I come around the corner on this little park, a perfect square, buildings from another century. Red brick, wrought iron, and right in the middle was the most perfect Christmas tree I'd ever seen.

Tuffer finds his pipe.

Not the sort of perfect I grew up with, not Bergdorf Goodman perfect. I mean this tree sparkled just the way you want one to. Glowed. And then, right on cue, it started to snow. Great big gorgeous white flakes tumbling down around me. I stood there, alone, and I cried. And I cried. And I cried. And I loved the City and every single soul in it more than I ever thought anyone could.

Tuffer produces a lighter.

Later I thought maybe I imagined the whole scene, it seemed too magical to have actually happened. Isn't that crazy? That I'd never seen Gramercy Park? Now I go by there all the time. I wish you'd been there. It would have been perfect.

RODERICK

Wow.

TUFFER

I miss the old days.

RODERICK

Me too.

TUFFER

I can't do this alone.

RODERICK

Me neither.

TUFFER

Please don't give up on me. You're my Jake Ryan.

RODERICK

What are we doing, T.?

TUFFER

We're starting over. We're on the threshold.

RODERICK

In the jamb.

TUFFER

Yeah.

They sit on the table with the cake between them. Tuffer lights a candle.

Oh what the hell.

He tosses the pipe into the canyon. They watch it disappear. No cue, no crash.

RODERICK

You totally have an endless supply of those.

TUFFER

Please, I packed three in my carry-on. Oh I have the perfect song for this moment!

Thompson Twins' 'If You Were Here', just like in Sixteen Candles.*

Roderick what's an emo?

RODERICK

Why, did you sleep with one?

TUFFER

I think so.

RODERICK

Dude I have no fucking clue.

Over the cake they kiss, and together blow out the candles.

END

**If You Were Here ©1983 Bailey/Currie/Leeway, Arista Records*