

# Finding an Upside Down

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## Abstract

This thesis includes a philosophy on teaching and an introductory video detailing artistic philosophy considering the use of the phrase upside down, as an avenue for viewing the dramatic arts. It exemplifies notions of technique and personal growth. Growth in the Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Virginia is tracked through three monologues and an explanation of why they were chosen. The appendix includes a play written in the spring semester of 2019 titled *DISSONANCE*.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Crossing the Ravine: A Statement on Teaching

Teaching is, and has always been, about recognizing the responsibility of the impact left on each student. I have been teaching acting for six semesters now, and every group of students is different. Some students learn by doing, some students come in with deep insights about the reading, some are empaths and struggle with technique, and many students understand the theory of acting in their writing but in practice have difficulty translating what they have written. They also face personal challenges – personal ravines to navigate. The one truth that remains steadfast is my, dare I say, role in their lives. Teachers have the power to enact immensely positive or inimically negative effects on the lives they teach.

Most of my students have never acted before, and those who have are there to gain new experiences and push their understanding of the craft further. Each semester a diverse group of people walks into my class and looks to me to answer the question, “How do I act?” The first thing I tell them is, “I do not know, but let us find out together.” Then I guide them through the technical methods of defining action, the futility of playing emotion, and the power of communicating thoughts on a moment-to-moment basis to win an objective.

Many of the technical elements of my teaching come directly from my own understanding of Uta Hagen’s lessons on acting. A student of Konstantin Stanislavski’s methods, Hagen focused on an intellectual understanding of a character’s circumstances and relationships in a means to connect more deeply to story and objective on stage. I take her journalistic questions a step further and challenge my students to investigate and enjoy the words the playwright offers them. Characters exist as the words on the page, thus it is imperative to be ever curious about the way in which words are used in a scene or monologue.

I invite my students to note when they stop being interested or invested in each moment and discover what about the character’s world is causing the disconnect. Uta Hagen says acting requires an “insatiable curiosity about the human condition.”<sup>1</sup> Even in that quote I would ask my students to consider what insatiable is asking of them. How is that different from intense, or dire? What is it to be unsatisfied, and what does that say about a person who acts? Using this curiosity as a leaping-off point, I watch my students grow from waiting to speak in a scene, to listening, investigating, and responding; staying on task to the end of each beat. By their final scenes each semester, I have confidently guided them through a series of techniques that they can objectively discover for themselves as they rehearse and perform.

Guiding is how I see my role in the classroom. My classroom is neither a democracy nor a dictatorship. I am a benevolent leader who sometimes, like a tough dad, encourages my students to boldly fail in finding their way across the ravine. Students walk in on the first day wanting to learn. They give me their trust, and in return, I give them the tools to be able to assess their own work. I hear them say things like, “I needed to be more specific about my relationship in order to find the proper delivery” or “I felt most in the moment when I stood my ground and focused on my action.”

Knowledge is life. When students walk in on that first day, I set a precedent for fostering community by actively encouraging trust to shape their experience. I put a heavy focus on their

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<sup>1</sup> Hagen, Uta. *A Challenge for the Actor*. Scribner, 1991.

learning others' names and who they are on a deeper level of consciousness, just as I do in their character work. Each day we come in and we make eye contact with as many people as possible. I ask them to spend time getting to know one another by having short conversations that are specific and meaningful. I make sure they know each other's gender pronouns, and we all introduce "establishing facts" (facts that are integral to the *identity* of each person) rather than "fun facts". The result is three-fold: 1) The students synthesize their own experiences 2) are able to comfortably articulate who they are and 3) students learn early on, just like the characters they will play, that real humans are complex and have a vast array of choices available to them.

At the beginning of each course I also engage the students in an interview in front of the class. After each short interview, I ask the class, "what do we know about this person?" Without fail, the comments are always astute, deep, and most importantly, positive. "She seems very warm", "He is probably shy around strangers but an excellent big brother". Humans crave community, and we want each other to do well. Inevitably, as I teach this lesson to my students, I gain a deeper understanding of it myself.

I teach my acting students time and time again, "the need outweighs the obstacle." In my classroom, this is the pinnacle principle and it is the standard to which I hold myself in the work I do. It is the most transferrable skill with which my students leave. Being aware of your objective in life puts you in a position of focus, whether stepping on stage, walking into a job interview, or having a difficult conversation with your significant other. Confidence is not the absence of fear, but the faith in focus.

Being confident and sure of what I am saying is the first step in building the trust it takes to guide the group. Without that trust I cannot hope to create the supportive community in which my students thrive. Because journeying over tricky terrain can bring a whole group of different people together, I aim to create an environment in my classroom where students are working toward the common goal of understanding and implementing objectives. This means being humble and knowing the lessons I am going to take from the students are as valuable as the techniques they will take from me. Humility is necessary in creating community; I acknowledge every semester that I too, once again, have to make it across the ravine.

Acting is awareness, and I constantly bring awareness to my students of themselves and of one another, while paying attention to who is getting the technique, who needs it taught using different tactics, who is having a rough day and maybe is not present, the time I have left, and what I am saying and asking of them. I ask them to consider how present they are when introducing themselves on a regular basis. Is that an action we have become so accustomed to that we tune out and go on auto-pilot and miss the name entirely? If you go on auto-pilot while you are attempting to help a comrade cross a treacherous part of the river, you may both fall in.

Just as actors need to be aware of many elements of theatricality from their text, to their scene partners, to the audience, to the prop they forgot, so to must a guide be aware of all the immediate obstacles on their hiking path. Teaching is not so different from acting. It is just a matter of understanding action from a backward end. To teach acting takes courage, and the right amount of curiosity to meet each student where they are and, without holding their hands, give them the tools to get across the ravine to new ideas and understandings.

## CHAPTER 2

A Journey to Journeying: A Philosophy and Journal on Acting

At twenty-two years old, many people would agree that I was not prepared for an MFA in acting. No doubt my own educators believed this at times. In my time in the MFA program at the University of Virginia I was often challenged with the idea of defining myself. An idea I had grown to hate in undergrad. Coming straight out of undergrad in a diverse, eclectic, urban setting into the buttoned up, traditional college experience of the institution of my Master's program, I felt like a fish out of water. Naturally, I clung to the identity that had worked for me for so long: confused.

I was hypercritical of the notion that I should be anything but confused. I have been told in many classes that I should say the line differently; in rehearsals that I should not allow the character to become too emotional; in one-on-one meetings that I should think about what I am doing in an MFA program. The word should, sat on my understanding of myself and crushed my ability to let go in the classroom. After my first semester, I was determined to prove myself wrong and prove my undergraduate professor right: "the molten nature of your experience will be vital to your growth as an actor in these next three years."<sup>2</sup> That determination lasted with me, only dropping off momentarily in activities with intense focus such as mask work, until the moment I stepped out of my end-of-semester review in the Spring of 2018.

I remember the door clicking behind me and struggling to stifle a laugh. I was told, "You need to make a decision about who you are as a human being." I thought to myself, "What an absolutely absurd thing to say, especially to an actor?" But I also acknowledged that this comment came from the same place all of the comments like it on my journey of seven years now have come from: "I do not get you."

Whether in an acting class, in my social life, or in other professional circles, I have been told these four words quite possibly more than anything else in my life. Those four words were said to me so much because I did not understand myself. I translated that lack of understanding from other people as a lack of clarity as to who I was. Very plainly, I have always known exactly who I am; I just did not realize I was being that person for the sake of other people.

I have understood for a long time that there is an almost masochistic nature to the way in which we actors force ourselves into accelerated revelations of ourselves. And why should not we? You cannot hope to put on the experiences of another person; transform into another mask of action without knowing completely the ground upon which you yourself stand. However, I was not using that understanding to create new masks, I was using it to prove I knew more than others, and to prove that not understanding myself was an identity. When I heard that door click, I stopped proving and started being.

It is no coincidence then, that the play I am currently working on, *DISSONANCE*, tackles the fundamental issue of my "I do not get you:" who are you if you are both gay and a born again Christian? The truth is, I still do not know, but that is why my work this year has been about that experience. I have included my sexuality in a lot of my devised pieces, and it has often come up in the conversations I have had about character. I am no longer struggling to prove that I am on some journey of self-exploration and am simply taking the journey. I do not have the answer, but living in a world of unknowing is the truth to uncovering the full possibilities of action.

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<sup>2</sup> Donna Snow, Temple University 2016

This journeying is reflected not only in my piece, but in my monologues as well. Their progression itself tells a story. It begins with the monologue that got me into graduate school, (*The Body of an American*) that convinced my teachers I was one person and had the potential to be many more. It then shifts (in *King Lear*), to the beginning of self-understanding of my own potential, as through mask work I found my unique ability to transform in the most evil characters imaginable. This micro-journey concludes with a piece of my own writing from *DISSONANCE*, detailing a pinnacle issue I see plaguing the queer community in America.

This final piece is who I am now. It is the acceptance of living in that world I struggled so hard for so long to prove was who I was. *DISSONANCE* for me is about the work I want to continue doing when I leave. It is about not only accepting my unknowns and continuing to ruminate on the nuances of my day-to-day actions, but also about my ability to instruct and guide people in a similar fashion. How can I help audiences, who maybe already support issues of LGBTQIA+ people, push their own understandings of those issues and themselves further?

This question is the basis for my including a teaching statement rather than a personal philosophy of acting. I fear my personal philosophy is one of uncertainty, as I am walking away from my program with more questions than answers about the craft and the form of theater at large. However, I find a comfort in that, and I believe it is the facet of my understanding that has allowed my acting to grow the most.

Walt Whitman, in his *Song of Myself*, said “Very well, I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes.”<sup>3</sup> Humans cannot hope to be one-sided just as characters cannot hope to be believed if they are so. It is imperative to seek out the parts of ourselves that we do not understand and sit with them, deal with them, and work to figure them out. Rather than taking any sort of easy way out, I have chosen to write about my own experience, tell that story, and connect with those who are ready to journey to their own unknowns as well. I am decidedly, forever deciding.

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<sup>3</sup> Whitman, Walt, et al. *Song of Myself, and Other Poems*. Counterpoint, 2010.

## CHAPTER 3

Monologues*The Body of an American*

Permission for use in the MFA thesis of Joel Chroscinski granted by Dan O'Brien on March 26, 2019 via email correspondence with the office of Beth Bickers: APA Agency.

Transcription.

This was in Mosul, at the beginning of the war. A boy was throwing pebbles at a marine humvee whose fifty-caliber rifle was whipping and spraying death. And as I'm taking pictures, this gang of students came rushing toward me carrying another student bleeding from a deep gash in his face. One of them made that sound like, click, click, take his picture! So as I'm switching lenses, you can see the switch go off in someone's head like, he's white. What's he doing here? I am lifted off the ground, tossed around, stoned. Someone slides his knife in my back and I'm feeling the blood pooling in my shirt. I'm holding on to my camera as they're stretching out my arms, like this. And I'm not trying to be cinematic here, but I felt like Christ on the cross. Because I had no sense of wanting to live or fighting back. I had this sense of, well we knew this was coming, and here it is. But the truth of these places is always the same. A dozen people against a multitude formed this circle around me and we were near this row up shops that was closing for the evening, and they just lifted up the shutters and shoved me under. That's how I know it's not just my brain doctor, or my father dying when I was two. It would be poetic justice to get ripped apart by a mob. Don't you remember what Cleveland said to me, "If you do this, I will own you". I just have this feeling he's thinking, "you watched my desecration. Now here's yours."

*King Lear*

Transcription.

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law  
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
 Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines  
 Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?  
 When my dimensions are as well compact,  
 My mind as generous, and my shape as true,  
 As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
 With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?  
 Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take  
 More composition and fierce quality  
 Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,  
 Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,  
 Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well, then,  
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:  
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund



As to the legitimate: fine word,--legitimate!  
 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
 Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:  
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

*DISSONANCE: Tug of War*

Transcription.

This is what it is to have your soul ripped in half  
 Perfectly.  
 Constantly negotiating who you are here in this moment  
 With who you will be in the future of eternity.  
 Determinedly,  
 You fight the people here who  
 Can  
 Not  
 Under  
 Stand  
 And it feels like you're gasping for air  
 And the walls are building higher as they fire  
 Shot for shot  
 Not to Escape  
 But to please at least one side  
 And when you just can't dance anymore you  
 Pray.

Because the reality is you're fine.

Nothing is actually wrong.  
 Your religion is just a yin that will not  
 No  
 Can not  
 No  
 Is not allowed to yang to your religion  
 And your queerness is something that will not  
 No  
 Can not  
 No  
 Is not allowed to be shared?  
 Why?

We're asking God every day but I'd like to hear from you.

## CHAPTER 4

Portfolio Materials

## Personal Statement

## Transcription.

Do you ever spend a lot of time upside down? Whenever I can't figure something out: a concept or an idea, I like to turn it on its head. This is sort of what I've been doing with theatre for the past three years.

When I came into UVA I sort of felt like theatre was this thing I had to present. Even if I knew that was not necessarily right, it was still what I was doing. It took me until about my second year to realize that what I was doing was trying to prove that my identity was valid instead of just living my identity. I realized we kind of do this in theater all the time. And that's how I started turning things on their head. In the ways we talk about African American theatre, or queer theatre, or inclusive theatre, what we often end up doing is creating spaces for audiences who agree with us to be complacent.

So what did I do? In my third year as an MFA I wrote about my own experience called DISSONANCE, my experience being gay and a born again Christian. Yikes I know. But I wrote it because I felt like I wasn't really seeing that story being told. Now, I don't know that this is actively engaging an audience in the way that I want it to, that's not going to create a complacent space, but what it's allowed me to do is become reflective. What I've realized about theatre, the most important thing, on an individual level, it needs to be reflective. If we're going to create new theatre, new spaces; have conversations about casting, and inclusion we have to look at ourselves, and turn our own identities, our own stories, upside down. Inside out. Start really investigating them, before we can change the rest of the world.

## Biography

## JOEL CHROSCINSKI

**Theatre** *DISSONANCE*: a devised project, *Urinetown*, *WE ARE PUSSY RIOT*, *Shipwrecked!* (UVA Drama), *Middletown*, *Company* (Heritage Theatre Festival), Mary Zimmerman's *The Odyssey*, *Anything Goes*, *Arcadia*, *She Stoops to Conquer* (Temple University Theaters)

**Training** University of Virginia, MFA Acting  
Temple University, BA Theater



JOEL CHROSCINSKI



# JOEL CHROSCINSKI

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6'4" • Brown Hair • Blue Eyes

## THEATER

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Dissonance	Playwright, Harvey Milk	UVA Drama, Graduate Project	Joel Chroscinski
Tartuffe	Valere	UVA Drama	Sabin Epstein
Urinetown	Officer Lockstock	UVA Drama	Bob Chapel
A Winter's Tale	Polixenes	UVA Graduate Acting	Colleen Kelly
P3M5	Company	UVA Drama	Doug Grissom
We Are Pussy Riot	Vladimir Putin/Guard	UVA Drama	Marianne Kubik
Company	Peter	Heritage Theatre Festival	Bob Chapel
Middletown	Landscaper/Janitor	Heritage Theatre Festival	Colleen Kelly
Shipwrecked!	Captain Jensen/other	UVA Drama	Marianne Kubik
Mary Zimmerman's The Odyssey	Alcinous/Musician	Temple Theaters	Brandon McShaffrey
Anything Goes	Elisha Whitney	Temple Theaters	Peter Reynolds
Arcadia	Jellaby	Temple Theaters	Liz Carlson
She Stoops To Conquer	Sir Charles Marlowe	Temple Theaters	Dan Kern

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

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MFA Acting Candidate, University of Virginia  
BA in Theater, Temple University  
Acrobatic Ropes Training, Brian Gibney

Fitzmaurice Technique, Donna Snow  
Alexander Technique, Karen Braga  
30 hours training in unarmed stage combat  
SAFD pass in rapier and dagger 2018

## SPECIAL SKILLS

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-Owns/Plays alto saxophone	-Percussionist	-Dialects: RP, Cockney, Estuary, Irish, Yorkshire, Russian	-Slays <i>Rock Island Line</i>
-Singer/Sight-reader	-Speaks German	-PA Driver's License	

## Production Photos



Officer Lockstock: *Urinetown*,  
Mark Hollmann & Greg Kotis UVA Drama 2018





Vladimir Putin:  
*We Are Pussy Riot or EVERYTHING IS P.R.*, Barbara Hammond UVA Drama 2017



Guard: *We Are Pussy Riot or EVERYTHING IS P.R.* Barbara Hammond



Valere: *Tartuffe*, Molière UVA Drama, 2018



## APPENDIX

DISSONANCE: A play on religion and LGBTQIA+ issuesACT IPROLOGUE

*Cast enters, begins "setting up"*

## PLAYWRIGHT

*Noticing the audience* Oh crap! You guys they're here! Okay just make sure everything is set up, make sure everything goes in the right place and quickly! *To audience* Hello! Welcome! My name is

Joel, well I guess not technically, at the moment I'm the playwright and the playwright's name is Joel and I'm also the playwright but if this were done other places then someone else might - oh nevermind...could you excuse me for just a second?

*Reprimands cast, tries to fix something, fails. To Audience* Sorry about that! But anyway, I'm the playwright, and there a lot of voices contributing to this piece, but you can sort of think of me as your MC or guide and I'll make sure you all stay safe on this wild ride we're about to take. *Getting caught up in the set* I'm a third year Acting MFA and for my final performance opportunity I elected to write and produce this play about my experience as a gay Christian. *Sharply turns to yell at cast.* "I'll do it myself" type of thing gets caught up in setting the stage incorrectly. So anyway, I wrote this play about being gay and a Christian and how I feel that I can never truly be myself because I'm constantly having to negotiate how much of each identity I want to be and also how much of each is safe to be.

Most of my non-Christian friends don't like that I'm a Christian. Truth be told they don't like that I'm gay either but they're better at hiding that one. And all of my Christian friends back home...well half of them don't even know I'm gay. A real full non-disclosure type of thing. *To Cast* This is how it goes right? *It is not.* So when I'm gay, I don't get to be a Christian. And when I'm a Christian, I can love Ariana Grande but that means I'm weird, and when I'm gay I can love Ariana Grande but that means I'm gay. And when I'm gay I get yelled at for saying I watch the world cup because most of the time I make fun of people who love sports, and when I love sports I'm not allowed to be a dancer, and when I'm dancing I can't love Jesus and love camping, and when I love camping I can't talk about how great Philadelphia is and how I can't wait to move back there,



and oh that reminds you of the movie? Yeah I can tell you all about AIDS, I took a class on it in college, no I never took a religious class but I feel like I don't know enough about other religions or even my own for that matter, no that doesn't mean I love God less, and when I love God then I can't love men, and we do this to people all the time, and

TUG OF WAR

*the sentence before carries straight into the poem; continuous. movement.*

ELIZABETH

this is what it is to have your soul ripped in half.

JOEL

Perfectly.

Constantly negotiating who you are here in this moment with  
Who you will be in the future of eternity

SADIE

Determinedly

You fight the people here who

ENSEMBLE (ALL)

Can

Not

Under

MYLES

Stand

And you feel like you're gasping for air

JOEL

And walls are building higher  
As they fire shot for shot not  
To escape

NISRINE

But to please at least one side  
And when you just can't dance anymore you

ENSEMBLE (ALL)

Pray.

ELIZABETH

Because the reality is you're fine.

RYLEIGH

Nothing is actually wrong.  
Your queerness is just a yin that will not

NAT

No  
Can not

NISRINE

No  
Is not allowed to yang to your religion

RYLEIGH

And your faith is something that will not

NAT

No  
Can not

GRACE

No  
Is not allowed to be shared.

ENSEMBLE (ALL)

Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?  
Why?

ELIZABETH

We're asking God every day, but I'd like to know from you.

CHAPTER I: GAME NIGHT  
GAY GABS

MC

Welcome to GAY GABS! The game where you fill in the blank and we read the scenario back to you and all get a good laugh! Playing with us tonight are...

*The "contestants" jump up to introduce themselves. Maybe indicated by clothing in some way. They sit in chairs facing back to back as the MC reads from cards. "Sharon" is an invisible Vana White figure up in the booth somewhere or out beyond the audience's cognizance.*

UNCOMFORTABLE MOM

Hi. My name is Uncomfortable Mom. I'm from Charlottesville Virginia. I like volunteering at every PTA event but I'm far too busy to be on the board. I have three kids whom I adore, the second just started college. Goo hoos! Haha...in my free time I like window shopping for home decor on my pin-ter-est and watching the great British baking show! I'm totally fine with my daughter's "sexual preference" I just don't want her to marry a girl. That's all.

MC

And your contestant!

TOTALLY CHILL DAD

Yeah no hey hi! I'm totally chill Dad. My son just told me he's gay and I'm...well I'm just so thrilled. See we love him no matter what and I'm just so proud of him. Kids? No I have no other kids and he's a senior in high school hoping to study theater in college.

PLAYWRIGHT

No no no! New impulse. She already has a daughter at UVA let's fucking not. Okay he's studying...engineering!

TOTALLY CHILL DAD

...hoping to study engineering in college. I myself am a pharmacist by day and a mean master on the grill by night. I make a "slammin" filet for my "fam" while listening to all the new "bops". Dabs Dab on 'em!

MC

Okaaaayyyyy!! Now that we've met our contestants let's get to the first category. Gabbers, are you ready??

UNCOMFORTABLE MOM  
Yeppers!

TOTALLY CHILL DAD  
Bet! *Winks, dabs again probably*

MC  
Alright Sharon, 60 seconds on the clock! Contestants remember to fill in as many blanks as you can in the time. Don't think just gab! Ready, Go!

Mom/Dad I'm (sexual orientation)

TCD  
Gay

UM  
Bi

To which Mom/Dad respond (general term that doesn't address what was just said at all)

UM  
Of course you do sweetheart

TCD  
*Thinking* Ahhhhhmmm...OH BUD!

MC  
Fantaaaastic! Gimme a non-verbal weighted response from the kids!

UM  
Exhales.

TCD  
Cries.

MC  
Now because this is getting awkward, I'll shift the conversation to make it easier for me and say (need a platitude)

TCD  
I'm proud of you.

UM  
We all go through phases.

MC  
But don't forget (troubling phrase opening the subject to and  
putting the ownness on the spouse.

TCD  
Do you want to tell your Mom?

UM  
What are we going to tell your father?

MC  
Last one! Word or phrase of closure.

TCD  
I love you.

UM  
I'm just looking out for you.

THE CONVERSATION

*maybe the lights switch maybe they don't. The actors in their  
chairs begin to fade up. If the poet is playing one of the  
parents they should still find a way to fade into the next  
moment. It should be abrupt and melty at the same time.  
movement.*

NISRINE  
It's wrong and he knows it.

NAT  
Okay.

RYLEIGH  
*Crying* It's wrong.

*These chants should continue as a slow drone to underscore the  
poetry*

RYLEIGH  
Coming out is

ELIZABETH

Like

JOEL

Well does a simile...

NISRINE

It's like

MYLES

Work

SADIE

I should

NAT

Gearing up to

GRACE

Wait

INGRID

I should wait

JOEL

He didn't answer

INGRID

I should wait

ELIZABETH

It's a sign

GRACE

Signs

RYLEIGH

Tell us

NAT

It's like gearing up to

NISRINE

Rev up to

MYLES

Work up to

GRACE  
Work up the

ELIZABETH  
Courage

SADIE  
Up to

MYLES  
Work up to

JOEL  
No a metaphor

INGRID  
To speak

RYLEIGH  
It's so awkward.

NISRINE  
Imagine a snake molting for the first time.

NAT  
But every time.

ELIZABETH  
Working up the courage to

SADIE  
Why

JOEL  
I ask

MYLES  
And ask

GRACE  
Will I ever not

MYLES  
Ever be

GRACE  
Ever not have

JOEL  
So I have something to say

RYLEIGH  
It's awkward

ELIZABETH  
There's no good time

JOEL  
Four years go by and the elephant in the room gets no bigger or  
smaller but annoyingly stays exactly the same

SADIE  
In the same corner of the room.

NAT  
Opinion piece?

MYLES  
Please.

NISRINE  
Shit.

NAT  
I'm gay.

RYLEIGH  
Mom I'm bi.

INGRID  
Dad I'm trans.

JOEL  
Sister I have something to say, and I know you won't care, but...

ELIZABETH  
Will I ever

NISRINE  
Grandma, I think I like girls.

GRACE



Hey bro, would you still love me if I liked guys?

JOEL  
Ever not.

SADIE  
Ever be able to

MYLES  
Working up the

RYLEIGH  
Courage

ELIZABETH  
Let me halt this convo right quick!  
Call everyone into the living room (*All ACTORS SAY THEIR NAME*)  
has something to tell us.

JOEL  
Ever not have to

NAT  
Gearing up to

SADIE  
Well most people know

NISRINE  
I'm not hiding it

GRACE  
I don't know if Dad knows or not

RYLEIGH  
I've never told her but...

NAT  
Never be able to

MYLES  
Working up to

INGRID  
I'm queer? ... I think...

NISRINE  
I've just been thinking

NAT  
Gering up to think

SADIE  
Listen,

RYLEIGH  
Working up the courage

JOEL  
To

ELIZABETH  
Coming out is like,

ENSEMBLE (ALL)  
"Hey Mom, what's for dinner?"

THE GAME OF STRIFE

MC

Let's give a round of applause to our phenomenal contestants!  
Our next game is called The Game of Strife, the life-sized board  
game where no matter where you step, you're wrong! Unless you're  
right. This game is for four contestants, let's meet them now!  
Contestant number one, tell us about yourself.

BRAD

Hi my name is Brad. I'm a part time body builder and full-time  
lover, but I also work at Ron Jon surf shop on the weekends when  
I'm not pumping that iron. *Looks at MC*, hey, got your tickets???  
To the gun show??? KAPOW! *Flashes "guns"* naaaahhhh I'm just  
kiddin' I don't roll that way. NO HOMO AMIRITE?!?! Right let's  
do this!! Testosterone heterosexual cisgender male! MEN'S  
RIGHTS I'M WITH HIM! Trump that iss! Football! Lmao maga! I like  
dolls... inflatable dolls! But I also do sex with real human  
women.or any woman, not strictly human. I pay well...the women.

MC

Fantastic! Thank you Brad. Why don't you start us off!

OTHER CONTESTANTS

Whoa -- Wait -- hold up -- what about the rest of us

MC

I'm sorry, game show guidelines only allow for the exact amount of time that Brad was speaking for all contestants to introduce themselves. Sorry ladies, gotta fit those commercials in somewhere. Anyway, go ahead Brad.

*Brad rolls the die, no matter what number it lands on the MC says,*

MC

Six. Step forward six spaces.

*He does (big ol stepz)*

Fantastic! Contestant number two.

*Contestant number two rolls die*

CONTESTANT 2

[Whatever number is rolled] YES!

*Steps forward. Buzzer sounds.*

MC

Oooo tough luck, you have to go (audience joins in) BACK TO STAAARRTT! Too bad. You there, sorry I've forgotten your name and everything about you. Your turn.

CONTESTANT 3

I never told you my name.

MC

Roll that die!

*She does*

CONTESTANT 3

[says whatever number it is] *Steps forward.*

MC

Aaaanthhhnnntt! You know what that sound means: wrong way! Try again.

*She does*

Aaaaaaanntthhhnnntt! Ooohh wrong way again!

CONTESTANT 3

You're making that sound with your mouth!

MC

Aaaaannntttthhnnntt! Wrong way again, sorry three strikes your out. Like out of the game, please go home or security will forcibly remove you. Hope you enjoyed your game, thanks for playing! Contestant four!

CONTESTANT 4

*Rolls die [Says number] moves those spaces*

*Dinging sounds*

MC

Oooh you know what that sound means!

EVERYONE

READ! THAT! CARD!

*Ensemble member holds up a card that says "Solve this equation in the next thirty seconds or draw a penalty card"*

CONTESTANT 4

Ummm are you serious?

MC

27 seconds!

CONTESTANT 4

*Tries to solve* Ummm okay, umm can I get a calculator?

EVERYONE

NO!

CONTESTANT 4

Did anyone else know about any of these rules? What is a penalty card?

MC

5 seconds!

CONTESTANT

What?!

MC

And that's time. Your penalty is...drumroll please....*flip card around* you can stay where you are but you have to stand on one

leg and hold this bucket of water above your head for the rest of the game.

BRAD

That's like so great for your arms bro, can I get one of those.

MC

You can get whatever you want Brad, speaking of which, it's your turn!

*Rolls die*

MC

Six

CONTESTANT 2

HEY! He rolled a [hopefully not a six] (or Hey! He got a six last time!)

*Brad takes big steps to the center*

*Music. Buzzer. Confetti probably.*

MC

It looks like Brad is our winner!! Your prize is success, happiness, and a million dollars!

CONTESTANT 4

That's so not fair! He didn't even get an exact number!

CONTESTANT 2

YEAH! He cheated!!

MC

Well that's the Game of Strife ladies and gents, thanks for playing Brad. Contestant 4, keep holding that water! Until next time folks!!

*Playwright's professor bursts into the room.*

PROFESSOR

MR. CRUBIDAGINSKI! What is the meaning of this ridiculous frivolity. You were supposed to write a play and not this patchwork of silly games and tom-foolery. What is the point of all of these metaphors?! No one's getting them anyway! I thought this was going to be an exploration of yourself, but what are you even bringing to the conversation? No one in the audience is homophobic. This was supposed to be a nice play about nice gay

people with nice, Christian values. So gay up and get on with it, or we're keeping you here for a remedial semester!

PLAYWRIGHT  
Uuummmm...ladies???

PEP RALLY

*Pep rally. The ensemble is gathered on the bleachers. Haphazard. Disarray. No one is really listening. Think of a bunch of college burnouts. This is a joke for them. Cheerleaders chant as the letters come out to introduce themselves.*

*As each letter introduces themselves maybe the audience sees media of "common portrayals".*

CHEER CAPTAIN  
Ready? OK!

CHEERLEADERS  
L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS!  
BREAK IT DOWN  
UNDERSTANDING IS A MUST

CHEER CAPTAIN  
I said uh -  
L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS  
BREAK IT DOWN  
AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF!!!  
ENSEMBLE (all)  
L.

L  
Lesbian. A homosexual woman.

NISRINE  
A girl who likes other girls???

MYLES  
Pppttthhhh

ELIZABETH  
Kevin's a girl?!?!

L  
L. Lesbian. A female identifying person who finds other female identifying persons romantically or sexually attractive.

JOEL  
Wut

CHEER CAPTAIN  
Yeah, wut

MYLES  
Yeah, wut?

L

L. Lesbian. A female attracted to the same gender. Often seen with short hair, wearing flannel and sporting combat boots. Loves camping, hiking, fresh air, the food network, the beach, sports (see: college softball), art, and traveling. Definitely smarter than you. Most likely a thousand percent more emotionally mature. Common representations of Lesbians include -  
*Breaking character*

A bunch of white straight women "experimenting" by going down on each other and a bunch of white men enjoying it

CHEER CAPTAIN  
*Clears throat.*

L

Nearly impossible to find hookups with others within same letter. Dating is practically impossible. Often snubbed by straight women trying to "find themselves."

*A clip of the song "Girls" plays*

L

When a solid candidate does come along, will most likely put out on the first date and move in together on the third. Often have children together. Often get married. Often portrayed as masculine or "butch" otherwise known as "U-hauling"

CHEERLEADERS  
WHAT EVER  
THE F-U-CK THAT ALL MEANS

L

For other uses see "lipstick lesbians, femme girls, and questioning."

CHEER CAPTAIN  
Isn't that the Q???

L

Nope. Not even kind of close.

Ya know, I don't know why I agreed to this. Here, you guys do this shit, I'm going home to my Chow and my sweet one.

*"Exits" Probably just sits on stage out of the scene, out of character.*

CHEERLEADERS

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS!

BREAK IT DOWN

UNDERSTANDING IS A MUST

CHEER CAPTAIN

I said uh -

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS

BREAK IT DOWN

AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF!!!

ENSEMBLE (all)

G.

G

Gay. A homosexual man.

ELIZABETH

Women can be gay.

GRACE

Yeah women can be gay.

SADIE

I'm a woman and my feelings are hurt.

G

G. Gay. Most commonly associated with homosexual male identifying persons.

MYLES

Boooo

SADIE

Stop with the whole male identifying bullshit, no one knows what you mean!!!



RYLEIGH

Are you a man or a woman?

T

Oh fuck.

G

Gay. Most often used to describe men who are attracted to other men romantically or sexually. See endnote: Endnote 1. Romance is not usually associated with this identity. Sex always is.  
Problem.

MYLES

Honestly how does buttsex even work.

NISRINE

Isn't there like...shit...

ELIZABETH

Wait bring L back we didn't even ask how lesbians have sex.  
Bring them back.

G

Way more associations than with Lesbians. Even being gay, being a man benefits representation and identity. See: Twink, Bear, Otter, Daddy, Top, Bottom, Vers, Leather, Clean Cut, Nerd, Sub, Dom, etcetera.

MYLES

Dude, did you just read my grindr profile?

SADIE

At me next time bro.

G

Often problematically in the closet. Will use straight mask to get ahead in life while maintaining homosexual identity in moments of victimhood. Likes Lady Gaga, Cher, Judy Garland, Ann Miller, Kylie Minoque, Jonathan Van Ness -

NISRINE

That's really more of a straight woman thing

G

*Breaking You right. Back. Working out, dancing, talking about sex, being far too open, being far too closed off, alcohol in large quantities, making friends and strangers feel like stars, sharing open hearts, dressing up, and the ASOS app. Most common representations are Queer As Folk, Queer Eye, and America's Next Top Model.*

GRACE

Honestly I stopped listening like five minutes ago

ELIZABETH

Yeah I don't even know what's going on right now...

MYLES

Ppptttthhhh

G

Maybe more emotionally mature than you. Maybe a raging hot mess of problematic ideologies. Definitely more put together than the common straight older brother. Loves everyone and everything. Hates everyone and everything.

Ugh, I'm leaving too.

*"Exits"*

CHEERLEADERS

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS!

BREAK IT DOWN

UNDERSTANDING IS A MUST

CHEER CAPTAIN

I said uh -

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS

BREAK IT DOWN

AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF!!!

ENSEMBLE

B.

B

Bi-sexual. People who are sexually or romantically attracted to both men and women.

ELIZABETH

LIAR

GRACE  
That's not real

INGRID  
Those bi people are gonna have to choose one or the other  
eventually

B  
Bi-sexual people often tend to be very confused because in a  
binary system it is difficult to exist somewhere in the middle.  
It is even more difficult for people on either side to  
understand or comprehend this existence. Bi-sexual people come  
in all shapes, sizes and colors -

JOEL  
NAH THEY'RE JUST GAY

MYLES  
FAGS!

B  
...just like all people. All people can look like and do and  
think and believe whatever they...okay fuck all of you.

*"Exits"*

CHEER CAPTAIN  
T.

T  
Transgender.

MYLES  
Oof.

T  
T. Transgender. People who have a different gender identity than  
their assigned sex.

GRACE  
WHAT THE FUCK

ELIZABETH  
WHO ARE YOU

SADIE  
GO HOME. BOO!

T

Transgender. People who don't feel comfortable in their assigned bodies.

*The crowd continues to taunt.*

Transgender. People who have to pay a lot of money...who are usually very kind, exceedingly kind because of all the bullshit...transgender. T.

*Straight White Man takes the stage*

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN

Hey it's okay everyone I got this. I can tell that your harmful words are harmful and triggering our transgendered friend over here, it's cool dude I got this.

T

I actually identify with they/them pronouns

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN

Oh so I think what you mean is you're still figuring out which gender you want to be.

ENSEMBLE

Who are you?

PLAYWRIGHT

Yeah who the hell are you?? *Pulls out script and rifles through it.* Did I even write you?

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN

No you didn't. I'm just here to help out this trans dude because I'm an ally and I have a pretty unique perspective on this because I read an article on transgender youth that I found on twitter one time. I'm the white straight guy -

ENSEMBLE (all)

Ohhhhhh...

SWM

Now, transgender people totally don't identify with their given gender so they feel the need to switch to the other gender.

PLAYWRIGHT

I think only half of that is half true.

SWM

So like if you're a transgendered man that means that you went from being a woman to being a man and now you want to be called a man.

T

Nope. You were just always a man and now...

SWM

Right like you were a man but now you're a woman.

PLAYWRIGHT

Can you please leave?

NISRINE

No wait he has a point

ELIZABETH

Yeah let him talk

SWM

Yeah let me talk, I have a queer friend who told me all this shit.

T

Actually queer people are just as transphobic as straight people.

L

Yeah gay guys kinda suck actually...like super sexist...all the time

B

Not like, straight people sexist, but like still **sexist** sexist.

*Suddenly and seemingly out of nowhere a sobbing white woman bursts on to the stage*

STRAIGHT WHITE WOMAN TEARS

You guys! I just feel like really attacked right now.

PLAYWRIGHT

HANG ON! WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU?!?!?

STRAIGHT WHITE WOMAN TEARS

I'm the tears of all straight white women everywhere.

ENSEMBLE (ALL)

Ohhh...

PLAYWRIGHT

Goodness gracious. Okay, we will get to this but first, we have more letters.

CHEERLEADERS

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS!

BREAK IT DOWN

UNDERSTANDING IS A MUST

CHEER CAPTAIN

I said uh -

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS

BREAK IT DOWN

AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF!!!

ENSEMBLE

Q.

Q

Queer is a word used to describe everyone who doesn't have a word or doesn't like their word or needs to redefine their identity to make themselves feel more comfortable in their own words. Difficult to describe. Not for everyone.

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN

I don't get it-

Q

Yeah and you're probably not going to, but maybe if you listen instead of just inserting yourself we all might start to get somewhere.

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN

Are you a woman studies major?

Q

Go to hell.

CHEERLEADERS

L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS!

BREAK IT DOWN

UNDERSTANDING IS A MUST

CHEER CAPTAIN  
 I said uh -  
 L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS  
 BREAK IT DOWN  
 AND INTRODUCE YOURSELF!!!

ENSEMBLE  
 I.

I  
 Intersex. Should I just leave now?

PLAYWRIGHT  
 Noooo, go on!

I  
 Didn't you say you were going to protect us?

PLAYWRIGHT  
 No. I'm protecting the audience.

I  
*Sighs.* Intersex just means you're born with several sex  
 characteristics.

GRACE  
 Like a hermaphrodite?

MYLES  
 HE-SHE!

I  
 I'm gonna go.

*"Exits"*

CHEERLEADERS  
 L-GB-T-QIA AND PLUS!  
 BREAK IT DOWN  
 UNDERSTANDING IS A MUST -

A  
 Asexual people don't have sex. We're not sexual. We're asexual.  
 It doesn't mean we're not romantic and it doesn't mean we're  
 pretending not to be gay or we're ashamed to be gay it means  
 that we just aren't sexually attracted to anyone and yeah there.

MC

WOW! I feel like we really need to unpack that!

CHEER CAPTAIN

NO TIME! *Motioning to cheerleaders but plus interrupts.*

+

Plus is everything else. It's every other label you have heard of and will never hear. And honestly the best thing you can do is just accept whatever someone says they are. It doesn't matter who I'm sleeping with. It really only concerns me and the person or persons I'm sleeping with. If someone tells you they're an AFAB dude who likes to sleep with men sometimes, and loves their vagina but doesn't want anyone to touch it and just wants to be called she and wears dresses some days but beanies and cut up ts on other days, honestly it's probably best to just call them their name and refer to them by their pronouns.

WHITE WOMAN TEARS

But sometimes it's so hard to remember, and it's so much easier to just call people what they are.

+

Right, ya see how that works. It's just easier to call people what they are.

ENSEMBLE (all)

YAAAAAASSSSSSS!!!!

WHITE WOMAN TEARS

I feel really vulnerable right now.

Q

Can you please knock it off! This is kind of our moment right now.

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN

Listen dude. We're just trying to help you out.

WHITE WOMAN TEARS

Right, like he was just trying to help and be an ally and explain things from his point of view and like don't you want to hear his point of view???

STRAIGHT WHITE MAN



Yeah I'm just trying to explain my point of view. You guys are just taking over everything.

STRAIGHT WHITE WOMAN TEARS

YEAH, and I just feel really triggered by this whole conversation

PLAYWRIGHT

You know that you just completely erased them. Like 100% jacked their time trying to explain to all of us and to them who they are and how they live??

STRAIGHT WHITE WOMAN TEARS

Sobs anew I just don't know why you're attacking me like this

PLAYWRIGHT

Attacking you?!

*Shift. The next lines should come rapidly one on top of the next. At some point they overlap and become completely cacophonous.*

### THE ATTACK

NISRINE

In 1969, New York City Police raided the Stonewall Inn

ELIZABETH

They dragged people out of their beds

JOEL

In 1978 Harvey Milk was lured into his office by a colleague and shot five times

RYLEIGH

Twice in the head

GRACE

In 1979 Playwright, Tennessee Williams was jumped by five teenage boys in Key West

SADIE

In 1979 a man no one knows named Terry Knudsen was murdered in Minneapolis by three drunk men on a "hunt to rob a fag"

MYLES

His body was torn open with a lead pipe and he was left where he  
lie

INGRID

In 1988 Rebecca Wight and Claudia Brenner were shot at their  
campsite in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania 8 times while they were  
making love *because they were making love.*

NISRINE

Rebecca died right there.

GRACE AND ELIZABETH

Claudia escaped having taken five of the bullets and ran to the  
police.

GRACE

She told the police everything except that she was a lesbian.

NAT

In 1988 transgender performer, Venus Xtravaganza, was found  
murdered on Christmas.

NAT & JOEL

She'd been dead for four days.

MYLES

in 1990 James Zappolorti was stabbed to death in Staten Island.

ELIZABETH

In 1992 Marsha P. Johnson's body was found floating in the  
Hudson River.

JOEL

It took the NYPD 20 years to declare her death a potential  
homicide.

SADIE

In 1993 Brandon Teena was raped by his friends when they  
realized he wasn't a cis man.

RYLEIGH

Scott Amedure was killed in Pittsburgh when he announced on  
television his friend was his secret crush.

ELIZABETH

It was his friend who killed him.

NAT

In 1996 Evan Kittredge was beaten, tortured, and urinated on by  
3 young men in Charlottesville, Virginia.

INGRID

They left him in the trunk of his car for 40 hours.

GRACE

A lesbian nightclub was bombed in Atlanta in 1997

JOEL & INGRID

In 1998 Nahshon Anderson was handcuffed and shot in his car.

MYLES

The same year Matthew Shepard was tethered to a fence in  
Laramie, Wyoming.

NAT

He was nineteen years old.

ELIZABETH

He was 12 years old

SADIE

His attacker was found not guilty.

NISRINE

She was 18 years old.

MYLES

They were 14 years old.

GRACE

In 2001 Terrienne Summers was shot and killed in her front yard.

RYLEIGH

In 2002 Nizah Morris died in Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia  
from severe head injuries.

NAT

In 2006, an 18 year old boy in New Bedford, Massachusetts walked  
into a bar, asked if it was a gay bar and attacked the patrons  
(Add MYLES)  
with a hatchet and a handgun.

ELIZABETH

In 2009 3 men entered a bar in Galveston, Texas with (Add SADIE) rocks.

MYLES

In 2011 Cameron Nelson was attacked at work in Utah

JOEL

Cody Rogers was brutally attacked in 2012 in Oklahoma for sticking up for his friend

NISRINE

They were shot in their home.

INGRID

She was 51

GRACE

A disowned transgender woman was murdered on a street corner in Idaho

ELIZABETH

In 2013 Gabriel Fernandez's mother tortured and murdered him because she thought he was gay.

ELIZABETH & RYLEIGH

Gabriel was 8 years old.

JOEL

49 people died in Orlando, Florida in 2016.

SADIE

It's just not like him.

GRACE

I can't believe this happened.

NAT

He was 17 years old.

INGRID

It's so devastating.

JOEL

And this was just a few from a list I found on Wikipedia

RYLEIGH

She was 32 years old.

NISRINE

She was 27 years old.

ELIZABETH

Not my little girl.

*The air is sucked out of the room. Stop.*

RYLEIGH

In 2006, Joel Chroscinski was attacked by 3 boys in a locker room in Pequea Valley Intermediate School in Kinzers, Pennsylvania. They had broken into his gym locker, stolen his t-shirt and jeans, ripped apart his jeans and wrote faggot all over his shirt. The gym teacher's office was right around the corner from his locker. Certainly he heard the whole thing. Joel threw away his clothes and went to his next class in his gym uniform where he was berated by the teacher in front of the whole class for not changing after gym. He was told that his clothes were inappropriate and he needed to go change. He cried. And nothing was done. Earlier that year he had been ostracized for sticking up for a gay friend. He never told the teacher what happened. He never told the principal or the guidance counselor. He never told his mom even though she worked in the school. She never found out. Until now Joel has told only four people. The three boys who had attacked him, were in his math class. He was 11 years old.

*"Ain't It Fun" plays, the cast slowly turns to face Ryleigh who has melted in the Joan we know in Act 2.*

*Blackout.*

## ACT 2

### CHAPTER IV: A TRUTH

#### SCENE I

*Darkness. Gas Pedal begins to play and the characters, in forms something representative of their true selves, begin to dance in low club light. Then, somehow, all at once we hear a game show. The club is gone. It is the MC's voice from Act 1. Something like the "gay gabs" game but real. More like wheel of fortune but still in that same forced, announcer way that lets us know they're getting paid way too much for this. Lights come up on a family watching TV. Mom, Dad, Sister, Brother. Maybe there's popcorn. Maybe there's a cross on the wall though that's*

*probably too much. Joan is home from college on winter break. She's a freshman in college.*

JOAN

Ugh, the people on this show are so stupid.

MOM

I know, how can she possibly get away with these answers.

JOAN

Right? Sometimes I think this stuff is scripted.

DAD

It definitely is scripted.

BROTHER

Shhh!

JOAN

Isaac do you actually care who wins.

ISAAC

Yes this is the best part! One of them is going to slip up under the pressure I can tell. I bet it will be the lady.

JOAN

Why would it be her? I don't think that guy seems like any kind of intellectual hero. His answers have been just as lame. Serious overzealous dad vibes.

DAD

What's wrong with an overzealous dad?

JOAN

*Laughing* I'm going to get more popcorn, anyone want anything?

MOM/DAD/ISAAC

No thank you. I'm good. Shhh. Thanks honey.

*Joan gets up and walks into the kitchen. On a blank stage, maybe the family moves or was never really there or she just walks to another part of the stage. Gets a text from her friend Ethan.*

ETHAN

Hey hey! Are you at home? I'm so bored.

JOAN

Yeah, just chillin with the fam. What's up?

ETHAN  
Wanna hang?

JOAN  
Surreeeee, lemme just check with Kath

ETHAN  
Lol okay. I can pick you up

JOAN  
Word, just a sec

Hey mom, is it okay if I go hang out with Ethan for a little bit?

KATHY  
I don't see why not? What's he up to?

JOAN  
Uhunuh, we'll probably just go to Red Robin and get milkshakes or something

KATHY  
Okay, just don't be out too late. We're going to early service tomorrow!

JOAN  
Ugh, why?!

KATHY  
Because Joe will be there and we're getting lunch with him after and Isaac has a scrimmage in the afternoon.

JOAN  
Soooo Dad and I can go to second service and y'all can go to first?

DAD  
I like that plan.

KATHY  
Ha. You're both hilarious. You're only home for a few weeks hon, we're going as a family. You can stay out I'm just telling you,

you're getting up early tomorrow so if you don't want to be exhausted you need to be home in time to sleep.

JOAN

Alright. I'll be back in a few hours then.

KATHY

I love you! Drive safe!

JOAN

Ethan is going to pick me up actually.  
*Texting Hey*, cleared it with Kath just can't be out too late.  
 Got a date with Jesus bright and early tomorrow.

ETHAN

Woof ball change! Lol that's cool. I'm heading out now.

KATHY

Have a good time sweetie.

*Jump to Red Robin. Jump to mid-conversation. Joan distracted.*

## SCENE II

ETHAN

...because if you say you "love" Abba then you must have a favorite song and most likely it's from *Gold* because honestly, who other than me knows any of their other stuff.

JOAN

Ummm my favorite is Head Over Heels thank you very much.

ETHAN

You only know that song because you're friends with me. Honestly, thank God for *Mamma Mia 2*. I know it was absolute trash but at least people now know all of those classics.

JOAN

It wasn't THAT bad.

ETHAN

She literally found a picture of Sam's fiance and immediately burst into knowing me knowing you.

JOAN

Okay it was convenient but I thought Lily James did a good job.



ETHAN  
Well yeah she's

JOAN AND ETHAN  
Perfect

ETHAN  
But yeah, other than having to read all of these musical theater nerds about ABBA, most of it's been okay. It's just weird we don't go to the same school anymore. Everyone just thinks I'm the strange ABBA kid but there's like forty thousand students so I'm not too worried about it ya know?

*Joan gets a notification.*

ETHAN  
Kathleen already??

JOAN  
No, just my...*looks at phone*...bible app. Verse of the day. Proverbs 14:16, "One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless."

ETHAN  
So...it IS your mom!

JOAN  
Shut up.

*She's distracted by that verse. They eat or sip. They food.*

ETHAN  
Any news on the boy front?

JOAN  
Whoa, wanna put on your blinker before you switch lanes like that?

ETHAN  
Sorry, it just got a little Earth to cadet Joanie there for a sec. So, you seeing anyone?

JOAN

No. School's been fine. It's weird not seeing you every day but it's good. I mean not really the glee club type/ so my tribe is a little...

ETHAN

/It's not glee club

JOAN

Sorry. But yeah it's also just weird being out of state at Vowtan. There's like a very weird culty kind of pleasantville, can't describe in words, twisted sense of pride in going there that I just can't relate to..

ETHAN

Yeah this is why I go to public school

JOAN

It is a public school

ETHAN

Don't tell them that.

JOAN

Anyway it's fine just not finding my group as easily. But like you said at a big school it's bound to happen. I think first semester was just rough. But overall it's good.

ETHAN

Good. Yeah, it's good for me too.

*Pause*

JOAN

Good.

ETHAN and JOAN

Are you okay? What's up?

ETHAN

Yeah! Yeah I'm so good! I just wanted to hang, I missed you! Just thinking about doing that musical thing but yeah no I'm just making convo/ you just seem

JOAN

Yeah/...

ETHAN  
something seems/ to be um...

JOAN  
Yeah no I'm good! It'll be weird to/ see you in glee club.

ETHAN  
...like bothering you,/ wait

JOAN  
Nothing's bothering me,/ everything's fine. Sorry!

ETHAN  
it's just like a student group that does musicals I swear/ it's  
not like glee...

JOAN  
It's just tomorrow...Right. I'm sorry.

ETHAN  
But like I guess it's like the show/ amiright? Wait tomorrow?

JOAN  
Okay Darren Criss. /I don't know, seeing Joe will be good I  
guess...

ETHAN  
I'm more like Jonathan Groff... how's your -

JOAN  
*Overlapping* I just don't want to get up early for church.

ETHAN  
Oh yeah, that's so wild. Did you know Darren Criss isn't  
actually-

JOAN  
*Overlapping* Yeah, my mom wants us all to be together while I'm  
home I guess...

ETHAN  
*Overlapping* Sure. Joan?

JOAN  
...and like I want to go, I miss my friends and I haven't found  
a/ church at school-

ETHAN  
I'm gay.

JOAN  
What?

ETHAN  
Oh my God. Oh my God, oh my god, ohmygod.

JOAN  
Ethan-

ETHAN  
I'm gonna throw up. Shit, I'm sorry. I had that all planned out, I was going slip it in with the whole Abba thing and how this guy had asked me to join this musical group thing and then you mentioned Glee and I was gonna make a joke to try to soften the blow because I'm sure it's super against your religion and all and I don't want to offend you but- do you hate me? I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, I tried to like girls, I tried to like YOU! I just, this guy Ryan introduced himself to me and ya know like the first time you liked a boy and you had all these feelings and you were like aaaahhhh I don't know what to do with my hands and it's just so crazy because there they are. Look! There are my hands. Attached to my wrists. Just doing their own thing. My hands. Wow. Ha..ha...would ya look at that they're sweating now wow! Except, I never experienced any of that when I was thirteen because I was too busy trying to convince myself I liked girls. I know you probably don't approve but I really like this Ryan kid and he might even be into me. Who knows?! I'm sorry but I can't keep lying to myself. Ya know, it's like...it's like...  
it's like...

JOAN  
It's like there's grass beneath your feet. You know it's there because the wind is always blowing, lightly. Sweetly. And you hear it rustle in the wind. You can't actually see it because your head is frozen. Looking out at the beautiful, sunny, perfect day around you. And you see all the other people enjoying the day but they don't see you. They can't see you. They won't see you, because you're not in the grass with them. You're not on the Earth. You're floating just inches above the grass. Just an inch. And sometimes you even think you feel it brush it's cool, calming fingers against your stretching, aching toes. But it doesn't. It won't. Because you're not in the world. You're just above it. Floating. Frozen.

ETHAN

Joan. I'm... *sorry? scared? Sad? Happy? Alone? Confused? Relieved?*  
*Let the actor decide. Better, let the audience.*

JOAN

Do you want more fries?

ETHAN

What?

JOAN

They say bottomless but then they stop coming and you only end up getting two helpings and it's like what's the point.

ETHAN

Yeah. Like just say "two helpings of fries" on the menu.

JOAN

So fake.

ETHAN

SO fake.

JOAN

We should stay here til we get like ten helpings.

ETHAN

Yeah we should.

*Pause*

JOAN

I don't know what made you think I would love your annoying,  
*why-did-it-have-to-be-me-loving-ass* any less but you're hashtag  
ride or die baby!

ETHAN

My favorite is Under Attack. The Visitors. 1982.

JOAN

Great album.

ETHAN

Arrival was 1976. Totally different sound.

JOAN  
Still my best friend.

ETHAN  
Womb to tomb?

JOAN  
Love you to the moon and back.

ETHAN  
Shit white girls really need to do better on instagram.

JOAN  
Ilysm bb!!!

ETHAN  
Omg ttyl brb LYLAS

*A moment.*

ETHAN  
Ugh, were you going to tell me something? Before I...my hands did the..?

JOAN  
No. Does it feel like you're feet are on the ground now?

ETHAN  
Yeah.

JOAN  
I love you.

ETHAN  
Love you more.

*Lights. Jump to early service the next morning. Christian rock plays in the transition. Probably the song Altar and The Door.*

### SCENE III

PASTOR  
...and Jesus tells the disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." Ladies and gentlemen of the congregation you are being pruned. God is going

to use the best parts of us to make us whole and keep us in perfect peace. But we have to trust Him. Let's pray. Dear heavenly father God, we thank you so so much for your love for us. We thank you so so much for your sacrifice. Lord you made us new, washed away our sins so we can glorify you and share your light.

*Soft Piano music begins.*

God give us the strength, the diligence, to remain in you, just as you have promised to remain in us. God make each of us a blossoming, ever growing branch connected to you our perfect vine. The giver of life. Let us be a light for others everywhere always. Heavenly father we pray all of these things in your perfect, holy name. Amen.

*Joan goes to get coffee with church friends. The presence of the holy spirit is real!*

SCENE IV

ABBIE

Did you guys see Dalton Baxter today?

LEAH

Ugh, he's so cute. And he's so sweet!

BETH

So are his parents.

JOAN

Didn't he tell Rachel Danson she's fat??

ABBIE/BECCA/BETH/LEAH/HANNAH

*GASP* What?! Noo!

HANNAH

No, no. She asked him out and he said no and when we were at youth group the other night obviously she was really upset so Becca pulled her aside to talk about it-

BECCA

And Rachel said that she thinks it's because she's overweight.

JOAN

That's terrible.

ABBIE

Yeah, you know she's been really insecure about it lately, but honestly she's not even that heavy and she's such a pretty girl.

JOAN  
She really is.

LEAH  
Yeah. She's gorgeous.

BETH  
So why did he say no? Was she like, too forward? I mean their parents are such good friends, I think they'd make a really cute couple.

HANNAH  
Yeah, no he likes her a lot I think. His mom is really strict about dating though.

BETH  
That's fair.

LEAH  
That makes sense.

JOAN  
What do you mean by strict? Like he's not allowed to date?

HANNAH  
Yeah, I think they want him to wait until he finishes at Liberty.

JOAN  
Why?

BECCA  
My mom said it's something about wanting him to focus on his studies but you know how his mom is, she can be really old school.

BETH  
Yeah

LEAH  
Yeah

JOAN  
I mean, it makes sense that they want school to be his priority, but Rachel is literally the perfect girl for him as far as his



parents are concerned. I mean she leads bible study, she works in the nursery, their moms hang out all the time...

HANNAH

Yeah I know, that's what I thought. I thought they'd be happy about it but I guess not. But we shouldn't talk about this. I'm sure Dalton and Rachel will get married eventually.

ABBIE

Yeah, I'm sure they'll get together after college.

BECCA

Yeah

JOAN

Yeah

ABBIE

So what's your boy situation Beth?

BETH

Ugh, what situation? I am a proud single lady, and I just want to focus on my studies too!

*They laugh*

BECCA

YES! Good for you! You're too beautiful for those boys anyway.

BETH

Awww stop, thanks girl! What about you Leah? How's Messiah?

LEAH

Nothing major...

ABBIE

What?! You're seeing someone?

BETH

No!

HANNAH

Oooo spill!

*They laugh and gasp and giggle probably*

LEAH

I'm not seeing anyone! I promise. No no, nothing like that.  
But...there is a boy...

*They squeal*

ABBIE

Oh my goodness. This is so exciting! Tell us!

LEAH

Well he's in my math class. We actually met because we got paired up for this group activity on the first day where we had to fit all these orange cubes into a glass jar and the idea was solving the issue of space or something like that

HANNAH

Yeah and???

BETH

Ught that's so cute.

JOAN

So tell us about him!

LEAH

Well his name is Isaiah

LEAH

He's a freshman as well. He's from Lancaster and he wants to be a missionary in the Sudan because his parents did that for 20 years and that's actually how they met and they got married there but they moved back here when they had him because they wanted him to grow up around his family.

JOAN

Did you just call it *the* Sudan

HANNAH

What?

JOAN

Wow how long have you two been dating?

LEAH

We're not dating. We just hang out sometimes. We got to talking after that first day of class because I'm also interested in missionary work and we realized we were in the same theology

lecture so we just ended up sitting with each other and we ended up working on the same project together and it just sort of took off from there. I've had the desire on my heart for so long to find someone who will care about me and want to be with me and it just feels like an answered prayer.

ABBIE/BETH/BECCA/HANNAH/JOAN

That's so great. Ugh I love that. Amen. I'm so happy for you.  
That's awesome.

BECCA

Yes! And you feel like he does that for you?

LEAH

Totally. He's just so thoughtful. Like one day I was sick and I couldn't make it to lecture and after it was over he brought me his notes and bowl of soup and it's just little things like that. And last month when my dad came down to visit, I introduced them and when Isaiah left Dad looked at me and said, *imitating* "He seems like a nice young man."

*They laugh*

LEAH

If that's not a sign, I don't know what is.

ABBIE/BECCA/BETH/HANNAH

Wow. Yes. That's amazing! Ugh, yes!

JOAN

*Laughs*

That's really great. So you think this is where God wants you? I know you weren't sure if Messiah was even the right place for you.

LEAH

Oh definitely. That's honestly been the greatest thing about it. It's like a clear answer that this was where I was meant to be.

JOAN

That's really great. I'm so happy for you.

BETH

Yeah

BECCA

Yeah that's great

ABBIE

Can we just appreciate the great place we're all at in life  
right now?

LEAH

Awww stop

BECCA

You're so right though. Love you gals.

HANNAH

So what about you Joan? Any boys at Vowtan?

JOAN

Of course there are boys you moronic bubble child! I'm just not  
interested in ANY of them because LOL I might be gay.

SURPRISE!!!

NAT

Aaannt! I'm sorry, wrong way! Try again.

HANNAH

So what about you Joan? Any boys at Vowtan?

JOAN

Oh there are boys...plenty of boys...and I've been ALL OVER  
tinder and bumble tryna get that D!

MYLES

Aaannt! Wrong again!

JOAN

Yeah there are boys but seeing as I'm a raging bulldyke I've  
been too busy tapping pussy to notice any of them. I mean  
scissor me timbers am I right???

JOEL

Aaannt!

JOAN

Huh? What? Oh, no. I'm just focusing on my grades. Vowtan's  
pretty intense.

BECCA

*Gets a text* Ooo! Ladies!! Esther just invited us to get burgers  
at Buzz Burger on Wednesday after bible study who's in?

ABBIE/BETH/LEAH/HANNAH  
Yeah. Me. Ugh, yes! So good. Yes!

JOAN  
Sounds good.

BETH  
I'm so happy we can all spend so much time together. I miss you  
all so much.

JOAN  
I miss you too! It is really nice getting to spend so much time  
with you all.

ABBIE/BETH/BECCA/HANNAH/LEAH  
A chorus of "Yeah"s

*Fade to black.*

SCENE V

*In the black out we hear a voice slowly fade into the night. It  
should creep up on us. Like a ghost.*

HARVEY MILK  
[SOUND CUE OF HOPE SPEECH]

JOAN OF ARC  
(*Smoking a cigarette maybe*) Did that work?

HARVEY MILK  
I don't know. I was murdered five months after I said that.

JOAN OF ARC  
I didn't live long after my claim either.

HARVEY MILK  
What did you do?

JOAN OF ARC  
Listened to God.

HARVEY MILK  
That doesn't seem very radical.

JOAN OF ARC  
Neither does being gay.

HARVEY MILK

It seems as though what is radical isn't always what is right.

JOAN OF ARC

But what is right is almost never what is done.

HARVEY MILK

Neither is what is radical.

JOAN OF ARC

Let me guess...you were shot?

HARVEY MILK

Five times.

JOAN OF ARC

Eh, that's not so bad, you should try swallowing facefulls of smoke.

HARVEY MILK

You were burned alive?

JOAN OF ARC

On a good ol' fashioned pire.

HARVEY MILK

Shit.

JOAN OF ARC

I know right?

HARVEY MILK

They made a movie about me.

JOAN OF ARC

They made me a martyr.

HARVEY MILK

Well...I guess that's pretty neat...I'm sorry, my name's Harvey.

JOAN OF ARC

I know.

JOAN OF ARC

Joan. Joan Of Arc.

*They shake hands*

It's a good speech.

HARVEY MILK

Thanks. I wonder if human beings will ever stoop low enough to the pool to see their own reflection.

JOAN OF ARC

That wouldn't be very human of them.

HARVEY MILK

That's probably true. It's just as well I suppose.

JOAN OF ARC

I was nineteen.

#### SCENE VI

*The lights come up instantly on Joan in her room. The ghosts are gone. She's texting a girl from school.*

JOAN

I'm nineteen.

DI

Really? When was your birthday?

JOAN

November 19th.

DI

Oooo scorpio!

JOAN

Lol yeah, I guess. That doesn't mean anything though.

DI

Um it so does! It means you're super caring but also kind of an asshole.

JOAN

I'm not an asshole!

DI

Like an asshole who gets shit done though! Embrace it. It's a good thing. I'm a Leo we're not caring at all. Just assholes.

JOAN

Lol

DI

How was Buzz Burger?

JOAN

It was really fun! I've known the girls I went with since kindergarten so we're really close and it was nice catching up.

DI

That's awesome I'm glad you had a good time.

JOAN

*Typing...*

DI

I don't mean this to sound weird or anything but are you like super religious then?

JOAN

Yeah, my whole family is really religious.

DI

So are you like Catholic?

JOAN

No I was raised baptist but now we just go to a non-denominational church.

DI

What is that? Like Unitarian?

JOAN

No we just like believe in the bible and salvation. Idk, it's just like for born-again Christians. Or whoever I guess. The slogan is "come as you are"

DI

Well that's a pretty awesome message. But isn't born again the like crazy evangelical-I-was-scorched-by-the-fire-but-have-been-made-clean-repent-repent-repent-brimstone-and-armageddon shit?

JOAN

No it just means you're saved.



DI  
Saved from what?

JOAN  
Like you believe Jesus died on the cross.

DI  
Lol he did...I don't think anyone denies the history there

JOAN  
It's like more than that though. Like I don't just believe in the person Jesus I believe he was *deletes types again* is the son of God and he was sacrificed to save me from my sins and because I believe in him and have asked him into my heart I'm going to heaven and I have the holy spirit with me.

DI  
Whoa...

JOAN  
It's the typical John 3:16 thing

DI  
Kinda platitudey

JOAN  
Yeah I know, but that's just the easiest way to explain it.

DI  
So do you think if people don't believe that, they're going to hell? Do you believe in hell?

JOAN  
Yeah, I believe in Hell and I believe in Satan and demons and all and when I was younger I definitely believed people who weren't saved were going to hell...I don't know if I still do.

DI  
So you think I'm going to Hell?

JOAN  
I don't know.

DI

Yikes, you don't know?!?! Not so great for me. That's just what I want, I get hit by a truck or something and the next thing I see is a giant white room with two doors and some chick in a pleated skirt with glasses is sitting there smiling at me and I'm all, uhhh wtf which door am I supposed to go through and she's all "idk, want a tootsie pop while you wait?"

JOAN

LOL I don't think it's like that

DI

How would you know? Have you died? Have you met pleated skirt lady?

JOAN

I don't.

DI

You don't what?

JOAN

I don't know how it works.

DI

Then how do you know people who aren't "saved" are going to hell?

JOAN

I don't. And you don't have to say "saved" like it's some sort of childhood pet name. I'm an adult.

DI

You're 19

JOAN

You're 18. Respect your elders.

DI

Oh my elders? Will I go to Hell if I don't?

JOAN

Omg can we talk about something else please?

DI

Do you believe God is all knowing?

JOAN  
Yes...

DI  
So then he's just picking people to ship off to eternal damnation? And you're one of the people "saved"? Shit how do I get on the list?

JOAN  
It's not like that?

DI  
How do you know?

JOAN  
I don't

DI  
So either your God isn't all knowing and the selection process is completely arbitrary or he hates some of us??

JOAN  
Will you knock it off?! I don't know! I don't pretend to be God, in fact the bible pretty clearly states one stance on that subject. All I know is that Jesus Christ was the son of God and he died on a cross to save me and he's always with me. I've felt him, I've HEARD HIM. He's woken me up from bad dreams, he told me where to go the night a friend desperately needed me, when I'm in church and we're singing worship songs I get goosebumps and I feel this overwhelming peace. I know I'm going to heaven. That's what I know. I don't pretend to know anything else.

DI  
I don't know what to say.

*Pause.*

JOAN  
Do you have a crush on Professor Anderson?

DI  
Lol no, he's like a total frat bro wanna be. I think that guy peaked in college.

JOAN  
LOL, everyone's obsessed with him. I just don't see the appeal

DI  
I mean he's gotta pretty big chest.

JOAN  
Oh big chests do it for you?

DI  
Not on everyone. Not on Anderson.

JOAN  
I know a thing or two about big chests.

DI  
I've noticed...

JOAN  
*Typing...Typing...Typing...*

*A shift.*

AM I A LESBIAN

RYLEIGH  
And in that moment I'm lifted

ELIZABETH  
Flying

GRACE  
Whoa is she hitting on me

INGRID  
God my lady boner is raging

SADIE  
Is this legal

NATHAN  
It must be lethal

RYLEIGH  
But I can't stop

ELIZABETH  
IV

NATHAN

Drip

NAT & GRACE

Drip

SADIE

Let me sip

RYLEIGH

I want kiss her

ELIZABETH & GRACE

Touch her

RYLEIGH & INGRID

This sounds like a scene from Dirty Dancing

RYLEIGH

only the dancing is dirtier because everyone knows

ENSEMBLE (ALL)

lesbians are kinky

MYLES

What?!

RYLEIGH

Who said that?

Where did I hear that?

ELIZABETH & GRACE

Stop.

RYLEIGH

Am I a lesbian?

She's kissing my back and her fingers slide down into a darkness  
where light exists but it's hidden and hiding from a world that  
wants be to believe my vagina showed up today

NAT

Walked in today

JOEL

Walks in every day

GRACE

For a man

NAT/JOEL/MYLES

For men

RYLEIGH

Maybe they won't notice if I just

INGRID

Open

RYLEIGH

Release

GRACE

That light

RYLEIGH

And her fingers

INGRID

They touch

ELIZABETH AND NAT

I touch

SADIE AND MYLES

Eyes touch

ELIZABETH/NAT/SADIE/MYLES

God this is amazing

NAT

God

ELIZABETH

This is God

MYLES & SADIE

Is amazing

RYLEIGH

I want her more,

ELIZABETH

to understand,

NAT  
to penetrate,

GRACE  
to know,

INGRID  
to touch

RYLEIGH  
And I climb through that darkness, reaching my hands to the next  
hand hold  
The most treacherous rock wall you've ever climbed

SADIE & GRACE  
If you fall you're right where you started

ELIZABETH  
which is death

NAT  
And if you reach the top...

RYLEIGH  
I'm trying to open the door to the light

JOEL  
Behind which

INGRID  
I'm sure sits something akin to a Georgia O'Keefe painting

RYLEIGH  
And she paints me

ELIZABETH  
Red and  
Lilac and

ENSEMBLE (ALL)  
Lovely

RYLEIGH & NISRINE  
And we're lovely

RYLEIGH  
And she's holding me and my eyes go wide

MYLES  
Toes curl

ENSEMBLE (ALL)  
Breathe.

NAT  
Breath.

SADIE  
Exhale.

RYLEIGH  
And I come back down and that blue bubble is just sitting there  
Mocking me  
Desperately craving the delicious sight of three gray dots in my  
gray bubble

SADIE  
She needs my gray dots

ELIZABETH  
Burns for them

NAT  
But instead of saying all of this

GRACE  
Instead of opening the door

RYLEIGH  
My door.

ENSEMBLE (ALL)  
I've lost the key.

JOEL & INGRID  
Sorry maybe another day.

RYLEIGH  
Because who I am and what I want are the same but only if the  
world tells me that's okay and I haven't gotten the green light  
for my light

ELIZABETH & NAT  
So it stays night



INGRID  
Alright.

RYLEIGH  
And I miss out.

*Immediately back in the scene like all the air, humans, and silk were sucked through a vacuum and just the two actors are left.*

DI  
Lol dude, I'm just kidding. You wanna go to that lecture on leather tanning that Anderson was talking about when you get back?

JOAN  
Sure. That sounds cool. Can't wait.

SCENE VII

*Continuous*

KATHY  
Joan sweetie! Can you come down here for a minute?

*Isaac is on his phone. Listening to the 2012 Piers Morgan interview with Kirk Cameron on homosexuality*

JOAN  
Yeah mom, what's up?

KATHY  
Have you talked to Joe at all do you know if him and Angela are coming over for dinner on Tuesday?

JOAN  
No I haven't talked to him.

KATHY  
Will you text him for me? Goodness I feel like that boy just moved out and whoosh mom means nothing any more.

JOAN  
I don't think that's the case. *Texting Joe*

KATHY  
I don't know maybe it's because he's seeing someone now, he doesn't need mom anymore.

JOAN  
You are so dramatic.

KATHY  
Hmm. What did he say?

JOAN  
He hasn't answered yet.

KATHY  
Isaac put that away and set the table please.

JOAN  
What are you even watching?

ISAAC  
This interview of Kirk Cameron from a few years ago. Apparently  
he's changed his stance on it recently.

JOAN  
On what?

ISAAC  
Gay marriage.

JOAN  
Isn't he like crazy.

KATHY  
No. Kirk Cameron was the one in Fireproof.

JOAN  
Yeah, I know who he is. He's like out of his mind though right?

KATHY  
Oh I haven't heard that.

ISAAC  
I don't know but we were just talking about it the other day and  
my friend said to watch this video because he makes a really  
good argument.

JOAN  
What do you mean?

ISAAC

He just explains how it's destructive really well.

JOAN

Oh. Have you talked to Ethan's parents recently?

KATHY

No, why?

JOAN

Nothing. I -

ISAAC

Is he gay? Derek said he saw him at school with a guy.

JOAN

I don't know. You shouldn't believe everything you hear,  
especially from Derek.

ISAAC

Isn't he your best friend?

KATHY

Isaac, Ethan is not gay he's had a crush on Joan for years.

JOAN

Mom!

KATHY

Oh, I'm sorry. Ethan is not gay.

ISAAC

You don't know.

KATHY

I do. Go set the table please.

*Doing dishes or something*

Oh goodness I hope Ethan's not gay.

JOAN

Why?

KATHY

I just can't imagine what his parents would go through.

JOAN

I think if Ethan were gay he'd probably have it harder than his parents would.

KATHY

I can't imagine what that must be like. You know I have no problem with gay people, I've always taught the three of you hate the sin not the sinner, I just can't imagine how they would handle it.

JOAN

I think their job is pretty self-explanatory.

KATHY

What do you mean?

JOAN

Parents. Just love your kids right?

KATHY

Of course. But if one of you were gay I'd want to do something to help you with that. I don't have any problem with gay people, I just don't like it when they're over effeminate. Ethan's not behaving like a woman is he? And those women that dress like men, you can't even tell that their women and then they get offended when you call them sir!

JOAN

Maybe that's how they feel comfortable.

KATHY

Oh no, don't you start. I just don't get it. And I don't care what anyone says, I'll never agree with this whole trans thing. God wanted you to be the gender you are. And this whole pronouns thing now! A woman at work the other day said she wanted to be called "they" as if every time I refer to her I'm supposed to say "they" or "them". Who do I need to talk about the new med-pass procedure? Oh them over there! Just makes no sense.

JOAN

Mm. Yeah. Do you want me to drop off that box of food for the food bank after dinner?

KATHY

Oh! That would be so great. Thank you.

*Shift*

SCENE VIII

*Darkness. Joan is in her dorm. We hear the ringing of a facetime call. She answers, it's BETH.*

JOAN

Hey Beth! How are you?

BETH

Hey girl! I'm great how are you?!

JOAN

I'm okay! This is a surprise, to what do I owe the pleasure?

BETH

I just wanted to call and see how you're doing. I was talking to my mom earlier and I guess she ran into your mom at the store you came up and I was like, "wow I haven't talked to her in forever!"

JOAN

I wonder what my mom had to say about me.

BETH

*Laughing* Probably something about how you're just not the same since you went to school, and how she misses her pal!

JOAN

Seriously! I'm home like every weekend for church and she acts like I'm neglecting her.

BETH

Haha my mom's the same way! They're so dramatic.

JOAN

They are! Wow glad I'm not the only one.

BETH

You're not, Leah was saying the same thing the other day!

JOAN

Oh you talked to Leah? How is she? How's the boy?

BETH

Yeah we talk almost every day! She's doing really well, and

Isaiah is so great. She hasn't actually told me this but I think they're official now.

JOAN

What makes you say that?

BETH

He's met her parents and they took the two of them to this fancy dinner the last time they came to visit her. I don't know why she's hiding it.

JOAN

Maybe she just doesn't want to jinx it, who knows?

BETH

Maybe.

JOAN

So have you talked to any of the other girls? The group chat's been kinda dead lately.

BETH

I know right?! I guess it's just because we're all so far away.

JOAN

But I hate that! I don't want to be out of sight out of mind!

BETH

I know! We should call them! You can add people to facetime, I'm gonna call Becca!

JOAN

Yeah do it! We deserve an explanation for *their* neglect!

*Phone ringing*

*No answer.*

Try Hannah!

*Beth calls Hannah*

*Phone ringing*

HANNAH

Hello?!

BETH  
Hey hey! What's up?!

JOAN  
HANNAH!!

HANNAH  
Oh hey! It's both of you! What's up? This is a surprise.

JOAN  
We want an explanation for why we haven't spoken in so long.

BETH  
Yeah, you started the group chat. You're contractually obligated to keep it going.

HANNAH  
Haha sorry my meme game has been a little weak lately. I've just been really busy.

BETH  
We know, we're just teasing.

JOAN  
I'm not. Do better.

HANNAH  
Umm, you're welcome to reach out to me anytime you want thank you very much.

JOAN  
Touché

HANNAH  
How are you guys?

BETH  
Oh same old. I'm good though, just trying to study for midterms.

JOAN  
That's what I should be doing but instead I'm floundering

HANNAH  
I'm sure that's not true.

BETH  
You love it there, I see all your insta posts.

JOAN

Yeah, no, I have a good time. I just feel like I don't really fit in anywhere.

HANNAH

What do you mean?

JOAN

I just don't really connect with anyone that deeply...here I mean. At school.

BETH

Still having trouble finding a church?

JOAN

Yeah, I don't know, maybe I just don't want to let go of home.

HANNAH

I think you're being tested.

JOAN

What do you mean?

HANNAH

This is the first time you've been in such a large community without your friends or family. And you're not at a Christian college like a lot of us. I think God is pushing you; he's testing your faith.

JOAN

Well it's not a fun test.

BETH

They usually aren't. Is there anything we can do?

HANNAH

Yeah, I'm sorry if it feels like we're losing touch. I can be better about responding in the chat.

JOAN

No, no you're fine. I was just joking. Could you guys just...can you pray for me?

HANNAH

Of course!



BETH

Yeah no problem. Are you sure you're okay?

JOAN

Yeah I'll be fine, I could just really use it right now.

HANNAH

Absolutely.

BETH

Let's do it now!

HANNAH

Yeah, why not?!

JOAN

*Taking a moment to consider it Okay.*

*"Rescue" by Lauren Daigle plays. Moment. All the church girls are involved.*

BETH

Dear Heavenly Father God, I'd like to bring Joan before you now.

I want to lift her up to you God that you may make her strong and help her maintain her faith. We know we aren't promised the answer we always want. We aren't promised answers immediately or in the way we expect them Lord but you do always answer us. I pray for a calm mind for Joan as she waits on her answer. God whatever it is that may be weighing on her heart or mind, whatever this divide is she feels from the people at school I pray that you would alleviate the stress of it for her or make the reason for this trial clear. Father God, we know when we are being tested that it is because you are planning something new and fantastic for us. Lord we know that you are using Joan, you are working in her life to make her new, give her new insights, new power and Lord we thank you for always keeping your promise to us. We thank you for your sacrifice. We thank you for Joan and the incredible works you have planned for her life. Lord, please breathe peace and assurance into her. When she feels that she doesn't fit in let her know that once you did not fit in, when she feels lost, remind her she has people a phone call away who love her, and a God who never forsakes. God we thank you for all you are and all you're going to do. In your perfect, holy name, Amen.

JOAN & HANNAH

Amen.

*The song fades.*

JOAN  
Thanks Beth

BETH  
You're gonna be okay.

JOAN  
I love you guys. Ugh, I wish we could just all go over to one of our houses and watch a crappy animal documentary and eat crappy food like we used to.

HANNAH  
Oh there's a new Planet Earth on Netflix!

BETH  
That would be so fun!

JOAN  
Wait, I have idea. Do you guys have any plans tonight?

HANNAH  
Nope, I was just finishing up some work.

BETH  
I should study but realistically I'm not going to.

JOAN  
Perfect! What if all three of us open the new planet earth on our laptops and try to hit play at the same time.

BETH  
You mean stay on facetime and try to watch it together?

HANNAH  
I don't have any snacks here!

JOAN  
That's okay we can just watch it.

BETH  
I have some pretzels in my room. You can live through me vicariously Hannah.

HANNAH

Oh perfect.

BETH  
Let's do it!

*They pull out their laptops*

HANNAH  
We're such nerds.

JOAN  
It's fine.

*Searching netflix*

BETH  
Okay I've got it.

HANNAH  
The new one?

JOAN  
It's Planet Earth Two right?

HANNAH  
Yeah!

BETH  
That's the one I have

HANNAH  
Got it.

JOAN  
Me too. Okay ready? 1...

HANNAH  
2...

JOAN/HANNAH/BETH  
3...

SCENE IX

*Back in no man's land.*

HARVEY MILK

The first gay people we elect must be strong. They must not be content to sit in the back of the bus. They must not be content to accept pablum. They must be above wheeling and dealing. They must be - for the good of all of us - independent, unbought.

JOAN OF ARC

Yeah, yeah! I like it. It's got an edge to it, but it's still about the people.

HARVEY MILK

That means a lot coming from someone who freed a city from the entire British army in only ten days.

JOAN OF ARC

It was nine days, but like I said, look where it got me.

HARVEY MILK

But you have to be proud of what you did. It meant something to you to stand your ground. To quite literally fight for what you believed in.

JOAN OF ARC

Why? Why should I be proud? You were fighting for gay rights in the 1970s and have things changed at all?

HARVEY MILK

Things have changed. Seeing me as an official made waves. Things have gotten objectively better, are getting better.

JOAN OF ARC

People still fight wars.

HARVEY MILK

So the conversation is different. There's just a new fight.

JOAN OF ARC

There's always a new fight. What difference does it make?  
Cigarette?

HARVEY MILK

If you listened to the rest of my speech you'd know.

JOAN OF ARC

Why should I? Only educated white gay men even know who you are. And they're really the only people you were fighting for right?

HARVEY MILK

If the contributions you and I made weren't important we wouldn't be having this conversation, we wouldn't be in this play. People remember us for our convictions.

JOAN OF ARC

People remember us because we were murdered.

HARVEY MILK

I refuse to believe that.

JOAN OF ARC

Have you ever heard of Kurt Hiller?

HARVEY MILK

No.

JOAN OF ARC

How about Marsha P. Johnson

HARVEY MILK

That's completely different.

JOAN OF ARC

Is it? Or did the issue just get a new name? Hang on, there's another dead gay guy around here somewhere who knows something or other about this, you'll love 'im. He's French too!

*Exits*

HARVEY MILK

*Shouting after her* I don't agree.

JOAN OF ARC

*Offstage or in darkness shouting back* Try being dead for another 500 years.

HARVEY MILK

Don't patronize me, we're on the same side!

JOAN OF ARC

*Retuning, she continues to search for Michel*  
Oh darling, I could never be on the same side as a homo. I grew up catholic. They'd kill me just for talking to you.

HARVEY MILK

You're kind of sick ya know?

JOAN OF ARC

Kurt Hiller once said, "Same-sex love is not a mockery of nature, but rather nature at play; and anyone who maintains the contrary fails to consider the superabundance with which Nature in all her largesse, wastes semen, millions and billions of times over."

HARVEY MILK

That's pretty funny.

JOAN OF ARC

You have to have a sense of humor to be a warrior.

HARVEY MILK

So he WAS a warrior.

JOAN OF ARC

Anyone with conviction and the ovaries to tell bad leaders they're wrong is a warrior. It doesn't mean we remember them.

Passionate people who speak up don't change the world. Passionate people who speak up who get *murdered* do. Where, is that guy?!

HARVEY MILK

I think any voice, diminished by night, deserves to sound out. And anyone granted that position has a responsibility to be a lighthouse for ignorance lost at sea.

JOAN OF ARC

*She stops searching*

Oh enough, with the metaphors! People only care about your cause so much as they can continue profiting off the morality or your ideas. That's why death is so great! It's like the cash-cow of morality. Now c'mon, read me the rest of your speech.

HARVEY MILK

If you believe that why do you even want to hear my speech?

JOAN

Do you really think knowing and acknowledging that the system is flawed removes you from it?

HARVEY

JOAN

*Looks for Michel* That Michel guy can really explain it better.  
Just read your speech.

HARVEY

But -

JOAN

Ah-

*she holds up a hand to silence him and gestures for him to continue reciting the speech. He waits, testing her, and decides to begin again*

HARVEY

"The anger and the frustrations that some of us feel is because we are misunderstood, and friends can't feel the anger and frustration. They can sense it in us, but they can't feel it. Because a friend has never gone through what is known as coming out."

SCENE X

*Joan's kitchen. Kathy is reading a cookbook looking for something to whip up. Joan attempts to come out to her.*

JOAN

Hey Mom, what's for dinner?

KATHY

Oh we just had spaghetti, do you want me to heat you some up?

JOAN

Oh no, no. I'm good. I ate with Ethan. Did you guys watch that game show thing you like tonight?

KATHY

Oh yeah...

JOAN

Who went home?

KATHY

That boy, who told that sweet story about his grandma?

JOAN  
Oh no I liked him!

KATHY  
I know! So now I don't know if I'm going to watch it next week.

JOAN  
Oh no...

KATHY  
I know!

JOAN  
So...what, um, what are you reading there?

KATHY  
I'm trying to find a new recipe for the church bake sale.

JOAN  
Oh right... you should make your cupcakes!

KATHY  
No I made those last year and you know Betty is going to bring  
cupcakes again.

JOAN  
Oh, I don't know, I always like your/ cupcakes

KATHY  
Although cakes...let me see...

*Flips to the "cake" section of the cookbook*

JOAN  
How was bible study tonight?

KATHY  
It was good, would have been nice to have you there, but I know  
you had plans with Ethan. Ugh, you're so grown up and busy no  
time for church groups with Mom.

JOAN  
No mom. I love going with you, it's just nice to visit friends  
and since Ethan and I were both home this weekend.

KATHY



I understand honey you're busy. I'm glad you got to spend time,  
I just hope you're taking time for your walk with God too.

JOAN

I am, I just haven't found a church at school I really connect  
with yet.

KATHY

That can take a long time, remember it's not just the building  
or the doctrine, the people make the church.

JOAN

Yeah, I'm guess I'm just not sure I agree with everything at the  
churches I've been to.

KATHY

Well I get that, your father and I had a hard time when we first  
moved out here. It's not easy, satan's got a lot of wolves in  
sheeps' clothes out there.

JOAN

I know...it's tough...

*Pause*

Mom, do you really think God hates gay people? Um...

KATHY

What?

JOAN

Do you...you were talking about Ethan the other night and..

KATHY

Oh dear is Ethan gay?

JOAN

No. Mom can you listen to me for a second?

KATHY

I never would have guessed. I thought when Isaac brought that up  
it was just some mean rumours. Oh goodness, his parents didn't  
kick him out did they?

JOAN

Mom. No. Ethan's not...shit!

KATHY  
Joan!

JOAN  
I think I'm bi Mom.

*Silence.*

KATHY  
What?

JOAN  
Bisexual. I like guys and girls...

KATHY  
Oh. Well of course you do sweetheart. *Begins "prepping" her cake*

JOAN  
So wait, you know??

KATHY  
Sure honey, you've always been a very open person. I don't see what this has to do with Ethan, but-

JOAN  
What?! Mom no. This isn't about Ethan, and I don't mean in a friendly, yeah-summer-camp-was-a-lot-of-fun-made-tons-of-new-pals-kumbaya kind of way, I mean I am attracted to both men and women.

KATHY  
Are you sure?

JOAN  
Um...pretty sure...

KATHY  
You're not bringing this up because, oh I don't know, you're meeting a lot of new people? Is it because Ethan's gay? Are you having trouble fitting in at school?

JOAN  
Jesus Christ Mom!

KATHY  
Joan Margaret!

JOAN

I'm sorry mom but I'm trying to tell you that I'm struggling with this here. I don't know what to do.

KATHY

What do you mean "do"? What do you want to do?

JOAN

Mom I'm sorry if this makes you uncomfortable but I really need your help here.

KATHY

With what?! I'm just not sure why you're bringing this up. Pass me that measuring cup please

JOAN

Can you listen to me?! I'm sorry I'm not the daughter you and dad want me to be but I've prayed about it and nothing's changed!

KATHY

Sweetheart, *embraces her*  
We all go through phases dear, college can be a confusing time.

JOAN

Mom I'm not confused, not about this. I don't think there was ever a time I didn't like girls.

KATHY

Did something happen?

JOAN

What?

KATHY

Well fine. Okay fine. Fine You're "bi" or whatever, what made you think that?

JOAN

What are you talking about?

KATHY

Are you dating a girl?

JOAN

No.

KATHY

Did you kiss a girl?

JOAN

No Mom! What-

KATHY

Well what was it? What made you think this?

JOAN

Mom something has always been wrong with me. Didn't you notice that I was never interested in any of the guys you constantly tried to push on me throughout school?

KATHY

What do you mean "push on you"? I never did that.

JOAN

Ha! You did that all the time! You and dad would have had me in an arranged married if you could.

KATHY

That is not true, we want you to choose a spouse who you love. We have raised the three of you to hopefully choose people with particular morals and beliefs, and I'm sorry if that's inconvenient for you young lady, but don't say we pushed people on you. We just want the three of you to be happy.

JOAN

You mean straight.

KATHY

Well, ya know, Joan. It is a sin. I'm not going to change my stance on that.

JOAN

What is sinful mom? Choosing someone who doesn't meet your "particular criteria"?

KATHY

You know the bible is very clear about homosexuality.

JOAN

I am not a homosexual Mom! Okay? Listen, I have tried to just ignore this. I used to tell myself over and over in high school that she's just pretty, I love her new haircut, or oh she's so

cool, or even wow I hate her she's so annoying! But it's a lie Mom. They were all lies. I didn't think whatsherface was just cool, or think so-and-so was annoying, I had a crush on those girls mom. I've been wrong my whole life and it's made me insane. Even when I like guys it's wrong. Being interested in one of your suggestions wouldn't stop me from liking girls and if sin is sin and being gay is a sin, and thinking is just as bad as doing, carry the one Mom!

KATHY

Have you told anyone else?

JOAN

Ethan.

KATHY

What did he say?

JOAN

I love you.

*Stop.*

KATHY

I don't think you should tell Isaac and Joe.

JOAN

Don't worry after this, I may never tell anyone in this household anything ever again.

KATHY

I don't what we're going to tell your father.

JOAN

I don't know.

KATHY

Do you want me to tell him?

JOAN

I don't know.

KATHY

And you're sure.

JOAN

Yep.

KATHY

Joan, I don't love you any less. I just cannot condone a homosexual relationship. You will always have a home here, and your father and I will always love you. You know, a lot parents kick their kids out, I would never do that. You know that right? You are my daughter no matter what and I would never do that to you. You do know that?

JOAN

Yeah, I know, I'm gonna go to bed.

Hey K *by Passion Pit plays in the transition to Ethan's dorm room.*

## SCENE XI

ETHAN

What do you mean you ran away? It was that bad?

JOAN

She just stood there, staring at me with this frustrated look on her face. Like the kind of frustrated when you're putting together an IKEA dresser and there's a piece missing. I don't think they're ever going to get it.

ETHAN

You know coming here isn't really running away? It's like a twenty minute bus ride.

*They exchange a look*

Sorry not helpful. Let's go out!

JOAN

What? No, I just need to...I don't know what, but not that.

ETHAN

Just trust me. We're doing this, come on. Grab your coat. Rooms full of queers and bad decisions put everything into perspective.

*Shift to Kathy and Rob. She's just told him. She's just been crying.*

ROB

Really puts everything into perspective doesn't it.

KATHY

What do you mean?

ROB

I've always thought we've done right by the three of them. I guess we're not the parents we thought we were.

KATHY

Don't say that.

ROB

How could this happen?

PASTOR

And this is happening all over the country.

*At the bar. Gas Pedal plays.*

ETHAN

I think that girl over there is checking you out.

JOAN

Great, that's just what I need now. Can we go?

ETHAN

Just hang out a little! I texted Ryan, it'll be fun!

PASTOR/ROB

It's an abomination.

PASTOR

Leviticus 20:13 tells us. Now, God loves all his children but the bible is clear. You cannot be saved and be gay.

KATHY

Well she said she was bisexual. I'm going to talk to pastor John and see what he thinks. I know he's dealt with this a lot.

ROB

So what you're saying she just shouldn't act on this?

ETHAN

Oh my God she's coming over here!

JOAN

Oh shit!

PASTOR

Does this mean we don't love our homosexual neighbors? Does this mean we treat them poorly? Of course not. But God defines marriage for us as the union of one man and one woman.

JOAN

How's my hair?

ETHAN

Like a curly Agnetha Fältskog

JOAN

Is that good?

*The actor playing Di approaches Joan and they begin to dance, awkward at first, but Joan eventually gets into it.*

KATHY

I'm just saying as long as she eventually marries a man what's the harm.

ROB

Right. I just hope this doesn't turn into anything bigger. Do you think she wasn't ready for a secular college?

KATHY

I think she'll grow out of this. You and I both know God prepares one man and one woman for each other.

ROB

So we pray.

KATHY

So I believe.

ETHAN

Enjoying ourselves are we??

JOAN

Maybe...



PASTOR

We must be equally yoked.

ROB

Do you think I should talk to her.

KATHY

It couldn't hurt. Be clear, but make sure you tell her I love you.

*Ethan teasing Joan*

JOAN

Go away!

*The dancing becomes more aggressive*

ROB

You're right. I'll go see if she's up.

PASTOR

God is creating the perfect home for each and every one of us.  
We're gonna have a mansion! A whole mansion! Streets of gold.  
Wonder beyond compare, and it's just for us. But we have to live  
our lives for him.

*The girl from the bar begins to kiss Joan's neck. Joan pulls back.*

JOAN

Um. Hey sorry, let's just dance okay!

*The actor playing Di moves on to someone else.*

ETHAN

What did you say to her?

*Rob returning*

KATHY

That was quick, what did you say to her?

ROB

She's not in her room!

KATHY

What?!

ETHAN

What do you mean she tried to kiss you?!

JOAN

Can we get out of here?

ETHAN

*Checking his phone* Yeah, in just a bit. Ryan will be here any minute. I'm sorry, just try to have fun! *Grabs her hands to dance* That guy's cute, go dance with him.

*Joan apprehensively goes up to guy in bar*

PASTOR

Our choices define who we are as individuals. We know that it is through Christ that we are washed clean of our sins, Amen?

JOAN

Ethan no, I'm sorry! I can't do this!

*Ethan is dancing with other bar-goers*

Ethan!

KATHY

*On the phone* Thanks Deb, no no, I'm sure she just went out. Thank you. Ethan's not at home this weekend, maybe she took the bus to his dorm?

JOAN

*Calling across the bar* Ethan!

ROB

Get your coat.

ETHAN

He's hot! Dance with him!!

PASTOR

So we have to be vigilant. We must pray without ceasing, meditate on the scripture. Always lead a life of love and a life of Christ and he will not guide you astray.

*As the guy at the bar tries to dance with Joan she can't take it and runs out.*

ETHAN

*On his phone.* Oop! Just got the text from Debbie, I guess Kath  
is on the move. *Notices Joan is gone*

ROB

Don't worry we'll find her!

KATHY

Rob...

ETHAN

Joan?! JOAN!

PASTOR

Keep your mind clear of lustful thoughts,

ROB

Kathy

PASTOR

Unnatural thoughts.

KATHY

I feel like I don't even know my own daughter.

*Rob pulls her out*

ETHAN

JOAN! *Searching for her*

PASTOR

God is preparing the holiest of homes for you.

ETHAN

Joan.

PASTOR

We need only keep ourselves holy/ for him.

ETHAN

*/JOAN! Runs out of the bar*

SCENE XII

*The stage is empty. The party is gone. Just a park bench and a homeless woman who looks vaguely like our friend Joan of Arc. Joan takes in the scene, leaves the woman to her business, and sits on the park bench.*

HOMELESS WOMAN

*After a moment. Nice night.*

*Joan ignores her*

*It's rare you can see the stars here.*

*Joan acknowledges her presence but doesn't look at her.*

*Listen kid, I'm not going to ask you for money.*

JOAN

What?

HOMELESS WOMAN

*She speaks! What are thou that usurpst this time of night together with that fair and warlike form?*

JOAN

*Getting up to leave Sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you. Have a/good night.*

HOMELESS WOMAN

*Wait, wait, wait I'm just messin' with ya. What's up kid? Ya look awful.*

JOAN

*Glances as the woman Pots and kettles*

HOMELESS WOMAN

Touché.

JOAN

*Sorry I don't mean to be rude I just-*

HOMELESS WOMAN

*Had a rough night?*

JOAN

Yeah.

HOMELESS WOMAN

I had one of those once. *Reaching in her pocket Cigarette?*  
*Joan shakes her head no, the homeless woman smokes. A homeless  
 man enters.*

HOMELESS MAN  
 Will you quit making that joke?! It wasn't funny the first time,  
 it ain't funny now. Hi there friend, is this woman bothering  
 you?

JOAN  
 No. She's fine.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
 See that? Why don't you mind your own business? Now c'mon, speak  
 the speech!

HOMELESS MAN  
 Ah c'mon can't ya see she's upset. Probably just wants to be  
 left alone.

JOAN  
 No really you're fine. You're both fine. Actually I don't mind  
 the company right now.

HOMELESS MAN  
*Sotto voce* Shit I do

HOMELESS WOMAN  
 Shh! What's up chickadee?

JOAN

HOMELESS MAN  
 There's no pressure...

JOAN  
 I don't even know where to start.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
 Well you're clearly upset

HOMELESS MAN  
 Distressed

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Probably ran away

HOMELESS MAN  
Probably from home...

JOAN  
I just don't know what to do. See, I think I like this girl at school, but I'm not gay!

HOMELESS MAN  
Hey, ain't nothing wrong with being gay

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Shh! Go on.

JOAN  
Right, but I like this girl, well, I think I do, I'm not really sure who I like but I do know that I love God and-

HOMELESS MAN  
Ahhhh I see...

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Ain't nothing wrong with loving God! Now be quiet and let the girl talk. *Takes a huge drag of her cigarette probably*

JOAN  
I believe in what I was taught growing up. I believe that God has done some really incredible things in my life, and without Him I'm not sure I'd still be here. But I want to have sex! And I want to have sex with not just men! And that's like doubly bad and I'm already confused about the sex thing and then on top of it there's this girl at school I like but she's a girl! And I don't want to give up God to be gay or bi or whatever I am but I feel like I can't have it both ways!

*Michel Foucault dressed as a third homeless man bursts onto the scene. He looks wild and much more unkempt than the other two. He speaks with a horrendous imitation French accent. He's bald and has glasses and wears a turtleneck sweater.*

FOUCAULT  
Why do you need to have eet any way?

JOAN

Huh?! *Whipping around*

HOMELESS MAN  
Oh shit.

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Hey!! There you are I've been looking everywhere for you!

FOUCAULT  
'Allo dear, I was standing outside ze symfonee 'all listening to  
le Mozart's requiem! Tres magnifique!

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Ah yes classic. Tragic, but classic.

JOAN  
Sorry, what did you say?

FOUCAULT  
I was standing outside ze symfonee 'all list-

JOAN  
No when you walked up. About having it both ways?

FOUCAULT  
Ah oui! Why do you need to choose one or ze ozair?

JOAN  
I can't have it both ways, my parents would kill me and my new  
friends already think I'm weird for going home to go to church  
every weekend.

FOUCAULT  
Ah ze parents. Uh question?! Who decided you were gay?

JOAN  
No one decided? I'm not gay. I'm -

FOUCAULT  
Precisely! You are not!

JOAN  
What?!

HOMELESS WOMAN  
Yeah what?

HOMELESS MAN

Yeah what?

FOUCAULT

Why does it matter who you like? How does zat have anything to do with loving...God was eet?

JOAN

Because my parents -

FOUCAULT

Oui, now zers ze rub!

JOAN

What do you mean?

FOUCAULT

There is no word for your sexuality because it does not exeest. It was created by your parents, by ozer "queer" people, by ze church, by a world zat wants you to see yourself as small tiny nobody who ees not worthy of "heaven".

HOMELESS WOMAN

See, I told you he was on to something.

HOMELESS MAN

This guy is certifiably insane

FOUCAULT

Even zat! See how you use zat word, insane to make yourself feel better about what is different about you and me? But what do you do with zat information? What does calling me insane do for you?

*To Joan*

I am not insane, or homeless! I am currently not in what we define as a home but zat is simply something I am doing. Calling me homeless just helps people with homes determine zat their lives are somehow better zan mine because of eet. What does calling yourself bisexual do for you? All eet does is tell you, okay I am in anozaire categoree of person and zat category is wrong so everyone else must be right. HOORAH! WHOOPIE! For everyone else! You are not queer or gay or bi or even a Christian or even a woman or even in zis play! Zose are just things you do. People take verbs and turn zem into nouns every day so zey can control ozaire people but you have ze potential to exist beyond zat.

JOAN



No. no. I'm sorry that's just not right. I am a Christian. I love God.

FOUCAULT

But even now you say two different things!

JOAN

And I'm not gay, I just like Di...I think.

FOUCAULT

*Pulls chocolate out of his pocket* Would you like a bon-bon? Anyone? Bon-bon?

HOMELESS MAN

...what kind

HOMELESS WOMAN

Yeah what kind?

JOAN

But you're saying I should just not use a word and then I can do whatever I want?

FOUCAULT

Zees one has ze little crème!

HOMELESS WOMAN

Oooo!

HOMELESS MAN

Do you have any with coconut?!

JOAN

Hello?!

FOUCAULT

You already can do whatever you want. You always could. Let me ask you, is a sick person really sick? Or is that just a word that keeps a lot of hospitals in business and makes doctor's a lot of money? Who decides your life is worse because you sleep with a woman and your life is better because you love God? Why are you dependent on authority figures to decide your fate? You are in distress because you want ze world of God to accept your sexuality and your friends at school to accept your God, oui?

Well consider zees, if zat were to happen, if zat utopia exeested, you would never even know there were words to describe

your sexuality or your religion because what creates zees game of strife inside you, is ze very naming of ze labels themselves.

JOAN

Do you believe in God?

FOUCAULT

Moi? Of COURSE not! But I am gay! You can't have it both ways!  
Haha! Bon-bon?

JOAN

Ugh! None of you are any help at all! Why am I even telling you all this?

HOMELESS WOMAN

Listen kid *lights another cigarette* I think what he's trying to say is it's up to you to be who you want to be-

FOUCAULT

Not quite, but zers really not enough time left in ze show!

HOMELESS MAN

I may not believe in God the way you do kid, but I do believe in doing what makes you happy, and unfortunately, sometimes ya gotta fight for your happiness.

HOMELESS WOMAN

One time, when I was about your age. I had a choice to make about fighting for something I knew was right, but my parents, and all my friends disagreed with me. They said I wasn't the right person for the job. Even after I won, I wasn't allowed to be happy about it. People lit me the fuck up. But if I hadn't done what I did, I wouldn't be who I am.

HOMELESS MAN

This battle you're facing isn't something that's going to end for you, but how you fight it will determine who you become.

JOAN

I just don't even know what to do. Any way I turn I'm screwed.

FOUCAULT

Talk to God no?

HOMELESS MAN

Oh don't make fun!

FOUCAULT

No really! Zer's no one you trust more no? Talk to him. See if he talks back.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Not a half bad idea. Want us to give you some space?

JOAN

I guess.

HOMELESS MAN

You're not gonna do anything crazy are you?

JOAN

I really don't know.

FOUCAULT

Oooh! How exciting! *Extending another chocolate* But really, ze amande is to die for.

HOMELESS MAN

Honestly where did you even get chocolate?!

HOMELESS WOMAN

C'mon guys, let's give the girl some room. *They start to leave Harvey and Foucault bickering.*

*To Joan* Whatever you decide, make sure it's your choice. Not someone else's. *Begins to exit* "One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. But to sacrifice what you are, and to live without belief, that is a fate more terrible than dying."

JOAN

Who said that?

HOMELESS WOMAN

A young girl, not so different from you. Goodnight kid.

*She exits. Joan alone. Prays.*

JOAN

You know you're not funny!

Why am I in this mess? I know I shouldn't be asking why me but it feels like all of this is happening to me and...I don't have

any choice in the matter. You wanted us to have free will but then you made being gay something we can't choose. Is that guy right? Am I just supposed to forget about the words and just do what I do and not worry about any consequences? Dear God, is loving a woman wrong? Am I wrong? What have I done? I haven't done anything? Is it so bad to kiss someone you like? By that guy's standards gender doesn't even exist! Do you believe in gender God?

I'm so confused. Look at me, asking God his beliefs.

If you created us in your image and I can't choose this than something about me must be right. I can't be all wrong. I can't be. Please help me prove this to my parents. Help them understand! Help me understand. I'm so lost and I need your guidance. I need a sign. Something! Hello?! Anything God, please let me know I'm okay! Because if I'm not okay then I can't do this. If this isn't okay I need you to take it from me.

God please forgive me for any homosexual thoughts. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I'm queer. Just change it! I don't know what to do and I need you take this away from me. If it's so wrong just take it away God. Let me go home, and wake up tomorrow and be straight. Let me make my parents proud like Joe and Isaac. I'll only be friends other believers. I'll do whatever it takes! Whatever you want God! It's too much so just take it away, please take it away! I can't handle it. I don't want it. It's killing me God, please take it from me. TAKE IT AWAY I DON'T WANT IT ANYMORE! GOD PLEASE! PLEASE GOD MAKE ME STRAIGHT. I'M SORRY JUST TAKE IT AWAY!

*She gets a notification on her phone.*

*Reading Verse of the day. Convenient.*

#### PLAYWRIGHT

First Corinthians 15:9 and 10. I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain. No, I worked harder than all of them-yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

*This is Gospel plays. Maybe a video rolls of various people holding up signs with their conflicting identities. If not a video, the cast comes out and holds them up.*

END OF PLAY