

Action Hero
By John Fisher

Casting:

Actor 1 Jason
Actor 2 Parnell, Max, Clark
Actor 3 Cranston, Jack, Waiter, Man at Bohemian Club

Setting: LA and San Francisco

Time: Now

Sources:

Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear*.
Reisner, Marc. *Cadillac Dessert*.
The Los Angeles Times.
Wikipedia.

Part I – Getting Out and Getting Up

Prologue

(JASON enters and talks to the audience. He is twenty-two, dressed casually.)

JASON

When I was in college, there was one action star who held on. As the others aged out, went on TV, started making dramas, retired, he held on, making action pictures. He was middle aged, impossibly old, but he was the undisputed monarch of the action picture. His name was Clark Tail.

(CLARK and VILLAIN run on from opposite sides of the stage. CLARK barrel rolls, kicks VILLAIN in face. VILLAIN falls, draws gun, aims at CLARK. CLARK dives and ducks, then rolls like a log into VILLAIN. VILLAIN falls, raises gun, aims at CLARK. CLARK runs around room dodging gun shots. VILLAIN is out of bullets. He moves to reload. CLARK comes in and kicks the gun out of VILLAIN's hand, kicks him in the face, kicks his legs out from under him.)

JASON

There were rumors about him. But how could you care when you saw him defying age, gravity, and logic. He was Clark Tail. Screw the rumors. He was an inspiration to all of us who wanted to make it. He was also Hollywood's biggest liar. Oh, well.

(CLARK exits triumphantly. VILLAIN crawls off stage. JASON exits.)

Scene 1

(JASON enters wearing page boy wig and holding a rapier.)

JASON

(To audience)

I graduated from college last year. Double major: BA in History and Theatre. And my father came backstage after my final production. I was Hamlet in... well, you know the title:

(As Hamlet, very gay, very campy) To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler of the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing, end them.

JASON

(To audience)

And when he came backstage, this is what my father said:

PARNELL

(Entering)

Jesus, that was long. Is there a toilet back here? (He exits to toilet.)

JASON

(To audience)

I think what bugged him wasn't that it was long. It's that I played Hamlet as a big old queen. He hated my politics. My history thesis was about how George Washington was queer. That drove him crazy. And you know about Abraham Lincoln. Uh-huh. (Stashing wig and rapier, putting on a tie and jacket) I was moving to LA. And I was supposed to meet him next day at The Bohemian Club for lunch. To get some money.

(A table and chair have been set up – the Bohemian Club. PARNELL enters, very natty, very gruff.)

PARNELL

(Taking in JASON's loud pink tie)

Jesus, is that the best tie you've got? (They sit at table.) You want a Martini?

JASON

I'll have a Shirley Temple.

PARNELL

Shirley Temple!

JASON

I'm joking.

(WAITER enters.)

PARNELL

(To WAITER)

Two Martinis. (WAITER exits. To JASON) That's not funny. You've got to learn what's funny. The crab here is great.

JASON

So can I have some money?

PARNELL

(Seeing someone)

Oh, Jesus, look at this asshole coming over here.

(JACK enters, well dressed in suit and tie but quite drunk, walking towards their table. PARNELL stands up.)

PARNELL
(To JASON)

Get up! Get up!

(JASON stands.)

JACK
(Pumping PARNELL's hand)

Hi, Parnell.

PARNELL
Jack. How are you? This is my son, Paul.

JASON
(Correcting him)
Jason.

PARNELL
Jason, Paul, Fred. One of my sons. Jesus!

JACK
(Shaking JASON's hand)
Hellohowareyou?

JASON
Pleased to meet you, sir.

PARNELL
How are you?

JACK
Good. Good.

PARNELL
Yeah? Yeah? Well, that's great.

(Awkward pause as they smile at one another.)

JACK
Sit, sit. Give my best to Darleen.

PARNELL
Sure, sure. And you give my love to... old what's her name.

JACK
I shall.

JASON
Pleased to meet you, sir.

JACK
Jack.

JASON
Pleased to meet you, Jack. (JACK exits.) Who's he?

PARNELL
Big. Very big.

JASON
Big how?

PARNELL
He owns Chili.

JASON
Like Hormel Chili?

PARNELL
No, in South America.

JASON
Chile's a country.

PARNELL
Yeah, well, he owns it. His father gave it to him. Now what the hell do you want to do in LA?

JASON
Make it in movies.

PARNELL
I don't know anyone in Hollywood so don't ask for contacts.

JASON
I didn't ask for contacts, I asked for-

(WAITER delivers Martinis.)

PARNELL

Here we go. (They raise glasses.) Cheers. Congratulations. You're a college graduate. Good work. (To WAITER) Couple of steaks, rare; no, he'll have the crab. One steak, one crab. Both rare. (WAITER exits. To JASON) What were you saying?

JASON

You know Joel Silver.

PARNELL

That asshole? Jesus, he died twelve years ago.

JASON

No, he didn't.

PARNELL

I didn't know anyone when I was starting out. No one. I was just a little piece of dried poo on the sidewalk. Dried, flaky poo. Blowing in the wind. You got a sense of humor, that's enough.

JASON

You just said I didn't.

PARNELL

(Seeing someone approaching)

Jesus! Here comes another asshole. Get up. (They stand. ANOTHER MAN, even drunker, enters and exits without even looking at them.) Oh, I guess not. Jesus, who is he not to come over here and say "Hi."? (They sit.) Son, I want you to do well down there. But take it easy on the gay stuff. Hollywood's a business. I know you think it's funny, but most people like me are threatened by it. Gay stuff's something we did in college and are embarrassed about now. Everyone in Hollywood's had a dick in his mouth but he regrets it.

JASON

I thought you said you didn't know anyone in Hollywood.

PARNELL

I don't. But the people I do know have had a lot of dick in their mouths and they've got a lot of regret.

JASON

Excuse me. Where's the bathroom? (PARNELL waves his hand vaguely. JASON exits.)

PARNELL

(Signaling)

Waiter. Waiter. Garckon! Gargoyle!

(JASON sneaks back on and stands behind him, pretending to be WAITER.)

PARNELL

Two more Martinis and where the hell's my steak?

JASON

Here's your fucking steak, dickhead.

(PARNELL spins in his seat, furious; realizes it's JASON and laughs.)

PARNELL

Son, I love it when you do that. Now that's funny. And it's not fruity funny.

JASON

(Pretending to see something)

Shit, here comes Chile again. Get up! Get up!

(PARNELL bounds up, and realizes he's been scammed again. He laughs.)

PARNELL

Where did you get your sense of humor? Your mother's dry as toast.

JASON

I got it from you.

PARNELL

But I'm only funny cause I'm a drunk. (Sadly) I'm not funny. God, I wish I was funny. I wish I was some fucking thing.

JASON

(Holds his hand)

You're all right.

PARNELL

(Referring to JASON's Martini)

Are you going to drink that?

JASON

(Pushing Martini to him)

It's yours.

PARNELL

You're a good son. I always said that. Your brothers can be dicks but you're the good one. One day I'll tell you why that is.

(PARNELL sips second Martini, then removes wallet and counts out money, handing it to JASON. JASON stands and talks to audience. PARNELL exits, and table and chairs are struck.)

Scene 2

JASON

(To audience)

Soon I was living on Westmoreland Avenue off Wilshire and doing some theatre on the weekends. I discovered a queer theatre in the Valley that specialized in putting on episodes of old TV shows. That's how I met my friend Cranston. He was playing Mary Tyler Moore and I was Georgette.

(JASON exits. CRANSTON enters dressed as Mary Tyler Moore with a mixing bowl. Knock-knock.)

CRANSTON

(As Mary)

Who is it?

JASON

(As Georgette, off)

Georgette.

CRANSTON

Come on in.

JASON

(Entering in Georgette wig)

Hi, Mary.

CRANSTON

Hi.

JASON

I hope I'm not disturbing you. Please tell me if I am.

CRANSTON

No, you're not disturbing me.

JASON

I'm not sure you'd tell me if I were.

CRANSTON

Yeah, I would.

JASON

No, because you'd think you might embarrass me and rather than embarrass me you wouldn't say anything. You're so nice and patient and kind. You wouldn't say anything, would you?

CRANSTON

Well I don't know. Uh... Maybe.

JASON

Thank you. But I don't want to disturb you.

(JASON starts to exit.)

CRANSTON

Georgette. Come here. You're not disturbing me. I'm all yours. What can I do for you?

(Cooking timer goes off.)

CRANSTON

Oh, sorry, three minutes are up. (Starts to cross back to her bowl.)

JASON

Can I have three more?

(The laugh track is ridiculously loud.)

JASON

(To audience)

I thought it was junk, the worst kind of closety gay theatre but the audience loved it. Loved it. And the night Georgia Engle died people lit candles in the house. Gay men worship stardom, of any kind. I admit, I felt like a goddess that night.

(CRANSTON bows to him reverently.)

CRANSTON

(To audience)

After Mary Tyler Moore we did something called Drunk Drag Musicals, usually starring the Artistic Director, Max.

JASON
(To CRANSTON)

Hey, I'm the narrator.

CRANSTON

Guess not.

MAX
(Entering in drag and acting drunk)

So at the end of Act I Albin sings a big song of defffiance.

(MAX drunkenly sings "I Am What I Am" in drag. JASON watches, smirking, as CRANSTON changes. CRANSTON joins him when changed.)

JASON
(To audience)

Again, I thought it was crap, but people loved it. LOVED it.

(CRANSTON and JASON are smoking cigarettes "out back." MAX joins them.)

MAX

Of course, they do. TV shows, old musicals. It's nostalgia. Theatre's meant to entertain.

JASON

It's meant to make you think.

MAX

No, that's books, fine art. Theatre should make you laugh.

JASON

You're not even drunk. You just pretend to be drunk.

MAX

Of course, I'm not drunk. I'm a professional.

CRANSTON

And he sells more drinks if he acts drunk.

MAX

Yes, what's wrong with that?

JASON

Everything. You should be queering the classics, putting on new works, discussing queer issues.

MAX

Save it for your novel. Write an editorial. Hey, I have to get up early and make a commercial.

JASON

Is that why you came to LA? To make commercials and sing in a dress?

MAX

(To CRANSTON)

This guy a friend of yours?

(CRANSTON smiles.)

MAX

I came here to act. I act a lot. Commercials, TV, onstage. I'm very lucky.

JASON

There are a lot of closet cases in Hollywood. Don't you feel like that should be discussed? In plays at least.

MAX

No. Hollywood's an industry. Like the car industry. Nobody cares about the sexuality of people who make Fords.

JASON

You should get Clark Tail to sing in a dress. Now that would be political.

MAX

How would that be political?

JASON

Because he's Hollywood's biggest closet case.

CRANSTON

Ooooooo....

MAX

Ouch! Honey! You're not going to get far in this town talking like that. (Music) Oh, there's my cue. Good night gentlemen. (He exits singing obnoxiously: "The Best of Times is Now.")

CRANSTON

This place, what a freak show. I agree with you. Bunch of middle-aged queens singing in dresses. The tragic state of the American Theatre.

JASON
Can I tell you something?

CRANSTON
What?

JASON
I'm looking for a job.

CRANSTON
You don't want my job. Fucking nurse maid to movie stars.

JASON
You're a maid?

CRANSTON
(Offended)
Hey, I work for a management agency.

JASON
I really could use a job.

CRANSTON
Can't help you. I don't know anyone.

JASON
What about at your agency?

CRANSTON
I just *work* there. I don't *know* anyone.

JASON
How long you been playing Mary Tyler Moore?

CRANSTON
A year. Most of the real theatre down here's Union. Forget it if you're not in Equity. This way at least I'm around gay people. Gives me something to do on the weekends. I worked in the Knott's Scary Farm for a while. That was all right.

JASON
You like scaring people?

CRANSTON
Sure. More than that I like being scared. That's why I quit. Not scary being a ghoul.

JASON

I'm great at pranks. I could scare you.

CRANSTON

Yeah, how?

JASON

If I tell you, you won't be scared.

CRANSTON

Ok.

JASON

Fifty bucks and I'll scare the shit out of you.

CRANSTON

Guaranteed?

JASON

Sure.

CRANSTON

Ok.

JASON

I'll text you where to meet me. Tomorrow night. Bring some spray paint. Bright colors.

CRANSTON

All right, Georgette.

(Blackout.)

Scene 3

(*Mary Tyler Moore* theme. Freeway Underpass noises. Lights up on JASON and CRANSTON tagging a wall with spray paint.)

CRANSTON

This is stupid.

JASON

It's exciting.

No, it's not. CRANSTON

We could get arrested. JASON

By tagging an underpass? CRANSTON

Ok, wise guy, I dare you to tag a house. JASON

Around here? You'd get shot. CRANSTON

Sounds scary. JASON

You're crazy. CRANSTON

Chicken? JASON

You do it. CRANSTON

OK. JASON

(Climbs on audience seat and sprays wall.)

Cock has a "k" at the end. CRANSTON
(Reading what JASON wrote)

I think the meaning's clear. JASON

I love it. CRANSTON

JASON
Go ahead. You do one.

CRANSTON
OK.

JASON
No, over there. That one.

CRANSTON
That' a nice house.

JASON
Yep.

CRANSTON
You tagged a piece of shit.

JASON
The greater the risk, the greater the thrill.

CRANSTON
They look like they love that place.

JASON
I know. It's so sad.

CRANSTON
Ok, keep a lookout for me. Down the block. Stand down there.

(CRANSTON climbs on a different audience seat. JASON disappears. He reappears behind CRANSTON, who is now spraying. He sneaks up behind CRANSTON.)

JASON
(In a different voice, pretending to be the homeowner)
You little turd. Don't turn around. I have a gun.

CRANSTON
(Hopping down)
Shit.

JASON
Pull your pants down. Do it!

(CRANSTON, terrified, pulls down his pants, stands in underwear, hands raised.)

CRANSTON

Shit man.

JASON

Now bend over.

CRANSTON
(Almost crying)

Come on, man. All I did was tag your house.

JASON

Do it!

(CRANSTON bends over.)

CRANSTON

Oh, my God.

JASON

Underwear too.

CRANSTON
(Whimpering)

Sir, please.

JASON

Do it!

(But before CRANSTON can do it JASON sings like MAX, "I Am What I Am..." CRANSTON spins, sees him, and pulls up his pants.)

CRANSTON

Motherfucker.

JASON
(Mocking him)

Sir, ppppplease.

CRANSTON

Oh, my God that was great! I almost peed myself. That was GREAT! What a rush!

VOICE
(Offstage)

Hey, what are you doing to my house? You little shit stains!

(They run off through audience right vom laughing wildly. They re-enter upstage.)

CRANSTON

That was great!!!! I love being humiliated! LOVE it! Thank you.

JASON

Thanks. You owe me fitty bucks.

CRANSTON

Yeah, sure. (Digging through his wallet and pockets to come up with the money) That was great!!! Man, I am so frustrated down here. Other people get to act, do make believe, and I just help. A whole town of helpers, slaves to the stars, that's LA. I fucking love make believe, especially when it's real.

(JASON laughs.)

CRANSTON

Ahhhhhhh!!!! I'm going crazy! How are we going to make it, man? I don't mean drunk drag and TV episodes in the Valley. I mean make it. In movies.

JASON

I don't know, man.

CRANSTON

I got a lot riding on me. My family. Shit, if I don't turn up on TV soon, I'm toast. When I left Boise, it was like they were sending me off to the Olympics or something.

JASON

When I left San Francisco my family barely noticed.

CRANSTON

Not my family. Christ, what a bunch of losers. When I left Boise there was a sense... I don't know, that I was fulfilling everyone's dreams. They threw a farewell party and they all acted like I was the one, the first one ever who was going to get out, make it, become a star. And I would fulfill all of their frustrated dreams. My Dad who wanted to be a novelist but settled for being fat. My Mom who wanted to sing opera but decided to suck on a gin bottle instead. They actually said, they never said this before, they actually said when I left, "We're so proud of you." Dammit, I gotta make it. Or I'll end up back there, drinking and going El Nowhere. I'd do fucking anything to make it.

JASON

Anything?

CRANSTON

Pretty much. (Pause.) Come on. Let's tag some more houses.

JASON

Not a good idea. Vigilante committees, neighborhood watches, it really is dangerous.

CRANSTON

They call the cops, we'll run.

JASON

They don't waste time on cops. 1993. Vigilante named William Masters II shot two kids from South Central who were tagging. Shot one of them dead. The other one he shot in the ass. The DA's office let him off. He had a ton of popular support. People were sick of the tagging, sick of it. He killed someone for graffiti and the City of Los Angeles let him off. Masters said, "Where're they going to find twelve jurors to convict me?" I was lying before. It's a dangerous game. That's where I got the idea to scare you.

CRANSTON

How do you know that shit?

JASON

I was an historian in college. Double major. I read up before we came out here tonight. Urban histories. LA is storied territory, as rich in legend and myth as Ancient Rome. City of Angels, sacred and profane. That's another reason I wanted to come here. Everyone knows San Francisco's history. LA's is still secret, dangerous, hidden, wherever you tread you tread on bones, and the bones have ghosts.

CRANSTON

Wow, creepy.

JASON

Creepy place. Home of film noir, forgotten disasters, and sin. We're all dreamers here and we'll do anything... absolutely anything, to make it. Remember what Joan Didion said about the Donner Party. Californians are desperate. Desperate. They ate their own to get here. We're cannibals.

CRANSTON

Ok, cannibal. You free next Friday?

JASON

Yeah. Something else to freak you out?

CRANSTON
Yeah.

JASON
I really need a job.

CRANSTON
Can't help you. I'm nobody.

(CRANSTON exits.)

Scene 4

JASON
(To audience)
I spent the week auditioning for stuff. Television, commercials, print ads. Nothing. Not even a callback.

(JASON's phone buzzes. He answers. CRANSTON appears in another place.)

CRANSTON
Hey, where are you?

JASON
Audition. What's up?

CRANSTON
I have a friend who wants you to scare him. He'll pay top dollar.

JASON
Oh, who is it?

CRANSTON
Do you have something good planned?

JASON
Something good?

CRANSTON
For Friday night. I told him about you. How you totally freaked me out.

JASON

Oh?

CRANSTON

So you have to have something really good. He likes surprises.

JASON

OK. Yeah, I can think of something.

CRANSTON

So what is it?

JASON

Wouldn't be a surprise.

CRANSTON

All right, where do we meet?

JASON

I'll text you Thursday.

CRANSTON

Ok, look...

JASON

What?

CRANSTON

This is a big deal, ok? So you have to be cool.

JASON

I'm cool.

CRANSTON

I mean... You can't be staring at him and getting all weird, asking him for jobs, getting personal. I don't know him that well.

JASON

Hey, it's our party. He's the guest.

CRANSTON

No, it's his party. It's always his party. He's big. Very big. Got it? This could be good for us. So be cool.

JASON

(To audience)

So Thursday I texted him. And he texted back – “T-H-X. Be cool.”

(Blackout. Lights up. Night. Crickets. JASON stands alone. CRANSTON enters. They both have backpacks.)

CRANSTON

OK, he just pulled up. Just be cool.

JASON

Would you stop saying that.

CRANSTON

It’s just... I got him to come alone. No people.

JASON

What do you mean “no people?”

CRANSTON

He has people.

JASON

This is bullshit.

CRANSTON

It’s not, it’s an insurance thing. He’s not supposed to go anywhere without people.

JASON

People? People? I’m people.

CLARK

(Entering with backpack)

You talkin’ about me?

CRANSTON

Oh, hey, you found us.

CLARK

(To JASON)

Hey. (Extending his hand.) I’m...

JASON
(Shocked)

Yeah, yeah, I know. Oh... sorry. (Extending hand) I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Tail.

CLARK
(Shaking)

Clark.

JASON

Clark. I'm Jason.

CLARK

Pleasure is mine, Jason.

JASON

Cran says you're hot for a thrill.

CLARK

Yeah, I like thrills.

JASON

OK.

CLARK

Real ones.

JASON

OK.

(Awkward pause.)

CLARK

So...

CRANSTON

Did you bring your shit?

CLARK

Yeah, camping gear's all here. (Pats his bag.)

CRANSTON

Cool.

CLARK

How do you two know each other?

CRANSTON

We act together. Onstage.

CLARK

Cool.

JASON

And you?

CRANSTON

I know him through the agency. This is what I do. (To CLARK) Do you mind if I do this? (CLARK laughs. CRANSTON stands with his back to CLARK's.) People try to come at him from behind. At events. And I say, "Mr. Tail's pretty busy. Can I help you?" I have very specific instructions. If he moves, I move. Walk away, Clark. (CLARK walks away, CRANSTON moves with him, walking backwards.) Everywhere he goes, I go backwards. Keep moving, Clark. This is what I do all day. I get so used to it, I can't stop at the end of the day. "See you guys tomorrow. Have a good one." (He walks around backwards, does everything backwards.) Drive home backwards. I walk in the house backwards. I eat my dinner backwards. Actually, I don't eat, I vomit. Everything backwards. It messes with you.

JASON

He covers your back?

CLARK

Yes.

CRANSTON

And sometimes Clark doesn't want to talk to anyone at events, so my instructions are to pretend like I'm talking to him. (They turn and face one another.) "Hungadungah, hungadungah, hundgadungah." And sometimes he gets tired of hearing gibberish, so I'm supposed to use real words. And Tuesday I said, "I have this friend who totally freaked me out." And Clark was actually interested. He was ACTUALLY interested! I actually got his attention. He made, Oh, my God!, he made eye contact with me!!!

CLARK

You're kind of a smart ass, aren't you?

CRANSTON

Not as smart as you Clark.

CLARK
Is this why you got me out here, to make fun of me?

CRANSTON
Oh, Clark! You're sensitive. You have feelings!

(They laugh. CLARK looks around.)

CLARK
So, what are we doing?

CRANSTON
I don't know, he wouldn't tell me.

JASON
We're camping out.

CLARK
All right.

JASON
You brought your gear?

CLARK
Yep.

CRANSTON
That's it?

CLARK
Pretty much. So what's the big thrill?

JASON
It's government property. Watershed. Sheriffs patrol it at night.

CLARK
We could be arrested?

JASON
Something like that.

CLARK
(To CRANSTON)
You told me he scared the shit out of you.

CRANSTON
He did.

CLARK
This isn't very scary.

JASON
Scarier than one of your movies.

CLARK
I've been insulted by better people than you.

JASON
You don't know me.

CLARK
Precisely.

JASON
I don't want to be rude but...

CLARK
Go ahead, most people who talk to me are.

JASON
OK, fuck off.

CRANSTON
(To JASON)
Is this what you meant by "I'll be cool?"

CLARK
Cran, I'll see you. (Starts to leave.)

CRANSTON
(To CLARK)
Hang on. He's... Just stay. I'm sure he's up to something.

CLARK
Up to something?

CRANSTON
This is all part of it. Ok?

(CLARK puts down his bag and opens it. BLACKOUT. Stars. Crackling fire sounds. Lights up. They sit around fire – otherwise pitch-black night.)

CRANSTON

Stars are pretty.

CLARK

They're prettier at Thunder Road.

JASON

What's Thunder Road?

CLARK

My place in Malibu. (Changing the subject) Something you said earlier.

JASON

Yeah?

CLARK

I don't make scary films. I make action films. So, if that was an insult, it wasn't very insulting.

JASON

You're insulting my insult?

CLARK

I'm just saying it wasn't accurate.

CRANSTON

I think he meant your movies aren't suspenseful. They're not exciting.

(CLARK looks at him.)

CRANSTON

I'm just being accurate.

JASON

(To CLARK)

You see, this is good. You're having an evening with real people. How often do you do that?

CLARK

Every night actually. I have a son your age. And a daughter. One thing you learn as a parent is to ignore what children say.

JASON

What about your wife? You ignore her?

CLARK

No. My wife's extremely intelligent. I love talking with her.

CRANSTON

What do you talk about? (Pause.) Just curious.

CLARK

The kids. Kids are fascinating. Even if you can't stand listening to them, they're fascinating. We also talk about travel. Work. She's a very talented actress, you know. (He stands.)

JASON

Conversation making you nervous?

CLARK

No, just bored. I came out here for a change.

JASON

Sorry.

CLARK

What about you guys. You married?

JASON

We're gay.

CLARK

Doesn't mean you can't be married.

JASON

That's true. You're married and-

(CRANSTON nudges him. JASON makes a motion, we hear a beeping sound.)

CRANSTON

What's that?

JASON

Making sure my car is locked. Can I ask you something? (CRANSTON nudges him.) What?

CLARK
(To CRANSTON)

It's ok. (TO JASON) What is it?

JASON

That movie, where you tried to kill Hitler.

CLARK

Yeah?

JASON

That was actually good. Why don't you make more movies like that?

(Pause.)

CLARK

It's a business, kid. That film did all right. It didn't break any records.

JASON

Does everything have to be a blockbuster?

CLARK

Yes, actually. There are a lot of people who can make that film. I'll leave it to them to make it. My stuff, the "un-exciting, un-suspenseful" action films I make, they entertain a lot of people. That's important.

JASON

Is it?

CLARK

To most people. Yes. It's vital. Like me. I like thrills. Very hard to come by if you're me. I do my own stunts, I fly my own planes. Doesn't thrill me anymore. Cran here's a good guy. He told me how he was actually in fear for his life last weekend. You convinced him he was going to get shot. In the hiney. I thought, "Well that's cool. I gotta meet this guy who can actually scare people." That's a real commodity – being able to scare people. Right?

JASON

Sure.

CLARK

So, I'm not very scared.

JASON

Sorry. I guess I'm overrated.

(We hear rumbling.)

CLARK

What's that?

CRANSTON

Probably the County Sheriff.

CLARK

That's not a vehicle. What is that?

(They listen. Rumbling.)

CLARK

That's not a vehicle. What's over there?

JASON

Power plant.

CLARK

That's not a power plant. Why would there be a power plant out here? What the fuck is that?

(They listen.)

CRANSTON

Earthquake?

JASON

I don't feel anything.

CLARK

Sounds like a tidal wave.

CRANSTON

Tidal wave? Ocean's twenty miles away.

CLARK

Why is there a power plant out here?

JASON

It's hydroelectric.

CLARK

Hydroelectric?

(They look at each other. Rumbling is much louder. They realize what's happening.)

CRANSTON

Fuck man!

CLARK

Shit!

JASON

Run!!!

(They run in place as if they're tearing away from the sound. They are "running" towards the audience.)

CRANSTON

Jesus fuck!

CLARK

Keep going.

(They run. Rumbling is louder. Thunderous.)

CLARK

We gotta get outta this canyon.

CRANSTON

(Having trouble keeping up)

I can't-

CLARK

Keep moving!!!! Here. (He runs to wall Audience Right.) Up! Up!

CRANSTON

What the fuck, man!

CLARK

Up!

(They scramble up the wall, CRANSTON is in the rear, having trouble.)

CLARK

Come on! Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!

(CLARK reaches the top. He leans over the top, extending hand to CRANSTON.)

CLARK

Give me your hand.

CRANSTON

I can't.

CLARK

Come on. Do it, asshole.

CRANSTON

I'm-

CLARK

I don't give a shit. Give me your hand.

JASON

(Having reached the top on his own.)

Let's go!

CLARK

Help me.

JASON

We gotta go!

CLARK

Help me!

(JASON reaches over, extending hand to CRANSTON.)

CLARK

Come on.

CRANSTON

I'm- I'm-

CLARK

You're getting us all killed, dickwad, give him your fucking hand! Now!!

(CRANSTON extends hand. They both grab him and hoist him up over ledge. CRANSTON collapses. CLARK is always looking at his phone.)

CLARK
Come on, up! Keep moving.

CRANSTON
I... I....

CLARK
You're in lousy shape. What are you, twenty?

CRANSTON
I'm twenty-three.

CLARK
You're pathetic.

JASON
Come on!

CRANSTON
I...

CLARK
Look, asshole, get up and move. That's an order.

CRANSTON
An order?

CLARK
Move.

(CLARK shoves him up. They move along the ledge. To behind Audience Right.)

CLARK
Now down.

CRANSTON
I...

CLARK
Do it!

JASON
We should keep the high ground.

CLARK

Fuck that. Next valley over is safer. And I can't get a signal up here. Keep moving.

JASON

But...

CLARK

Go.

CRANSTON

I...

CLARK

Would you go? It's downhill, little girl.

CRANSTON

I-

CLARK

Go!

CRANSTON

I object to the sexist characterization of little girls as weak.

CLARK

You go down or I push you down. Your choice.

(They lower themselves down wall and move to center stage and collapse, except CLARK who is immediately talking into his phone.)

CLARK

(Into phone)

Call 911.

JASON

Don't.

CLARK

(To JASON)

We have a fucking dam collapse, dude. Hello, I'm in the San Francisquito Canyon, just off of Highway 5-

(JASON grabs his phone.)

CLARK
What the hell are you doing?

JASON
It's ok.

CLARK
Give me that thing!

JASON
No. The dam collapsed in 1928. St. Francis Dam. It collapsed ninety years ago.

CRANSTON
(Barely able to get it out he's so breathless)
Man, you are fucked up.

CLARK
What are you talking about? Give me that.

JASON
The dam collapsed in 1928. There hasn't been a dam there in almost a hundred years. It swept away the entire canyon and washed all the way through Ventura to the Pacific Ocean. 450 people drowned. Some were washed out to sea. The worst dam disaster in US history. Faulty construction. Built too quick.

(CLARK stares at him.)

CLARK
What the fuck, man.

JASON
Are we all all right?

CLARK
What the fuck!!!

CRANSTON
I think it's over.

CLARK
I can still hear it.

(JASON clicks remote; sound stops.)

JASON

Yeah, it's over.

CRANSTON

You fuck... (Grabs JASON.)

CLARK
(Separating them)

Easy, take it easy.

(CLARK starts to laugh.)

CRANSTON

Man. I mean... that is some bullshit.

JASON

It's what you asked for.

CLARK

That is.... Woooooooooooo.... I am a coyote!!!! Woooooo.....

CRANSTON

That's not funny.

JASON

Oh, come on.

CRANSTON

It's not. Now that is *not* funny. That is taking it too far.

CLARK

I've heard of that dam. Yeah, but I didn't piece it together.

CRANSTON

What are you two talking about?

JASON

1928. LA needed water. Desperately. It was a desert. And it was growing too fast. So, the City Engineer William Mulholland stole water from Oroville up north, brought it south four hundred miles in an aqueduct. But the people in Oroville needed the water for their crops so they kept blowing up the aqueduct.

CLARK

So, Mulholland built the St. Francis Dam so he could hoard the water, in LA.

JASON
But he built it too fast.

CLARK
And he filled it too fast.

JASON
And he built it in the wrong place.

CLARK
Yep.

JASON
And on the night of March 12, 1928 it collapsed and swept away half of Ventura County. And everyone in its wake, mostly poor people: farmers, construction workers.

CLARK
You know, he built two dams.

JASON
Yep, the Hollywood Reservoir. Exact same construction. Still there.

CLARK
For now.

(Pause.)

CLARK
Sound system in your car?

JASON
I added some baby woofers to give it body.

CLARK
(Helping CRANSTON up)
Get up, Cranston. Well, this was fuuuuuuun. Damn, girl, you know how to pick 'em.

CRANSTON
I'm going to gouge his eyes out with my thumbs.

CLARK
We're going to get you a gym membership. That was a pretty sorry ass display, sailor.

CLARK

I was scared.

CLARK

You were slow. You're going to start jogging with me in the morning. On Mulholland Drive. (Smiles at JASON.) That was fine work, soldier. Excellent. That's my report.

JASON

Thank you.

CLARK

A big thrill. A little history. (To CRANSTON) Just like you described it. (To JASON) Where did you come up with this?

JASON

I was a double major in college – drama, history.

CLARK

I didn't even go to College.

CRANSTON
(To CLARK)

You didn't even finish high school. (Pause) That's what I read.

CLARK
(TO CRANSTON)

And look where I am. (To JASON) Is all your history this liberal stuff – hooligan taggers shot by homeowners, poor farmers washed away by water barons?

JASON

That's the story of LA – the rich eating the poor.

CLARK

Is it? Come on, let's get back to the cars.

CRANSTON

Oh, Jesus.

CLARK

That's right, grandpa. Up and over the hill again. I wanna get home and tell my kids about this. But first, I'm going to take you two to my favorite restaurant in LA. My treat.

CRANSTON

Spago in Beverly Hills?

CLARK

No. Cheesecake Factory, West Hollywood. (Pushing CRANSTON to wall.) Up! Up!

Part II - Getting Back

Scene 1

JASON

(To audience)

I was so flush with my success – I never thought they’d fall for it – that I forgot I’d spent the evening with Hollywood’s biggest closet case. And he’d been smart enough and clever enough not to get drawn into any compromising conversations. That impressed me. Don’t ever think movie stars are stupid or unsavvy. Amazing how we convince ourselves powerful people are dummies. Not for second. A week later:

(JASON answers his phone. CLARK can be seen on his.)

CLARK

Hey.

JASON

Hi. Who is this?

CLARK

Clark. Sorry. I got your number from Cran. I hope it’s all right me calling you.

JASON

Of course. What’s up?

CLARK

I’ve been dining out on that story. You know what everyone loves most about it?

JASON

What?

CLARK

The St. Francis Dam Disaster. They love the LA history tie-in. People keep asking, “Can I come next time?”

JASON

Thrills for the rich and famous?

CLARK

I told them, "No, it's our little thing."

JASON

OK.

CLARK

I wanted to invite you guys over. Friday afternoon, to Thunder Road. I think you'll like it. You can stay the weekend, use the pool, the view is amazing. The Pacific is right there.

JASON

I'm busy.

CLARK

Oh, yeah?

JASON

Audition.

CLARK

What are you auditioning for? You mind me asking?

JASON

Car commercial. Honda.

CLARK

Ok.

(Lights out on CLARK.)

JASON

(To audience)

Fifteen minutes later, I mean fifteen minutes after I hung up, my agent called and said I had the commercial, no audition necessary. Suddenly, I mean, like that (snap), I was free to enjoy the weekend. Next stop, Malibu. Thunder Road.

(CLARK enters in swim suit and casual shirt with CRANSTON and JASON, by his pool.)

CLARK

I bought it for nothing. Nothing. When I was your age. Guess how much it's worth now?

CRANSTON

Fifteen trillion dollars.

CLARK

Precisely. You must be in real estate. The kids love it.

JASON

Where are they?

CLARK

Around.

CRANSTON

(Referring to house in the distance)

Who's house is that?

CLARK

Barbra's.

JASON

And that?

CLARK

My friend Gerard Butler's.

CRANSTON

He should fix it up. (CLARK stares at him.) I'm just saying.

JASON

My God, the wind is hot.

CLARK

Santa Ann wind. I love it. Reminds me of Mexico. Or the Sahara. I shot a film in the Sahara.

CRANSTON

The one with the mummy. (He imitates the Mummy.) It wasn't scary. (To CLARK) I mean that one was supposed to be scary, right? (Pause) Sorry.

CLARK

(Ignoring him, pointedly)

The house we built in '92. My wife at the time and I. We were interested in the schools. But the kids ended up going to Swiss schools so that part of it was a big waste of time.

CRANSTON

What part of it?

CLARK

The taxes. (His phone buzzes. He looks.) Teenagers. Excuse me. (He exits.)

JASON

Well, this is weird.

CRANSTON

He's trying to be nice.

JASON

What are we supposed to do here?

CRANSTON

Relax. Enjoy the view.

CLARK
(Entering)

Sorry. Kids are home from school. Total pandemonium.

CRANSTON

Can we go in the pool?

CLARK

Sure. (Buzz. He looks at phone.) You'd think she could come out and ask. Kids. Excuse me. You want something? To drink?

CRANSTON

Sure.

CLARK

Just press a button, they're everywhere. Michael can make you anything. (Looking at phone)
Shit. I'll close this door. There might be some yelling. Kids. (He starts to exit.)

JASON

Clark?

CLARK

Yessir?

JASON

Why are we here?

CLARK

I wanted to thank you. Last week was... amazing. It was unique. I felt a real bond with you two, having gone through that. (To JASON) And you... They call this make-believe town but you... That was incredible. You've got a hell of a future, kid. (CLARK exits.)

JASON

Maybe we should go.

CRANSTON

No.

JASON

He's obviously having kid trouble.

CRANSTON

His problem.

JASON

I thought the kids were our age.

CRANSTON

He has kids our age, teenagers, little kids, kids in their thirties, adopted kids, he's been around a while. That's what happens when you're rich and old.

(Blackout. Steely Dan – "Here come those Santa Ana winds again.... " Lights up - they are drifting in the pool, on a float.)

CRANSTON

This is the life.

JASON

I feel like such a phony.

CRANSTON

It's good to be phony.

JASON

It's not perfect out here. It's hazy.

CRANSTON

Fog.

(CRANSTON touches his hand. JASON moves it away.)

CRANSTON
It's very romantic in this pool.

JASON
I know...

CRANSTON
Come on. I've always had a thing for you.

JASON
(Smiling)
I know.

CRANSTON
Come on.

JASON
No... It's weird. We're in the middle of this guy's pool.

CRANSTON
I know. It's so hot. He's probably watching.

JASON
Ewww.

CRANSTON
I'm joking. But he probably is.

JASON
(Sitting up)
Is he cooking something?

CRANSTON
I asked Michael to make us waffles.

JASON
Why?

CRANSTON
I like waffles.

JASON
Waffles must be burning.

(CRANSTON looks around. Sniffs.)

CRANSTON

That's not fog, it's smoke.

JASON

Smoke?

CRANSTON

Something's burning. (JASON is paddling raft to edge of pool.) Where you going?

JASON

Clark! Clark! (Raft has reached edge of pool. JASON is getting off.)

CRANSTON

Where are you going?

JASON

Inside. Clark!

(JASON disappears. He comes back on coughing.)

JASON

Jesus, the living room is full of smoke.

CRANSTON

Let's get out of here.

JASON

Hang on. (JASON moves to a wall.)

CRANSTON

What are you doing?

JASON

There are kids in there. They might need help.

CRANSTON

We gotta get the hell out of here.

JASON

Hang on. (He touches the wall.) Ahhh!!! This wall is hot.

CRANSTON
We gotta get out of here.

JASON
There are kids in there.

CRANSTON
We gotta get out of here.

JASON
What about Clark?

CRANSTON
We woudla heard shouting. They went out the front. Fire is between us and them.
(JASON looks around. We hear sirens. JASON runs to another wall.)

JASON
(Touching wall)
Ahhh!!! This wall is hot too.

CRANSTON
Let's go!

JASON
Where?

CRANSTON
Down the hill.

JASON
Shit. Where're my shoes?

CRANSTON
(Grabbing him)
Fuck your shoes. Let's go!

JASON
That's a hillside!

CRANSTON
Come on!

It's all rocks. JASON

(They cross to downstage, looking out.)

Where are we going? JASON

Down the hill. CRANSTON

I don't have shoes. JASON

Shut up. CRANSTON

(Blackout. We hear their voices.)

Ah, ah, ah, ahhhhhh!
JASON/CRANSTON
(As they run on the hot rocks)

(Lights. They are looking across the stage from upstage.)

Jesus. JASON

Come on. CRANSTON

We can't go down that. It's too steep. JASON

It's a wild fire. We have to. CRANSTON

No way. I can't even see where it ends it's so steep. JASON

It falls off into the ocean. CRANSTON

The ocean!
JASON

We can't burn in the ocean.
CRANSTON

No way.
JASON

(There is an explosion.)

Jesus.
JASON

(They slide down the stage on their butts as if it were a steep hillside. Blackout. We hear their shouts in the dark. Lights up. They are now rolling down the hillside, from upstage to downstage. When they reach the edge of the stage downstage they stop. They stand, brush themselves off, and look down.)

Fart!
CRANSTON

Let's go.
JASON

Big fart!
CRANSTON

We gotta go!
JASON

Where?
CRANSTON

Into the ocean.
JASON

Into the ocean?!?!
CRANSTON

Yeah, we'll jump.
JASON

CRANSTON
Jump?

JASON
It's like ten feet.

CRANSTON
It looks like a mile.

JASON
This whole hillside's gonna burn. We can't stay here.

CRANSTON
I can't do it.

JASON
It was your idea!

CRANSTON
I...

JASON
What?

CRANSTON
I can't swim.

JASON
You were just in a pool!

CRANSTON
Floating. I can float.

JASON
I'll go first. Jump close to me, I'll get you to shore.

CRANSTON
We can just wait here, for rescue.

JASON
This whole hillside's going to go up like a match.

CRANSTON
I can't.

(Another explosion.)

JASON

I think that was Barbra Streisand's house.

(Another explosion. JASON shoves CRANSTON. CRANSTON starts to fall, shouting, "Ahhhh!!!." Blackout. We hear two splashes. In dark we hear:)

JASON

Ok, hold on to me.

CRANSTON

I'm... I'm...

JASON

Stop struggling.

CRANSTON

I'm... I'm drowning.

JASON

You're not drowning.

CRANSTON

What about sharks?

JASON

What about sharks?

CRANSTON

Are there sharks around here?

JASON

How the hell do I know. Stop struggling.

CRANSTON

I... I...

JASON

You're drowning both of us.

CRANSTON

I...

JASON

Look, do you want me to rescue you? Do you?

CRANSTON

Yes.

JASON

Then just lay there. Quietly. The beach isn't that far.

CRANSTON

What about sharks?

JASON

There are no sharks.

CRANSTON

There are no sharks.

JASON

There are no sharks, there are no sharks, there are no sharks.

CRANSTON

(Joining him in the mantra) There are no sharks, there are no sharks, there are no sharks.
(Surf sounds. Lights. They are crawling ashore. Wet.)

CRANSTON

Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

JASON

Just lay on your back.

CRANSTON

Are there really no sharks?

JASON

Of course there are sharks.

CRANSTON

So you lied.

JASON

Of course I lied, you maniac.

CRANSTON
(Laying on back)

Oh, my God. There are sharks, there are sharks, there are sharks.

(CLARK enters, casually, with a couple of waters. He hands them out as he speaks.)

CLARK

Welcome to Malibu Beach. A little hard to get to, but you managed.

JASON

Are you all right?

CLARK

Yes.

JASON

And your kids? They're all right?

CLARK

That was a nice touch. I really admire that. You trying to save my kids.

JASON
(Realizing)

Oh... Oh, ok.

CRANSTON
(Realizing)

Jesus.

CLARK

Malibu Fires. It's not only the poor people who suffer in LA. In November this whole hillside went up. Two thousand homes destroyed. My friends Kim Bassinger, Daryl Hannah, they both lost their homes. Gerard. That's why you thought his house looked like such a dump. Thunder Road has almost burned four times since I built it. The Santa Ana winds come hammering out of the Mojave Desert, straight into the Santa Monica Mountains and all it takes is a spark. And then Malibu burns to the sea.

CRANSTON

Jesus, I thought I was going to be eaten by a shark.

CLARK

The President says its poor forest management. My family, my house, I live under constant threat. Finally, we have an administration in the White House that looks out for our interests, with Federal subsidy. That's understanding the environment.

JASON

You know what the real problem is? Malibu doesn't belong here. The Indians used to clear the chaparral yearly with fires. That's forest management. This whole development should never have been built.

CLARK

But who could resist these views?

JASON

Same problem LA's always had. It's a desert where no one should be living. Dry landscape, no water. What makes Malibu unique is there's actually something that can burn. Chaparral and fancy houses. And the Feds keep giving you guys money to rebuild. Because you're powerful. So, it *is* the poor people who always suffer. Because a long time ago Malibu was an artists' colony, but they got burned out, and no one cared. It just paved the way for wealthy development.

CLARK

Hey, I'm an artist. Gerard's an artist.

JASON

What if he'd drowned?

CLARK

Cranston? Cranston wouldn't drown. I knew you'd save him. And sharks don't eat other sharks.

CRANSTON

Very funny.

JASON

How much did this production cost you?

CLARK

Nothing. The special effects people all had fun. Come back up, I'll show you how we did it.

JASON

No, I wanna go home.

CRANSTON

Hey, I wanna see. Come on.

CLARK

You've recovered fast.

CRANSTON

That was great. Better than the dam breaking. (To JASON) Sorry. But it had better production values.

CLARK

(Putting his hand on JASON's shoulder)

I think you can dish it out, but you can't take it.

JASON

I never asked for a thrill, you did.

CLARK

Well, we're into thrill country now. Trust no one.

Scene 2

JASON

(To audience)

Suddenly I was tired of the whole thing. Or maybe it was because finally I'd been the dupe. I went north for my little brother's graduation from high school. And lunch again with my father. I'd been summoned. And I needed more money. This time at the Pacific Union Club, which looks a lot like the Bohemian Club. (He sits with PARNELL at a table. PARNELL suddenly jumps up.)

PARNELL

(As if he sees someone over JASON'S shoulder)

Jack, Jack.

(JASON spins and stands.)

PARNELL

Ha ha. Got you. (Indicating drinks) I got you a Martini.

JASON

Thanks.

PARNELL

Your brother told me you're friends with Clark Tail.

JASON

I'm not friends. I'm acquaintances.

PARNELL

He said he's getting you work.

JASON
(Dismissively)

He got me a commercial.

PARNELL

You're going to need all the help you can get, Boyo.

JASON

It's not the kind of help I want. I don't even like him.

PARNELL

What's not to like?

JASON

Well, for one thing, he's a Trump Republican.

PARNELL

Oh... Well, at least he's a Republican.

JASON

And he's a major closet case.

PARNELL

Come on. He has like six kids.

JASON

That doesn't prove anything.

PARNELL

Well, it proves he's had sex with a woman at least six times. That more times than I've had sex with your mother.

JASON

Dad!

PARNELL

I'm just saying, sex with your wife is hard work. I think if you do it six times you should be entitled to call yourself straight. Or normal. Or whatever the term is now. Gifted? Canadian? I have something I need to talk to you about. Can I have this one? (He takes JASON's Martini.) Listen, that kid, your brother, is going to need a lot of help. I'm pretty strapped right now. I'm glad you're doing well down there because I have to cut you off. Sorry.

JASON

Ok. Why do you keep sending him to private schools if you're strapped?

PARNELL

I knew that would make you jealous.

JASON

It doesn't make me jealous, it just...

PARNELL

He needs that kind of fancy pants, professors licking your butthole attention. You're more independent.

JASON

I'm not. I need help. The connections I've made in LA - they either lead nowhere or they're strange. I don't know what's going on. Clark Tail is a dead end, he's majorly manipulative. And my best friend down there I don't even trust.

PARNELL

Good. Good. You shouldn't trust your friends. And successful people should be manipulative. You're learning. I'm proud of you.

JASON

(Taking Martini away from PARNELL)

Maybe you should lay off that.

PARNELL

Probably.

JASON

So what is all this about cutting me off?

PARNELL

You're in a good spot. You don't need me anymore.

JASON

I do.

PARNELL

I'm not just here to sign checks.

JASON

I don't treat you that way. What's going on?

I'll tell you something.

PARNELL

Ok.

JASON

In Colma... you know what Colma is?

PARNELL

Yes.

JASON

I mean you know what's there?

PARNELL

Grave yards.

JASON

Very good. Smart boy.

PARNELL

In Colma...

JASON
(Prompting him)

In Colma, there's a tiny grave. Your brother.

PARNELL

My brother? What are you talking about?

JASON

You had an older brother.

PARNELL

No, I didn't.

JASON

PARNELL

You did. He didn't last long. Three weeks. He was born prematurely. And his little lungs. They just sort of shredded. That's the problem with little babies, the lungs aren't strong enough if they come out early. So, he died. Three weeks old. And we buried him. Your mother was distraught. I mean, she was a mess. She was convinced she'd never have another kid and I think she was... defeated... she carried that little guy to term, she loved him, and he died on her. She

didn't think she could go through that again. Not a very a strong woman, your mother. So, we did a stupid thing. Well, it was my idea, and it was wrong.

JASON

What are you talking about?

PARNELL

We adopted. I thought it would make her happy. And it did. She loved you, loved you. Drove me crazy how much she loved you. No time for me.

JASON

This is a joke, right?

PARNELL

The problem was, and I guess I wanted this so it's my fault... The problem was she got pregnant again and it was no problem, she had babies, your brothers. And they were no problem, arrived on time and grew up strong. I mean, they can be kinda dense sometimes, that comes from her side of the family, but they're good guys. You know that. They're good guys, right?

JASON

Why are you telling me this?

PARNELL

I need to cut back. Business is down, way down and, well... you were smart enough to get into a good public school but those guys...

JASON

Are you really telling me all this? Why did you tell me?

PARNELL

I don't know. I'm jealous of you? Maybe that's why. I mean, you're not even my fucking kid. (He sighs.) Don't drink. It's a terrible thing. You say all kinds of rotten things.

JASON

I'll say.

PARNELL

I probably shouldn't have said anything.

JASON

Too late.

PARNELL

Oh, forget it. Let's have a nice lunch and talk about something else. The crab here is terrific.

Scene 3

(CRANSTON enters dressed as Mary Tyler Moore with mixing bowl and meets JASON. They are mid-conversation. PARNELL exits, and the table is struck.)

CRANSTON

That's rough.

JASON

So, I'm really on my own. He said he made a deal with himself to get me through college and then that was it. I'm cut off. He said he was surprised he doesn't hate me more. He used to, but he said all the theatre and gay stuff he actually thinks is amusing, he says I'm endearing.

CRANSTON

If my parents in Boise saw me now, they wouldn't know what to think. This is not how I want to be famous.

MAX

(Entering)

Hey, I've got good news. Mary Tyler Moore loved the show, loved it! She wants to film our episodes. We're going to be on TV! Everyone in Boise's going to be so proud of you!

(CRANSTON drops his mixing bowl. Lights change. MAX and CRANSTON exit. CLARK has entered and JASON crosses to him at a sofa.)

JASON

So, you've got kids, what advice do you have?

CLARK

Is that why you came up here?

JASON

I was just curious what you thought. I need some advice.

CLARK

About what?

JASON

My father... well, I can't go into it, but he doesn't get me at all and... Ok, he just told me... I can't believe he did this... He just told me...

CLARK

Listen, before you start confessing things. I'm not going to be much help in the kid-parenting department. I've pretty much surrendered all that to their mothers.

JASON

You're always talking about your children.

CLARK

I'll let you in on a little secret. That's all nonsense. I've had a bunch of kids, mostly because their mothers wanted them and... well this won't surprise you... it just looks good.

JASON

What do you mean "it just looks good?"

CLARK

Publicity. Image.

JASON

You're saying this whole parent thing is a sham.

CLARK

No. They're my kids. And I love them, I do. And I support them. But I haven't had much to do with raising them. But they get it. I have an image to project. They're a part of that image. They've grown up knowing, so there's no resentment. Well, there is resentment but that's normal in children. It hasn't damaged them. Their mothers are all smart, motivated women, they've helped them understand it.

JASON

(Sitting on sofa)

Wow.

CLARK

Shouldn't come as a surprise to you.

JASON

It just surprises me you're saying it.

CLARK

I like you, Jason. You're guileless. Well, you have guile, obviously, but you have a core of sincerity. Maybe that's because you didn't grow up down here.

JASON

You're saying everyone down here is insincere.

CLARK

No. Just different. They all have an eye on the big chance. You don't really think that way.

JASON

Looks like my big chance has arrived despite that. They're going to start filming our Mary Tyler Moore episodes.

CLARK

(Sitting on sofa)

I'd advise against it. You start playing gay characters that's all you'll play. I've seen it happen too many times.

JASON

Is that why you've never played gay?

CLARK

Yes.

(He puts his hand on JASON's knee.)

JASON

Uh, look...

CLARK

Come here.

(He draws JASON to him. But before they can kiss JASON pulls away.)

JASON

I... This makes me uncomfortable.

CLARK

Why?

JASON

For a lot of reasons.

CLARK

Ok. Is it my age?

JASON

No. Well, yeah. But that's not the only reason.

OK. CLARK

The wig. JASON

What wig? (They laugh.) I can take it off. CLARK

That's OK. (Pause.) You are like a major closet case. That's a problem for me. JASON

I'm not. CLARK

You're not? JASON

No. CLARK

And how is that? JASON

I've never identified as queer. CLARK

So, what is this? CLARK

This is sex. CLARK

Queer sex. JASON

That doesn't make me queer. CLARK

It makes you something. JASON

Not queer. CLARK

JASON
I disagree.

CLARK
Are you telling me what I am?

JASON
No. (Referring to the intimacy) This, this is telling me what you are.

CLARK
This? This is nothing. This is attraction. I find you attractive.

JASON
Really? I mean, thank you, I mean... Look, this is a problem for me. It always has been.

CLARK
Always?

JASON
Ever since I heard about you.

CLARK
Why don't you forget for a moment what you've heard about me and just deal with me?

JASON
I'm trying to.

CLARK
I always have this problem with people. They think a lot about me that has nothing to do with me.

JASON
(Sarcastic)
You have a rough life.

CLARK
I do. Not rougher than anyone else's but rough like everyone else's.

JASON
Your life isn't like anyone else's.

CLARK

Do you know what it's like to have people hate you who've never met you. To have people you've never even seen before glare at you? Do you know when the last time I read a newspaper or opened a magazine for fear there'd be some nasty thing written about me, some innuendo. It's amazing to read in the same paragraph that I'm a big phony but I can't act. How does that work? I mean, I must be a terrific actor if I've gotten away with being such a big phony for so long. I'm probably the most financially successful actor of all time so I must be good at it. I mean, why on earth would the entire planet pay so much money to see me act badly? But the media knows better, don't they? They always have the inside track. I mean, everyone has such a problem with our President because he says the media lies. I don't see how anyone in show biz can disagree with him on that one. They say I made a shitty movie and then it makes a billion bucks. Now where's the truth?

JASON

I'm sorry, but all those kids, all those wives...

CLARK

Yes?

JASON

It's all a lie.

CLARK

It's not. Those kids love me, I've loved every woman I've lived with.

JASON

They love you because you give them money.

CLARK

Isn't that why you love your father. Partly? You think love is just biological?

JASON

No, actually, I don't.

CLARK

(Sarcastic)

Here's the thing I love about identity politics. It works magnificently if someone says they're trans but if I say I'm straight I'm a liar. Explain that one to me. I mean, don't I get to say what I am?

JASON:

It's not just words.

CLARK

Having six kids is not just words.

JASON

Ok. (Referring to the intimacy) Doesn't this worry you? If it got out?

CLARK

How would it get out?

JASON

If I told people.

CLARK

Who'd believe you?

JASON

Lots of people.

CLARK

Who important?

JASON

The National Enquirer.

CLARK

Oh, they wouldn't print it.

JASON

You're pretty confident.

CLARK

I'm not confident. I know it for a fact. And you wouldn't tell anyone.

JASON

I wouldn't?

CLARK

No, you're too smart for that. That's why I like smart people.

JASON

Wow.

CLARK

You're father's an attorney. You know all this.

JASON

How do you know my father's an attorney?

CLARK

I know a lot about you.

JASON

You had me checked out?

CLARK

Hey. Come here.

(He pulls JASON to him. Vanessa Williams' "Best for Last." Lights fade to black.)

Scene 4

(Lights up on CRANSTON getting a text. He looks. Smirks. He calls JASON. Lights up on JASON answering.)

JASON

Hey, I'm glad you called. I have to tell you something.

CRANSTON

Can you meet me in Hollywood?

JASON

Where are you?

CRANSTON

The Wax Museum. Meet me there at noon. Ok?

JASON

Why?

CRANSTON

Just meet me there. Yes?

JASON

Ok.

(Lights change. They are standing together.)

JASON

What are we doing here? This place is creepy.

CRANSTON

Clark's here. He's getting a new waxwork.

JASON

Who cares?

CRANSTON

Are you kidding? It's a major event.

(CLARK enters.)

CLARK

Hey. What are you? Tourists? What are you doing here?

CRANSTON

Happened to be in the neighborhood.

CLARK

You want some passes? I can get you in.

CRANSTON

No, we thought you might want a thrill.

CLARK

I'm busy.

CRANSTON

Oh, I think you'll like this thrill.

CLARK

I've got my people with me.

CRANSTON

Get rid of them. (Pause.) What are you? Chicken?

CLARK

Is that a dare?

CRANSTON

Yeah, it is.

CLARK

OK. (He turns, gestures to "his people" – "ten minutes.") OK, what's the thrill?

CRANSTON

It's nearby. We can walk.

CLARK

(Not believing his ears)

Walk?

CRANSTON

Yeah.

CLARK

(Puts on his sunglasses)

OK.

(They are walking.)

CLARK

(To JASON)

How are you?

JASON

Good.

CLARK

Sorry I haven't been in touch. I've been busy.

CRANSTON

Very busy.

CLARK

(Stopping)

What's going on?

CRANSTON

Keep walking. (They resume walking. To JASON) He got our show cancelled. I guess he knows Mary Tyler Moore.

CLARK

Is that what this is all about?

CRANSTON

And he got me fired.

CLARK

Hey, I go through management teams like socks. It's nothing personal.

CRANSTON

Why did you get our show cancelled?

CLARK

I'm actually helping you. As I was telling Jas here. You really shouldn't be doing stuff like that.

CRANSTON

Isn't that our decision?

CLARK

You'll thank me one day. (To someone unseen) Hey, how are you? Nice to meet you. Sorry, we're in a hurry. Sorry. (To CRANSTON) Is this the thrill, walking down Hollywood Boulevard?

CRANSTON

Cross the street. We're almost there.

CLARK

(To JASON)

Are you ok?

JASON

I don't really know anything about this. He just called me down here.

CRANSTON

(Stopping)

Here we are.

CLARK

(Smirks)

So why did you want to come here?

CRANSTON

Well, you two organized the last two adventures. This is mine.

JASON

What is it?

CRANSTON

It's just like the dam and Malibu. It's the site of another LA catastrophe.

JASON

What is it?

CRANSTON
(To CLARK)

You tell him.

CLARK

He can read.

JASON
(Reading)

Church of Scientology.

CRANSTON

That's right. LA's most destructive cult.

CLARK

Do you actually know anything about my church?

CRANSTON

I thought maybe you could give us a tour. I'm sure we'd hear some pretty scary shit.

CLARK

Scientology's all about the analytic as opposed to the reactive mind. You two strike me as a couple of young men who are wrapped up in the trauma of life. You're still reacting to life's challenges as opposed to analyzing them, moving beyond them, growing. I feel like there's a lot you could learn from my church.

CRANSTON

Like how to lie. To the public. To yourself.

CLARK

This isn't like you. (Pointing to JASON) It's more like him. I've listened to a lot of nonsense about my religion from a lot of people who didn't know anything about it. Scientology's helped a lot of people get their lives back on track. It helped me.

CRANSTON

Weren't you banned from Germany for being a Scientologist? I'm sure they had a reason.

CLARK

Yeah, I don't think the Germans should be judging people based on their religions. They don't have a very good history in that department.

CRANSTON

It's a destructive, predatory cult.

CLARK

It's a philosophy that helps people. That's why I support it. I know it works. It helped me.

CRANSTON

It helps you lie.

CLARK

Oh, we're back to this again.

CRANSTON

Why can't you just live openly.

CLARK

Does anyone even care how I live?

CRANSTON

Yes. People do. They care about truth. And you could be an inspiration to young people.

CLARK

I already am. To anyone who's ever had a dream. About making it. I'm a huge inspiration.

CRANSTON

But there are so many people now who are out. Huge people. And they're inspirations.

CLARK

Name one.

JASON

Anderson Copper.

CLARK

He's in news.

JASON

Tim Cook.

Tech. CLARK

Pete Buttigieg JASON

Politics. Name one person, one person in film. CLARK

Doogie Howser. That actor. I forget his name. CRANSTON

Precisely. His name is Neil Patrick Harris. Nice man but you can't even remember his name. CLARK

Nobody in this country cares anymore. CRANSTON

This country? What about Japan, China, Russia, what about Russia? What about the Middle East? I just shot a film in Dubai. Do you get my point? When I have a film that flops here, guess what? It always does well in Japan. In China. Does this make sense to you? My films are pre-sold to airlines, ALL airlines. Am I getting through to you guys at all? CLARK

(A tremor.)

What was that? CRANSTON

Earthquake. CLARK

Oh, no. I'm not falling for this again. JASON

(Another tremor.)

Jesus. CRANSTON

Yeah, right. JASON
(Not buying it)

CRANSTON
He can't make the earth move.

CLARK
This a real earthquake. Look around you.

(We hear screaming.)

CRANSTON
Can you get us inside?

CLARK
That building's old. Not safe.

JASON
(Rolling his eyes)
Did you two rehearse?

CRANSTON
Let's just stay here.

CLARK
Power lines. Come on.

JASON
I'm not falling for this again.

CLARK
Look, it's no bullshit. Look around you.

(More screaming.)

CLARK
I know the evacuation plan. Come with me. Only safe place.

JASON
I swear to God these are all extras.

CLARK
Come on.

JASON
(Shouting)
Cut everyone! That's a wrap!

(More screaming.)

CLARK

Come on!

(JASON finally looks worried. Another tremor.)

CLARK

Come on!

(Blackout. In the dark we hear, echoing voices.)

CRANSTON

Ugh.

CLARK

Keep moving.

CRANSTON

This is disgusting.

(Lights up, very dim.)

CLARK

We're safe here. The architecture of these tunnels is solid.

CRANSTON

Oh, my God, it stinks.

JASON

It's a sewer, what did you expect?

CLARK

(Looking at phone)

Oh, God.

CRANSTON

What do you see?

CLARK

It's big. 6.4.

CRANSTON

Deaths?

CLARK

None so far. (Sees something on phone.) Jesus, we've got to get out of here.

CRANSTON

What?

CLARK

Come on.

JASON

What is it?

CLARK

Hollywood Reservoir.

(We hear rumbling, same as flood sounds from before.)

CLARK

Run!

(They start running from flood sounds. The sound grows louder, thunderous. The flood hits. They are on the floor, swept off their feet by the flood. They tumble about in the water – it is pushing them towards the audience, violently – they roll, they grapple with each other. CLARK drags JASON towards seats, grabs hold of an armrest, hauls him up, places him on armrest, makes sure he is secure. JASON sees that CRANSTON is still in the flow. He and CLARK struggle at armrest.)

CLARK

He's gone.

JASON

No.

CLARK

You'll just drown with him.

JASON

No.

CLARK

Don't fuck around. Hold on.

JASON
No. Let me go.

CLARK
Hang on dammit.

JASON
No.

(JASON breaks free and jumps back into the water. He and CRANSTON flow out of the space, up the audience right vom. CLARK leaps back in too and flows out of the space after them. They re-enter from the vom audience left, still tumbling about the floor. CRANSTON is in front; he rolls to center stage. JASON manages to grab his leg so they are linked. They tumble out of the space upstage. CLARK tumbles through on his own. Still linked, JASON and CRANSTON flow through from audience right vom; they quickly flow across stage to exit upstage; CLARK quickly follows. JASON/CLARK flow on from audience left vom; CLARK manages to attach himself to them at center stage and they flow out together upstage. The three, now linked, flow through from audience left vom. As they pass through, CLARK manages to grab an armrest. He now holds JASON by the arm as JASON holds CRANSTON by the arm. CLARK tries to drag JASON to arm rest as JASON still clings to CRANSTON.)

CLARK
Let him go.

JASON
Fuck you.

CLARK
I can't hold you both.

JASON
Fuck off.

CLARK
I can't pull you both up.

JASON
I'm not letting him go.

CLARK
I can only save one of you.

Bullshit. JASON

I'm not strong enough. I'm losing my grip. CLARK

I'm not letting him go. JASON

You hang onto him, you'll both die. CLARK

Fuck you. JASON

Jason, listen to me. CLARK

What? JASON

You're my son. I'm... I'm your father. CLARK

What?! JASON

I'm your Dad! CLARK

It's true! CRANSTON

Don't let go! CLARK

No! JASON

Don't! CLARK

Noooooo... JASON

CLARK

Jasoooooooooooooooooon...

(JASON lets go. He and CRANSTON flow out upstage. Lights fade on CLARK clinging to armrest. In the dark we hear flood sounds fade as a news report takes over: "No fatalities reported as yet. And in a bizarre development, action hero Clark Tail was found in the Hollywood sewers with two of his people. Apparently, he rescued them from the flood waters unleashed by the spill way of the Hollywood Reservoir. The reservoir was drained to relieve pressure on the dam. No damage has been reported to the dam itself. The water release was merely a precaution." Sirens. Lights up on CRANSTON and JASON wrapped in towels, eating donuts, sitting as if on the curb side.)

CRANSTON

He told me what happened between you. At his house.

JASON

What did he tell you?

CRANSTON

That you hooked up.

JASON

No. I didn't sleep with him. You thought that we... that's gross.

CRANSTON

Drop the euphemisms.

JASON

What?

CRANSTON

"Sleep with him?"

JASON

We didn't fellate, suck, fuck, rub, lick, stick, finger, felch-

CRANSTON

Oh, OK... That's good. Did you kiss?

JASON

A little... OK?

Tongue?
CRANSTON

That's gross.
JASON

Tongue?
CRANSTON

A little.
JASON

Ewww... His or yours?
CRANSTON

Stop it... Mine.
JASON

Why'd you stop?
CRANSTON

This is gross.
JASON

But why? I mean, I'm glad you didn't... for macro reasons, but he is a movie star... and rich.
CRANSTON

I stopped because-
JASON

You could taste the genetic make-up?
CRANSTON

What?
JASON

Nothing. Go ahead.
CRANSTON

He has a bridge. It popped out.
JASON

You swallowed his false teeth?
CRANSTON

JASON

I didn't swallow it. It ended up in my mouth. So, I politely returned it to him. But...

CRANSTON

What?

JASON

It broke the mood.

CRANSTON

Jesus, Jas.

JASON

What?

CRANSTON

You didn't know. But he did.

JASON

Yeah, I just thought about that.

CLARK

(Entering, also wrapped in a blanket)

I told you. I was looking for a thrill. When you've got it all, you've got nothing. Thrills are hard to come by.

CRANSTON

He's your son.

CLARK

What are you worried about? We're not going to have a baby.

CRANSTON

It's irresponsible.

CLARK

Most people never have to face the fact that given the right time, the right place, they're capable of anything.

CRANSTON

That is really screwed up.

JASON

Wait a minute. That's from... That's from *Chinatown*. John Huston says that. (Pause. CLARK and CRANSTON are laughing.) He's not my real father. That's bullshit. (To CRANSTON) You... You helped him with this?

CRANSTON

Well, sure. I'm one of his people.

CLARK

It was actually his idea. That was his thrill.

JASON

So, when you kissed me...

CLARK

Oh, well, I think you're cute but... You're not really my type. You think I have dentures? Props department.

(Blackout. Lights on JASON.)

JASON

(To audience – he can't really even speak. He just makes noises, can't really figure out what to say to audience.) But how did he... I never told... How could he... And the sequence was... But I don't get how... Unless... (He turns and confronts PARNELL, who has entered and is sitting down to lunch.)

Scene 5

PARNELL

Sure, he's been a club member for years. Chuck Heston sponsored him.

JASON

(Unbelieving)

And you agreed to say I was adopted?

PARNELL

Well, I didn't think you'd fall for it. Jesus. I told him you were a smart kid, went to Berkeley and all. I never thought you'd buy it. I mean, how dumb can you get?

JASON

(Still unbelieving)

He asked you to say I was adopted, and you said yes?

PARNELL

Look, I'm trying to get clients in LA. It's business. The crab's good.

JASON

Does Mom know this?

PARNELL

Your mother? Are you kidding? No way. And don't you tell her. She nursed you.

JASON

I thought I was adopted!!!

PARNELL

Oh, come on, I'd never adopt a kid. You know that. You think I want a crack baby. My friend Jack adopted a kid from Russia. He got a five-year old alcoholic. Kid started raiding the liquor cabinet the day he moved in. (Referring to JASON's Martini) You going to drink that?

JASON

It's yours.

PARNELL

Fetal alcohol syndrome. Putin's revenge. Adoption's the stupidest thing in the world. But I wasn't completely lying.

JASON

What do you mean?

PARNELL

Money is tight. But I'll cut you in for a percentage of every case I land in LA.

Scene 6

(JASON turns to audience, as Hamlet)

JASON "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
Is it not monstrous that this player here,
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
Could force his soul so to his own conceit
That from her working all his visage wann'd,
Tears, in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
Broken voice, and his whole function suiting
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!

For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
That he should weep for her?"

(JASON stands and crosses to MAX, who has entered and is dressed for Drunk Drag Musicals.)

JASON

Look, I'm sorry I got your show cancelled.

MAX

It's OK. Stars do what they want when they want to. I wasn't really counting on it. Mary Tyler Moore's going to put me on TV? Yeah, right.

JASON

Did she really see the show?

MAX

I think so. It looked like her, sounded like her. Come to think, didn't she die a few years ago? Oh well, it was fun to dream.

JASON

I'm sorry.

MAX

I told you, it's ok.

JASON

Not about that.

MAX

This sounds serious. I got a number coming up.

JASON

I just feel bad that I always thought of you as a frivolous, not very talented, old queen.

MAX

That is so sweet. You think about me? Hey, I wanted to be a big star. And then I realized, what I really wanted was to be in front of a live audience. I didn't need to be a big celebrity to do that. And people in movies, they never get to be in front of their audience. Their audience is trapped, and so are they. In boxes. Alone. Movie actors are acting for people who don't exist, and movie audiences are cheering for people who can't hear. You ever hear clapping at a movie? It's just sad. Come see a play. If you clap, the actors hear. If you laugh, the show gets better. It's magic.

JASON

Don't you want to be rich?

MAX

What would I do with all that money? I'd just be bored. Looking for cheap thrills. I mean, I'd probably get laid more often, but sex is kind of weird anyway, even when it's not. You know what I mean?

JASON

No.

MAX

I'm lucky to have this theatre, while it lasts. Even the Valley is getting pricey. Hey, maybe we can get your action hero friend Clark Tail to buy it for us.

JASON

I doubt it.

MAX

I made a movie with him once. I had two lines. I had to sign a contract that said I wouldn't look at him, I wouldn't talk to him, I wouldn't glare at him, I wouldn't touch him, except when the camera was rolling. I thought, "This is just weird." Then he came on the set and he was all sweet and friendly and asking me what roles I had played. I thought, "Is this a trap? Is it a test?" I didn't know what to do. I was tongue tied. So, they fired me, because I wasn't cordial to the star. Hollywood is so strange. And not. (He hears something.) Oh, there's my cue. Thanks for talking with me. After all these years I'm still nervous before I go on. I'm not a natural. I think I should start drinking. It might relax me. Or do cocaine. I just don't think I have the discipline to be a good drug addict. (Exiting singing, drunkenly) *LA CAGE AUX FOLLES, A ST. TROPEZ TRADITON...*

(JASON's phone buzzes. He answers. CRANSTON appears, talking on his phone.)

JASON

Hey.

CRANSTON

Hey. Where are you?

JASON

At the theatre. Where are you?

CRANSTON

Standing behind you?

(JASON turns around and sees him.)

Oh. JASON

Hey. CRANSTON

Wassup? JASON

Just wanted to say hi. CRANSTON

Hey. JASON

I got a role. In Clark's new film. CRANSTON

Cool. JASON

We're on location next week. In Chile. CRANSTON

Oh, I know the guy who owns it. Jack somebody. JASON

You see, I'm not like you. I don't have a rich daddy with connections. CRANSTON

Yeah, that's true. Well good luck. JASON

I gotta figure it out all on my own. CRANSTON

Hey, I get it. JASON

You should have seen your face when you realized he wasn't your father. CRANSTON

JASON

Yeah, if I ever play Hamlet again I'll know just what it feels like to get screwed over by your family and friends.

CRANSTON

Ouch! Dude.

JASON

Sorry.

CRANSTON

It's ok. I felt bad.

JASON

You should.

CRANSTON

I know.

JASON

But you did it anyway.

CRANSTON

Sure. Hey, I'm going to premiere in Boise in a Clark Tail movie.

JASON

Is there something between you two?

CRANSTON

Gross. He's got issues.

JASON

OK. Well remember me, when you're a famous waxwork.

CRANSTON

Listen, there's a role, not as big as mine, only two lines, but it's a good part. In the Chile movie.

JASON

Oh, come on...

CRANSTON

No, Clark and I think you'd be perfect.

JASON

This is such a scam. Forget it.

CRANSTON

No, it's not.

JASON

No way.

CRANSTON

OK. I'll see you.

(CRANSTON starts to leave.)

JASON

Wait. What are the lines?

(Blackout.)