

A Necessary Evil

By John Fisher

Draft 3/18/09

Representation:
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A Necessary Evil
A Play by John Fisher

Performances: April 14 – 26, 2009 (Mainstage, Theatre Rhinoceros)
Wed-Sat at 800 PM
Sunday, April 17 at 700 PM
Sunday, April 26 at 300 PM
Pre-Production: There will be a reading of the play in early March
Rehearsals: Evenings starting in mid-March

There are four characters: 3M, 1W
Full length, no intermission

Plot: Jack and Dave have lived together for twenty years as domestic partners. Jack's father dies suddenly without ever having told Jack he was ill. Jack's mother Doreen is suddenly homeless as a result of poor financial planning on the part of her and her husband. Jack and Dave take her in and, in spite of tensions, there seems to be the possibility of happy coexistence. But secrets about the past and present are revealed and the tensions soon become unendurable.

Characters:

JACK – Middle aged, gay, domestic partner to DAVE. A writer of gay fiction and a writing teacher. He and DAVE live in San Francisco. A bit of a queer activist.

MOM (DOREEN) – Mother of JACK, recently widowed. Upper-middle class Marin County housewife who raised sons JACK and PAUL Jr. with her husband PAUL Sr. She has a very busy, full life – adult education classes at College of Marin, her church, some volunteer work. Because of poor financial planning with her deceased husband, she is now living with JACK and DAVE.

DAVE – Same age as JACK. Has lived with JACK for twenty year and they are devoted to each other. Works in the Administrative Offices of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Friendly disposition, kind.

SAM – Early twenties. Gay. A writing student of JACK's at Stanford University. Very bright and personable.

Time: August to November, 2008; just preceding and after the Presidential Election.

Place: Jack and Dave's apartment in the Duboce Park district of San Francisco.

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Scene One

(DAVE and JACK in a hotel room in Rome, JACK on a laptop.)

DAVE

You all set?

JACK

In a minute. I'm checking my mail.

DAVE

We leave right now we can beat the crowds around the Coliseum.

JACK

It'll take two seconds.

DAVE

You're the one that wants to see Nero's Golden Showers.

JACK (correcting him)

Nero's Golden House.

DAVE

You're on Amazon.

JACK

My book's got a *Publisher's Weekly* thing! Ohmigawd! Ohmigawd! Look at that!

DAVE

Great, we can read it later.

JACK

Look at that! (He dances about singing "Oh My God You Guys" from *Legally Blonde: The Musical*.)

DAVE

Ok, ok, chill.

JACK (diving at laptop)

Wait! Wait, wait, wait. I want to check for word from Mark. I know he wasn't happy with the Forward.

DAVE

Day after tomorrow you'll be in New York at their beck and call. They can lock you in a room for three weeks and make you their rewrite slave.

JACK

One day you'll write a book and know how it feels.

DAVE

Never. I've seen how it feels and I don't envy you.

JACK

Hold on. Here's something from my brother.

(During the following JACK stares at his screen, scrolling down as he reads.)

DAVE

Your brother! Come on. It's going to be hot outside in an hour. I want to beat that Roman summer. At noon I want to be inside a museum, a museum with air conditioning, and not stumbling across some traffic nightmare trying to dodge Vespas. What's wrong?

JACK

My... My father's dead. The e-mail's from Paul Jr. It says... It says my father died.

DAVE

Oh, my God... Jack...

JACK

He... apparently he had cancer... he's dead. He... no one ever told me...

DAVE

Oh, my God...

JACK

I never even knew he was sick.

DAVE

Jack...

JACK

I... I have to call my mother...

(He grabs his cell phone. Blackout. The sound of a jet.)

Scene Two

(A week later. JACK and DAVE's living room: sofa, chairs, coffee table, bookshelves, lots of books. Right, a hallway leads to the rest of the apartment, left is an exit that leads to the front door. DAVE enters left escorting MOM. They are both dressed for a funeral.)

DAVE

Come on in, Mrs. Davis.

MOM

Doreen. It was a nice service, wasn't it?

DAVE

Beautiful.

MOM

Thank you, David. Now if we can just work out the memorial.

DAVE (taking her coat)

Let me take that. You'll stay here till then.

MOM

Thank you.

DAVE

Come in and sit.

MOM

This is so nice. I always loved this place. The walls, all the books. And the City. It has so much life. I mean, I love Marin, that's my home. But the City... Well now. (JACK enters, also dressed for funeral, puts down car keys.) Jacky-Wacky. You look so nice in that suit. (He sits with her on the sofa.) Goodness. I'm so tired. You liked the service?

JACK

It was very nice.

DAVE

Who was the man who sang that song?

MOM

Oh, he's from my church. He's the head of the choir. I always wanted your father to come to church and hear the choir. But he refused. You can't get an Episcopalian into a Baptist Church. And the choir is so wonderful, so full of pep and energy and, I don't know, they're just so peppy. And now he'll never hear them. Oh, well. (JACK takes her hand.) Oh, and the election. He'll miss the election. What a stupid thought. Election, election, election, that's all he talked about the last few months.

DAVE

That's all anyone talked about.

MOM

You know he was going to vote for Barak. Yep, he was all set.

JACK

Dad was?

MOM

Yes, we've never voted for a democrat. Sometimes I wanted to but... well, I didn't want to cancel out his vote. But Barak, Barak, Barak, that's all he could talk about.

JACK

How was he going to vote on Prop 8?

MOM

Oh, he didn't give a damn about high-speed rail.

JACK

No, same-sex marriage.

MOM

Oh, yes, he told me... He told me he would vote against it because he didn't see that it would have any fiscal impact. He didn't believe in voting against people's civil rights if it wasn't going to save money.

JACK

Dear Old Dad, always in our corner.

DAVE

Why do you go to a Baptist church, Mrs. Davis?

MOM

Oh, you know, I was raised Episcopalian, very strict, very uptight. Tough, tough, tough. The Episcopal minister in Tiburon's name was Mastor Sargeant.

DAVE

No way.

JACK

It was, I remember him.

MOM

That was his name. Mastor Sergeant. And Boy-oh-Boy, was he ever. He was Mr. Solid, Mr. No-Jokes-on-Sunday. One day I was upset about... well about your father's illness, and I just wandered into the church nearest our complex. I didn't even know it was Baptist. And they were so welcoming, so kind. They smiled, they told stories, oh the stories. And the singing, you know your father loved the singing at our church but it was all Bum-bum-bum. "Onward Christian sooooooldiers..." " This singing was so loud and energetic and there was clapping and people danced about. And the minister's name is Harry Watson and he insists that we call him Harry, can you imagine that? A minister who wants to be called Harry. And the first time I went he met me at the door, he asked my name, we chatted, all these people coming out of the church and he stopped this whole line of people who wanted to say good morning and made them wait while he chatted with me. And from then on he calls me Doreen. I can't believe it. It's so nice, so... uplifting. When your father was sick, I just, oh... I was always so tired, so upset, I had no energy. I was like this... (She slumps in her chair.) I needed something. I would take my walks and chat with my friends, go to my classes, but there seemed such a void in the world, a world alone. I was facing a world alone. Of course, I could never imagine this would happen, that I would be here with you. But back then, when he was sick, all I could see was emptiness stretching out in front of me, a big huge emptiness. But Harry, and that church, and all those nice people. They make me feel, oh, well... (She smiles.) I'm going to get baptized.

JACK

Really?

MOM

Yes.

JACK

You're already baptized.

MOM

I want to be baptized in my new church.

JACK

Mom, how do they feel about us? About Dave and me.

MOM

They don't know you dear.

JACK

No, how do they feel about our kind?

MOM

Your kind?

JACK
About homosexuals?

MOM
I don't know.

JACK
It never comes up?

MOM
No, we never talk about things like that.

JACK
I'm going to check the website, Mom.

MOM
Oh, Mr. Suspicious. Mr. Spy-Guy. You were always like that. I'd like you to know there are some very nice gentlemen who come every week and I'm sure they're just like you and Dave.

JACK
Oh, yeah. How can you tell?

MOM
They bring their cats with them. They each have a cat, in a little sling. They love their slings. (JACK and DAVE giggle.) What? Oh you two, a couple of silly pills. Now let me use the powder room.

JACK
Then you should go to bed.

MOM
Yes, sweetie pie-pie. Oh, I love you two boys so much.

(She exits.)

DAVE
That was a very nice speech you made at the funeral.

JACK
It was all bullshit. Talking about how much he loved me, what a fun guy he was when I was growing up. He was absentee, AWOL, always off at the party somewhere, somewhere else. I did it for her, I said those things for her. She was always in his thrall. Except when she wanted to kill him.

DAVE

They must have done something right, you're so handsome and intelligent.

JACK

They trained by bad example. When you had cancer and I thought you were going to die-

DAVE

Ugh, let's not reminisce.

JACK

Well, all I could think at that time was I hadn't loved you enough. Why not? Why hadn't I? And then I realized it was because no one had ever taught me how to love, I'd never been around it. I was brought up to believe the person you lived with was the person you most resented in the world, the person you blamed, the person you yelled at and backstabbed and made fun of. I'd lived with you for seven years and I took you for granted because I thought that's how you lived with a person. I even thought I was doing better than them because I took you for granted, I didn't actually hate you. And afterwards, when you were better I thought, "Well, I don't believe in God but I sure as hell believe in cancer. And cancer has taught me to love this fucker because he might evaporate at any second and then I won't be able to." And that's when I realized that spending your life with someone wasn't about detesting them, it was about adoring them.

DAVE

Your parents were very kind during my illness.

JACK

They're very good actors. Don't trust them. I mean her.

DAVE

They wore those hats, when I lost my hair, those French berets. That was very sweet.

JACK

They must have realized the same thing I did. They could go on being dicks or they could love you. That's what cancer does, it's very clarifying, it cuts through all the bullshit. I was hoping his death would cut through some of our bullshit, I wanted to talk to him, but nobody ever told me he was dying.

DAVE

It's been a long time since they despised us.

JACK

It's been a long time since they've said they did. They wanted a son. So they settled for his boyfriend. They're very clever that way.

DAVE

Give him a break already, he's dead.

JACK

Is he? The whole thing's an abstraction to me. I never saw him ill, never saw his body, never even knew he was sick till he was gone. It might be a big joke. He'll walk through that door and have the last laugh.

DAVE

Let it go.

JACK

No, I want to know why they never told me he was ill. (He holds DAVE tight.) Thank God I have you. Thank God we're not them. (They kiss.) You don't think I'm a shit leaving right after the funeral.

DAVE

You gave up the first two weeks of your time in New York for the funeral. That's enough.

JACK

So long as you think so.

DAVE

It's what he would have wanted. Everyone said that.

JACK

Well, I'm not sure. He was always a little jealous of me.

DAVE

Really?

JACK

Yeah, he wanted to be a writer. You're very sweet to be ok with this.

DAVE

I like her. She's fun.

JACK

Even when she didn't speak to you for three years.

DAVE

Would you forget about that? It was fifteen years ago.

JACK

She wouldn't speak to you, Dave. Wouldn't mention your name.

DAVE

Because I took her little boy away from her.

JACK

Because you, a *man*, took her little boy away from her.

DAVE

She doesn't like your brother's wife anymore than me. None of us are good enough for her boys, whether or not we're the right gender.

JACK

None of you were good enough for her.

MOM (entering)

I love this place, but that bathroom. Tiny, tiny, tiny.

DAVE

We think of it as intime.

MOM

I think of it as small. Well, now... We should talk about the date for the memorial.

JACK

It's up to you.

MOM

Ok, what are the dates?

JACK

Are you sure you want to do it at your church?

MOM

Oh, yes, it's free. They've been so nice. Let's do it there. It's free. What are the dates?

JACK

Any Saturday afternoon in September. Now it would be really nice if it wasn't the third Saturday because that's the week of my book launch in New York.

MOM

What are the dates?

JACK

The 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th. It would be best if it wasn't the 19th.

MOM

You can't do the 19^h?

JACK
I can but it would be best if it was earlier.

MOM
The 19th is the best for me.

JACK
Well that's the day of my launch.

MOM
You can't do it that day.

JACK
I can, but it would be best...

MOM
Well, let's do it the 19th. That gives us more time to plan.

JACK
The 19th is almost a month away.

MOM
The 19th gives people more time to respond.

JACK
Well there's also the 26th.

MOM
That's too far away.

JACK
Its only one week after the 19th.

MOM
It's almost October.

JACK
Mother-

MOM
People will think we don't want to do it.

JACK
They won't think that.

MOM
The 19th is the best.

JACK
Why don't we discuss it in...

MOM
I just want people to have a good time. I want them to have the chance to remember your father. I want them to have time to plan and be ready and the 19th is the best.

JACK
We could do it another place. Rent a hall.

MOM
The church is free.

JACK
He never went to that church.

MOM
That's where I want to have it.

JACK
Well, let's discuss the 26th.

MOM
Honey, if you can't be there that's fine-

JACK
Of course I'll be there-

MOM
And if you don't want to help me to arrange it that's also fine-

JACK
Of course I'll help-

MOM
But let's just set it for the 19.th It's the best day for everyone and I've made up my mind-

JACK
I thought we'd talk about this tomorrow.

MOM
I can't wait till then. We need to decide and get things in the mail-

JACK
We have weeks to-

MOM
The sooner the better-

JACK
This is ridiculous-

MOM
Please don't upset me! Please! Not tonight! Please!

DAVE
I think we need a time out.

MOM
Thank you. Thank you, David. It's decided. I'll make the arrangements. I'd like to go to bed now.

(Blackout.)

Scene Three

(Later. MOM sits on couch sipping wine. JACK enters in bathrobe.)

JACK
You can't sleep?

MOM
No. I'm glad we got that memorial straightened out. Thank you.

JACK (freshening her glass)
Here.

MOM
Thanks. I love this place, the view, that beautiful apartment building across the street. It's a little noisy but pleasant. Thank you for letting me stay. (He smiles.)

JACK
Why didn't you call me in Rome? When he was sick?

MOM
We tried.

JACK
Or send me an e-mail?

I had the address wrong. MOM

Paul Jr. figured it out. JACK

I told you we tried. MOM

I just want to know what happened. Will you tell me? JACK

(DAVE has entered behind them and listens.)

We tried your address, your e-mail, but I couldn't get it to work. I kept going down to the Rec Center in our complex and trying to use the computer. MOM

Why didn't you ask someone to help you? JACK

Jack. MOM

I just want to know. JACK

Well, I did but I had the address wrong. MOM

My cell phone. JACK

We assumed it didn't work in Italy. MOM

You could have just left me a message on my home phone. I was retrieving my messages through the whole trip. JACK

We never thought of that. MOM

Paul Jr. figured out how to send me an e-mail. JACK

MOM

That was later. Later he called your publisher and they gave him the correct address.

JACK

But you had the correct address. I made sure you had it.

MOM

It was a very difficult time-

JACK

I wrote it down for you-

MOM

I guess I lost that slip of paper.

JACK

I called you before you left and confirmed all my-

MOM

Jack-

JACK

I'm just trying to figure out why I had to hear about my father's death after the fact and in an e-mail with the subject heading "sad news." How come everyone else knew about his illness and I didn't?

MOM

Jack, I'm exhausted.

JACK

Mom, that's an excuse. The funeral, the arrangements, Paul Jr. had to get back to Boston, you had to say goodbye to the family, it's all an excuse. I've waited long enough, I want to discuss it.

MOM

Can I at least use the restroom.

JACK

Of course, Mom.

(MOM exits passing DAVE on the way.)

DAVE

Do we have to do this tonight?

JACK

I just gave up another trip east for this memorial, I want to talk about it.

DAVE

This isn't going to help.

JACK

It's just so typical of my family that the most important event in someone's life, their dying, is so completely botched.

DAVE

It wasn't deliberate.

JACK

Not deliberate. No, it wasn't. That would be interesting. It was done out of a classic combination of lameness and just not giving a shit, which comes from hostility. You don't communicate with people because you don't love them, you make lame efforts and bungle even those and then excuse yourself because "you tried." But the bottom line is rage. Simple rage which makes any kind of shitty behavior all right.

DAVE (seeing MOM standing in doorway)

Hi.

MOM

Hello. That bathroom's very small.

JACK

Sit down.

MOM

Thank you.

JACK

I'm very upset.

MOM

Jack, we did our best.

JACK

Mom, that's not good enough. Why didn't you tell me when he was sick? You must have known for months.

MOM

He didn't want people to know.

JACK

Paul Jr. knew.

MOM

I don't want to talk about it.

(Pause while JACK allows the tension to subside.)

JACK

Can you at least tell me about how he was... before he died.

MOM

Oh, Jacky.

JACK

Mom, please.

MOM

He just... he would sit for a while, calm, not really talking. He was doped up on a lot of medicine. Pills, pills, pills. Everywhere pills. I asked him how he felt. He said, "Numb, can't feel anything." Which was good at that point. But then he'd sort of grimace, like this... (She makes a painful face) make a face, and then he'd shift. Every five minutes. Always, no matter how many pills. Grimace, the face, then shift. Night and day. All night. He couldn't get comfortable. He couldn't stay comfortable. I think, I think when he finally died, he was just tired. He wanted it to end. He wanted to be comfortable.

JACK

I think he was scared to death of dying.

MOM

Yes, before, which is why he couldn't tell you for so long. But at the end he was ready just to get comfortable. Just so he wouldn't have to shift every five minutes.

JACK

He didn't tell me because he was afraid it would make him look weak. He was competitive with me, with all of us...

MOM

Oh, Jacky, that's so... typical. Your father loved you, he didn't compete with you... that is just so... hateful.

JACK

All right, mom.

MOM

Anyway, there was a lot of that at the end, a lot of that, it was all very slow, which is why we, we didn't have time, well we didn't have the number... which is why we couldn't reach you.

JACK

It's all right, Mom.

DAVE

Would you like some more wine?

MOM

I think I'll go back to bed. I have French in the morning.

DAVE

You're going to go to school?

MOM

I have to. Gotta stay busy. Busy, busy, busy. Good night Jacky Packy. Good night, Davey-Pavey. That's my new name for you. A plus tarde. Bon nuit. (She exits.)

JACK

Typical of my family. All the secrets. Never tell anyone anything. Spare them the truth and torture them with the mystery.

DAVE

He just died. She'll tell you one day, if you really want to know.

JACK

Of course I want to know. I wanted to know all kinds of things about my father but he would never tell me. Now he never will. I would have at least liked to be there at his death. Maybe we could have had that big conversation.

DAVE

It wouldn't have been very satisfying.

JACK

You don't know that.

DAVE

You're very polite with our parents.

JACK

Me?

DAVE

Yeah, You never push them for answers, really push them. I used to do that, demand answers. Not give up. Hammer on them like I was Perry Mason. They would just lie.

JACK

You don't even talk to your parents anymore.

DAVE

No, I got sick of it. Also I decided they had there lives and I have mine, there was no need for us to be buddies or even acquaintances.

JACK

You're saying I should toss her out on the street.

DAVE

Just let her have her secrets. She's entitled.

JACK

They're so transparent. They're so obviously lies it's maddening.

DAVE

Yeah, they like their lies. Gives them power. You know, my father, I think, had sex with his secretaries. For years. That was his big secret. I think he hired secretaries to have sex with them. I mean, I think they could type and answer phones and all that, I don't think he was obvious about hiring women who were just hos, but I think their main qualification was that they were hot or at least the best he could get for the money he was offering.

JACK

But you don't know that.

DAVE

No, I don't. Because I don't want to. You see that would mean that he was unhappy with his life, that he didn't like me that much and he hated my mother and he was just, you know, generally discontent. So he had to fuck his secretaries.

JACK

And you never asked.

DAVE

A million times. He'd just lied. And I had this burning desire to know. So I followed him around one day. I secretly stowed away in his car. He had this boat of a vehicle, a Cadillac El Dorado. I think that's evidence enough that he was cheating on my mother. Anyway, he had this big Cadillac and I lay down in the back seat, crouched on the floor, I was eleven. So I crouched on the floor and stayed that way all the way into the city. It was murder. I remember, I remember thinking that I would know where we were the

whole way into the city by the feel of the road and the turns the car made. But once I was back there and he was driving, I was so nervous I had no idea. I was completely disoriented. Every time the car turned I was thrown off balance and then I was worried that I'd made some noise that he would hear and then I'd panic and my heart would go in my mouth. And then, before I could regain my composure, we'd hit another turn and I'd be thrown off balance and panicked again and then the turns just piled up on top of each other and then the car braking, that crushed me up against the back of his seat and more panic. I could never catch my breath. At one point I thought I might suffocate. I remember thinking, "I have no idea how this man will respond if he finds me back here. I mean, I've seen him angry but never in a situation like this. He might kill me or beat me senseless. He'd hit. Never beat me, but hit me, a few times. And I thought maybe there was some volcano of energy I'd never seen before. At one point he reached into the backseat for his brief case, right over my head. I felt like I was going to have a heart attack. I thought he was reaching for me. His hand flailed around on the seat right behind me. The sweat sprung from my face, sprung, you know that feeling? Turned out he had the briefcase beside him in the front seat. I thought to myself, "Why was he reaching back here for his brief case if he always had it beside him up front?" Then I realized he was reaching for me, he had heard something behind him, but he figured it had to be someone laying down on the back seat, he couldn't imagine anyone could fit in the space on the floor.

JACK

What did you find out?

DAVE

Nothing. By the time he parked in the city I was so freaked I got on a bus and went home. I'd learned enough. On the ride in.

JACK

What?

DAVE

He talked to himself. The whole way in. He had a dialogue with himself.

JACK

About what?

DAVE

He was talking to his partners, his clients, his associates. He was chewing them out. Telling them what was wrong with them, why they were stupid. I hated hearing that. It was all so petty and self-righteous and self-aggrandizing. He was nothing. He was a businessman, a successful businessman, but he was no Lee Iacocca. Yet he talked like one, in the car. And I realized that was his right. I decided it was none of my business. Whatever he did with his life, even if he betrayed us, it was none of my business. In other words to be the decent man that he was in real life he had to be Donald Trump in his brain.

JACK

He doesn't sound all that decent.

DAVE

He fed me, he sent me to college, he did all that stuff parents thought they should do for their kids back then.

JACK

He hit you.

DAVE

Like spanking, because I was bad. It wasn't violent. We all have a right to privacy, no matter how heinous. Come back to bed?

JACK

I have to send an e-mail to Mark let him know I won't be there for the launch. I guess I can do the interviews over the phone, not quite the same thing though.

DAVE

I'm sorry it happened this way.

JACK

No, my family was always about my father. He was the title character. I should have expected it.

DAVE

Your book is wonderful. People are going to love it, with or without all the big interviews.

JACK

It's funny, my parents always encouraged my writing, loved it when I won short story contests in grammar school. Then when I started getting published they hated what I wrote. My father actually said, "I love your writing, your *writing*. But the stories, all that gay stuff, why do you have to write about stuff like that?"

DAVE

Well now there are enough people in the world who like stuff like that his opinion doesn't mater.

JACK

I don't think there's enough sex in it. Mark begged me for more sex.

DAVE (holding him tight)

It's about an old married couple. Married couples have quality of sex, not quantity. That's what people like about your work.

JACK

Well, they liked it when I wrote a story a year. Let's hope they'll swallow a whole novel.
(Lights fade.)

Scene Four

(A month later. JACK and DAVE stand near the door. JACK is dangling his car keys.)

JACK (shouting off towards hall.)

Mom, I've got the car out front, let's go.

DAVE

There's no rush.

JACK

I want to get this over with.

DAVE

Ok.

JACK

It's been a month. I want her out.

DAVE

I'm sorry about what happened.

JACK

It doesn't matter. It's not why I write books. Mom!

MOM (off)

Coming. I'm looking...

JACK

Let's go!

DAVE

Jack relax. It's not her fault.

JACK

What's not?

DAVE

Forget it.

JACK

Actually, you know what? It is. It is her fault. Because aside from the shittiest review I've read in the *Times* ever, I wasn't even able to enjoy the parties and the signing and launches before the defeat. And maybe it wouldn't have been such a flop if I'd been there to charm the critics and shmooz the press.

DAVE

That's pretty cynical.

JACK

No, it's not. It's how it works. You play the game and you stay in the game. But I was here, at a fuckin' memorial service for a man I couldn't stand. Mom! And now my book is a flop, officially, a flop. And maybe my not being there had nothing to do with it but it would have been fun, for once, to be treated like a successful author for a few days before the inevitable curtain. But once again, my family got in the way of me having any fun. Bullshit! Mom.

MOM (entering)

Yes, yes, all set.

(They stare at one another, he with rage. He turns away.)

DAVE

Mrs. Davis, we should get going.

MOM

Well, yes, let's go.

DAVE

Do you have everything?

MOM

I do, thanks. Just a minute. (She crosses and sits.)

JACK

Mother.

MOM

I just want to sit a minute.

DAVE

Ok. We should beat the traffic.

JACK

Yeah.

Well, I can take a bus. MOM

You can't take a bus, Mother, not with your stuff. JACK

No. MOM

Let's go. JACK

I'd like to sit. MOM

Mom, what are you doing? JACK

Is everything all right, Mrs. Davis? DAVE

Doreen. MOM

Doreen. DAVE

I just have been so comfortable here. So safe. MOM

(A beat. Something's wrong.)

Are you afraid to be in your place without Dad? JACK

Without Dad? MOM

The apartment. JACK

Oh. MOM

Mrs. Davis. Are you going back to your apartment? DAVE

No. MOM

What? But we're taking you back to your place. JACK

Mrs. Davis. Where are you going tonight? DAVE

To Alice's. MOM

Mom. You don't have to be afraid of your place. You can get a new one if it reminds you of Dad. JACK

Oh, sweetie. MOM

Doreen, has your place been rented? DAVE

Why would her... JACK

Yes. They rented it last week. I talked to the manager this morning, he's been very sweet. He has all our stuff in storage. He can keep it there for a little while. MOM

You were going to go stay with Alice? JACK

I was going to let you drop me off at the complex, at our place. And then I was going to go down the hall and stay with Alice. MOM

For how long? JACK

I can stay there a week. MOM

Then what? JACK

I don't know. MOM

You mean you're broke. JACK

We have some money. Not enough for rent. Your father hadn't paid it in a while... MOM

Mom, you live in Tiburon. JACK

It's very expensive. MOM

You haven't been paying rent? JACK

Your father wanted to stay in Tiburon. We don't have any choice. MOM

You could have moved somewhere cheaper. JACK

We've always lived in Marin. MOM

This is incredible. You mean you have no money? Six months ago you took us to dinner at Rubicon. JACK

On a credit card. MOM

What are you crazy? JACK

Do you want to stay here Mrs. Davis? Till you sort things out. (To JACK) Till she sorts things out. She'd just be back here in a week, when she can't stay at Alice's any more. DAVE

This is incredible. JACK

I'm sorry, I'm so embarrassed. I promised I wasn't going to say anything. MOM

JACK

What were you going to do in a week? How much money do you have? Don't you have a retirement plan, from Dad?

MOM

Your father, please, that was his firm, he was his own boss, that money's long gone. I have my social security and a little of his, his is not much. His firm, well, they weren't always paying into the retirement plans ... (She can't finish the sentence.)

DAVE

Why don't you put your things away and we'll make dinner, ok? I'll call Alice. Do you have her number?

MOM (handing him her number)

Yes, here, but you have to let the phone ring a lot and then talk into the answering machine because she hates her kids and doesn't answer till she knows it's not her son or her daughter. Her son's very mean and her daughter's always asking for money. (DAVE leaves to call. JACK just stares at her.) Oh, Jacky. I love you.

JACK

Where did all the money go, Mom?

MOM

Uh, I don't... (She just peters out. She's trying not to cry. He just stares at her.)

DAVE (entering)

I told Alice. Strange lady.

MOM

She's deaf. I'll see to dinner. (Then she exits.)

DAVE

Look, it's fine, just...

JACK

How can she be broke? They sold their house for 4.2 million dollars, David. That means that in three years they've squandered all that money.

DAVE

Maybe they owed a lot. Maybe they didn't really own the house anymore.

JACK

This is incredible. Now I'm living with my mother.

DAVE

You're letting her stay here. We'll figure out what the real situation is and find a long term solution. She's your family, Jack.

JACK

You're my family.

DAVE

Ok yes, but so is she. You can't just throw her out.

JACK

She doesn't live here. She's visiting.

DAVE

Yes. But she's homeless. She can stay here a while at least. Until you can make other arrangements.

JACK

There are no other arrangements to make. She can't afford to move, we can't afford to move her somewhere, Paul Jr.'s not interested in helping, she has no money. So if she moves in here by default, then she'll stay here, by default. That's how it will work.

(Pause.)

DAVE

Ok.

JACK

It's not ok.

DAVE

It has to be. In this country, right now, if you don't take care of her, no one takes care of her.

JACK

Where the hell's her money?

DAVE

Spent.

JACK

How on earth did they spend it all? They sold our house for 4.2 million dollars.

DAVE

Just tell her it's all right. We can start working on another solution Monday.

JACK

There is no other solution.

DAVE

It's a challenge.

JACK

People always say they're confronted with a challenge when they mean an impossibility.

DAVE

It'll be fine.

JACK

She drives me crazy.

DAVE

Mother's are supposed to do that. It's in the job description.

(Music. They exit.)

Scene Five

(MOM enters and lights change to indicate early morning. It is a few weeks later. MOM is brightly dressed and moves about the room happily, getting ready to make her morning exit. DAVE enters dressed for work. She turns off the music.)

MOM

Morning Davey Pavey. How are you?

DAVE

Great. Late. What's your one question?

MOM

Is there another way to get down to the Ferry Terminal other than the bus?

DAVE

There's the streetcar on Duboce. (Giving directions with hand gestures) Across the park, then up Duboce to Noe. You'll see it.

MOM

Less crowded?

DAVE

It's a toss up.

MOM

Thanks, sweetie pie, pie. (She exits almost crashing into JACK entering.) Beep, beep.
(JACK rolls his eyes. DAVE laughs.)

JACK

You're sweet.

DAVE

Bye.

JACK

Come here. You're very handsome this morning.

DAVE

You're handsome every morning.

JACK

You have very soft skin.

DAVE

You're the one with the soft skin.

MOM (crossing the room, masking her face)

Don't mind me. Just passing through.

JACK

Ugh. She does that deliberately.

DAVE

She doesn't.

JACK

She waits in the hall and springs.

DAVE

She likes to keep moving.

MOM (entering)

Jacky, can I have my one question now?

JACK

Shoot.

MOM

"Shoot." That's cute. I like that.

JACK
Mom.

MOM
Can Margie park in the driveway when she drops me off tonight?

JACK
Not if she's going to get out of the car. Parked cars piss off the neighbors.

MOM
Thanks. (Exits.)

JACK
She drives me crazy with her "one question."

DAVE
It's fun.

JACK
And that wasn't a real question. It was a bogus one so she could talk.

DAVE
It was a real question. She was basically asking if Margie could come in, you definitely said no, communication is fundamentally sound.

JACK
She drills you every day on things she could easily figure out on the Internet.

DAVE
She likes to ask questions.

JACK
What do she and Margie do till 10 on Wednesday nights?

DAVE
They go to bible study, then they have a ladies night out.

JACK
They go out drinking then get into that car and drive.

DAVE
They go to Denny's and have pie. It's sweet.

JACK
Sweet?

DAVE

They talk about how much they love Barak.

JACK

Why on earth are a couple of Marin ladies going to vote for Barak?

DAVE

They think he's handsome.

JACK

You love this.

DAVE

I don't.

JACK

You do. You think it's a big slumber party.

DAVE

I don't love it. But we're making it work and I like that. It suits my vanity. Someone asked us for help and we're able to give it. That's good.

JACK

It's not a long-term solution.

DAVE

No, but it's a short term one and something will work out.

JACK

In a year?

DAVE

Remember when we have Ellen living here and you were sick of it. Suddenly she moved in with Stacy?

JACK

Because I completely vibed her out. My mother's not that easy.

DAVE

You love her. You don't mind nearly as much as you let on.

(JACK smiles. MOM enters.)

MOM

Ok, I'm all set.

JACK

Have a fun day, mom.

MOM

Fun? Algebra all morning. French all afternoon. Then my volunteer work with the kids. The only part of it I like is bible study and that's only because they all talk over my head. Talk, talk, talk. It makes me dizzy but I learn a lot.

JACK

Bye, Mom.

DAVE

Bye, Doreen.

MOM (kissing them goodbye)

I love you guys. I do. Mmmm. And one for you... mmmm. And another. Ok, across the park, then up Duboce to Noe. That wasn't a question. (Moving towards door) Au bientot. Je t'aime. Plus tarde. (Suddenly dashing into hall) Forgot my phone!

JACK

Oh, my Lord!

DAVE

Take it easy. You're cute. Join me for lunch at the Museum.

JACK

No, I have a student coming over to discuss his story.

DAVE

Sam?

JACK

Yes.

DAVE

He's a tease.

JACK

Yes, but if I see him here I don't have to drive all the way to Stanford for a meeting. You know he does nothing for me.

DAVE

One day I'm going to meet him.

JACK

So?

DAVE

All I can say is he better be hideous. (He kisses JACK and leaves.)

(MOM enters at a run.)

MOM

Vite, vite!

JACK

Mom.

MOM

See you around four!

JACK (laughing)

Mom.

MOM

Yes, dear, quickly now. I'm in a hurry. Rush, rush, rush.

JACK

I have to say, I'm very impressed with the way you've managed things.

MOM

Thank you, Jacky. You both have been very sweet since I got here.

JACK

I think it's great the way you get from here to your activities, you figured out the buses, the ferries-

MOM

Well, I had to raise you boys and take care of your father all these years, I know organization. Think ahead!

JACK

Yes, you do it very well.

MOM

I'm reading your book.

JACK

Are you enjoying it?

MOM

Oh, yes. The writing. I always loved your writing. I can barely follow it but the... what is it? The imagery... the imagery is so beautiful.

JACK

I'm glad you're enjoying it.

MOM

Have you thought about my baptism ceremony?

JACK

When is it again?

MOM

Well, I want to do it next Sunday or the following.

JACK

Those are both not good for me. This Sunday Dave and I are going to Yosemite-

MOM

What about next Sunday?

JACK

Well, that's the day I have that book signing in Stanford.

MOM

Then maybe this Sunday is best.

JACK

I won't be back in time from Yosemite.

MOM

Oh Jacky, this is really important to me and I want to have you there, to meet everyone at the church.

JACK

Well, why don't you do it in three weeks, then we could come.

MOM

No, that's too far away, people will think I don't care about the ceremony.

JACK

They know you had to postpone it for Dad's service and memorial-

MOM

Yes but there's only so long you can postpone-

JACK
I don't see how a week-

MOM
It has to be one of the coming two Sunday's, I can't put it off any longer-

JACK
Mom-

MOM
No, I'm done discussing this. I can't keep putting it off-

JACK
Mom-

MOM
I'm sorry to be definite-

JACK
Mom. I can't be there. That's definite.

MOM (sarcastic)
Ok, have a nice day. Goodbye.

JACK
Mom! (She stops.) Please sit down.

MOM
Don't tell me to sit down.

JACK
I didn't tell you. I asked you. (She sits.)

MOM
Please be quick, I have to catch the bus and-

JACK
Mom. Dad's memorial was very important to you so I changed my plans to be there. I'm not changing my plans for this. I'm not sorry. You live here now. You can't order me about and make pronouncements. That's over. You don't have to live here. You don't. But if you do, you have to show respect for me when I say I can't- No, you have to show respect for me even if I say I *won't* do something. You can't order us about.

MOM
Is that all?

JACK

Actually it's not. I don't know how you and Dad lived but I'm not Dad. Please don't treat me like I'm your husband. I want you to be relaxed and happy living here. But the orders have to stop. Today. I'm leaving now. I'll see you tonight. (He walks out. See sits for a minute, then gathers up her stuff and exits. Blackout.)

Scene Six

(That afternoon. SAM, a student in his early twenties sits, in the middle of the floor. JACK hovers above him holding a story SAM has written.)

SAM

I like your place.

JACK

Don't change the subject. How does this passage advance the story?

SAM

It's about her first child, the one she put up for adoption.

JACK

Makes her seem like a heartless bitch.

SAM

So?

JACK

She's your lead character.

SAM

But she's also a heartless bitch.

JACK

But you want your lead character to be sympathetic.

SAM

Sympathetic people can be ex-heartless bitches.

JACK

If you want them to be ex-sympathetic characters.

SAM (getting up)

It's very frustrating. Your comments are frustrating. I want to be a writer. I want to get better at it and I feel like I'm spinning my wheels.

JACK

You are. We meet a lot but you don't seem to take my advice.

SAM

If I take your advice I have to rewrite and it's hard enough for me to squeeze it out in the first place.

JACK

Writers write, that's what they do.

SAM

I think I have writer's block.

JACK

You can't have writers block if you don't write.

SAM

But when I just write freely it all sounds so stupid. I stop myself. I mean, how do you do it?

JACK

Do what?

SAM

How do you keep writing and not worry about it being crap.

JACK

Thank you.

SAM

You know what I mean.

JACK

I've overcome my self-censoring mechanism. I just keep writing, whatever shit comes out. Read a novel some time.

SAM

I read novels all the time.

JACK

Do you love every word you read?

SAM

No.

JACK (sitting on the sofa)

Of course not. Because half of it is shit, well not shit, just not honest or not all that interesting or clearly ripped off from some other author. But you keep reading. That's where style comes in. Your individual style, your voice, covers a lot of faults. And you can't find your voice unless you write. A lot. Uncensored. Then, in your case, go back and cut the whining. There's a lot of whining in here. Don't whine. Whining is interesting for about a second, then it's just annoying, like a buzzing in the ear. Whine for a line, that's what I always say. Then crack a joke or say something dirty. For instance: "I hate my boss. I really want to have sex with him." That's interesting.

SAM

I hate my teachers.

JACK

I hated mine.

SAM

But there's one I really want to screw.

JACK

That's interesting.

SAM

I think it is.

JACK

Now how does one go about screwing a teacher you actually hate?

SAM

Well...

JACK

It's a rhetorical question. Never ask questions that aren't rhetorical, it wastes time. Got it? (Pause.) Good, that was rhetorical.

SAM (sitting beside him on the coach)

Your book.

JACK

Yes.

SAM

I didn't buy it.

JACK

It was expensive.

SAM
No, I didn't believe it.

JACK
Oh, I'm sorry.

SAM
Those two guys had been together for twenty years and never had sex with anyone else. It just doesn't happen.

JACK
Doesn't it?

SAM
No, they were idealized.

JACK
Well, I'm glad you think that's an ideal.

SAM
Couple of gay guys? It's impossible.

JACK
I think it happens a lot more than you think. Anyway, that was the point of the book. It was something new, something surprising.

SAM
Not many other people bought it.

JACK
You don't know that.

SAM
I meant purchased it. Not many people purchased the book.

JACK
So?

SAM
Isn't that an indication of its believability?

JACK
Maybe it's just an indication that I didn't settle for a cliché.

SAM (getting closer)
Like gay men are incapable of monogamy.

JACK
Like students are all smart alecks.

SAM
Like teachers want to screw their students.

JACK
Get off my couch.

SAM
I think your novel's autobiographical?

JACK
You said it was idyllic.

SAM
It is. You're vain, you think you have an idyllic life.

JACK
I have a very good life and one of its pleasures is teaching. Get off my coach.

SAM
Listen Professor-

JACK
I'm not a professor, I'm a lecturer.

SAM
Listen Lecturer, I don't want you to get the wrong idea.

JACK
I don't think I have.

SAM
Glad to hear it.

JACK
I thought you had a boy friend.

SAM

What's that got to do with it? Sorry. Advance the story. My friend goes to bars to get laid. But he doesn't want to get involved, he doesn't want to leave his boy friend. So his pick up line is "My husband's out of town, do you want to fuck me?"

JACK

That's a strange use of the word husband.

SAM

Don't be so conventional.

JACK

It seems to me that's exactly what we're fighting for when we fight for marriage, convention. The right to be conventional, traditional. Husband," in the most conventional sense, is not someone you cheat on but someone you respect and hold sacred. Using "husband" in that context, in the context you just mentioned, is perverse. It's the ideal we're after, not the joke.

SAM

And you think the message is ahead of its time.

JACK

Maybe. Maybe gay people want marriage but they want to alter the conventions of marriage too much: open marriage, serial monogamy, conditional matrimony. At some point the noun marriage loses its meaning in the all the qualifying adjectives. It's like gay Mormons. What's the point?

SAM

Now you're proselytizing.

JACK

No, I'm being a mentor. A mentor should be open about his attitudes. Maybe. I try to open up with my students to make them comfortable.

SAM

I'm very cynical about mentorship. I think mentors are the ones seeking guidance.

JACK

That might be your experience but-

SAM

Am I scaring you?

JACK

No, I'm daring you.

To get closer?	SAM
To act like an adult.	JACK
Adult's do what they want.	SAM
Very rarely.	JACK
(MOM walks in.)	
Oh, excuse me.	MOM
Hey, Mom.	JACK
Hi.	MOM
Hey, Mom. (This doesn't go over well.) Sorry.	SAM
Mom, this is Sam Hines. Sam, my mother Mrs. Doreen Davis.	JACK
SAM (standing and shaking hands)	
Hello, Mrs. Davis.	
MOM	
Hello, Sam. Excuse me. (She exits to the hall.)	
Wow, sorry, are you busted?	SAM
I'm a little old to be busted.	JACK
You wanna walk me to my car?	SAM
No, thanks.	JACK

SAM

Why not, it's paid for. You're already in trouble.

JACK (handing him his story)

Avoid cliché. Keep it surprising. And keep writing, you should write something today.

SAM

About this?

JACK

Yes, why don't you write what you think happened here. I'd like to read it. It would be amusing.

(SAM smiles and leaves. MOM comes on.)

MOM

Did your friend leave?

JACK

He's a student.

MOM

They usually are at that age.

JACK

One of my students.

MOM

It's none of my business.

JACK

You're right.

MOM

Next time I say I'm going to stay out until four, by God I'm going to stay out until four.

JACK

Look, don't start with me. I don't need your shit. You're a guest in my house. If you don't like what you see you can move out. I stopped apologizing to you for my life twenty years ago.

MOM

Let's just forget about it.

JACK

No, don't come in here and start something and when I call you on it act like I'm the irrational one. That's bullshit.

MOM

I didn't want to start a fight.

JACK

No, you wanted me to feel bad and you can't do that anymore – you just make me angry, angry at you. You're pathetic.

MOM

Pathetic. I saw what you were doing. I saw you. While David's at work. That's pathetic.

JACK

I was doing nothing. You have a suspicious mind.

MOM

I know hanky panky.

JACK

Hanky panky?

MOM

Yes, hanky panky.

JACK

Wait a minute. Are you upset that I was doing something behind David's back?

MOM

Then you admit it?

JACK

You don't approve of me and David. You think what we do is disgusting.

MOM

I never said that-

JACK

And now you disapprove of me cheating on him-

MOM

I never said that you and David were disgusting.

JACK

Yes you did. When I told you, when I first told you that we were living together.

MOM

That was years ago-

JACK

When I came out-

MOM

Twenty years ago-

JACK

You screamed it in my face-

MOM

So you admit you were messing around with that boy-

JACK

No! But I'm shocked you have the gall to take the moral high ground on David's behalf when you know-

MOM

Oh, honestly, disgusted by what you do? I haven't thought that way in years.

JACK

Haven't thought that way in years?

MOM

No.

JACK

What are you talking about?

MOM

I got over that years ago.

JACK

How can you "get over that years ago?" You still think that.

MOM

You used to be normal, then you were gay. People change.

JACK

No they don't. I was never normal.

MOM

You know what I'm talking about.

JACK

We don't even speak the same language. Normal? I'm normal now. And you never changed, you just started lying.

MOM

I like David.

JACK

So do I. I love him,

MOM

So do I. And I just can't watch you getting involved with someone in his house when he's at work. It sickens me.

JACK

Mom, forgive me but this is so fucked up and twisted. You work yourself up into a bogus lather because you think I'm cheating on him when you don't even acknowledge our relationship in the first place.

MOM

I don't like cheating.

JACK

Neither do I. I also don't like hypocrisy.

MOM

Your father did this. This underhanded crap. He was always trying this on me.

JACK

Confronting you with your own hypocrisy?

MOM

No, fucking other women and acting innocent. *That's* hypocrisy.

JACK

Mom.

MOM

He was. How dare you. How dare you make me feel insecure about what I know is right, you were messing around with that boy, I saw it. I did.

JACK

Mom. I'm only messing around with him if you acknowledge my relationship with David. Don't you see that?

MOM

Fine. You have a relationship with David.

JACK

A marriage, Mom. A marriage.

MOM

Fine.

JACK

You never told me that about Dad.

MOM

Why should I tell you that about Dad? It was my shame. My embarrassment. Big man attorney. Boom, boom, boom. Walk in a room and everyone's impressed. Big man. That was your father. Mr. Know it all, Mr. Big Shot, Mr. Hot shot lawyer. And all the time he had his hand in the cookie jar. Lipstick smeared on his collar. On his collar. One night he came home late and I just cried. I'd had it, too many times. I was crying. And he said to me, he said, "What the hell's your problem?" And I said to him, I'd never said anything like this, I said, "You've been screwing Barbra Bosch, that fat secretary of yours, you've been screwing her." And he just laughed. He looked at me and did this little laugh. And I said, "What. Are you denying it?" And do you know what he said to me, Mr. Husband, Mr. Big Family Man. He said, "Doreen, I've never been unfaithful to you." He said it to me, to my face. So I told him, I said, "Don't you dare, don't you dare, I'm not some judge or some jury or some client, don't get sincere with me, don't you snow me, don't you try to sell me your sack of shit!" That's what he was trying to give me, his closing argument, his summation, his pack of lies like he used to do in court. If he'd yelled his lies at me I could take it or just told me to go to hell, but he became all sincere. Mr. Heartfelt. So I said, "Don't shovel that poo on me, Mister. I'm not someone in your office, I'm not a Junior Associate. I'm not some judge you've paid off!" And he shoved me. He gave me a big old shove.

JACK

Mom.

MOM

It was a relief. I shoved him back and then he pushed me over the sofa. I landed on the end table, thank God I didn't break the Auboson chair. So we shoved each other for a while. It was a great relief. There was nothing else to say and I loved pushing him because I wanted him to die I was so angry. And I'm sure he was so embarrassed he

needed something to shove as well. At some point there just aren't words appropriate so violence is necessary.

JACK

Mom, he abused you.

MOM

No, I started it. And he was far too good an attorney to actually draw blood or break a bone. I counted on that.

JACK

Did this happen often?

MOM

A few times. Whenever I decided to confront him.

JACK

Why didn't you leave him?

MOM

He couldn't afford to divorce me. Everything was in hock. Why do you think I'm here? We always lived way beyond our means, if we ever split up it would all go into court and then the jig would have really been up. We could either live together in borrowed splendor or split up and join the middle class. We had no other choice. I grew up in the middle class, around divorced people, lots of them. They're the only people worse than married people.

JACK

How could he afford all those clubs, the Yacht Club, the PU Club, the Bohemian-

MOM

Oh, he put it down as a company expense, it was easy, he used to take clients there, wine and dine the big wigs, take the judge to lunch, Big Man, Big PU Club Member. What a fuck!

JACK

Mom, I have students, sometimes they get too close. Sometimes they flirt. Students do that.

MOM

I know dear.

JACK

That doesn't mean I do anything with them.

MOM

I know you don't. It's illegal I'm sure. And you're far too smart for that. You're your father's son.

JACK

Mom, I don't do it with anyone, except David. I never imagined that would mean anything to you.

MOM

It does mean something to me. It makes me jealous.

JACK

Thanks Mom.

(Blackout.)

Scene Seven

(That night. MOM sits on the sofa cradling a glass of wine. JACK is also drinking wine. The atmosphere is relaxed.)

MOM

Your father, well he was my whole life and now he's gone. Gone, gone, gone. I don't accept that. I don't even understand it. I... I hated him. For years I despised him, but then you knew that. Boy oh boy, did I hate him. He was such a hotshot, such a big guy. Not just with the ladies- Of course that really got me, and he knew it and that's a big reason he did it, to get me. But that wasn't the worst. People always think the worst thing you can do to your wife is cheat on her, no he turned on me. That was the worst. He betrayed me, to his friends, to you kids, to everyone. He turned you against me, or tried to. Once, we were out to dinner, Sunday night family dinner, we'd been arguing, in front of you kids. I was going to cry, I felt it coming on, and I got up to go to the Lady's Room. I headed in the wrong direction, towards the kitchen. So I doubled back, and as I passed our booth, he didn't see me, I was behind him, he said to your bother, he said, "She's basically a stupid woman." That's what he said. You could see me. Over his shoulder. Do you remember that? (JACK is silent.) I never talked that way about your father. To other people, to you. Because that was dirty pool. But that was your father. He knew the rules but he didn't play by them. He knew better. He knew he should not. Some men don't know that, they're just children. But he was always an adult. An attorney. Always slipping in a fast one when he could get away with it. It took my breath away when I heard him say that. (Pause.) But I lived through the women and the betrayal, I lived through it all. And I came out the other side. And there he was. Still living with me. And I didn't trust him and I didn't really like him, but he was decent enough company and he was smart and we had enough in common to carry on a passable conversation, so that it was ok.

JACK

You talked about us, you gossiped.

MOM

Yes, we did. We had that in common.

JACK

You talked about us constantly.

MOM

Don't flatter yourself.

JACK

Was he jealous of my writing, of me being a writer?

MOM

Probably. I don't know. He was quiet on the subject. I'd show him a review, a story, he'd smile. Go on watching the game. He was non-committal.

JACK

So he was jealous.

MOM

It's not that simple. He felt pride as a father. But for men pride is wrapped up in envy, it's hard to separate.

JACK

Why didn't you leave him? Was it just money?

MOM

No. You see I knew your father and I knew myself. If you're like me and you leave one, you tend to end up with another just like him. And it's hard to change partners, really hard. I'd seen enough of my friends do it and they never ended up any happier, just busier. You just have more to do when you switch partners, because you have all your kids and all his kids and two houses, so much work. Alice said it kept her young, having to start all over again with a new husband, but I never wanted to be young, I just wanted your father. The only man I ever admired. Boy oh boy wasn't that a mistake.

JACK

Mom.

MOM

No, it wasn't a wasted life. The days have been fun, the separate days. I've always had activities and my friends and you boys.

JACK

And your job.

MOM

That was a trial.

JACK

I thought you love that.

MOM

Going back to work at 55? God. I had to do it. His firm was falling apart, he had no retirement, none, they hadn't been paying into it, for years. I went back to work to give myself some insurance, to bring in some money.

JACK

And he made fun of you, I remember that.

MOM

He was confused. His wife having to go back to work.

JACK

Can I ask you something?

MOM

Not about his death. Please, Jacky.

JACK

No. About why he hated you. You always struck me as, well... not all that formidable a person, not someone anyone would hate.

MOM

Well... He came home one night, almost in tears. The things he had to do, to win those cases, to pay for the house we had, my dream house with the columns and the dormer windows. "The House of the Seventeen Gables" he used to call it. That night he was almost crying. He'd had to, well... he told me he'd had to pay off a juror, to win a case. He did that. And afterwards, he told me, after the case was won, because of what he did, he told me only then did he realize he'd have to do that for the rest of his life, if we were going to keep the house, the cars, the... everything. That's what he'd have to do. He was asking me if it was worth it?

JACK

What did you say?

MOM

I was too frightened to answer. So I said nothing. He took that as my answer. He took that as a yes.

JACK

And that's why you forgive him.

MOM

He never asked me again, it never came up. He drank more, he blamed me, he ignored you guys... but he kept it all going. And deep down... God help me, I was proud of him. My man. (JACK holds her hand.) There was a time though, your father, quite a guy... He fought in World War II, you knew that.

JACK

Mom, he was in training at the naval base in World War II. He fought the Second World War on a small island in the Pacific: Alameda.

(DAVE has entered behind them unseen and is listening.)

MOM

Well, Alameda was a rough place at that time. You remember that picture I had of him, in his navy uniform, on my dresser, God he looked handsome, so young, so... dashing. What a corny word.

DAVE

How did you meet?

MOM

Why hello.

JACK

We're havin' a big old chat.

DAVE

Well, it's about time.

JACK

She caught me in flagrante delicto.

MOM

Oh, stop.

JACK

She walked in on me with Sam. She thought we were makin' whoopee.

DAVE

Were you?

JACK
No!

DAVE
I'm joking,

JACK
She was jealous on your behalf.

DAVE
Ah, Doreen. That's sweet.

JACK
So now we're bonding.

DAVE
I hate that kid. Unctuous twit.

MOM
He is an unctuous twit. He called me "Mom." Thought he was really cute. I wanted to sock him.

DAVE
So how did you meet? On the dance floor. Top of the Mark?

MOM
Sailing. He used to crew on this big boat, "The Rebel." On the Bay. My friend Margie knew his friend Bob and she invited me along. We were working at the Emporium. In the intimate apparel department. That was your father's big joke. "When I met your mother she was in intimate apparel." Well, Margie took me along and there was this huge boat full of men and liquor and hors d'oeuvres.

DAVE
Weren't you nervous?

MOM
Hey, I'd been out on the Bay with men before, I was a big girl. We sat in the back of the boat... in the cockpit. And the men sailed her and we mixed drinks. It was lovely.

JACK
Was Dad the handsomest man on board?

MOM
No, Jack Bradey was but he was already engaged.

JACK

The second handsomest?

MOM

I don't remember. He was the shyest. Which at that time was something. Boy oh boy, those men Margie hung out with, they were always going to take care of you. That's what they used to say: "I'm going to take care of you, baby." Your father was never like that. He didn't say a word to me all day, but I caught him looking at me, several times, out of the corner of his eye, just sneaking peaks. One time, we were rounding Angel Island, in Raccoon Straights, it's so beautiful there with Belvedere on your left and the island on your right, they were reefing the spinnaker, getting ready to come about, a very difficult maneuver on a boat, everyone was shouting and running around, all attention was on the skipper, Don Keeler. "Ready to come about," Don shouted. "Ready to come about," everyone shouted back. This was the moment. The men were tense, waiting for Don's order. And I looked up at your father, the mainsheet in his hand, and was he staring at Don? Was he staring at the mainmast? No, he was staring at me. And he had Tiburon behind him, the Yacht Club and Sam's Café on either side of him. Like a picture. And I just stared back. All of a sudden Don shouted, "Hard a lee!" Your father pulled in the mainsheet, "The Rebel" yawled to the wind, and she whipped about – whoooop! And we were headed back to the city. Just like that. And when I got home from work on Monday the phone rang. It was him. Could he take me for a drink? "When?" "Right now?" "I have plans." "In an hour?" Well that made me laugh. And of course I didn't have plans. So we went. Weeks later he sent a letter, it was the first weekend we hadn't seen each other, he was off on a business trip, flying back east on TWA. He wrote: "I'm sitting here a mile above San Francisco thinking of you." I thought, "Well that's nice." When he got back we were engaged.

DAVE

It's so romantic. San Francisco in the 40s.

MOM

50s.

JACK

Where did you go for your honeymoon?

MOM

You mean we never told you?

JACK

You never told me anything. I thought you two had been born together. You were just these two tall people who always yelled at each other. When I heard about weddings and honeymoons I thought, "Oh no, my parents never did anything like that."

MOM

We went to Mazatlan. It was lovely. Wait. (Grabbing her purse and digging) I found these a few weeks ago. I was so embarrassed.

JACK

Is this a picture of dad in a cowboy hat?

MOM

That's him.

DAVE

Look at you two. Girl.

MOM

Yes, we had fun.

DAVE

You look like you had fun.

MOM

We did. And there's our plane that crashed.

DAVE

Your plane crashed.

MOM

Yes.

DAVE

Look at you so casual.

MOM

Oh, it was terrible. The wheel fell off, you can see it there, and the plane went bump and then bump and then weeeee-rrump. And then it started to spin and I thought, woops, this is it.

DAVE

This is what?

MOM

This is where we die! But then it stopped. And the stewardess was very nice. She bundled us out of the airplane, very nice. She knew all of our names, well they did in those days, and she said, "Mr. and Mrs. Davis, you'll have to move quickly now because, well, we've had a little problem." Little problem I thought. And I was very confused at first because I couldn't figure out who she was talking to and then I realized, "Oh, I'm Mrs.

Davis.” And your father was very much in charge, always in charge, and he said, “Doreen, come on, don’t dawdle” and he got me out of the plane and then I just stood there. But they kept bundling me along, “Keep going, Mrs. Davis.” “Keep going Doreen.” And I thought, “Well why is everybody shoving me? I’m out of the plane.” And then I smelled it. Like a tonic, eek! Gas! I could smell the gas. And here I was dawdling, that was one of your father’s words, dawdling, “Don’t dawdle Doreen. Don’t dawdle.” And there I was dawdling and there was gas pouring out of this airplane.”

JACK

Were you smoking?

MOM

Probably. We all did then. Smoked, smoked, smoked. Yep. I’m sure that was part of it. Woosh! We almost all went up in flames! And all because I dawdled.

DAVE

But you had fun.

MOM

Oh, yes it was beautiful. Very small town. I don’t know what it’s like now.

DAVE

Huge. All big resorts. And you can’t go out at night. They’ll grab you in one of these express kidnappings.

MOM

Express kidnappings?

DAVE

Yes, they kidnap you, take you to your ATM, force you to take out all your money and give it to them and then they let you go.

MOM

Oh, I wouldn’t like that.

JACK

Did you love Daddy? At the time?

MOM

Oh, yes, of course. I always loved your father.

JACK

What was he like?

MOM

Well he used to wake me up at five AM and say, “Doreen, time to get up.” And I’d say, “Why Paul? It’s five AM.” And he’d say, “We’re on vacation and we have to do things.” Do things. That was your father. We always had to do things. You remember that?

JACK

I remember once we went to Tahoe and I didn’t want to go skiing and he said, “This trip is costing us a lot of money and you’re going to have a good time.”

MOM

Yes! We hiked to the top of the tallest mountain in Mazatlan, all the way to the top, woop, right along this skinny ridge. Woop. And I was like “I can’t look, I can’t look, I can’t look.” But he held my arm the whole way up. And when we got there, I turned around and “Wow!” The most beautiful view. The ocean, the town, a little creek and the most beautiful flowers, everywhere, yippee! And I looked at your father and he had the book from the travel agent out and was reading it.

JACK

Trying to figure out the next activity.

MOM

Yes! “Doreen, there’s a donkey ride to the leper colony at noon, if we leave now we can just catch a burrow.” So woop! We went straight down the mountain. Always going. Go, go, go.

DAVE

They had a leper colony?

MOM

Oh, yes. Well, an old one. I don’t think there were any lepers there then. Just a restaurant.

DAVE

My father never took us anywhere. I used to look at travel magazines or even *National Geographic* and he’d say, “You’re never going there. You might want to, but you’re not.”

MOM

I’m sure he loved you very much.

DAVE

Nope. He didn’t.

JACK

But we’ve been everywhere now so ha-ha on him.

DAVE

Yes, we’ve been everywhere.

MOM

You boys are great travelers. Do you ever talk to your brother?

JACK

No.

MOM

I wish he'd come visit. I'd love to see Olivia. Sort of too bad I never get to see my grand daughter. (Silence.) Maybe I'll got to Boston, surprise them, just show up on their doorstep. Surprise, here's grandma!

JACK

I don't think that's such a good idea.

MOM

No. Olivia loved your father, liked to pull his mustache. It reminded me of him with you boys, when you were small. He used to skin the cat with you two.

JACK

I knew you were going to bring that up.

DAVE

Skin the cat?

JACK

Oh, you know how to skin the cat.

DAVE

No.

JACK

Here. Get up.

(JACK and DAVE rise.)

MOM

Oh, now Jack. Don't try this.

JACK

No, come on.

MOM

It's very dangerous.

JACK
It's easy.

MOM
And you were very small when you did it.

JACK
I just have to get enough upward motion. (Positioning DAVE.) Here, stand facing that way... Ok, now bend over and put your hands between your legs like we're playing football.

DAVE
Like this?

JACK
Yes.

DAVE
Kinky.

JACK
Now on three I'm going to yank on your hands and pull you through your legs such that you're going to flip around and end up on your feet.

DAVE (breaking out of position)
Wait, wait, wait. No way.

JACK
Yes, it works.

MOM
Jacky...

JACK
Everybody relax. It's all about getting upward motion.

DAVE (resuming his stance)
Ok but go slow.

JACK
You can't go slow, it all happens very fast.

MOM
Jacky...

JACK
You all set?

DAVE
No. Yes.

JACK
One, two, three... Alley ooop! (JACK yanks DAVE's arms and DAVE goes crashing to the floor with JACK landing on top of him. They are in a pile. Disaster.)

DAVE
Owww!

JACK
Damn!

MOM
Oh, Jacky!

JACK
Are you all right?

DAVE
No, I'm not all right! I banged my head.

JACK
That wasn't supposed to happen.

DAVE
Are you insane? That was the stupidest thing you've ever done!

JACK
Yean, I guess you're too big.

DAVE
I have a rug burn. Look at that!

(MOM starts laughing and can't control herself. JACK is laughing too. DAVE is rubbing his head.)

DAVE
It's not funny. It's not.

MOM
You're right, it's not funny. (And they start laughing again. DAVE doesn't joins in – he is annoyed. Eventually he smiles and joins in the merriment. It takes them a while to

stop.) When you're father did that with Paul Jr, his hair would fly through the air. It was golden blond when he was little, like a dandelion. I used to call it his little dandelion doo. Why do they never call me? Do you ever speak to them?

JACK

Let's not talk about it, Mom.

MOM

Why shouldn't we talk about it? Is there some big secret? Tell me the big secret.

JACK

Mom.

MOM

What?

JACK

You're getting snippy.

MOM

What do you mean snippy?

JACK

That. That was snippy.

MOM (sarcastic)

Ok. Good night.

JACK

Mom. (He shakes his head. She registers this, calms down.)

MOM

You're right. Always too much wine. A life time of too much wine. Good night, Jacky. I love you so much. I'm not such a bad old mom, am I?

JACK

No, Mom.

MOM

Davey-Pavey. Jacky-Wacky. I hate you thinking I was ever disgusted by you.

JACK

Ok, Mom.

MOM

Whatever we felt, *I* felt, we loved you. You know that.

JACK

Of course, Mom.

(She leaves.)

DAVE

That was sweet.

JACK

They fought for twenty years, in front of me. It was nothing like that.

DAVE

It must have been, for a time.

JACK

When I was tiny, super little, I remember them like the Kennedys, all dressed up to go out, laughing, hugging us, excited to be hitting the town on Saturday night. They were incredibly elegant. And probably already drunk before they got behind the wheel. Eventually they were just drunk all the time. And angry.

DAVE

You're Doreen's little boy. She adores you.

JACK

You always say that.

DAVE

You love her.

JACK

We love each other in an abstract way, suspiciously, almost in spite of what we know about love. You see, my family never taught me how to love. In my family the person you spent your life with was the person you resented most in the world for ruining your life. Matrimony was one long punishment. We had family dinner, every Sunday night we'd go out to dinner. And my father would drink too much, way too much. And we'd sit there, the whole family in some Chinese Restaurant and argue over our pot stickers. And I remember my father, after two Martinis and four glasses of wine, staring at my mother with the most bitter resentment. He hated her. And she'd say, "You're not having another glass of wine." And he'd say, "You bet I am." And he'd order one more glass of wine and a cup of black coffee. You see he knew he shouldn't drink as much as he did and he knew he shouldn't drive his family home, his wife and two kids, drunk on wine... So he'd order one more glass of wine and a cup of black coffee. Like the one erased the other. And he'd sip that final glass and just stare at her, with all the anger of fifty years of hate bubbling up in his eyes. I became a writer because of that, because of those dinners, because of that final glass of wine. And his stares of hate.

DAVE

But you never write about your family.

JACK

No, but it's when I found books. You see, I figured out that if I scarfed my cashew chicken I could escape to the bookstore next door. It stayed open late on Sundays. And while they drank endlessly I could lose myself in books. And when they were finished with their roundelay of rage, when they'd chewed down their last fortune cookie and finished baiting their other son, they'd come collect me at the bookstore, and we'd all browse for a half hour or so. It sobered them up and allowed us to spend time together where we didn't have to talk. God bless independent booksellers. They kept my father's drunk ass off the road.

DAVE

But there were some relatively good years before the booze.

JACK

No, even then, before the booze took over, they lived in a fantasy world. A complete fantasy. They never loved us. They liked to paint this picture of self-sacrifice and commitment and they never sacrificed one goddamn thing to raise us. Ever. They never missed a party, a regatta, a tennis weekend, not one. They didn't love us, they were just too decent to throw us out on the street when we became tiresome. And for them to act like their decency ever translated into anything like love is ludicrous. I can remember asking my father, begging him, to spend time with me, to take me out on Sundays, to do things with me. He flat out said no. Well, no, he was too smart to say that. He was an attorney and he knew that sounded like bad parenting. He said, "Well, come up with a plan, tell me what you'd like to do." I was eight. I wanted to be shown the world. I didn't know what to do. I never let up. I said, "Can we go somewhere in the car?" and he'd say, "Where?" and then he'd spend the whole day watching the game. Or I'd say, "Please take me into the city" and he'd say, "I have to go into the city every day." Finally I found myself saying, God this is pathetic, I'd beg him: "Please spend time with me" and his response was, I love this, he said, "Jesus Christ, when I was your age I couldn't stand my parents. I never wanted to be seen with them." So I guess I was uncool. That's what he wanted me to feel. I was square. (DAVE looks at JACK, who is lost in the past.)

DAVE

Big day tomorrow.

JACK

I almost forgot. So much drama around here.

DAVE

Why do they do these things mid week? It's almost impossible to enjoy. (JACK lays in his lap, still holding his glass of wine. DAVE takes it from him.) Enough of that.

(Lights fade. We hear Charlie Gibson's coverage of the Presidential Election.)

Scene Eight

(JACK and DAVID are glued to the TV on election night. MOM enters.)

MOM

Come on you guys. I can heat up that lasagna or the pizza from last night.

JACK

Mom, forget it.

MOM

You've got to eat.

DAVE

Doreen, come and sit. This is the biggest day in US history, nobody's eating.

MOM (joining them)

Everybody eats. We ate on December 7th. We ate on 9-11, big breakfast. Why I was feeding you the morning they announced Kennedy had been shot. I was feeding you and they said he'd been assassinated and I went blup, Gerber's all over your face. Bluup. But I kept feeding, you would have balled your head off if I stopped.

JACK

Shh... Listen to George Stephanopolis.

MOM

Oh, I like him. He looks nice.

DAVE

He's gay.

MOM

No. You say that about everyone.

DAVE

I never said it about George Bush.

MOM

Ugh. (Fake barf.) Bleah. What an idiot. I look at him and I go... (big barf) bleeeeah! I don't want him to be gay. Gay people are nice. He wouldn't fit in.

JACK

Mom. Shhh..

(We hear Charlie Gibson announce Obama's victory. They cheer. An explosion of energy.)

MOM

Oh, goodness, that's great! Whoopdidoodlebug!

(They dance about whooping, making an incredible amount of noise. They run out of breath and we hear faint whooping outside.)

MOM

Listen to that. Do you hear that? I want my camera. Get a picture of my boys on the big night.

JACK

Mom!

MOM

No, let an old lady have fun!

(She exits. JACK is cruising channels.)

DAVE

That's great. Her whole life she's voted for white Republicans and here she's all excited about voting for a black Democrat.

JACK

I can't find anything on Prop 8.

DAVE

It's too early.

JACK

There's nothing on it. Nothing.

JACK

Go to CNN on-line.

(MOM enters with camera and takes a picture of them. JACK picks up his laptop and starts searching the Internet.)

MOM

Oh, my goodness, there is whooping in the streets. How about that! It's like a party out there. (Points camera at them.) All right you two, smile.

JACK

Not now Mom. (Note: JACK's resistance in this sequence is more playful than angry – he doesn't really mind having his picture taken.)

MOM

No, come on, give me a nice smile.

JACK

Mom.

MOM

Jacky.

JACK

Mom, not now.

MOM

Come on, Jacky.

DAVE (standing behind him at sofa)

Come on, grump!

MOM

This is a big night. Big teeth. Teeth! Teeth! (She takes it.) Oh, Jacky, let me get another one.

(A huge whoop from outside.)

MOM

Listen to that

DAVE

Do you want to go out and look?

MOM

Oh, we can't.

DAVE

Of course we can. Get your coat. (She leaves. JACK is transfixed by the internet.) Do you hear it?

JACK

Sounds great.

(MOM comes on struggling into her coat.)

MOM

This is so exciting.

DAVE

Was it like this when Kennedy got elected?

MOM

No. Goodness. Daddy Paul was so upset. It was like this when we reached the moon and when the Audrey Hepburn won her academy award. Amazing.

DAVE

Come on.

(They have left. We hear the distant whooping. JACK is left onstage looking at his screen. He looks at a page and then types and looks at another page. He types some more and looks at another page. He scrolls down. He scrolls down. Looks. Types. Looks. He types some more and then quickly puts in his earphones. He listens. Through all of this he is looking more and more tense and annoyed. He sits and listens. DAVE and MOM enter laughing.)

MOM

All I can say is wow! Wow! Wow! Wow!

DAVE

That was great.

MOM

Can you believe those guys?

DAVE

Jack, there are people dancing in the streets. And fire works.

MOM

It's like VE day!

JACK (Not looking up)

Really.

DAVE

Yeah, incredible.

MOM

Oh, that is so great. What fun.

DAVE

And you should have seen your mother. She let our the loudest whoop on the block and everyone looked at her and said “Yeahhh!”

MOM

It was just like that. Yeaahhhh!

DAVE

Yeahhh!

MOM

Yippee. (She hugs DAVE.) Thank you so much. That was fun. Thank you, thank you, thanks you.

DAVE

Of course.

MOM

Oh, I’m going to call your brother. Do you think I should?

JACK

Why not?

MOM

Is it too late?

JACK

I’m sure they’re up.

MOM

Maybe they’ll let me talk to Olivia.

JACK

I’m sure they will.

MOM

Oooo... Do you think he voted for that rat McCain?

DAVE

I’m sure he didn’t.

MOM

Ooooo... All I can say is “Yes we can!” (She leaves.)

DAVE

She’s cute.

Adorable. JACK

Oh, don't be such a grump. You should have seen her outside. DAVE

Like being back in the dorms. JACK

It is. It's fun having her here. You like it. DAVE

Sometimes. JACK

Tonight it was fun. DAVE

Till a few minutes ago. JACK

What did she do? DAVE

Not her. Look at this. JACK (pointing at his screen)

Those are votes cast. Less than five percent of the precincts reporting. DAVE (after a brief glimpse)

Look at the exit poles. JACK

It's still incredibly early. DAVE

It's going south. I can't believe it. JACK

You don't know that. DAVE

It doesn't look good. JACK

Wow. Should we tell her? DAVE

No, let her enjoy the night. It's good for her. JACK

Boy, I was overjoyed for five minutes there. DAVE

Yeah, I should have gone outside with you. I had about thirty seconds of pleasure. JACK

Hey. MOM (entering, a radical change in energy)

Hi. JACK

Did you hear? DAVE

Hear what? MOM

Prop 8 is passing. DAVE

Oh. No, I didn't know that. MOM

You ok? JACK

Your brother didn't answer. I guess they've gone to sleep. MOM

Hey, how about our new President? DAVE

He's going to give his speech. JACK

Oh, I think I'll go to sleep. I love you boys. MOM

JACK

I love you too, Mom.

DAVE

Love you.

MOM

Mom.

DAVE

Mom. Come here. (She sits between them on the sofa.) Now watch this and feel better.

(They turn up the volume and we hear Obama's "Yes we can" speech as the lights fade.)

Scene Nine

(Later. All three still on the sofa, MOM is asleep.)

DAVE

When I think of those stupid people I work with, all prancing around talking about how they're voting for Prop 8. Hateful. We would joke about it in the office because we never imagined it would pass. We just thought they were being morons.

JACK

We can lace their drinks at our Christmas party.

DAVE

Forget it, they're off my list. I don't want them in this house. Jerks!

JACK

You're usually live and let live.

DAVE

Not on this subject. It's just hateful. Woman in my office comes in every Monday morning with black eyes, black eyes her husband gives her. The fuck doesn't even work, his only exercise is hitting her, and she won't leave him. Won't. And she voted for Prop 8. So her marriage has more validity than mine. It's just hate.

JACK

You're worked up.

DAVE

I can't believe this happened. Where the hell did it go wrong? It wasn't supposed to pass. We've been together for twenty years, we have jobs, we pay taxes, we take people in, why aren't we considered worthy of this? (Looking at MOM.) Why's she so depressed. She's not gay.

JACK

It's my brother. Of course he was awake. On election night. They don't pick up when they see her number. She knows that. Well, God bless her, that's all I can say.

DAVE

Why "God bless her?"

JACK

Well thank God for Bay Area Baptists! Only here do we have enlightened fanatics.

DAVE

Enlightened? They're as bad here as anywhere else.

JACK

What are you talking about?

DAVE

Your mother's church hates fags.

JACK

No, it doesn't.

DAVE

It does. It's part of the Baptist Church, it's "pro-family." It hates fags.

JACK

You can't hold a local congregation responsible for the ideologies of the mother church.

DAVE

Except that the daughter church acts just like the mother.

JACK

How do you know that?

DAVE

Where do you think they get their money from?

JACK

Wait, just wait. Are you saying she goes off every Sunday to that place and they tell her to vote for Prop 8?

DAVE

Look at the website.

JACK

I have. There's nothing on it.

DAVE

Follow the links. It's all part of a larger network. That church is part of the Southern Baptist Coalition or some such bullshit and that entity votes for things like Proposition 8.

JACK

But not her church.

DAVE

Of course her church. Why do you think people run churches? Why do you Harry runs that one? For power. That's the fun stuff. Not talkin' about Jesus on Sunday's and helping widows, but getting two hundred people to vote the way you want them to. That's power, that's influence. That's what gets you taken out to dinner and laid in Vegas. Look at the website. Follow the links. It's all there.

JACK

Have you followed the links?

DAVE

I don't need to. I read the paper. (Pause.) Look, don't worry about it. I mean... It's not a big deal.

JACK

What happened to "I don't want people like that in my home?"

DAVE

I was upset.

JACK

It is a big deal. Very big.

DAVE

Maybe it will change, it's still early. Then all the hatemongers are off the hook. (He looks at JACK.) Hey, maybe I'm wrong about your Mother's church. I wouldn't worry about it. Jack?

JACK

You going to bed?

DAVE

I think we should. (He stands, kisses JACK.) We've been together twenty-one years. That's all that matters. This, all this, is history. No one care about history anymore.

JACK

You're a very sweet man.

DAVE

And you're very handsome.

(They kiss again and DAVE exits. JACK stares at his sleeping mother. He picks up his laptop and begins typing, quickly. He sees the website. He cursors about and clicks. He sees a new website. He is following the links, always glancing at his mother. He finally sees what he is looking for. He reads. He looks up from what he has read. He stares at her. Lights fade.)

Scene Ten

(Music – an old musical. The next morning. MOM hurries about the stage getting ready to leave. JACK enters, watches her. He shuts off music.)

MOM

Hey, my favorite show.

JACK

Good morning.

MOM

Morning.

JACK

One question.

MOM

What's that sweetie pie-pie?

JACK

What are you doing today?

(She looks at him.)

MOM

Going to school.

JACK

You have a class.

MOM

Two.

JACK

And tonight?

MOM

Well, Margie's picking me up after school.

JACK

For church?

MOM

No, church is Thursdays. Excuse me. (She goes into hall. JACK looks after her. DAVE enters.)

DAVE

Rough night.

JACK

Yeah, it's going south.

DAVE

What I said last night about her, it might not be true... Who knows what goes on in these churches.

JACK

I read the website. You were right. You're always right about things like this.

DAVE

Still she might not have voted with her church.

JACK

Well, let's see if it passes. If it doesn't, she can keep her little secret.

DAVE

I've been thinking about that. Maybe it's our job to teach her to love us enough to vote differently next time.

JACK

The odds are in her favor. There are three options as I see them, weighing it as a lawyer's son. It doesn't pass, in which case I won't ask. It does, in which case I ask but it turns out she voted against. It passes and I ask and it turns out she voted for it. Chances are two in three she's off the hook. So the odds are against it.

DAVE

Against what?

JACK

Against her being homeless. (He kisses DAVE and exits.)

Scene Eleven

(That afternoon. DAVE sits on sofa reading. JACK's key in door. MOM enters holding a glass of wine.)

MOM

Hi, Jacky Wacky, how was your day?

JACK (entering)

Good. I want to talk to you about something.

DAVE

Hey, Jack.

MOM

I was just going to call your brother.

JACK

You can call him later.

MOM

I want to call-

JACK

He's not going to answer. Sit down. (She does.) How did you vote on Prop 8?

DAVE

That's none of our business.

JACK

She doesn't have to tell me. I'm asking her.

MOM

Why are you so upset at me?

JACK

It passed today. Essentially. I want to know how you voted.

MOM

Why?

JACK

Tell me.

I thought she didn't have to tell you. DAVE

She does if she wants to stay. JACK

Jacky. MOM

How did you vote? (Silence.) How did Pastor Harry tell you to vote? JACK

He said we should vote for it. MOM

So you voted yes. JACK

MOM (carefully)
He said, I want to get this right, he said you already have all the rights of married people. That it's a sacred institution and is inviolate. We discussed it all in Bible study. It's a sacrament and it needs to remain a sacrament.

So you voted yes. JACK

They said domestic partners have all the rights- MOM

You know that's not true. You *know* that. JACK

They said it's a sacred compact and that homosexuality is not sacred- MOM

Mom, Dave and I are more married than you and Dad ever were. In the eyes of our friends, in the eyes of each other, even in the eyes of God. You know that. You do. JACK

Pastor Harry said no one should be persecuted for this, that it was a question of conscience- MOM

JACK

Mom, you know better than that. Pastor Harry's been in your life ten months, I've been here for forty-five years. Don't hide behind him.

MOM

Your father felt the same way.

JACK

You said he didn't.

MOM

I lied.

JACK

Well, he's not here either, Mom. And I have only your word on what he felt.

MOM

He did. Legally, he felt homosexuals had everything they needed through domestic partnership.

JACK

Don't argue legality with me, Mom. Dad was a shitty lawyer, he got rich because he was a huckster and he paid people off. But shitty lawyer or not he knew the Fourteenth Amendment and he knew this was illegal.

MOM

He also knew how he felt. About you. About the two of you.

JACK

Don't hide behind Dad, Mom.

MOM

He felt awful about you.

JACK

You did, it was always you. Emotionally he followed your lead.

MOM

Jack-

JACK

He came to you for guidance, you told me that.

MOM

No, I told you I voted like he did-

JACK
Did you vote for it? Tell me.

MOM
Your father-

JACK
Don't talk about my father. Tell me how you voted.

MOM
Father Harry said we didn't need to incriminate ourselves-

JACK
It's only incriminating if it's wrong. How did you vote?

MOM
He said nobody should make us feel like we have to tell-

JACK
This isn't a court room, Mom. I'm your son, your gay son.

MOM
And this has nothing to do with you, it's my right to choose.

JACK
So tell me how you chose.

MOM
I don't have to.

JACK
You voted against my brother cause you hated his wife so you lost your grand daughter.
You voted against your family because you hated your husband so you lost my love. Now
you're about to lose your home. Tell me how you voted.

MOM
You're spiteful and mean.

JACK
That's how I was raised.

MOM
We lavished money on you kids

JACK
You lavished it on yourselves, we were incidental.

MOM

You hurt us terribly.

JACK

Impossible. You never noticed me enough to let me hurt you.

MOM

You have no idea how much you hurt your father. Your... confession. The two of you... living here. It made him sick. When he told me he was heart broken, heart broken. He hoped you would grow out of it, find yourself. Get over it. When David was sick he said, "Thank God, maybe he'll die and Jack will move on, find a woman." That's what he hoped. He felt sad for you, for both of you. But that's what he hoped. Your father loved you and Paul Jr. Loved you. And for one of you to turn on him and do something like this, to so deliberately hurt him, well it made him sick. Biology? It's all spite. Spite, spite, spite. Mr. Big Man, Mr. Independent, Mr. Gay. It's filth. Everything you ever did was out of hate, hate for us, for how hard we worked, for our success. Look how you live. We had a palace in Tiburon, a palace. You live in an apartment. And you hated him for that. You've failed, completely failed, whine, whine, whine, that's all you've ever known how to do. You're such a failure you weren't even invited to your father's death. I wouldn't have you around. You think I didn't have your e-mail? Here it is. (Holds up paper.) Here's the piece of paper you gave me. Had it all the time! I was married. To a man. That's a marriage. A bond between a woman and a man, not a bond between a couple of pansies. You're damn right I voted for that law.

JACK

Get out.

MOM

No.

JACK

Get out.

MOM

This is my home.

JACK

Never was, never will be. Get your shit, pack it up or I'll throw it out on the street. Do it!

(She exits.)

DAVE

You totally provoked that.

JACK

You heard it.

DAVE

It was horrible. But she's not in control of her emotions.

JACK

She is. She knew exactly what she was saying.

DAVE

You can't know if that's true. You can't take her word for it that he said any of that.

JACK

No, but she did say it. And I can imagine him saying it. Can't you? (DAVE is silent.) Next thing, she'll apologize. Because she wants to stay. He protected her for forty-five years. She's used to being protected by a person she hates. I won't be that person. She goes.

DAVE

Is this what voting does? Gets you thrown out of your home?

JACK

It's not her home.

DAVE

It needs to be.

JACK

She lives here on sufferance. She's not my child. I don't have to put up with her even if I don't particularly like her. She wangled her way through this much life, she'll figure out the rest. She wants a palace in Marin rather than home with us, let her build one.

DAVE

What I said last night about not letting these people in my home, I was upset.

JACK

This is the moment. If she stays it's under her terms, not mine, that's what she was saying. She failed, so now she wants to leave.

DAVE

She doesn't.

JACK

She's packing.

DAVE

She's had three glasses of wine.

JACK

She'll always have three glasses of wine. The rest of her life, that's her personality: three glasses of wine and a hell of a lot of hate. For her husband, her other son, her daughter-in-law, probably for you and me least of all. But we're here, we're convenient, so we'll get the brunt of it. No thank you. I had twenty years of it and a lovely twenty-five year hiatus. I'm not going back in the pen.

DAVE

You can't do this.

JACK

Of course I can. She's my mother. I can throw her out any time I please.

DAVE

Listen. Just listen to me. This is all about families right, protecting families? The rights of families. Well like it or not, she's now a member of our family. So, however you feel about her, and you can not talk to her for twenty years if you want, but you can't throw her out.

JACK

No, that's where I'm different. They raised me to live with people who despised me for the first twenty years of my life-

DAVE

They didn't despise you-

JACK

Worse, they ignored me. Out of good manners they lived with me even though they didn't like me and that made me miserable. Ok. I'm not them. If I hate someone they go. Right. Out on the street. So there's no dishonesty, no ambiguity. I will not live with her. She hates us...

DAVE

She doesn't hate us-

JACK

As a species she hates us and she goes. Forget it. I've decided. You're a very nice man and I love you and that's why I live with you, because you're nice and kind and intelligent. But I'm not. I'm smart, but I'm not kind. So please, let me handle this unkind act. In this house, I'm the expert. I'm the expert on cruelty and she goes.

DAVE

So you're being deliberately cruel.

JACK

No, she is. She wants it both ways. As always. She wants to hate someone for who they are but have them love her because she deserves it. Well, she doesn't deserve it. My love is conditional. Just as our love for each other is conditional. It's based on respect and loyalty and kindness. Those things are no part of her love for me, so she goes.

(MOM enters with suitcase, sets it down.)

MOM

Hello.

JACK

Hi.

MOM

I... I want to say...

JACK

You have to leave. You do. I'm sorry but...

MOM

It was your father. It was all your father. It wasn't me. Yes, I voted that way but you need to know I was confused, he... I begged him to let me call you, in Rome, I had the number, I did. He wouldn't let me. He said no. He said he didn't want you around for his death. He said... I know this will hurt you but you need to know, you need to know it was all him, all the decisions, until he died, even now, even when I voted, it was all him... He said you weren't entitled to see him die, you hadn't earned it... he was bitter. He'd suffered horribly, he said he'd suffered horribly, you coming out of the closet. Paul Jr. knew, he told him. Now he was going to make you suffer his death. It was all him.

JACK

Mom, that's a lie.

MOM

It's not. I begged him.

JACK

You didn't Mom. I asked Paul Jr. He would have told me if he knew that. We can call him right now and ask again. He'll answer the phone. If I call he'll answer. And he'll tell me the truth.

MOM

Jacky-

JACK

No, I'm not sorry. You have to leave. Tonight.

MOM

Jack.

JACK

No, here we go. Here's the drama. Here's the drama I couldn't have in New York with my book launch because you wouldn't change the fucking day of my estranged father's memorial. Here's the drama I can't have because you won't let me get married and have a proper ceremony. Here's all the drama of hate and persecution you get every day at your fucking church. Here's the superiority you get to feel every Thursday at Bible study as you discuss your Lord's hatred and denial. Here it is. Out. You're packed. Out.

MOM

It's the middle of the night.

JACK

There are cabs on Haight Street.

(She starts crying,)

JACK

No, sorry. This is bigger than that. No crying. Out!

DAVE

Jack-

MOM

Davey-

(She sits.)

JACK

No don't sit. (He lifts her) Up.

MOM

Ow.

JACK

And out!

(She is whimpering.)

I'll drive you.

DAVE

You won't.

JACK

To a hotel.

DAVE

You won't. Because I have the keys. My car. My rules. Out.

JACK

(She takes her bag and walks towards door. She stops and looks at DAVE. He looks at JACK who turns away. DAVE looks back at her. Her look is pleading. DAVE looks back at JACK. JACK looks at him. Which way will DAVE go? He crosses to JACK and holds his hand. She leaves. JACK crosses to door and shuts it. He enters.)

Now we can begin our lives.

JACK

End of Play