

BILL OF (W)RIGHTS

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GAY MAN

LESBIAN WOMAN

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Acknowledgements

The short plays that comprise *Bill of (W)Rights* were commissioned by Michael Bigelow Dixon in August–October of 2003. The production (which opened February 20, 2004) took place on nine stages throughout Mixed Blood’s 1887 converted firehouse theatre. Six directors (Stan Wojewodski, Liz Engelman, Aditi Kapil, Gavin Lawrence, Michael Dixon, and Jack Reuler) directed 24 actors in the ten scripts. The first and tenth play, both by Jeffrey Hatcher, took place in the 237-seat Alan Page Auditorium. The audience was then divided into eight groups, each with a “tour guide.”

After *Freedom of Speech*, the tour guides led their herd to one of eight satellite stages (that ranged from a hallway to a follow spot loft to a 1991 Oldsmobile in the theatre’s driveway to a stairway). With pulsing music and lit paths, the patrons made their way from stage to stage in this political theatrical funhouse for eight eight-minute stops to witness the artistry of each play. The final play, *States’ Rights*, reconvened the audience into the Alan Page Auditorium.

There were three flights of stairs and a stop outside in February in Minnesota in the course of this trek. On the final performance, all ten plays were performed on the stage with ASL interpretation, audio description, captioning, and an opportunity for people with ambulatory difficulties to witness the event that was *Bill of (W)Rights*.

—Jack Reuler
Artistic Director
Mixed Blood Theatre

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

by Jeffrey Hatcher

Cast of Characters

THE ENSEMBLE:

They each wear a sign proclaiming their character.

(The lights go to black.)

(And we hear:)

LOUD ACTOR. FIRE! FIRE!

ALL OTHER ACTORS. FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!

(Lights bump up.)

(Two actors onstage, GAY MAN and LESBIAN WOMAN, greet each other.)

LESBIAN. Well, hello, you ass-fucking cocksucker!

GAY MAN. Hello yourself, you cunt-licking dyke!

(They shake hands as a BLACK WOMAN and a CRACKER meet. The CRACKER holds a bunch of magazines.)

BLACK WOMAN. Greetings, you back roads, cousin screwin', hillbilly cracker!

CRACKER. Back atcha, you, lazy, good for nothing Welfare Queen nigger!

(They shake hands.)

(RATIONAL MAN comes downstage and announces:)

RATIONAL MAN. Hello. I'm a rational man.

(LEFT WING LOON enters.)

LEFT WING LOON. The nation is in the hands of a fascist putsch, orchestrated by the puppetmasters of an illegally selected president.

RATIONAL MAN. I am an educated person with more than one year of post-graduate study.

LEFT WING LOON. The only solution is to murder the president, the vice president, the speaker of the house, the president pro tem of the senate, and then hope to God Colin Powell isn't nuts too!

RATIONAL MAN. I'm the kind of person who reads *The Times*, *The Nation*, *Mother Jones*, *The Voice* and never, ever watches Fox News.

(A scantily clad NAZI WOMAN wearing Nazi regalia—think Charlotte Rampling in “The Night Porter”—enters.)

NAZI WOMAN. Hitler was right. Jews are vermin. The holocaust never took place. And if it did, so what?

RATIONAL MAN. You've probably seen me at one of those “Talking Volumes” things Catherine Lampher does, or at a DFL caucus, or at Lucia's in Uptown.

LEFT WING LOON. Communism is an idea worth the deaths of millions.

RATIONAL MAN. My car radio is set to every NPR station in the state.

GAY MAN. All breeders are grotesque, foul, stinking beasts.

RATIONAL MAN. But I prefer to use public transportation, for environmental reasons.

LESBIAN WOMAN. Men should be castrated at birth.

(FLAG MAN—wearing lots of American flag paraphernalia—enters with an American flag and looks out front.)

RATIONAL MAN. I do not support the statements being made at present by the other members of the cast.

BLACK WOMAN. Gays become flight attendants because they don't want to work with men who might make fun of them.

RATIONAL MAN. I find many—if not all—of them to be repellent and repugnant.

(A STREET KID enters.)

CRACKER. Affirmative action rewards low scores, low IQs, and whiny underachievers.

RATIONAL MAN. But in this country we have the right to free speech. In America, we have the right to say whatever we choose.

STREET KID. Try saying “Fuck you” to a judge.

(LEFT WING LOON takes out a long list.)

LEFT WING LOON. The following is the formula for the deadly nerve agent Sarin. *(Continues under the following exchanges until the end of the play:)* One part Sestatophin, 3 parts auric fissules, dera-tionated cronex, two parts credible zion, four zitrous oxide, 36 ounces hellatrix, three scabrous fulminators, folic acid, mouse urine, coca cola, burning bushes, skippy peanut butter, oral g, ex-lax, kerosene, ky jelly, mixatrical acid, voluminous crine, krosticea-metaboxil, vellum, non-toxic isis, toxic isis, Marlboro cigarettes, lasic, basic, and crasic, guterman dollyde, revus tantamount, equalizer dust, churlish google,

(FLAG MAN takes out a lighter.)

BLACK WOMAN. *(Starts at “One part”:)* September 11 was no big deal. We had it coming.

(PRIEST enters.)

LESBIAN WOMAN. I wish I had known someone who died that day. It would give me status.

RATIONAL MAN. And by speech, we of course define it in ways the Supreme Court would.

(FLAG MAN lights the flag. It starts to burn.)

(STREET KID starts to hand out porn magazines to the audience.)

STREET KID. *(Ad-libs:)* Porn? Porn? Have some porn? Look at page 69, it’s real good! *(etc.)*

RATIONAL MAN. I am your stand-in.

NAZI WOMAN. Abortion is murder and puts the comfort of a woman above the life of a child.

RATIONAL MAN. I represent the audience.

PRIEST. Most priests are gay. Most gay priests want to have sex with little boys. Make it easier for gays to have relationships and they won't become repressed, self-hating, manipulative, predatory gay priests.

RATIONAL MAN. I am here to provide balance.

BLACK WOMAN. Religion is for idiots.

LESBIAN. Except for the Black Baptists. They have "soul" and their music is catchy.

RATIONAL MAN. I am you.

CRACKER. The notion of the Spiritual—and its attendant rituals such as baptism and communion—is nonsense.

GAY MAN. Except when discussing Native Americans.

CRACKER. Whose equally ludicrous Sweat-Lodge-And-Tree-Spirit crap has to be indulged because we stole their land a thousand years ago, and we feel guilty about it.

RATIONAL MAN. Frankly, I find a lot of this difficult to listen to.

BLACK WOMAN. Men who wear condoms are pussies.

CRACKER. AIDS is o.k. except for the dancers it killed. I loved *A Chorus Line*.

RATIONAL MAN. And I'm sure you agree with me, because, as I have said, I am, in effect, you.

GAY MAN. The following words cannot be said in public schools: patriot, patriotism, patriotic, Indian, savage, and manifest destiny—unless uttered with scorn, derision or in a patronizing tone of voice.

RATIONAL MAN. I am a sensitive, educated, sophisticated thinker.

CRACKER. To criticize the president in a time of war is to give aid and comfort to the enemy, hence any criticism of the president should be judged treasonous.

GAY MAN. The rational response to offensive speech is to shout it down.

RATIONAL MAN. (*Re: NAZI WOMAN:*) And I'm not really sure this is even speech...

(*NAZI WOMAN starts to undress.*)

RATIONAL MAN. ...but the court says so, so...

CRACKER. I would love to mow down a roomful of kindergartners.

RATIONAL MAN. Oo. There's an ugly one. Now is that simply an utterance? Or an imminent threat?

BLACK WOMAN. The best thing that could happen to this country would be to forbid white men from voting for the next 20 years.

GAY MAN. Except for gay white men.

BLACK WOMAN. One gay white man does not equal a black person.

GAY MAN. What about a gay black man?

BLACK WOMAN. Don't make me sick.

RATIONAL MAN. I mean, I know you can't yell fire in a theater—

LOUD ACTOR. FIRE!

RATIONAL MAN. ...although I note none of you panicked when he did that. You must have thought it was part of the show.

LESBIAN WOMAN. What we're doing in Iraq is worth the deaths of 100 times the number of soldiers who have died to date.

GAY MAN. I'm just glad most of those soldiers are poor and lower middle class people, because I tend not to know those people.

BLACK WOMAN. I'm glad soldiers are getting killed in Iraq because it makes Bush look bad.

CRACKER. I wish Al Qaeda would hit us again. It was exciting.

RATIONAL MAN. I know there are such things as "gag orders" and "speech codes"...and if I say this to you—

(*STREET KID suddenly gets in an audience member's face.*)

STREET KID. I'll kill you, motherfucker! Right here, right now!

RATIONAL MAN. That's assault, did you know that? You can be arrested for that? But I doubt you'll press charges because you know he's just an actor.

(**RATIONAL MAN** *stands next to FLAG MAN.*)

And as for the flag...well...I know some people don't think flag burning is a form of political speech. And some people—I doubt there are any of them here tonight—some people think we should have an amendment to prevent flag burning. But consider this: if I burn an official post office American flag, then I'm burning a flag, right? But what if I burn one of Jasper Johns' flag paintings? What if I burn a child's drawing of a flag? Or a flag decal? Or a sign with the word "American flag" on it? You see how multi-layered my thinking is?

(**NAZI WOMAN** *is now down to her underwear.*)

(*The following is overlapped:*)

LESBIAN WOMAN. Letting Indians run casinos is like saying "We should make it legal for Latino women to be whores."

NAZI WOMAN. America needs illegal immigrants. Who else is willing to do those kind of pathetic jobs?

GAY MAN. You can usually tell what kind of city you're in by the race of the workers behind the counter at McDonald's.

BLACK WOMAN. Most policemen are stupid. If they were smarter, they wouldn't be policemen.

CRACKER. When I was a kid, we thought most of our teachers were vile idiots who couldn't find work in the "real world." Why is it we're now supposed to believe they're geniuses and saints?

GAY MAN. I want to have sex with children.

CRACKER. I want to have sex with children, too.

GAY MAN / CRACKER. Let's have sex with children together!

NAZI WOMAN. In Germany, you can't say you like Hitler. They'll arrest you.

(**FLAG MAN's** *fire is blazing now.*)

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SPYWARE

by Kelly Stuart

(A MAN looks at a WOMAN, holding up a pack of cigarettes.)

WOMAN. Our 13-year-old smokes cigarettes.

MAN. Where did you find that?

WOMAN. Her bag.

MAN. Why are you going through her bag.

WOMAN. Because I'm her mother. It's my job to know.

MAN. You don't know she smokes.

WOMAN. Half the cigarettes are gone.

MAN. Maybe she's—

WOMAN. Holding them for somebody else?...Are you totally glib and clueless and naive? Have you not noticed the sudden appearance of mascara and eyeliner ringing her eyes like some cocktail-swigging raccoon in heat— Her three hours of curling iron effort as if she were going to the Beirut Disco and not eighth grade first period algebra— Have you not noticed she's wearing THONG underwear which she steals, with her alpha girl pack of mini Britney Spears in training—

MAN. She's not a—how can you say that. So, what, she wears—thong...

WOMAN. I never bought those...

MAN. So take them away from her.

WOMAN. I will. I will... This is wrong.

MAN. It could have been a gift from her friends.

WOMAN. No. She "jacked" them from Victoria's Secret. She revels in being a kleptomaniac. She knows that one of us cheated on the other. She knows either you cheated on me or I cheated on you.

MAN. She told you this? How do you know?

WOMAN. I have my ways to find out.

MAN. Maybe you project.

WOMAN. These are cigarettes, not projections.

(She lights one, smokes. The MAN takes one, they both smoke furiously.)

MAN. You were the one who cheated on me.

WOMAN. Should we tell her all that? About Mommy's affair, so it can just be all out in the open?

MAN. You want to tell her about Mr. Big Dick? How you chased him around like a dog. Giving him money, WHEN WE WERE BROKE. Forgetting all about your own child.

WOMAN. Are you talking about you or her, bastard.

MAN. Your child, your child. Idiot bitch.

WOMAN. She knows, probably knows from your screaming.

MAN. I have been careful to scream only outside.

WOMAN. She knows from your cobra-like hissing. Shall we flat out just say, then, how Mommy gave Daddy permission to fuck some sex shop clerk who brags about how she loves anal sex on the internet, so Daddy would feel better after stealing a disk and reading Mommy's ENTIRE EMAIL correspondence and diary of three years, although things had been over with that jerk for two solid years, but Daddy had to read it, to memorize and recite every sordid detail, to spit back in my face every private fantasy and humiliation, every fucking private thought I ever had.

MAN. That was to save our relationship.

WOMAN. And did it? And did it save our relationship? Did it? Is this the relationship you'd hoped for?

MAN. You didn't read her diary, did you?

WOMAN. No. Of course not.

MAN. She's just a child. She's innocent. This is not her problem, our relationship should not affect her at all. So you wouldn't read

her diary would you as some kind of twisted revenge? Just because I read yours. If you did you're a hypocrite.

WOMAN. No.

MAN. You wouldn't lie to me again would you?

WOMAN. No.

MAN. I wish I could trust you.

WOMAN. You can.

MAN. Then how do you know all those things about her, if you didn't read it in her diary? *(Beat.)* We promised the therapist we would be honest, we promised complete honesty now. Because if you have something to hide...

WOMAN. I don't. I don't hide anything.

MAN. Who can you trust if you can't trust your family. You haven't been reading my email have you? I CAN'T read yours now because you've changed your passwords but you HAVE my password, but HAVE YOU BEEN READING IT. Because I REALLY HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE but I would just LIKE TO KNOW. If you read her diary.

WOMAN. I didn't.

MAN. Because then you'd be a hypocrite wouldn't you, if you'd done what you've accused me of doing, if you've done the thing you thought violated you.

(He grabs her violently, digs through her pockets.)

WOMAN. What are you doing? What are you doing.

(Comes out with a notebook. Opens it.)

WOMAN. Blank, every blank page is my obliteration, what I don't say, but I can't be accused of.

MAN. If you read her diary then you are a hypocrite and then you can't accuse me of anything. Did you read her diary or not? Did you or not? Tell me the truth.

WOMAN. Blank. Blank. Blank. Blank.

MAN. You fucking hypocrite.

WOMAN. What if she read your email to me? You leave it sitting right on the desktop, all your vile spewing...

MAN. If you read her diary, I will find out.

WOMAN. What if you've installed spymaster software on our computer and reading all my correspondence still, still...is that what you've done? Have you done that to me? Because I can't think or speak or write without the fear that every key stroke I make is being recorded and sent to you...but we have to deal with the cigarettes and thongs and our daughter because she is really fucked up.

MAN. What if she knew you were reading her diary and wrote those things just to fuck with your head?

WOMAN. She would never do that.

MAN. How do you know.

WOMAN. There is spymaster software on our computer. I've had it scanned. It's on there. You did it.

MAN. I did not. I trust you.

WOMAN. You don't. There is software on my computer.

MAN. Why would you do that, have the disk scanned, what are you trying to hide anyway that you're so afraid I'm going to read.

WOMAN. If you put spymaster software on the disk I'm going to make you pay for that. It shows you don't trust after everything we've said, after everything we've done.

MAN. You're fucking someone. Or you're planning to do it, or maybe you've just been thinking about it.

WOMAN. No. Not at all.

MAN. What if she did it?

WOMAN. Our thirteen-year-old?

MAN. What if she did it.

WOMAN. You're blaming her now?

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THE RIGHT TO BARE ARMS (AND ASSES)

by Elizabeth Wong

(Spotlight up on ANINA, a voluptuous blues singer in the tradition of the fabulous Etta James. She finishes her show-stopping number "Stand" on other side of curtain. Wild applause, she bows in her diva style, exits through curtain into a backstage area. Now the audience hears her backstage thoughts, as she changes costume. She's proud of her body, unabashed at all times.)

ANINA. What a show! What a show! Those people can't believe their eyes. A girl my size with my glorious thighs. Listen to them, they feel my love. Damn, I was cookin'! Oh yeah, uh huh. But who was that bitch was in the audience, with that clackety clackety knit one pearl two knitting in the front row shit. Where she think she is? Making some dog sweater during my show. Unbelievable! I'm glad I'm not one of those skinny needle knitting women. Men need something to hold onto, not a chicken bone with silicone. I don't have a lot of women as friends. Jealousy maybe, don't really know why. As a kid, I never got invited for sleepovers, pajama parties. And when my breasts happened, well, all my friends ended up being boys, men, and, oh, gay guys. Oh honey, you wish you could be me. I'm all that, and then some. Look at me. Uh huh. That's a fact. I have a spectacular body. That's right! I am soooo fine. Thick legs. Luscious hips. Look at these beauties. Still perky, and all 100 percent ME!

(ANINA sees a gift box with a red bow on it sitting atop her vanity table.)

Hmmm, what's this? I love presents. I love surprises. Everyday is Christmas.

(She opens it. Reads the card with it.)

"Use in case of emergency, Love Daddy." Oh Daddy. What am I going to do with this? When I got this gig, Daddy said a girl like me, with a job like mine, needs protection. Protection! I'm all grownup Daddy. I know all about protection! Condoms!

(ANINA pulls out a six-shooter.)

Daddy, I told you, I don't want no gun. Look at this big, ugly, thang. Who does he's think I am, Halle Berry? We play this game every time I go home to visit. He tries to give me a pistol when all I want for him is to pass the sweet potato pie.

(We hear DADDY on the headset.)

DADDY. *(V.O.:)* Sweetpea, Anina, be serious.

ANINA. Oh Daddy.

DADDY. *(V.O.:)* Noooo sweetpea, I want you to have it. R is for recoil.

Say it with me. R is for recoil.

ANINA. Oh Daddy. R is for recoil.

DADDY. *(V.O.:)* T is for target. Aim at the target, and squeeeeeze slowly. Make that first shot count. BAM.

ANINA. Oh Daddy. T is for target. Daddy, I don't want a gun. I don't need a gun. I'm a big girl now, I can handle myself.

DADDY. *(V.O.:)* Anina, take the gun. A woman like you needs two reliable friends, Mr. Smith and Mr. Wesson. You can wear it on your, uh...you can put it in, uh. Oh, you figure it out.

ANINA. I can wear it where? Here? Here? Maybe here? Where?

DADDY. *(V.O.:)* Well, you can find a place to pack it. Every red-blooded American, has the right to protect themselves, you have the right to bear arms.

(ANINA continues to get dressed. Her next costume should be spectacular, in the Las Vegas style.)

ANINA. I have the right to bear arms, and legs, and asses, and bodacious boobies, if you got 'em! And I do. Every little bit of me is real, baby. Uh huh.

(BART, a slick and handsome young club owner, comes up from a stairwell, and to ANINA's dressing room, with flowers.)

ANINA. Here he is. The new club owner. Young boss Bart. Young boss Bart has a lot of ideas. Ideas for improvements 'round here.

Poor dumb thing. He means well, not much upstairs, too many steroids. Last week, Young boss Bart paid big bucks for one of my dancers to get a butt implant, or else O.U.T. Poor girl got her butt augmented, and now she has breasts on her ass!

(We hear a young DANCER weeping.)

DANCER. *(V.O.:)* Look. Look what they did. Tell me the truth, Anina. How bad is it? Ohmygawd!

ANINA. Those bastards! Honey child, I can't tell if you got hemorrhoids or nipples. Listen, last week. I go into his office. Young boss Bart gets out his fucking laser light, that red laser pen, and while I'm standing there, he points out places on my body where he thinks I could use improvements. Improvements in the plural! I tell him, baby, look at this, and this, and check this. This is prime A one au naturelle, as God made me. Liposuction?! Oh uhuh. Now listen here. Nothing on this body needs sucking. I don't need no liposuction. Don't need to be nipped, tucked or sucked! Unless you want to be my boyfriend. Oh look at the time. I'll be ready in a sec. Time to go and be dazzling.

(He uses the laser pen on various parts of her body, slowly slicing here and slicing there.)

ANINA. Oh uhuh. Not again. Now you gone too far. That's it.

(She goes to the vanity table, grabs her dad's revolver from the box.)

(She tries to shoot at BART, he tries to hide, ducking and weaving, while ANINA tries to follow his path with her revolver.)

ANINA. Retribution. Revenge. Justice. I read somewhere, it used to be when heinous crimes were committed, punishments would be public. Out in the open. Public floggings. Beheadings. The stockade. The scarlet letter.

(Finally, she pins him somewhere.)

Well Young boss Bart, what should be your punishment? HmMMM.

(She gestures instructions to BART with her gun. He complies with each command. She gestures for him to strip—first his tie, then his shirt, then his undershirt, then his pants, and finally, his boxer shorts. He is naked, concealing his “stuff” with boxers.)

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THE BILLET

by Jane Martin

(A living room.)

(Doorbell rings. WOMAN in her 30s answers it.)

(Two soldiers, a MASTER SERGEANT and a CORPORAL.)

(As she opens the door, the SERGEANT brushes past her.)

WINNIE. I beg your pardon?

SERGEANT MAXWELL. *(A slight bow:)* Gratefully accepted.

WINNIE. Do you...

MAXWELL. I do.

CORPORAL LOLOW. He did.

MAXWELL. Introductions. I would be Sergeant Maxwell, given name Theodore after my fraternal great-grandfather, a seed merchant beloved in the Plains states. This gentleperson is Corporal Lolow, currently of little military significance.

LOLOW. How y' doin'?

WINNIE. You both...

MAXWELL. Exactly. *(Refers to file folder:)* You, my beauty, are Mrs. Winifred Cabot-Corinthian, wife to Alexander, C.P.A., not present. Mother to Timothy currently cavorting at Arturo Toscanini preschool. All residing 14888 Lowering Elm Terrace, zip 91669. Please to affirm or negate?

WINNIE. *(Confused:)* I am. I do. We are.

MAXWELL. Excellent. We are P.T.R.P. ... *(A slight bow.)* personal terrorist-repel personnel, U.S., special services domestic as specified in Edict 177-B (as in baby) L (as in laptop) 9443-X (as in xylophone) 66218, passed both House and Senate and signed into law Dec 1, 2005. Coordinated operations beginning March 17 (Wednesday last) in all test-target areas. You, Winifred, are now by fiat safe from any Al Qaeda and 249 other perfectly nasty organizations in 36 third

world countries deemed deleterious to the health and well being of American citizens, of whom you are three.

LOLOW. A mouthful.

MAXWELL. Corporal, proceed upstairs and requisition living quarters and toilet facilities commensurate to our rank and operational necessity.

WINNIE. Living quarters?

MAXWELL. *(Hands her papers:)* You will find here our dietary requirements which assuredly will not be onerous given that Corporal Lolow is a practicing vegan while I myself will eat almost any comely comestibles you dish out. Dish up. Whatever.

WINNIE. You plan to...

MAXWELL. We do. Pardon the personal note but you are a pretty hot number, a compliment I give abstractly even metaphorically on behalf of American genetics due to my extensive training in the moral wilderness of sexual harassment. Corporal?

LOLOW. Yowsa?

MAXWELL. I believe I'll crack me a long tall Colt 45, if you'll explain to the little hotbox the further ramifications.

WINNIE. Get out of my house!

MAXWELL. Shut the Fuck Up! *(Pulls out a beer.)* You may proceed Lolow.

LOLOW. Okey-dokey.

WINNIE. I am calling the police.

MAXWELL. This would be your war on terror madam, we are the police.

LOLOW. We supersede them.

MAXWELL. *(Patting him; cheerfully:)* Quite right.

LOLOW. So call.

MAXWELL. But you're going to be suckin' up some dial tone. Proceed Lolow.

LOLOW. Okay. Okey-dokey. Baby, you are now as safe as a tick in bubble-wrap. Whither thou goest we will go, an' we got automatic weapons.

MAXWELL. We do, we do.

(They laugh.)

Pardonez-moi the levity.

LOLOW. *(Obviously memorized:)* American citizens not involved in active, passive or negative terrorism...

WINNIE. Excuse me...

MAXWELL. In due time.

LOLOW. With incomes of...

MAXWELL. Skip that part.

LOLOW. ...will be assigned P.T.R.P. in their place of residence for the duration of said war on terror...

MAXWELL. Nicely put.

LOLOW. *(His own words:)* Which could, y'know, run several generations, y'know, give or take. *(Memorized:)* Billeted operationals will accompany you on any foray...

MAXWELL. Foray is good.

LOLOW. ...defuse letter bombs, identify biological agents, teach rudimentary decontamination and home school your children.

MAXWELL. Even father your children. *(A pause.)* A quip. Patriots, Mrs. Cabot Corinthian, the necessity! And to *ensure* sufficient patriots we must *raise* sufficient patriots. No easy task in this permissive bunghole we call a society.

LOLOW. No shit.

MAXWELL. It is in this crucial arena that passive or negative terrorism eats our lunch. Comprenez-vous? You seem poised, Wini-fred, uncertain, betwixt, between, becalmed...sit on my lap.

WINNIE. But...

MAXWELL. Sit on Lap!!

(She does.)

LOLOW. A Kodak moment.

WINNIE. I want my husband.

MAXWELL. Entirely understandable.

LOLOW. Speaks well of you.

MAXWELL. Give the damsel the quiz, corporal. *(Jounces her on his knee.)* You are as light as a feather.

LOLOW. Okey-Dokey. *(From his clip board:)* Have you ever heard your husband pledge allegiance to the flag?

(WINNIE stares at him.)

During the seventh inning stretch does he, in fact, know the third verse of the national anthem?

(The stare.)

Has he ever picketed, defaced or expressed revulsion at a local mosque?

WINNIE. *(Hissing:)* Animal.

LOLOW. Does he possess sufficient and varied weaponry in the home?

WINNIE. Pig Bladder.

LOLOW. Does he respectfully, proudly and prominently display Old Glory?

WINNIE. Pagan Meatball.

MAXWELL. A spirited filly.

LOLOW. Does he believe and make known the belief that Arabs are responsible for all disasters, civil, political, foreign and natural?

WINNIE. Eat dung in proliferation.

MAXWELL. We've come to the right place Lolow.

LOLOW. Fuckin' A.

MAXWELL. *(Stands, thus dumping WINNIE on the floor:)* Having sifted the received intelligence we may categorize your dearie-deedums, Alexander, as the negative space in which and upon which world terrorism feeds and prospers. There can be only one response to terrorism, Winifred, and that response must be... Give me the word Lolow.

LOLOW. *(Whips out a tiny dictionary:)* Chylomicron?

MAXWELL. No.

LOLOW. Frustule?

MAXWELL. No.

LOLOW. Implacable.

MAXWELL. Yes!!! Implacable opposition. All else, Winifred, and I beg you to follow me closely here, all else creates the morally empty canvas which terrorism stains incarnadine. Our enemies are too many Winifred, we will never...

(Looks at LOLOW who pages through his dictionary.)

LOLOW. Eradicate.

MAXWELL. Them all. Your husband enables this emptiness, this barren mandscape on which is written the signature of the apocalypse.

LOLOW. Wow.

MAXWELL. No canvas, no Bruegel. A metaphor.

(A knock.)

ALEXANDER. *(O.S.:)* Hello... Winnie?

MAXWELL. Ah.

LOLOW. Hubby is home.

ALEXANDER. *(O.S.:)* My hands are full.

MAXWELL. Throw wide the portal.

WINNIE. But...

MAXWELL / LOLOW. Do it!

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THE RIGHT TO REMAIN

by Melanie Marnich

THE RIGHT TO REMAIN.

The Fifth Amendment reads: “Nor shall any person...be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself.” That is, we have the right to avoid self-incrimination. That is, we have the right to remain silent. Which is harder and harder to do. Because today our actions create echoes that speak on our behalf in a language that can be used independently of us. In spite of us. And against us.

Cast of Characters

AMY: Late 30s.

PETER: Late 30s.

JOSH: Mid-teens.

Place

Their kitchen.

Time

The present.

(AMY and JOSH in the kitchen.)

(AMY is putting dinner on the table.)

(JOSH clicks away on a computer in the corner. He never looks away from the screen.)

(Not when he speaks. Not when he's spoken to. Not until later.)

AMY. *(As she puts dinner on the table:)* You okay?

JOSH. Yeah.

AMY. You sure?

JOSH. Yeah.

AMY. Good.

(Beat.)

JOSH. What's for dinner?

AMY. Chicken.

(JOSH just grunts.)

AMY. With rice.

(Just a grunt.)

AMY. And asparagus.

JOSH. Folic acid. Cool.

(Beat.)

JOSH. Mom?

AMY. Hm?

JOSH. *You* okay?

AMY. Yeah.

JOSH. Cool.

(PETER enters, just as he ends a call on his cell phone.)

PETER. *(On the phone:)* No. No. No. No. No. No. No. Okay. Bye.

(He snaps his phone shut.)

I hate my job.

AMY. You have to go back in?

PETER. It can wait till morning.

AMY. That's news.

(He puts the cell phone on the table.)

PETER. *(Admiringly:)* Look at you.

AMY. What?

PETER. *(Holding her face in his hands:)* You're kind of dressed...*up*.

AMY. A little.

PETER. You look really...hot.

JOSH. I'm in the room.

PETER. Then maybe you should leave.

JOSH. Mom?

AMY. Stay.

PETER. What's the occasion?

AMY. I had a meeting.

PETER. With who?

AMY. Some guy I might be working with.

PETER. Do I know him?

AMY. Doubt it.

PETER. Should I be jealous?

(JOSH snorts but never looks at PETER.)

PETER. Shut up. Your mom's gorgeous. And I'm not an idiot.

JOSH. Smell the irony.

PETER. What's that supposed to mean?

(JOSH shrugs.)

PETER. Is there any way to slap the teenager out of him?

(Dinner's on the table. She and PETER sit down.)

Josh.

(JOSH totally ignores him.)

Dinner.

(JOSH ignores him.)

Come on.

(JOSH ignores him.)

JOSH. Mom?

AMY. *(To JOSH:)* It's okay, hon.

PETER. No, it's not. Get over here. Now.

(JOSH ignores him.)

PETER. What is it about "now" that you don't understand?

AMY. He's working on something.

PETER. Well he can work on it later.

AMY. No he can't.

(PETER's starting to sense that something's up. A weird connection between AMY and JOSH that doesn't include him.)

AMY. *(Starting to eat:)* How was your day?

PETER. *(Trying to switch gears:)* Um. Busy. Crazy.

AMY. That big account?

PETER. Yeah.

AMY. Who'd've thought snowmobiles could suck up so much time.

PETER. Hey, it's Minnesota. *(To JOSH:)* You've got five seconds.

JOSH. Mom?

AMY. *(Sharply, to PETER:)* Leave him alone.

(Now PETER knows something's definitely up. AMY's too benign. JOSH is too focused on the computer. It's a tense, bizarre, forced normalcy. A strange current in the room. He tries to feel his way around it.)

PETER. You?

AMY. What?

PETER. Your day. How was it. Including the part about that guy I don't like the sound of.

(JOSH snorts.)

PETER. Do you know how bad I wanna hit him right now?

AMY. It was fine, thanks.

PETER. You had a huge deadline, right?

AMY. *(Full mouth:)* Missed it. Salt, please.

(PETER passes the salt.)

PETER. What do you mean you *missed* it?

(As a command—)

Josh.

(JOSH ignores him.)

AMY. I mean five o'clock came and went and I turned in jack shit.

PETER. You never miss a deadline. And you never swear.

AMY. There's a first time for everything. Go fuck a duck.

PETER. Amy?!

AMY. *(Looking directly at him:)* Peter?

(She looks at him until he squirms. For an instant, he's a bunny in the headlights. Then she looks back at her food.)

PETER. *(Trying to get to catch his breath after that weird moment:)* So you, like, completely missed it?

AMY. *(Eating:)* Mm.

PETER. Well, that can't be good.

AMY. Pretty bad, actually.

(JOSH is focused on the computer. AMY's focused on her dinner. The atmosphere is just too weird for PETER.)

PETER. *(Snapping:)* Get off that stupid computer before I throw it out the window. I hate that thing. It's sucking the testosterone out of you. Turn it off. Eat. Then we'll go play football or something.

JOSH. We don't own a football.

AMY. *(Focused on her food:)* Are you online?

JOSH. *(Focused on the computer:)* I will be.

AMY. Good.

PETER. You two are starting to freak me out.

JOSH. Mom?

AMY. Hm?

JOSH. I'm online.

PETER. Get off.

AMY. Stay on.

PETER. Off!

AMY. On.

PETER. *(Finally losing it:)* Off! You— *(To AMY, who's about to say something:)* stop. And you— *(To JOSH:)* get over here.

(They don't react. They don't even blink. It's like they didn't hear him. Whatever the game is, it's becoming clear that AMY and JOSH hold all the cards.)

PETER. Are you people insane? Who are you? What planet are you from? What planet am I on? You were normal this morning. Somebody spill their milk. Somebody burp. Somebody talk about their day and look at me while you're doing it.

(AMY puts down her fork and looks at him point blank.)

AMY. Three.

PETER. What?

AMY. I said "three."

PETER. Three?

AMY. Two.

PETER. Two what?

AMY. Five. Four.

PETER. What?

AMY. Two.

PETER. Your lottery numbers?

AMY. Nine.

PETER. *My* lottery numbers?

AMY. No. They're hers, right? The numbers in her phone number.

PETER. The numbers in whose phone number?

AMY. Three-two-five, four-two-nine— What comes after nine? What's the last number of her number?

PETER. Back up.

AMY. Couldn't you come up with a better excuse than "snowmobiles"?

PETER. You mean, my *job*?

AMY. Snowmobile photo shoot, snowmobile trade show, snowmobile convention...

PETER. This isn't even worth talking about. It's stupid. It's just... *wrong*. Five minutes ago I was jealous of some guy you—

AMY. My lawyer.

PETER. What?!

(Beat.)

PETER. You're crazy.

JOSH. You're busted.

PETER. *(To JOSH:)* Shut up. *(To AMY:)* You think just because I'm working all the time?

AMY. No. Because you *say* you're working all the time.

PETER. You know I am. I call you from the office. You call me there.

AMY. Cell phones changed the rules. Accessibility doesn't preclude guilt. As a matter of fact, it's the perfect cover.

PETER. What?

AMY. I got that from the lawyer. Pretty good, isn't it?

JOSH. *(Still not looking away from the computer:)* Tell me the last number, Dad. Of her phone number.

PETER. There *isn't* one.

JOSH. Yeah there is. And I already know it. Because I called the phone company and got your cell phone records. But I want you to say it. Say it and I'll stop. Two? Seven? Five? One? Nine?

AMY. The thing is, I had no idea. He's the one who figured it out. Not me. Not even close. I believed every late night. Every Saturday afternoon. Because I love you in that really stupid way. He's pretty smart, though, isn't he? For the son of a stupid mother. Three? Eight? Six?

JOSH. If you don't say it, I'll type it in. It'll tell me her name and address. Then I can run a search on her and know more than you. But if you say the last number, I'll stop. If you admit it. I'll turn off the computer and eat my vegetables at the table next to you. But if you don't, I'll find out where you took her for dinner. Where you stayed. Where you fucked her. How much you paid for the room. Come on. What's the number? Just the last one. Then we can stop. If you admit it.

(Nothing.)

PETER. Don't do this.

AMY. What's she like?

PETER. There's no— *(To JOSH.)* Go to your room.

JOSH. Mom?

AMY. Stay.

PETER. God.

(Silence. He doesn't have an ally in the room.)

PETER. It's not—

AMY. It's not what I think it is?

PETER. No. It's not.

AMY. You have no idea what I think.

PETER. *(Holding out his cell phone.)* Here. I'll stand right here while you—

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THE PROMISE

by Gavin Lawrence

(The set is arranged to accommodate the skeletal necessities of a small apartment. There is a bed, a small sofa with a nearby TV, and a sink representing the kitchen. The outdoor scenes are played downstage in their own light.)

Scene 1

(A young couple in their mid-thirties lie on opposite sides of the bed, backs to each other.)

(Both are awake and painfully aware of the sudden awkwardness in their relationship.)

(They are TORY and MICHELLE. Married for two years, the recent events during Tory's brief incarceration have left them both lost and alone. Their frustrations have been multiplied because, though they know they only have each other, there is a chasm between them that neither seems to know how to cross.)

(MICHELLE finally sits up. She looks at TORY before reaching for the bedroom curtains. She parts the curtains and looks out on the dreary street that they live on. The lifeless, frozen landscape does nothing for her spirits.)

(MICHELLE moves towards the bathroom and stops. She turns to TORY, wanting to say something but doesn't find the words. She closes the door behind her and, as if on cue, TORY rolls to Michelle's side of the bed, snuggling with her pillow.)

(TORY parts the curtains and looks out of the window.)

(There is the sound of the cell door slamming as the voices take over.)

COP (V.O.). Who you lookin' at?

TORY (V.O.). I'm not looking at you, okay?

COP (V.O.). Oh, so now I'm a liar? I say you lookin' at me, and I want to know what the fuck you lookin' at.

TORY (V.O.). I'm not lookin' at you, officer.

COP (V.O.). What? You like me? Is that why you staring? Yeah, that's it—you a girl. You lonely, girlfriend? You need some attention?

TORY (V.O.). Look, man, I don't want no trouble, okay?

COP (V.O.). Who said anything about trouble? Just relax and shut up...this is gonna feel good.

TORY (V.O.). You can't do this!

COP (V.O.). You see this badge? That means I can do this.

TORY (V.O.). Get off me! Help me! Somebody help me!

COP (V.O.). Shut up! Don't move!

TORY (V.O.). Please!

COP (V.O.). Shut the hell up before I bust your head open. Now...that's it. That's better. Oh yeah...oh yeah...

(Michelle's voice intrudes on the memory and TORY is brought back to reality. He looks at MICHELLE who stands in the doorway with her toothbrush in her hand.)

MICHELLE. Tory? Tory. You okay?

TORY. Yeah.

MICHELLE. I got some errands to run so I'll meet you, okay?

TORY. Errands?

MICHELLE. Yeah, you know—bank, post office, pay some bills...freeze my ass off, you know, errands. Don't forget...ten o'clock.

TORY. Yeah, I know.

MICHELLE. Tory...

TORY. I won't forget.

MICHELLE. You promised.

TORY. I'll be there. Ten o'clock. I'll be there.

(She goes back into the bathroom. Lights down on the scene.)

Scene 2

(TORY sits on the sofa watching TV.)

(MICHELLE enters, crosses in front of him, and gets her coat from the closet. She goes to him, strokes his head and kisses him.)

MICHELLE. You got the address, right?

TORY. Bye.

(MICHELLE goes to the front door then turns back to him.)

TORY. Ten o'clock, Michelle.

(She goes to him and kisses him. He doesn't respond.)

MICHELLE. Bye.

(She exits.)

(Lights up on the part of the stage representing the bus stop. MICHELLE enters and waits in the frigid air.)

(TORY steps to the sink and washes his face. He takes a glass and runs some water in it, taking a sip.)

COP (V.O.). Don't move!

(TORY smashes the glass in the sink.)

(Lights down.)

Scene 3

(Lights up on Rebecca's office. REBECCA writes on a note pad as MICHELLE sits waiting for Tory to arrive.)

MICHELLE. I'm sorry. He knew what time he was supposed to be here.

REBECCA. Let's give him a couple more minutes.

MICHELLE. I mean the bus is running a little late this morning, but he should have been here.

REBECCA. I'm sure he's on his way.

MICHELLE. Plus he's never broken a promise. He knew how important this is.

(TORY enters and waits for the bus as the scene continues.)

(MICHELLE looks at her watch.)

MICHELLE. I'm sorry. I have to get to work. I'm sorry.

REBECCA. I know these things are hard. Maybe you want to schedule an appointment on your own until Torrence is ready to join you.

MICHELLE. "Tory."

REBECCA. What's that?

MICHELLE. Everybody calls him, "Tory."

REBECCA. Tory. So, do you want to maybe see me on your own?

MICHELLE. No, I really want us to do this together. I don't even know what's wrong with him. He won't talk to me. He won't even look at me.

(She is close to tears.)

REBECCA. Can I get you something to drink?

MICHELLE. No. Thank you. I better go, before I'm late.

REBECCA. You take care. Call me if anything changes.

(She leads MICHELLE to the door.)

(Lights down on stage.)

Scene 4

(It is late afternoon as TORY stands on the banks of the lake, lost in thought.)

(The sounds of children playing on the lake can be heard offstage.)

(DILLON, a six-year-old boy, runs on stage. He's bundled up and out of breath.)

DILLON. Hey, mister.

TORY. Hey.

DILLON. What you doing?

TORY. Nothing. Just thinking, I guess.

DILLON. Why are you out here all alone?

TORY. I don't know. I guess I just wanted to be alone.

DILLON. Don't you have any friends?

TORY. Yeah.

DILLON. Do you have a girlfriend?

TORY. No, I'm married. I have a wife.

DILLON. Where is she.

TORY. I guess she's at home.

DILLON'S MOM. *(Offstage:)* Dillon!

DILLON. Well, bye.

TORY. Bye.

(DILLON runs off. TORY follows DILLON with his eyes and, after a moment, hurries off in the opposite direction.)

(Lights down.)

Scene 5

(It is late afternoon in Rebecca's office. TORY sits across from the therapist.)

TORY. I bet Michelle was pissed, right?

REBECCA. She was...disappointed.

TORY. I've known Michelle since we were kids, and she don't get disappointed, she gets pissed.

COP (V.O.). Don't move.

(TORY reacts.)

REBECCA. What is it?

TORY. I got to talk to somebody. I feel like I'm going crazy.

REBECCA. I'm listening.

(He hesitates.)

REBECCA. It's okay. Go ahead.

TORY. About a month ago I got arrested. Except I didn't do anything. They thought I was somebody else.

REBECCA. Okay.

TORY. But they didn't let me out until the next day. And there was this dude, this cop, who kept messing with me.

REBECCA. Messing with you how?

TORY. Just messing with me.

REBECCA. Did the police officer hurt you?

(He won't answer.)

Tory?

TORY. Yeah. I mean, yeah.

REBECCA. So the officer...assaulted you?

TORY. Yeah.

REBECCA. Did you tell anybody?

TORY. No.

REBECCA. Why?

TORY. I can't. I can't do this.

REBECCA. Okay look, if we keep this up I'm gonna miss my dinner, which means you're going to have to buy me dinner, which means you'll be late getting home, which will make Michelle even more pissed off at you.

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SACRAMENT

by Syl Jones

(Open on an old Buick, large and lumbering, circa 1988, in the parking lot. The radio is blaring the Martha and the Vandellas song, “Nowhere To Run,” when the MAN in the car, older, graying, and wearing an old Chapeau and a trench coat, turns it down so that it can barely be heard beneath the first part of the scene. He removes his hat slowly, carefully, and places it on his lap.)

(The music is very specific through this scene: “Nowhere To Run,” followed by “Unchained Melody” by The Righteous Brothers and ending with Jefferson Airplane’s “White Rabbit.”)

(Suddenly a YOUNG MAN wearing a hooded sweatshirt covered by a Minnesota Twins jacket opens the car door and jumps into the seat next to him.)

MIDDORI. Jesus...!

TONY. *(Chewing gum:)* No—Tony. Good guess, though.

So, how’s kicks? Still listenin’ to the Oldies station, I see. Only place where the world never changes, huh? The Oldies station.

MIDDORI. You were a good boy, Tony. Not like the others. You just needed a little guidance. I tried my best to give it to you.

TONY. When you said the Blessed Virgin was alive, watching over me, I listened. I believed. I even seen the Blessed Virgin in the joint. Yeah. I was on the toilet and this guy he says to me, “It’s time now, sonny boy.” Just like that. I knew exactly what he meant. But the Blessed Virgin told me the sacrament was just between you and me. I shouldn’t do it with nobody else. So, I let him get real close like I kinda wanted it, you know. And when he wasn’t lookin’, jammed a pencil right in his eye! *(Smiles)* So, I been listenin’ real good. You give me good guidance.

MIDDORI. You blame me, don’t you? Just like all the rest.

TONY. I ain’t blaming you? It’s just that I gotta know, Father.

MIDDORI. (*Desperately:*) Is it money you want? Listen—I can fix it so they pay you!

TONY. Did I ask for frickin' money? What you take me for? Some cheap faggot?

MIDDORI. I'm not working at the settlement house anymore. I can't be around kids.

TONY. I ain't no kid no more. I met another guy in the joint. Marcellus. Member him? I asked him.

MIDDORI. Look, Tony—

TONY. Know what he said?

(*MIDDORI looks away.*)

TONY. You only done him once. Behind the altar, so to speak. That true?

(*MIDDORI says nothing.*)

TONY. It's true, ain't it? (*Pause.*) What about the others? You done them like you done Marcellus?

MIDDORI. Tony...I think you'd better go now.

TONY. You done all them other guys the same way as Marcellus, right? The exact same way, right?

MIDDORI. What...what do you mean—exactly?

TONY. You know what I mean! You did 'em all the same way. Behind the altar—so to speak. (*Chuckles.*) I seen you doin' Charlie Malloy one night. (*MIDDORI looks horrified and starts to shake his head.*) You didn't know I was there. I seen you. Ain't that right?

MIDDORI. I can't remember anymore.

TONY. You didn't say no hail Marys or nothin'. You told Charlie Malloy not to tell, else he was going straight to hell, didn't ya?

MIDDORI. That's what Father Novak told me. A long, long time ago. (*Pause.*) And...I believed him. And I kept my mouth shut. I heard the call and accepted the faith. And it all became... beautiful...in its own way. God forgives, Tony. God sees into our hearts,

sees our purity, how holy we truly are no matter what we do. But you have to keep going. You have to show a little faith in him. And you have to keep your mouth shut. If God can forgive, then I can forgive. Can you forgive?

TONY. (*Confused:*) I ain't learned nothin' from nobody about the Blessed Virgin except you, I never forgot that, Father

MIDDORI. —don't call me that.

TONY. Why not? You treat me like a son. You showed me the Blessed Virgin in all her glory come down from heaven just for me, Father, for me. You give me the sacrament. (*Pause.*) And, I come to say...I come to say...I know you only done that with me, Father. You trusted me to handle it, and I handled it. (*Accusingly:*) But you lost track of me. You shouldna done that... (*TONY covers his eyes, crying.*) You...lost...track of me!!

(*MIDDORI looks at him cautiously.*)

MIDDORI. Tony, my son...I didn't mean to hurt you. You were very, very special to me. You know that, don't you? I wanted to share something with you...passed it on...I wanted you to be...holy.

(*Pause as TONY looks away.*)

But, this...thing...this disease...it took hold of me and...and...

TONY. a frickin' disease

MIDDORI. (*Confidently:*) God has forgiven me, Tony. I am purified by Him. You can be purified, too. If you really want it.

TONY. (*Confused:*) I wake up at night...*it* wakes me up at night. To this day, Father. So, I ask myself, what's wrong? Did I feel special—yeah—because you give me the sacrament. You give it to me and me alone, I knew it. You made me see the Blessed Virgin like she was my own dead mother and that made me feel all holy like. But, I ain't been right. I mean, my life's—I'm...no good for nothin' now.

MIDDORI. (*Desperately:*) There's a fund, Tony. Money to tide you over, counseling, anything you need.

TONY. (*Not listening:*) I ain't never done it with nobody else, not even in the joint. You think...maybe...

(*Pause.*)

MIDDORI. (*Glowing:*) You mean you...*want*...the sacrament...my son?

TONY. (*Rapidly:*) I ain't never felt so holy, Father. I need to feel that way again.

MIDDORI. (*Triumphant:*) I knew it! I told myself Tony's a good boy, the best...*my* boy! You are seeking redemption through the ancient rite, and God *will* be merciful. God *will* forgive. This is my faith...*our* faith!

(*He puts his hand on TONY's neck.*)

TONY. (*Mechanically:*) You gotta put the collar on first, Father. Like you always done.

(*MIDDORI pauses.*)

MIDDORI. Not anymore.

TONY. (*Desperately:*) Why not? You gotta make it holy, Father. You can't give me the sacrament without the collar! It ain't right!

MIDDORI. Where two or more are gathered in my name, saith the Book—

TONY. Don't give me that bullshit!

MIDDORI. (*Childlike:*) Pretend, Tony. Imagine that I'm wearing the collar—

TONY. I ain't a child no more, Father! It's gotta be holy. I gotta feel that way again, see the Blessed Virgin—

MIDDORI. Close your eyes and have faith, my son. "This is my body..."

TONY. (*Angrily:*) Put the fuckin' collar on!

MIDDORI. No!

TONY. Put it on, goddamn it!

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YOUR DAY IN COURT

by Rebecca Gilman

(A hallway in the county courthouse, Indianapolis. The accused, TINA CONNER, 16, sits with her father WILLIAM CONNER, 50. TINA is sullen. WILLIAM is resigned.)

WILLIAM. *(Looks at his watch:)* I'm not gonna make it back to work.

TINA. I wasn't even with those guys.

WILLIAM. Then what were you doing?

TINA. Just walking around.

WILLIAM. You don't get arrested for walking around.

TINA. Yes you do. The mall has those parent patrols and they wear T-shirts. They go around yelling at you, even if you're just standing there. And then half the stores have signs that say if you're under a certain age, you can only come in two at a time. Like if you're with ten people, you can only go in in twos.

WILLIAM. They don't want anybody to steal.

TINA. But then, like when me and Kylie and Sean went to get our cleats at Foot Locker, one of us had to wait outside. It was ridiculous.

(WILLIAM doesn't say anything.)

You have to admit that's ridiculous.

(ANDREA, Tina's public defender, enters. She is 35, overworked but still dedicated.)

ANDREA. Tina?

TINA. T-Conn.

WILLIAM. Tina.

ANDREA. Is this your father?

WILLIAM. *(Holds out his hand:)* William Conner.

ANDREA. Andrea Tyler. You requested representation, right?

WILLIAM. Right.

ANDREA. (*Flipping through a stack of files, she doesn't have a chair:*) We'll have to do this out here. (*Finds what she wants.*) I talked to the State's Attorney and I think I got us a good deal. He'll reduce the charges to loitering. Normally you'd just pay a fine but with Tina's record, he's asked for forty hours of community service.

TINA. Seriously?

ANDREA. Otherwise we go to court and he'll ask the judge to suspend your license for a year.

TINA. No way!

ANDREA. If you weren't a minor you'd go to jail. So it's a good deal, you should take it.

WILLIAM. Will she have to miss school?

ANDREA. No, it's Saturdays. Five Saturdays.

WILLIAM. She'll take it.

TINA. No I won't. I'm not spending my Saturdays picking up crap off the freeway. Where everybody can see me.

ANDREA. You'll have company. The other kids you were with are getting the same deal.

TINA. I wasn't with them!

ANDREA. That's not what the cops say—

TINA. The cops are lying.

ANDREA. Then it's your word against theirs.

TINA. This is bullshit!

ANDREA. Try and think it over, okay? It's forty hours versus an entire year without a license. You can't drive to school. You can't drive to work. On weekends somebody has to come get you. You have a boyfriend?

TINA. Yeah.

WILLIAM. Who?

TINA. Nobody you know.

ANDREA. So you can't drive around with your boyfriend. For a whole year.

TINA. (*Shakes her head:*) I don't care. I'm not doing it.

(*Beat.*)

ANDREA. (*To WILLIAM:*) You want to help me out here?

WILLIAM. Do what she says.

TINA. You do it.

WILLIAM. I'm taking the goddamn car from her anyway, so I don't care.

TINA. You can't do that!

WILLIAM. I pay the insurance, I can do whatever I want. (*Looks at ANDREA:*) But I think you should do the community service anyway to teach you a lesson.

TINA. It's my car.

WILLIAM. (*To ANDREA:*) She's always telling me she doesn't do these things these other kids do, and that the only reason she gets in trouble is she's just standing there with these other kids. But I tell her that she's gonna get judged by the company she keeps, right? And if she wouldn't hang around with these losers then she wouldn't keep getting in trouble. (*To TINA:*) So you lose the privilege of having a car until you can find somebody decent to hang around with. I'll have your mother call over to Randy's and he can come pick up your car, put it on blocks in his garage.

TINA. I haven't even—! I haven't even gone in the room and nobody's even said I did anything yet! All I did was be in proximity. I'm just being—I'm being *framed* because of proximity.

WILLIAM. Say whatever. Because there's this court and there's my court, and in my court I know you. So take her deal and let's go home.

(*Small beat.*)

ANDREA. Tina?

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PRIVATES

by Janet Allard

Cast of Characters

JOE: A much admired man running for Sheriff.

CANDICE: A nurse.

WENDY: A nurse. Candice's best friend since childhood.

THE DOCTOR: A preoccupied doctor.

Place

In a hospital.

In a tiny town in California. Now.

The Set

A hospital as signified by three curtains which can be pulled back to reveal three rooms. One of the rooms is a hospital room where Joe waits for the Doctor, the second is the Doctor's "scrub room" where the doctor prepares, the third is a supply closet where Nurse Wendy smokes. Candice revolves between these areas. Curtains open and close throughout the play.

(At rise: A hospital. Three curtained off rooms. In JOE's hospital room, NURSE CANDICE and JOE whisper.)

CANDICE. I don't see why it's such a secret.

JOE. It's my private life.

CANDICE. Our life.

JOE. I don't want it dragged out—

CANDICE. What dragged out?

JOE. For everyone to see. Private is private. Look, I just think we should cool things down. Till after the election.

CANDICE. The doctor will be right with you.

JOE. Look—Candice—I still want to see you.

CANDICE. This isn't working for me, Joe!

JOE. What? What isn't working!

(She shuts JOE's curtains. She opens the DOCTOR's curtains, revealing an ominous doctor, dressed for surgery. He holds a pair of enormous, sharp, metal scissors. He is on his cell phone.)

DOCTOR. *(To CANDICE:)* READY?! I've got to make the tee-off. *(Into the phone:)* This sucker's loaded, right? Give me the silver interior with the *(To CANDICE:)* —where the hell is she? THE PATIENT!

CANDICE. He!

DOCTOR. Hold on. *(To CANDICE:)* Silver with black interior or black with silver interior? Shit. *(Into the phone:)* I'll take the silver interior. Hold on. *(He switches phone lines.)* I'm on my way; I'm almost there don't tee-off without me. *(To CANDICE:)* This guy's got insurance right? What's he in for? His liver?

CANDICE. Wait. One minute.

(CANDICE shuts the DOCTOR's curtains. CANDICE opens JOE's curtains.)

You do realize the risk, don't you?

JOE. Risk?

(She shuts JOE's curtains.)

(WENDY, another nurse, pokes her head out of her curtains. Whispers urgently.)

WENDY. Psst. Candice! What's he in for?

CANDICE. I can't tell you. It's private. Confidential.

(WENDY opens her curtains. She smokes a cigarette in the supply closet.)

WENDY. But you can tell me, right?

CANDICE. You owe me a cigarette.

WENDY. You look stressed. Is it life threatening? His heart?

(WENDY grabs the file from CANDICE.)

CANDICE. You can't read that. Wendy! It's private information. His private information—

WENDY. ELEVEN INCHES! He wants to make it 11 inches. Is that possible? With what he's got? Can they do that?

CANDICE. Give it back, Wendy.

WENDY. Do you know how big this is, Candice? This would ruin his fucking political career. Do you realize, people would DIE to know this. PAY to know this. THE PRESS—

CANDICE. You can't be serious, Wendy, you wouldn't—

WENDY. It's HUGE. NEWSWORTHY. This is the only way, Candice. That dickhead's gonna fucking win the election because his daddy's WHO HE IS. Their whole family is gonna rule the whole fucking world from top to bottom, from the guy who makes the laws to the guy who fries you in the chair. It's not an election it's a fucking popularity contest. And you have the power. Right here. You could bring him down with one phone call to the press. This hits the papers and he's out, down for the count, nobody's gonna vote for a small dick sheriff—no matter who his daddy is...

CANDICE. You're kidding, right!

JOE. Nurse!

DOCTOR. READY?!

CANDICE. Hold your horses!

WENDY. Are you gonna call the press, or am I?

(The DOCTOR rips open his own curtains. He holds up a large syringe. He's on his cell phone.)

DOCTOR. *(Into the phone:)* And she didn't have any damn health insurance, and there she is on my operating table having a heart attack, dying like she's got the money to pay for it. How the hell am I supposed to pay make the payments doing heart surgeries for free. *(To CANDICE:)* What did you say this guy wanted? Botox?

(JOE rips open his curtain. CANDICE shuts the DOCTOR's curtain quickly.)

JOE. I'm doing this for you, Candice.

CANDICE. I think we should call this off, Joe!

JOE. I thought you supported me. I thought you were behind me and my election. I thought— It's the sex isn't it.

CANDICE. The sex is fine, Joe.

JOE. You're lying. I can tell when you're lying!

(She shuts his curtains. WENDY opens hers.)

WENDY. Candice!

CANDICE. It's immoral, Wendy, Illegal!

WENDY. It's personal. Do you know how many speeding tickets that fucker has given us?

CANDICE. It's revenge, isn't it?

WENDY. He's been a dick since high school, grade-school. That asshole dumped me for Lydia Martin. He ruined my life.

CANDICE. See it's not political at all it's petty, personal—

WENDY. And now he's a fucking celebrity cop. He's so full of himself, well now we know why, fucking Napoleon complex of the dick. We had one joint on us in that car that summer, one fucking joint that he would've smoked with us outside of the seventh grade dance, and he arrests us for it?

CANDICE. He's a cop. That's his job, Wendy.

WENDY. Who does he think he is? He thinks he's better than us, Candice, he always has—

CANDICE. You're still in love with him, aren't you?

WENDY. He knows me. I gave him his first blowjob.

(JOE opens his curtains. He sees WENDY. They recognize each other.)

WENDY. Hi.

JOE. Hi. Just in for a physical. Got to keep fit. Nurse, can I see you for a second.

(He closes his curtains.)

WENDY. Who do I call? Channel nine? What's their number?

CANDICE. You can't do that.

WENDY. No one will know it was us.

CANDICE. You!

WENDY. We're in this together.

CANDICE. Are you asking me to cover for you?

WENDY. How many times have I covered for you? In your life? Lied for you: The parakeet. The New Year's Eve stain on your living room rug, the chicken pox. Not to mention, Geometry. The station wagon drag queen incident. Your mom's Niagara Falls plate. Your missing panties. Numerous phone calls, excuses, lies. Add it up, Candice. Add it up. I'm your friend Candice. Friends keep each other's secrets.

CANDICE. I've been seeing him.

WENDY. Who?

CANDICE. Sleeping with him. Having sex with him.

WENDY. You're kidding! *(Pause.)* Shit, Candice. He's an asshole.

CANDICE. He's not.

WENDY. As your friend. I'm telling you. How long?

CANDICE. Two years.

WENDY. Two years. With that dick?

CANDICE. He's not a bad guy—

WENDY. And you think he's committed to you? He doesn't even acknowledge you publicly! Why not? Why is it such a secret?

CANDICE. He's just thinking about his career, his reputation.

WENDY. Which is he going to choose, Candice? You or his reputation? Go in there and ask him. Go in there and find out. Go in there and ask him point blank.

CANDICE. I don't need to.

WENDY. You think he's in there having a dick extension for your benefit? Why do you think he's having a few more inches tacked on? Because he wants to remain faithful to you? He's a fucking republican politician asshole, what is there to trust. He's gonna dump you for the next hot piece of ass that comes along.

CANDICE. He wouldn't do that.

WENDY. Go ahead. Believe that. See where that gets you.

(Pause. CANDICE and WENDY stare at each other. Then...CANDICE rips open JOE's curtain.)

CANDICE. What exactly is your commitment to me, Joe? Why don't you acknowledge me in public?

JOE. Where is this coming from? Where's your TRUST Candice?

CANDICE. And why aren't we living together!

JOE. You have a reputation.

CANDICE. Reputation? Oh here we go!

JOE. After the election, after I win—

CANDICE. What kind of reputation?

JOE. You know.

CANDICE. Are you saying I'm not the kind of woman you would be seen with? What? Say it!

JOE. You've got a record, Candice. A criminal record. And I'm running for SHERIFF. I mean, come on. You don't expect people to ignore that do you? After. AFTER the election.

CANDICE. What's more important. That election or us? Your reputation or me? Choose.

JOE. Candice—I love you—

CANDICE. Are you gonna fry people in the chair Joe? Are you? And where's all the marijuana you "confiscate," do you dispose of it? Where is it? What's important to you Joe? I doubt it's the same as what's important to me!

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by Jeffrey Hatcher

Cast of Characters

THE ENSEMBLE:

They each wear a sign proclaiming their character.

(BLACK WOMAN enters and faces audience. She wears a very African looking outfit.)

BLACK WOMAN. Hello. My name is Barbara Bush. I am the mother of the current president, George W. Bush and the wife of the former president George H.W. Bush. I am 78 years old and very white. You may think I am not telling the truth. But I am. I changed my name to Barbara Bush some time ago. I have that right. I also have the right to say the things I just said moments ago, about being the mother, the wife, all that crap. I can say that, and there's no law that says I can't. I can say these things, no matter how confusing, peculiar, or perverse they might seem. I have that right.

(CRACKER enters and stands next to her.)

CRACKER. Hello. I believe Earth was created by Venusians as a testing ground for an inferior race of beings called "humans." These "humans" were placed here by the Venusians to see if we'd all kill each other by October 17, 3047. It was part of a bet between two Venusians named Zenon 5 and Crag Olgsgridar. And everything in human history upon this planet has been the result of this interplanetary barroom wager. I believe this with all my heart and Venusian-tooled soul. There is no law that says I can't. I have that right.

(GAY MAN joins them.)

GAY MAN. Hello. I am from Alabama. I am gay. This is a contradiction in terms. I wish to have gay sex in Alabama. Not because I think it's kinky, but because I live in Alabama with the man I love, and part of our love includes physical intimacy. Alabama, however, frowns on gay sex. That's putting it mildly. Alabama scowls on gay sex. It makes one of those Yuck faces. One of those Oh-God-that's-

disgusting-look-out-it's-poison-Yuck faces and would spit and say "Feh!" if "Feh" weren't Jewish-sounding and hence outside normal Alabamese parlance. I want to have gay sex in Alabama, but gay sex is illegal. So I don't have the right. I am now considering moving to some state that allows—nay, *encourages* gay sex. But I'll have to get a new job. Luckily, I'm a flight attendant, so I can pretty much live anywhere.

(RATIONAL MAN *enters.*)

RATIONAL MAN. Not so fast, gay man. Didn't you hear about the Supreme Court's most recent ruling?

GAY MAN. The one about interstate trucking?

RATIONAL MAN. (*Chuckles à la Robert Young:*) Silly gay man! Gays know not of trucking—except in very specific truck stop circumstances. No, I'm talking about the new rulings that say government can't go running into people's bedrooms and saying: "Hey, now! No cunnilingus for you!"

GAY MAN. Really? They SAID that?

(NAZI WOMAN *enters.*)

RATIONAL MAN. Well, not in so many words, but—

GAY MAN. Wow. This is great news! I guess it's sodomy time in the deep south!

NAZI WOMAN. But I thought the federal government had no right to...to...

RATIONAL MAN. No right to what, Nazi chick?

NAZI WOMAN. Well, here now, wait a minute, I know I've got the Constitution here somewhere... (*Looks through her scant garments:*) ...not in my G-String...not in my Swastika...here it is! Folded between chapters of "Mein Kampf." Amendment 10. The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.

RATIONAL MAN. True enough, Nazi Chick.

NAZI WOMAN. So if Alabama says "No Cunnilingus..."

GAY MAN. Hey, *I* say “No cunnilingus.”

NAZI WOMAN. If the state says “None of that stuff,” how can the feds just swoop in and say it’s okay?

RATIONAL MAN. Because of the right of privacy.

CRACKER. WHAT right of privacy?

RATIONAL MAN. Well, I’ll tell *you*, Cracker, but I won’t tell Nazi Chick...there is no right of privacy. That’s just something a few Supreme Court justices cooked up and pretended to find in the Constitution about 40 years ago.

CRACKER. Why?

RATIONAL MAN. Because they were enlightened liberals and knew it wasn’t in the Constitution but they were afraid crackers...er...Conservative Thinkers across the nation were employing antiquated, outmoded, reactionary ways of thinking to modern circumstances.

NAZI WOMAN. So that Tenth Amendment stuff is, like, Null and Void? Never mind? Nicht?

RATIONAL MAN. Well, we can’t SAY that, but...yeah. I mean...and here I’m just the playwright’s mouthpiece, so bear with me: we say “Okay, States: Some of you are perfectly rational, somewhat enlightened states, and some of you are really pathetic big-forehead idiot states. If St. Petersburg, Florida wants to have a speed limit of 35 MPH because the median age down there is 106, and Nebraska insists you drive like a jet-powered maniac because the roads are straight and the view is boring, okay, we can live with this weird disparity. You want strict child labor laws in New Hampshire and a right for 12-year-olds to work on farm equipment in Wyoming? Okay. Lotta 12-year-olds’ll lose their arms in threshers, Wyoming, but it’s your call. Some states like poison in their lakes, others don’t. Some think casinos are the way to solve budget deficits, others think slot machines and bingo mean the end of the American civilization. It’s a big country, and states like to think they have autonomy. They like to think that people are so different the minute you cross a state line, all sorts of cultural and societal rules have to change on a dime. Buy liquor here, but not there. Porn

on Sunday there, but not here. They like to believe that geography is character, that topography equals values. And maybe they're right. But we all watch television and surf the net and buy the same products at the same chain stores. So how different are we, by and large? And that phrase "by and large" is important, because we're talking about the norm here, percentages, averages. If I say we all watch "Survivor" twelve of you from Linden Hills and Kenwood will pipe up and wave your hands and yell smugly: "Why, the only television we watch is the MacNeil Lehrer Report and that wonderful HBO adaptation of ANGELS IN AMERICA"! Yeah, well, thank you, NPR Cultural Minority, welcome to the country you actually live in. You may be watching Jim Lehrer try to make expression come onto his face, but BY AND LARGE America is watching somebody eat a rat in Bago-Bago. You know who Nina Totenberg is, you and two million other likeminded individualists. The other 246 million of us have memorized the name of the girl Laci Peterson's husband was seeing before he killed his wife, and it ain't Nina Totenberg. And yes, I know the PBS news show is now just called "The News Hour" but be honest: we all still think of it as the old MacNeil Lehrer Show.

(LESBIAN WOMAN *enters.*)

LESBIAN WOMAN. Did someone say something about legal cunnilingus in Alabama?

NAZI WOMAN. Shhhh!

LESBIAN WOMAN. Why go all the way to Alabama when there's a Holly Near concert right here in May?

CRACKER. I think Rational Man here is getting off topic.

RATIONAL MAN. We allow states to do whatever they like because once, a very long time ago before cars and planes and phones and the internet, geography WAS destiny. But when we think they're getting too crazy with their little, weirdo laws, we find some trump in the Constitution and we take 'em away.

CRACKER. States' rights are sacred!

RATIONAL MAN. You'll note we had the southern cracker say that.

CRACKER. Hey!

RATIONAL MAN. Remember all that The Red and The Blue stuff during the post-election Bush-Gore period in 2000?

GAY MAN. Yeah.

LESBIAN WOMAN. The red hicks voted for Bush and the smart blues voted for Gore. I'm condensing the argument, of course.

RATIONAL MAN. By and large, you're right. Give or take. Percentage-wise. Correct. Not that there weren't people in Utah who voted for Gore, there were, probably some professors and students and some leftovers from the Sundance Film Festival. And not that Bush didn't get any votes in Boston and Cambridge, he did. But we're less alike than we seem, politically. The things that hold us together—media, tradition, culture—are becoming weakened. We're setting up separate cultures within our own borders. And in a strange and very dangerous way, it's starting to make sense that different states have different rights and different laws. We are more educated, more connected than ever before, and yet we are living on different planets. Finding common ground, common experience is almost impossible. How many people who go to the theater know men or women who serve in the armed forces? There was a time—the time of the first George Bush and Bob Dole and John Kennedy—when young men from Princeton and Yale fought alongside and made friends with young men who would never see the inside of a college. Those men, both the privileged and the poor, were better off for serving together, for finding common ground. Why are we so pleased to have carved out cultures within a nation that seem never to touch each other? Why does it take a cataclysm to bring us together? And why do we so easily fall apart?

(**FLAG MAN** *enters.*)

FLAG MAN. I'm ashamed.

BLACK WOMAN. Of what?

FLAG MAN. Burning the flag.

CRACKER. You had the right to say no.

FLAG MAN. And they had the right to fire me for saying no.

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