



Airline Miles

A New Play
By Hank Perritt

Casting Aside Love
Losing a son
Becoming a father
Seeking Redemption

Directed by Peter Connor

Featuring:

Gary Houston

Jordan Phelps

Brandon Thompson

August 3rd - 12th
Second Stage Theatre

www.airlinemilesplay.com

Airline Miles

Henry H. Perritt, Jr.
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V, dir: Ryan Moore
Bader: only
1 can go

heavyweight → lightweight

Characters

Richard – overweight, bald, disheveled, sixtyish, smart, quick, but tormented

Brendan – late twenties, blond, blue eyed, well built, strikingly good looking, quick, and well-tailored; has his shit together

Bobby – late twenties, pretty, buff, carefree, daredevil, maybe a little effeminate and campy; tormented but covers it, mostly

Setting

Chicago, 2011.

The theatre should have a large LCD screen on which the audience can see pictures (but not necessarily read the text) displayed on Web pages

Scenes

Scene 1 - Brendan's bedroom

Scene 2 - Restaurant

Scene 3 - Brendan's office

Scene 4 - Brendan's office

Scene 5 - Restaurant

Scene 6 - College apartment (flashback)

Scene 7 – Restaurant

Scene 8 - Brendan's condo

Scene 9 - Bobby's bedroom (flashback)

Scene 10 - Brendan's office

Scene 11 - Brendan's condo (flashback)

Scene 12 - Motel room (flashback)

"There are not helpful
(A) up last time head voice"

Scene 13 - Restaurant

Scene 14 - Brendan's office

Scene 15 - Brendan's office

Scene 16 - Restaurant

Scene 17 - Brendan's office

Scene 18 - Restaurant

Introductory instrumental music from "Beside You" comes up when house lights go down.

SCENE 1

BRENDAN is in bed, twisted sheets partially covering his naked body. He is restless, dreaming. The first light of dawn.

BOBBY appears, ghost like, at the edge of the room. He, also, is naked.

BOBBY

(sings "I Should Be Beside You")

I SHOULD BE BESIDE YOU
LIMBS ALIGNED
SPIRITS FUSED
HEARTS BEATING TOGETHER

WE MISUNDERSTOOD; WE GOT IT WRONG
THE FLAWS FATTEN ON TIME
DIRTY SOCKS IN THE CORNER
TOO MUCH SALT ON THE EGGS

A BIT OF RECKLESSNESS
A CERTAIN LACK OF BRAVERY
HAVING IT, HAVING IT
AND YEARNING TO CAST IT ASIDE

I SHOULD BE BESIDE YOU
LIMBS ALIGNED
SPIRITS FUSED
HEARTS BEATING TOGETHER

Brendan wakes with a start, as the sound of the chorus fades. He looks around. He is alone. He shakes his head, sits up, puts his feet on the floor and pulls on a pair of briefs.

SCENE 2

RICHARD and his lawyer, BRENDAN, are seated across from each other in an upscale restaurant at lunch time. BRENDAN wears a perfectly tailored suit, white shirt, and yellow tie. His nails are manicured, and he wears a gold ring on his right ring finger. It bears the Harvard seal, with "veritas" in the middle, and the word "Harvard" below it.

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RICHARD also wears a suit, but it fits poorly and is wrinkled. The knot on his mismatching tie is not two-blocked.

They are working on their salads. RICHARD has an overstuffed manila envelope on the table in front of him, his salad plate pushed to the side. He is rummaging in the envelope, looking for a document.

RICHARD

I'm sorry to be taking so long. I'll find it in a minute here. I know this has been a long story. I should let you get to your lunch. Go ahead. But it's important for you to have the complete picture.

He glances up nervously at BRENDAN every moment or so. Sweat beads on his forehead, although the restaurant is cool.

BRENDAN

It's okay. Take your time.

BRENDAN works hard to keep a straight face.

RICHARD

I think I found it. No, that's not it. I should have put it near the top, so I wouldn't have to waste so much of your time looking for it

BRENDAN

Don't worry. You'll find it.

*RICHARD pulls the document from the envelope.
It is three pages, stapled at the corner.*

RICHARD

Here. Let me read it to you.

*BRENDAN resists the temptation to say that he
would rather read it for himself.*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Dear Mr. Ginsburg. We have reviewed the records of your use of your Lifetime World Voyager membership and have discovered numerous instances of violations of our membership rules. Regrettably, we are forced to cancel your membership. If you have any questions, you may contact me at (800) 348-1000. Thank you for flying American Airlines, Matilda Hahn."

I opened this terrible letter just as I returned from the hospital.

It was . . .

His voice clouds and tears fill his eyes.

BRENDAN

The hospital?

RICHARD

Oh, it was a terrible day. It . . . The worst day of my life. I got the phone call . . . They said they had found . . .

BRENDAN

*(beginning to show some
alarm)*

You don't have to rush. I'm sure it's difficult for you to talk about it.

RICHARD

Well, once I got on the phone, they asked me to verify . . . They seemed skeptical . . . Wanting to make sure . . . Of course it would be terrible if they had the wrong . . .

*(clearing his throat, trying to
go on)*

BRENDAN

Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

He's still confused about what had happened.

RICHARD

And so this letter arrived just after. I'm sorry to admit it, but I just broke down and cried when I read it.

BRENDAN

I can't imagine.

RICHARD

You see, this was very important to me. This ability to travel wherever I wanted, whenever I wanted.

BRENDAN

*(resisting the urge to break
through the clutter and ask
for clarification)*

It must have been a horrible time.

RICHARD

It was the worst time of my life. Using the Membership had become more than a hobby; it was a kind of . . . well, I don't know how to describe it exactly . . .

*Trailing off, he puts the document back in the
envelope and fumbles around for his fork, finds it
and takes a large bite of salad, dropping a few pieces
on the outside of the envelope as he does so.*

His eyes seek Brendan's, pleading.

*BRENDAN waits for him to swallow his food and
to continue.*

*RICHARD chews, swallows, and remains silent for
the first time since they greeted each other and sat
down.*

BRENDAN

And so?

RICHARD

Oh, right. Sorry. I haven't told you what . . . I'm sorry. Going through all this . . . sorry, what was your question?

He takes another bite of salad, dropping a few more pieces. He chews, swallows, and looks at Brendan.

BRENDAN

How can I be helpful? What do you need from me?

RICHARD

Oh! I still haven't told you.

BRENDAN smiles slightly.

BRENDAN

No, you haven't.

RICHARD

I'm getting all tangled up here. You must think I'm a fool.

BRENDAN

No, no. Not at all.

RICHARD

I hoped that . . . Everyone says that you are the best lawyer for this sort of thing. You won that case against US Airways. I read about it. I hoped you might be willing . . . Maybe there is something we can do . . .

BRENDAN

Thank you. Something we can do about the hospital where . . .?

RICHARD

No. They did everything they could, I guess. With the airline.

BRENDAN

The airline? Or the hospital?

RICHARD

No. The airline thing is separate.

BRENDAN

Separate? But the two are connected in some way?

RICHARD

I'm embarrassed that I have been so confused about this. Before I sold my bathroom-fixtures business, I was much more focused.

You knew that I sold it?

BRENDAN is even more confused, and barely able to contain his impatience.

BRENDAN

You had your own business?

A hint of toughness enters RICHARD's demeanor, for the first time since lunch began.

RICHARD

Oh yes. I used all the leverage I had, and I had a lot. They were drooling over the market niche I had. They offered nine. I got them up to twenty-one.

BRENDAN

Really! That's pretty good.

RICHARD

(laughing)

Yeah. They hated it, but they agreed.

BRENDAN

So . . .

RICHARD

Oh, yes. Well, the main thing I want to talk to you about is the airline.

BRENDAN

Okay.

RICHARD

I want to sue the airline to make them reinstate my membership.

BRENDAN

Okay. So let's focus on that.

RICHARD

Actually, there's another . . .

He reaches into the envelope again

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I sent them an email. Probably you need . . .

He rummages around in the envelope.

BRENDAN

It's okay. I think I have the basic picture. And actually, I'm a little pressed for time. I have another . . .

RICHARD

Oh, I'm terribly sorry. I have been rambling on. I should try to be more organized about these things. But somehow, I get so upset . . .

BRENDAN

Oh, I completely understand. I need to think about what you have told me, do a little research, and get my thoughts organized.

RICHARD

Oh, right. You've been very kind to . . . you've been . . . it's very nice that you have given me so much time already. You must be very busy. I'm sure you are. I used to be more focused, more efficient.

He sadly begins to stuff the papers back in the envelope, and gestures for the check, at that moment oddly transforming himself into a brisk businessman with a command of his affairs—but only for that instant.

BRENDAN

(softening)

I have a few more minutes, if we need it.

RICHARD

No, no! I've taken far too long. You need to go.

RICHARD stands up and extends his hand.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Thank you so much.

*BRENDAN takes his hand, and impulsively pats
him on the shoulder.*

BRENDAN

(with genuine empathy)

I'll call you. There should be something we can do about this.

SCENE 3

BRENDAN is in his office, a well appointed space. A computer with a large LCD sits on the desk extension, a telephone on the surface, and several tabbed folders in front of him. He checks a couple of items in the folders and then picks up the phone and dials an 800- number.

"Press 7 to Start Over"

(recorded song)

GOOD MORNING, GOOD MORNING
AMERICAN AIRLINES IS HERE.
MARQUE CINCO POR ESPANOL, OR JUST STAY ON THE LINE

PRESS ONE FOR FLIGHT CONDITIONS
TWO TO BOOK A TRIP
THREE TO CHECK YOUR MILES
PRESS EIGHT FOR MORE OPTIONS
SEVEN TO START OVER OR
ZERO FOR AN AGENT

BRENDAN presses zero on the phone touchpad
PRESS ONE FOR FLIGHT CONDITIONS
TWO TO BOOK A . . .

BRENDAN presses three on touchpad
PRESS ONE FOR FLIGHT CONDITIONS

BRENDAN presses eight on touchpad
ANTICIPIERE QUE UNA PERSONA RESPONDERA . . .

He slams down the phone, angrily hitting the handset on the desk, trying to break it, and Googles something on the computer. After a few tries, he thinks he has found what he wants, but then checks it against one of the folders, and with an expression of frustration, tries other Google searches.

After several unsuccessful Google searches, he consults another folder, then reluctantly picks up the phone and punches in a number.

BRENDAN

Hello, Richard? This is Brendan

(listens)

Yes, well. Yes---no--listen. I have only a minute. Well – no --- Listen. I just need one piece . . . No.

(grimaces and holds the phone away from his ear)

(louder and more insistent) We can talk about that later. I don't mean to be abrupt, but I absolutely have to go. Do you have a phone number for the . . . or an email address; that would be fine. I've tried to get a number for human being, but --- Oh, good.

He picks up a pen and writes something on the cover of one of the folders.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Thanks. Talk to you later. Yes. No. Okay. Talk to you later.

He hangs up the phone with relief, and looks at what he has written down, pondering whether to call or to send an email.

Deciding, he types a message on his keyboard, pausing a little as he phrases the sentences. He reads it over before he moves the mouse and clicks on "send"

SCENE 4

BRENDAN is seated behind his desk, jotting some notes on a yellow pad. His phone rings once.

BRENDAN

Yes?

(listening a moment)

OK. I'm ready for him.

The door opens and RICHARD enters. BRENDAN stands up from his desk, his hand extended, and gestures for Richard to sit on a couch behind a small coffee table. BRENDAN sits in an adjoining chair.

RICHARD is clutching two stuffed file folders in both hands. He almost dropped them when trying to shake hands. He looks around the office.

RICHARD

This is a very nice office. You are obviously doing well.

BRENDAN

Thank you. They're pretty good to us on things like that. Sit down.

RICHARD puts the file folders down and sits. Some papers spill out of one of the folders. RICHARD flinches and ineffectually pokes at the papers.

RICHARD

I found something else you should . . .

BRENDAN

(interrupting)

First, before we do that: I want to tell you about the response I got from American Airlines.

RICHARD

Oh yes! What did they say? Do they agree? Well, I mean, I guess they don't agree, but did they seem taken aback that you are representing me? I bet they . . .

BRENDAN

It was all very professional and preliminary. I had sent an email with your basic information. I simply asked for the appropriate lawyer to contact me with an explanation of their position.

RICHARD

Their position? They can't have any "position" on this! They just decided to screw me and to take away my lifetime entitlement!

*BRENDAN makes an effort to keep his voice low
and still.*

BRENDAN

That may be how it turns out, but mostly people do not do things and then immediately admit that they have no justification for doing them.

RICHARD

Oh, I see what you mean. I'm sorry. This is just so upsetting. I have trouble keeping . . .

BRENDAN

I know. It's very difficult for you. But we need to be as cold blooded as we can, if we want to come up with a good strategy.

RICHARD

Cold blooded.

BRENDAN

Well, calm and calculating, anyway.

RICHARD

Yes. I understand what you mean. Before I sold the business, people always told me that I that I could be a poker champion. They never knew if I was upset. I just cut straight to the – Did you ever wonder about that expression "cut to the chase"? It doesn't make a lot of sense.

BRENDAN

I think a "chase" is part of the apparatus that harnesses a team of horses to a vehicle, like a wagon or a coach.

Anyway . . .

RICHARD

Oh, yes. Sorry. You were about to tell me.

BRENDAN

I got a phone call within an hour of my email. From a lawyer in Dallas. She said her name was Irene Gifford. Ever had any contact with her?

RICHARD

No, not her. The guy who represented me, until I sold the business, his name was Ron Nichtmach. I called him about this problem but he said his firm had a conflict. That stunned me, I don't mind admitting. With all the ...

BRENDAN

It's hard for the big firms to avoid conflicts. Anyway, this woman Irene said she just wanted to check my email address. She said it would be more efficient to set things out in writing.

I agreed.

RICHARD

It would have been better on the phone. Less bureaucratic and stilted. More natural.

BRENDAN

Maybe

RICHARD

So did you get an email?

BRENDAN

Within five minutes.

RICHARD

That's the thing about email. People fire them off without thinking them through. Then they try to explain what ...

BRENDAN

Her email said that your membership agreement allowed American to revoke membership privileges of anyone who made "ghost" reservations. Do you know what a ghost reservation is?

RICHARD

That's when you book a reservation for a companion when there really is no actual person to use the companion ticket.

BRENDAN

Right. That's my understanding, too. Based on the copy of the membership agreement she attached to her email message.

So what's our position on that?

RICHARD

On what? What the membership agreement says?

BRENDAN

Well, on that, too. But mainly on whether you made ghost reservations.

RICHARD

The first time, it was an accident.

BRENDAN

(to himself)

The first time.

(to Richard)

Tell me about it.

RICHARD

It was always nice to have company. You know. And it was kind of exciting to be able to offer someone a round-trip first-class ticket to Tokyo or Sidney with nothing expected in return.

But then, I guess, people thought it was a little weird. I liked to fly out, maybe spend the night in a hotel, and get on the first plane back. Maybe people thought that was strange.

BRENDAN

And the ghost reservation?

RICHARD

Oh, right. Well, I planned for my son and me to go to Bangkok. I was pretty excited about it, to tell you the truth. You know how people in their teens and twenties are. You're not that much older than that, yourself.

BRENDAN

Not wanting to hang out with their fathers?

RICHARD

Right. Lowest thing on their priority list. Dad says embarrassing things to strangers. Wants to pry into your affairs. Tells stories you've heard a thousand times.

BRENDAN

But your son made an exception?

RICHARD

I thought he did. I waited for him in the VIP lounge. When he didn't show and it was getting near departure time, I tried to call his cellphone, but I just got his voicemail.

Then I tried his home phone, his office phone, his producer's cell phone... Voicemail everywhere.

When they called the flight for boarding, I got a little frantic.

BRENDAN

I'm sure you were.

RICHARD

I wasn't sure whether I should go ahead and board, hoping he would show up at the last minute. Or go looking for him. But where would I look?

RICHARD clears his throat. He seems to be tearing up.

BRENDAN

What did you do?

RICHARD

I got on the damn flight. Having me cancel the trip was just what he wanted.

BRENDAN

That wasn't a ghost reservation. It was a no-show.

RICHARD

Right. But even though I was distracted—on the way out, at least-- by being pissed off at him, I did enjoy the extra room. Even in a first-class seat, it's nice to have some extra space beside you.

BRENDAN

And so, that was the only time you made a reservation and had an empty seat beside you.

RICHARD

Well . . . it wasn't the *only* time. Sometimes, when I couldn't find anyone to go with me . . .

BRENDAN

Oh.

SCENE 5

BRENDAN and RICHARD are seated at a table in the same restaurant in which they first met.

RICHARD, as usual, is surrounded by overstuffed file folders. He is, again, attacking his salad and spilling it all over the folders and papers.

RICHARD reaches into one of the folders and starts to speak.

BRENDAN

I've reviewed the membership agreement the lawyer sent me and checked out a few other things. I thought it would be useful to find out more details about the times you flew with an empty seat beside you.

RICHARD

When he didn't show up for the Bangkok flight, I just couldn't understand it. He knew about Bangkok—that you could get everything you wanted there . . .

BRENDAN

(a little startled)

Like what?

RICHARD

Oh, I don't know. But everyone says that anything goes in Bangkok. Of course we were not going to be there that long. We planned a flight back—of course I had an empty seat next to me coming back as well. That's what got me thinking that maybe I should not care so much whether the people I invited actually came or not. I couldn't actually book an empty seat, of course. American required reservations for each person. You had to give all kinds of information—it always was a nuisance to have to find out people's social security numbers—of course I already had most of their email addresses—that was required also, and their home phone numbers . . .

BRENDAN

There were other times when someone didn't show up to travel with you?

RICHARD

(looking up finally)

It only happened a couple of times. There was that one time with my son—the time he didn't show up. Maybe I should have just cancelled, but I couldn't believe that he would just stiff me that way.

[Of course he had wanted his buddy to come, and I guess I had discouraged that.]

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BRENDAN

Actually, I wanted to talk about the other times. How many other times would you say that there were?

RICHARD

Not many.

BRENDAN

Well, take a guess? Ten?

RICHARD

No, no! Not ten.

BRENDAN

More than two?

RICHARD

Well, I'm not sure. There might have been, or maybe there was only one other time. Let's see . . . I remember thinking on the way back that it was nice to have the extra space, and that maybe. But did I already have another trip planned, or was I just thinking about it? I had been wanting to go to Australia—or was that before?

BRENDAN

Where did you come up with the names you booked the extra seats under?

RICHARD

How did I come up with them? They were the people I invited to go with me.

BRENDAN

You always invited an actual person

RICHARD

Of course. There was my son, of course. He was the first.

BRENDAN flips a couple of pages in his notes.

BRENDAN

So: this ghost booking thing all seems to have started with the time he didn't show up.

RICHARD

Right. To Bangkok. I was really looking forward to it. We hadn't spent much quality time—no--hackneyed way to talk—but I guess it fits my thinking. We hadn't spent much quality time together since he was much younger. In high school, I used to go to all his races. He rowed crew.

BRENDAN

*His interest in the son beginning to grow, he tries
to envision what he might look like, dressed to row.*

He rowed crew?

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Oh, yeah, he was on the freshman ~~heavyweight~~ boat—if that's what you call it. What a strange sport. You sit on your ass the whole time, and rock back and forth on this little rolling seat and pull on the oar again and again. Seems like it would be horrendously boring.

BRENDAN

(smiling)

Sometimes it is. I rowed, too—in college.

RICHARD

Really! I'm sorry. I didn't mean to insult your sport.

BRENDAN

No, no. It's all right. That's not much of an insult.

RICHARD

Okay. I'm glad. I wouldn't want to offend you. He was very committed to rowing, and I wanted to support him—especially in sports. He apparently was quite good at it. He explained that his being tall and having strong legs and arms were assets. His teammates, or crew buddies, or whatever you call them, all looked kind of like him, in that regard—those regards—sorry.

BRENDAN

*(interest growing further,
based on the description)*

You met his teammates?

RICHARD

Oh, yes. The highschool ones, anyway—from New Trier High School. He was always bringing them around the house. They would sit around and drink beer and talk about school and sports. They would talk about that and politics and stuff and argue far into the night.

I was happier when he brought them over than when he brought his musician friends—a scruffy, dirty, disgusting lot. The crew guys were all nice to me, always calling me “Mr. Ginsburg”—that sort of thing. One or two of them seemed genuinely interested in my business—this was before I sold it. I’m kind of sorry I sold it. It does give me a nice financial cushion, though. Did, anyway.

Two young men enter the restaurant. They obviously are a couple. RICHARD notices them and glares, flinches, or frowns with disgust. BRENDAN notices Richard’s reaction.

BRENDAN

But, I sense that his bringing them over was not completely welcome?

RICHARD

Oh, sure. Like I said, they were gentlemen, always. But he went away to college . . .

I was afraid he would want to do music instead. But he went.

BRENDAN

He was into music?

RICHARD

He loved music! He wrote songs, sang, played lead guitar in several bands.

BRENDAN

(knows this is getting them off the track, but he can’t suppress his curiosity about the son)

He was a singer?

RICHARD

(laughs)

Oh, yeah. He wanted to be on American Idol. Maybe he would have won it. All his bandmates, in all of his bands, teased him about being their “pretty-boy singer.” He

was a lot better looking than me. That's for sure. He was blond, had blue eyes, swimmer's physique. The girls loved him.

You do better in music if you're good looking, don't you think?

Still, the music things, and then all the good-looking guys--

BRENDAN looks at his papers, the professional part of him ready to get back to the main business. Still there is something being suggested here that he can't quite let go.

BRENDAN

The ones from high school or the new ones from college?

RICHARD

All of them. And then he didn't show up for that flight. I was baffled--and also a little angry and hurt. I don't mind saying that, I guess—yeah: angry, and, um, hurt.

He had been so intent on having his buddy come. Maybe I should have let him.

I suppose that was the start of all my difficulties—have you heard anything else from that lawyer with American?

BRENDAN

(can't keep himself from going back)

Was he close with the other guys who rowed crew—at New Trier.

RICHARD

Oh yes, like I said they came over to the house all the time.

BRENDAN

What about college?

RICHARD

Oh, yes. I think so. He was always talking about them. I forget some of their names. But like I said they never came over to the house much.

BRENDAN wants to cut through the clutter, but he's having trouble sorting out in his mind something familiar about the son, which may bear on the case, and a certain prurient interest in what

he's hearing about the son and his friends. He'd like to hear more.

BRENDAN

(interrupting)

Did he ever bring any of his college friends home?

RICHARD

Oh, yes. I think. Once or twice. His classmates . . . Well, I guess the crew buddies, or whatever you call them, weren't all classmates. Some of them were sophomores while he was a junior, and some were seniors. Then when he was a senior, some of them were juniors. Of course, some were seniors as well. Once he got to college, they did not come around so much.

Actually, he seemed to be more remote generally. Rarely called. Monosyllabic and obscure when we did talk.

There was this one kid—actually, maybe you shouldn't use the term "kid" once they are in college. Don't you think people your age find that term offensive?

BRENDAN

I guess some people would.

RICHARD

Do you, when people call you that?

BRENDAN

Not too many people call me a kid to my face now. I'm 28.

RICHARD

Anyway, this kid—he was younger than you are now—was the one he wanted to bring along.

BRENDAN

So this other guy rowed as well?

RICHARD

I think he did. Maybe he didn't. I just assumed because Rob was rowing that his friends did also.

BRENDAN

"Rob"?

RICHARD

Rob. My son.

BRENDAN

Your son is named Rob?

RICHARD

Yes, short for Robert. Anyway, Rob talked about him so much, maybe I should have let him come along. I probably could have finagled it so that three of us could go, without anyone having to pay. But, frankly, I was not eager to have the friend go. I wanted it to be just Rob and me.

Rob was really pissed off about it. Maybe that's why he stood me up.

BRENDAN

Did Rob bring his friend to your house?

RICHARD

I think so. Well, maybe he didn't. You know what? I don't think I ever actually met him. But he just talked about him all the time.

BRENDAN

*(he's forgotten all about his
papers and files)*

Where did you say your son went to college?

RICHARD

Harvard. Like I said, he was really enthusiastic about crew. Most of his friends seemed to row crew including this one guy.

BRENDAN

Shit.

RICHARD

What's the matter?

BRENDAN

I think I may know him.

He stands up and looks out the window.

RICHARD

Really! That would be something. What a coincidence!

SCENE 6

BRENDAN is in a small college apartment, wearing only gymshorts. He is at his computer

He turns at the sound of a key in the lock of the door.

BOBBY enters. His shorts and tee shirt are sweaty. He's been out running. He pulls off his shoes and shirt and throws them into a corner.

BRENDAN

(turning away from the computer)

Hey. How was your run?

BOBBY

You should have come with me. You're going to get even fatter and flabbier sitting on your ass all the time.

BRENDAN

As long as you were gone, you must have barely been running—like one of those old farts who run along the Charles at about one step every fifteen seconds. I would have gotten bored.

BOBBY

Hah! I was practically supersonic. You'd have fallen behind and then gotten winded and had to drop out. I stopped off for a trick.

BRENDAN

I hope he was cute.

BOBBY

(moving over and putting his arms around Brendan's neck)

Not as cute as you are, even if you are getting to be a fat ass. You're the only trick I want.

BRENDAN

Gross! You're all sweaty. You're getting it all over me.

BOBBY

*(He wipes his arm on the side
of Brendan's face)*

You know you like it.

BRENDAN

Take a shower. We can get a pair and go out on the river this afternoon and see who is the fat ass. And then, maybe we can do something else.

BOBBY

How about we do something else, *before* we go out on the river—maybe even before I shower?

BRENDAN

Take a shower. Then we can decide.

*BOBBY heads for the bathroom. BRENDAN calls
after him*

BRENDAN

Hey! Has your father gotten back to you on that Thailand trip? That sounds like a blast.

BRENDAN smiles and turns back to the computer.

BRENDAN

Oh, shit! Come look at this

*Bobby returns. They both look at a news story on
the screen. The headline reads, "Freshman dies from
drinking binge."*

BOBBY

Fuck.

BRENDAN

Yeah. Fuck.

BOBBY

We have to do something.

BRENDAN

Like what? He's dead.

BOBBY

We have to tell them we were there.

BRENDAN

What? Why in hell would we do that? No one saw us.

BOBBY

I don't care whether anyone saw us. We were there. We could have stopped him.

BRENDAN

I doubt that—unless you were willing to tie his hands behind him. He was determined to drink the whole bottle. He was going to prove his manliness.

BOBBY

Yeah, after we hazed him. Insinuated that he liked boys. Tempted him.

BRENDAN

Yeah. That part was pretty funny. If anyone was straight, he was . . .

BOBBY

Closets or not. We shouldn't have done it. Now we have to take responsibility.

BRENDAN

What? You're going down to the TV station and have a coming out party? We breathe one word about this, and it will be all over the evening news.

BOBBY

It's not about that. It's about our watching him drink himself to death.

BRENDAN

You're nuts. It *will* be about that. It will be impossible to keep anything secret. You and I are the co-captains of the crew. They'll have a field day. "Harvard crew hazes freshman to death!" "Co-captains there when he died!" "Rumors of gay recruitment ring!"

You're not really thinking about doing this, are you?

BOBBY

I'm not only thinking about it. I'm going to call the police now.

BRENDAN

Jesus! I gotta tell you: you're on your own.

BOBBY is stunned. It takes him a moment to process the implications of this betrayal.

BOBBY

OK, chickenshit. I won't say anything about you.

BRENDAN

This is a really, really bad idea.

BOBBY

Sometimes you have to do your duty. I have some honor.

BRENDAN

Jesus Christ! Fuck honor! This is not Georgia in 1860. You should have watched more than the first few scenes of *Gone With the Wind*. It did not turn out all that well for the honor-boys.

BRENDAN turns back to his computer. BOBBY exits. From off stage, we hear him.

BOBBY

Hello. I'd like to talk to the detective working on the case of the Harvard freshman.

SCENE 7

Brendan and Richard are still in the restaurant.

RICHARD

The friend—what's his name? I should be able to remember it. I used to have this system that helped me remember names. When you first meet someone, you must repeat their name to make sure you have it right. Then you associate their first or last name with some kind of exotic animal.

BRENDAN

(mostly to himself)

He rowed crew—at Harvard. He went to Harvard, and rowed crew there. And his name was Robert. And he was a musician. And blond. And pretty-boy handsome. There was talk of a trip to Thailand. And his name was Robert

RICHARD (CONT'D)

It always works. You don't tell them about their animal, of course. But I can't remember the animal for this guy. Leopard? Cheetah? I can't remember. And without . . . Boa Constrictor? Without that association, I can't remember. Guard Dog? I can't remember. And without that association, I can't come up with his name.

It seems like I had a conversation with him, but maybe I am just imagining that. Maybe it was all just what Rob told me.

BRENDAN

*(barely keeping track of what
Richard has been saying)*

They were really close, it appears.

RICHARD

I guess so. The guy—what is his name? What is the animal? Some kind of snake, I think. Rob *was* enthusiastic about the guy—always talking about him. And not at all enthusiastic about taking the trip without him.

Wait! I think his name was "Indy,"

*BRENDAN freezes. RICHARD is oblivious to his
reaction.*

RICHARD (CONT'D)

"Indy." Something like that. That couldn't have been his real name—just what Rob called him. I remembered it because it reminded me of Indiana, and they don't have snakes in Indiana—at least not many snakes.

BRENDAN has said nothing for several minutes.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

BRENDAN

(pulling up his tie)

Nothing. I'm fine.

RICHARD

Listen. You said you hadn't heard much from the guy at American. Have you heard anything at all?

BRENDAN

I've got to go.

BRENDAN, forgetting about the check, walks quickly toward the exit. He accidentally jostles the maître di. BRENDAN distractedly waives an apology and stumbles through the door and out to his car.

SCENE 8

Brendan's condo. It's late afternoon, around 5 PM.

BRENDAN is sitting on the couch, with an open pizza box and a half-eaten pizza on the table in front of him. Two sixpacks of beer sit beside the couch, one with three of the cans removed from the plastic that holds them. He is dressed, not as he usually is, in a jacket and tie, but in bluejeans, flipflops and an overlarge tee-shirt with the logo of the band "Switchblade Suicide" on it.

He inhales the beer in his hand.

BRENDAN

(to himself)

Mi, mi, mi. Do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. My name is Brendan Scope. Hello, I'm calling about the Ginsburg matter.

He enunciates each word and each syllable over-precisely. Satisfied, he picks up the phone and dials.

The audience hears what he says but not what the other party says.

BRENDAN

Hello, Irene? This is Brendan Scope. Glad I caught you. I was expecting voicemail. You're working late.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

It's nice to hear your voice, too. I hope you had a nice weekend.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

That sounds like fun. I was pretty much tied to the office. Worked out a little and went for a couple of runs.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, well. I try to stay in shape. Long habit.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

That's a possibility. Let me know when you plan to be in Chicago.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

What? Oh. Well, I am 28. I've been at the firm for two years.

He suddenly gets an idea. He turns to his computer and brings up Facebook and enters Irene's name in the search box, extracting another beer and popping its top as he does so.

A large LCD screen is positioned so that the audience can see what he is looking at. The audience need not be able to read the text—just to see images

A Facebook homepage showing a stunning young woman at the beach appears.

BRENDAN grins to himself.

BRENDAN quickly clicks on "Home." It shows Brendan in a model pose, big smile, his eyes glittering, his bangs over his forehead; his shirt off.

He closes one eye to inspect the image more closely. He smiles.

Feverishly working the keyboard and the mouse, he clicks through to his photo albums and deletes the pictures showing him with Bobby and other men, deletes the link to Bobby and a couple of other male friends, and quickly uploads a couple of provocative photos of him with his shirt off, and the few that he can find showing him with women in the frame.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Yeah. Well you can check out my Facebook page. That's a pretty good source for intel about everyone these days.

On a business matter. I've been looking at the rules for the Program.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, one of my law professors always said that it's a much neglected skill: actually reading the contract.

The seventh bullet point under "Redeeming Awards" says "award tickets may be issued in any name designated by the member"

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Yeah. That one.

The, the second bullet point from the bottom in the same section prohibits "bookings . . . without having been requested by or on behalf of the named passenger."

I don't see any language that requires that the named passenger actually travel. Am I missing something?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Right, but all those cases involved challenges to the airline's power to modify the terms and conditions of the program. We are not challenging your modification of the program; we are challenging your administration of it.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Okay. Check it out and get back to me.

And, Irene? Let me know as your plans develop for a Chicago trip. I'll talk to you soon.

BRENDAN hangs up the phone.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Have fun facebooking, Irene.

SCENE 9

Thin

~~Bobby's~~ bedroom, much grander than Brendan's, which framed the first scene.

in Chicago

A huge poster of James Dean hangs over the head of the queen-size bed

Other, smaller posters adjoin it and are sprinkled on other walls, featuring Richard Chamberlain, Greg Louganis, David Pichler, Dan Veatch, Neil Patrick Harris, Elton John, Ricky Martin, and Barney Frank.

An elongated poster, with the words "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," crossed out in red by the traditional circle with a diagonal mark through it, spreads across the large window looking out to the north. The words face outward, but are visible from inside.

A Gibson acoustic guitar sits on a stand in a corner near the closet, a keyboard beside it. A dozen athletic trophies are crowded on a shelf, many of them featuring eight-man rowing shells. Beside the shelf hangs a framed photograph of Bobby and a group of seven other guys dressed in shorts, barechested and barefooted, holding oars in a vertical position.

BRENDAN and BOBBY are in bed, asleep, their bodies naked above the sheet which covers them. BRENDAN lies on his left side. BOBBY also is on his left side, his body spooning Brendan's. BOBBY wakes but does not move. He moves his face and lips within an inch of Brendan's cheek. Then, slowly and carefully, he slides away from Brendan, checking constantly as to whether he has awakened him. He slowly removes his long, muscular legs

from beneath the covers, and stands up, carefully, a few inches at a time. He is fully naked, though he might be facing upstage.

He pads over to the bureau, slides open the top drawer and withdraws something.

BRENDAN

(sleepily)

What are you doing?

BOBBY

(startled)

Nothing.

BRENDAN

Yes you are. You're doing *something*.

BOBBY

Just getting some aspirin. Go back to sleep. I have a bit of a hangover from last night.

BRENDAN

No one keeps his aspirin in the drawer with his clothes.

BOBBY

I do.

BRENDAN

No you don't. I live here, remember. I know what you are up to. What is it? Coke?

BOBBY

(closing the drawer and moving to the adjoining bathroom)

No. It's aspirin. I told you.

BRENDAN

Bullshit. Don't you have to go to work today?

BOBBY

*(over his shoulder,
disappearing into the
bathroom)*

I do. Not that you cared about that last night. It was okay for me to get shitfaced when we were celebrating *your* great legal victory. I need to be sharp. We have a major presentation today.

BRENDAN has put his feet on the floor. He, also, is naked. But then, he sighs and puts his legs back under the covers, leans his head back against the pillow, and closes his eyes.

BRENDAN

(to himself)

Jesus Christ! Some way to prepare for a major gig.

BOBBY

*(disappearing into the
bathroom)*

You, on the other hand, were born prepared. You've probably already got your suit picked out for today—that was pretty easy: they're all blue pinstripes—and a shirt and just the right yellow tie. That was easy too. All the shirts are white, and all the ties are yellow—maybe there's a red one. I forget.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(singing from the bathroom)

You don't ask
I won't tell

The lyrics are indistinct. As BOBBY sings, BRENDAN opens his eyes and smiles, despite himself. He gets out of bed and picks up his guitar. Rocking his shoulders a little to the beat of Bobby's song, he begins to improvise an accompaniment. After a few measures more, he has it, and plays more strongly and confidently.

BOBBY starts the song over. The lyrics are distinct now.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(still singing)

YOU DON'T ASK
AND I WON'T TELL

YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE
AND I'LL LIVE MINE

JUST DON'T ASK
'CAUSE I DON'T WANT TO TELL

JUST LEAVE IT ALONE
I'M ALREADY DEFINED

YOU DON'T ASK
AND I WON'T TELL

Hearing Brendan playing, BOBBY, still singing, emerges from the bathroom, a towel around his waist. BRENDAN continues the accompaniment as BOBBY stands behind him singing the rest of the song.

WE DON'T HAVE TO TALK
WE'RE BOTH ALOOF, AND THAT'S FINE

IF YOU ASK
I'LL BE FORCED TO TELL

HOW YOU CAN FUCK YOURSELF
~~ALL THE WAY TO HELL~~

RIGHT STRAIGHT

As BOBBY starts to repeat the last two lines, BRENDAN joins in, harmonizing.

HOW YOU CAN FUCK YOURSELF
RIGHT STRAIGHT TO HELL

BRENDAN then plays a concluding cadence with a flourish, and turns to face Bobby.

BRENDAN

That's pretty good. You are such a good singer. Maybe it's a shit song but you sing it well.

BOBBY

It's not a shit song. The accompaniment was pretty shitty, but the song is good.

BRENDAN

You make it sound good, anyway.

BOBBY

You didn't do so bad on the harmonies, yourself. You really should come out and sing backup vocals for me, sometime. Just try it.

BRENDAN

(laughs)

Are you kidding me? I'd make a fool of myself. I can't sing.

BOBBY

You just did. Try it. Once?

BOBBY reaches his arms out and pulls Brendan up, holding their chests and pelvises together.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

We are such fucking opposites. I guess that's why I love you so much.

BOBBY overlaps his bare feet with Brendan's

BRENDAN kisses him. BOBBY clings to Brendan.

BRENDAN

OK. You have to go to work.

SCENE 10

Brendan's office, the next morning.

RICHARD enters. BRENDAN approaches him from behind his desk. They shake hands.

Brendan seems a little off. Tired? Hungover? The attire is not quite right, the fly of his shirt is not lined up with the fly of the trousers, the belt buckle not lined up with either. The tie is slightly askew. One of his shoes has come untied.

He's exuding even more energy and self-possession than usual. There is a brittleness to his mania, however.

BRENDAN

Would you like some coffee?

RICHARD

Sure. But I don't want you to go to any trouble.

BRENDAN

It's no trouble. Cream and two sugars, right?

RICHARD

(surprised)

Right! Thank you for remembering.

BRENDAN

From the restaurant.

RICHARD

The restaurant?

BRENDAN

I remember how you ordered it at the restaurant. I'll be right back. Make yourself comfortable.

RICHARD remains standing, looking over the certificates on the wall, even though he's seen them before.

BRENDAN returns with two cups of coffee. He hands one to RICHARD.

BRENDAN

Sit down, sit down! Make yourself comfortable.

Sorry about the other day. I was very rude, but I suddenly felt sick and didn't want to take the chance of creating a scene

RICHARD

Are you all right now?

BRENDAN

Fine, fine.

RICHARD puts the cup of coffee down on the edge of the coffee table and hits it with the edge of one of his folders as he sits down. The cup tumbles to the floor, splashing coffee all over the carpet.

RICHARD

Oh, I'm so sorry!

He pulls a handkerchief out of his pocket and begins frantically wiping at the coffee.

BRENDAN

No, don't worry. It's happened before. I'll get some paper towels.

He exits again and returns with a handful of paper towels, spreading them on the carpet.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Don't worry about it. Sit down.

RICHARD glances again at the coffee and reluctantly sits down.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Here, let me get you some more.

RICHARD

No, no. Thanks, but it's all right.

BRENDAN sits down in his usual armchair beside the couch and waits for RICHARD to collect himself. RICHARD fumbles with his folders and papers, looking at the paper towels and coffee periodically. His eyes don't meet Brendan's.

RICHARD

That first time, with Rob. When he didn't show up? That's when it started to unravel.

He was about your age. Once upon a time, he talked about being a lawyer. But then . . . things took a different turn.

Then there was the time when I should have invited both Rob and his friend—and Rob didn't show. And then, I think, I invited Mike Melanič . . .

BRENDAN

(he's having trouble focusing)

Mike Melanič?

RICHARD

Yeah. The guy who bought my business. That was when we were still on pretty good terms. Or maybe . . . Yeah I think I did. It was for the trip to Bangalore . . . or was it the one to Shanghai? . . .

BRENDAN

(a little vaguely)

Might you have any records, on a calendar or something?

RICHARD

Oh. Yes. That would be good. I could check the calendars. They would show it. I have always kept a careful calendar. On paper, back when I was still running the business. I still keep notes but I'm not as good about keeping them in one place, you see, it's . . .

HE notices that Brendan is staring vacantly into space.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I can get them.

BRENDAN

What?

RICHARD

The calendars.

BRENDAN

Oh, right. Right. It would be helpful if you could check all the calendars you kept and see what records of flights you find.

[ACT BREAK? EQUAL-LENGTH ACTS]

SCENE 11

(Flashback) BRENDAN is at home, in the condo he and Bobby share. He's just back from a run. He strips off his sweat-stained shirt, shoes and socks, sits down on the couch, puts his feet up on the table and reaches for the TV remote.

A big LCD screen comes to life. BOBBY is seated at an anchor desk. Appropriate credits appear on the screen.

The video shown on the screen will have the material appearing in the script intercut with still shots of NFL football games and stills or full motion video of a crew shell—an eight—being rowed in the Chicago River. Some of the scripted material will be edited down to soundbites. The four minutes of video suggested by four script pages will be 2-3 minutes of video.

ANNOUNCER

And now: "Behind the plays," with Bobby Spurlock.

Bobby's upper body fills the screen, in the customary position of a TV anchor. He is immaculately dressed and his smile sparkles.

His voice is pitched noticeably lower than usual, and any hint of swish in his movements has completely disappeared.

BOBBY

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Tonight we have interviews with several Bears players with different perspectives. Then I'll show you an interview with the reclusive new quarterback of the Chicago Bears, about whom rumors are swirling. And finally, an update on the fortunes of local crew—a sport dear to my heart. But first, this word.

BRENDAN mutes the audio during the ad, and unmutes it when the program resumes. Only the beginning or tail-end of the ad is seen

Chance enters and sits in the guest seat next to the anchor desk.

BOBBY

Chance Badertscher, the wide receiver for the Bears has joined us. Thanks, Chance for being here.

CHANCE

Never miss a chance to be on the air.

BOBBY

There has been some controversy about your performance in last week's game against the Falcons. You started the season bragging that you would end up as the MVP. Yet in the last game you caught only 25% of the passes thrown to you, and allowed three interceptions, two resulting in touchdowns.

CHANCE

I played great. The Falcons were lucky. And I had shi... really bad support from my teammates. I would have had to be a kangaroo to catch some of those passes. As soon as I get some support, I *will* be the MVP.

BOBBY

And then you were caught eating a pizza on the sidelines.

CHANCE

So what? I was fu... very hungry.

Cut to Ryan Moore in the interview chair.

BOBBY

Now we have Ryan Moore, the tight end for the Bears. You've gotten a lot of flak for the way you ended the game in New York.

RYAN

Well, first off . . . you know . . . criticism comes with playing this position. As a pass receiver, I . . . I played poorly and did things that cost us that football game.

BOBBY

You won't say it, but I will: I respect the fact that you are keeping quiet about your leg, which turned out to be fractured.

RYAN

The biggest thing going through my brain is that I just didn't want to be sitting here on Monday or Tuesday thinking we're 0 and 2. Dealing with pain, that's just part of playing football.

Cut to Phil Litchfield in the interviewee chair

BOBBY

Have you thought about where you are now, compared to where you were then?

PHIL

Little bit. We started off so well, especially after three weeks. We were 3 and 0, going for 16 and 0 and everything was great. And then we hit some rocky weeks there.

BOBBY

Have you ever dealt with the negativity like that?

PHIL

No. Never. You know. We've always won--in high school and college; and then, after three weeks . . .

Cut to Ryan Janski in the interviewee chair.

BOBBY

Now we are with Ryan Janski, new draft pick as a cornerback for the Bears. Welcome Ryan.

RYAN

Thanks for having me.

BOBBY'

You were led to believe that you would be drafted, second round, possibly third. But then it didn't come.

RYAN

I remember being downstairs for like the fourth round. That came and went. And the fifth round is coming and going. Going into the sixth round, I say, I gotta get out of here. I don't want to sit around, let my hopes get up. I took a walk with my mom and dad around the block.

He starts to cry.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. It was just a tough day And then when the Bears called, I was so excited. I didn't have to be an insurance salesman, you know.

BOBBY

And you blew everyone away at training camp.

RYAN

am just honored to . . . uh . . . to play alongside my teammates.

Cut to Grant McAdams sitting in the interviewee's chair.

BOBBY

Now we have Grant McAdams, running back for the Chicago Bears. Rumors have been rampant, Grant, ever since you did the ad favoring same-sex marriage.

MIKE

It's a barbaric issue. It's time for society to evolve.

BOBBY

Sports is a very masculine world.

MIKE

Yeah, no question. It's the cardinal rule of professional sports: if you're not married by the time you're thirty, you're all of a sudden definitely gay. I mean, I just laugh it off. We're ten or fifteen years behind socially.

How come a Navy Seal can be gay, out and proud, and a professional football player can't?

We have to catch up. We're usually trend setters.

BOBBY

You are a brave guy.

Cut to Phil Litchfield in the interviewee's chair.

BOBBY

And now the Bear's reclusive quarterback, Phil Litchfield. Everyone wants to learn more about your private life.

PHIL

"That's why it's called private."

BOBBY

Are you dating anyone in particular?

PHIL

*(looks uncomfortable,
hesitates)*

I'm not going to comment on that.

Clip of an eight-oared shell racing.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

On tomorrow's program, we'll talk about how crew is becoming a big-time sport in Chicago, despite major threats to rower health from the nasty water in the river and the canal.

The screen fades to credits and then begins another advertisement.

BRENDAN clicks off the TV and makes an enthusiastic victory sign. He picks up his cellphone and speed dials. He listens (getting Bobby's voice mail).

BRENDAN

Hey, Tiger! You were absolutely terrific. I bet women all over Chicagoland—and at least one guy—were drooling all over you. Fuck the women—figuratively, of course. I can hardly wait until you get home!

BRENDAN gets himself another beer and sits back down. He reads the paper for a bit, then turns the TV back on and goes to the channel guide, checking out various programs. Nothing appeals to him. He looks at his watch, and then at the door. He goes back to his paper. He looks at his watch again, and then sits back with his eyes closed.

Then he sits up, sniffs under his arm, picks up the still sweaty tee shirt and sniffs at it, wrinkles his nose in disgust, looks at his watch again, and jumps up to go take a shower, stripping off his gymshorts as he exits.

BOBBY enters. He's drunk. He looks around and hears the shower running. He scowls and mouths "fuck." He goes to the kitchen and mixes himself a scotch.

Then he moves to the keyboard in the living room and begins to improvise a harmony and a melody. It is very dissonant.

BRENDAN enters, wearing only a towel. His hair is wet.

He sees Bobby, hears him playing but does not pay any real attention. He approaches BOBBY from behind, grabbing him around the waist.

BRENDAN

Hey! You were great! Did you get my voicemail? I called you as soon as it finished.

BOBBY stops playing and stands still, not really responding to Brendan's arms around him.

BOBBY

No, I didn't.

BRENDAN

No problem. It's just that I wanted to tell you right away how great you were.

BOBBY peels Brendan's right hand away from his belly.

BOBBY

Don't do that.

BRENDAN

What's the matter?

He backs away and realizes that Bobby is drunk.

BOBBY

If you were so eager to see me, you could have come down there.

BRENDAN

You know that I had a client meeting that I couldn't get out of. It's my job. You knew that. We talked about it before.

BOBBY

Yeah, well. People have priorities.

BRENDAN

It wasn't a matter of "priorities." There are some things you just can't get out of. That happens to you sometimes, also.

BOBBY

Yeah, well. There were some things tonight I just couldn't get out of either—like having a few drinks with my friends who were there in the studio.

BRENDAN

Oh. I wondered. I was beginning to worry about you.

BOBBY

If you were so worried and impatient, why were you in the fucking shower? You could have done that before.

BRENDAN

Well I waited, but it took you longer than . . . Anyway. I'm sorry. We're both here now. Let's have a nice evening.

BOBBY

You always do that, Indy: shit on me and then say, "Let's have a nice evening."

BRENDAN

Shit on you? I just took a fucking shower. It lasted all of five minutes. Come on, Bobby. Why do we have to fight? We don't have to do that every time we are together.

BOBBY

Oh, so now we "fight" every time we are together? No wonder everything else is more important than us.

BRENDAN

Come on, Bobby! I thought we might go out to Morton's for a steak—a steak fit for my jock sportscaster. I already made reservations—I can move them a little later.

BOBBY

I don't want to go out. I'm tired. I'm going to order a pizza.

BRENDAN

Well, okay. Large with extra pepperoni and onions?

BOBBY

I don't need to be coached on what to order.

BRENDAN tries to control himself. Fails.

BRENDAN

Jesus Christ! I don't care if you want to get shitfaced before you come home, but you don't have to be so fucking belligerent every time you get drunk.

(under his breath)

Could be worse, I guess.

BOBBY

What do you mean, "Could be worse?"

BRENDAN

Nothing

BOBBY

No. Tell me.

BRENDAN

At least you're not totally spaced out or climbing the curtains. At least you're more or less coherent, although you're being an asshole.

BOBBY

Oh, fuck you! Leave me alone.

He drains his glass, makes himself another scotch and pats his pockets, looking for something else.

BRENDAN goes back to the couch, sits down, and turns on the TV.

BOBBY comes in from the kitchen, sits down beside Brendan, and tries to pull the towel loose from his waist. BRENDAN resists.

BRENDAN

(watching and listening to the TV)

Wait a minute

BOBBY pulls on the towel again, and kisses Brendan's cheek. BRENDAN pulls away.

He doesn't pull far away, however. Maybe this is an opportunity to let some calm replace the storm.

BOBBY

Let me ask you a question, Indy.

BRENDAN

Here it comes.

BOBBY

Are you really gay? Or are you just so fucked up that you are straight and trying to pass as gay?

BRENDAN

Don't do this. Go get another drink, or sniff some coke or something.

BOBBY

No. Answer my question.

BRENDAN

We can talk in the morning, when we're not both half drunk. I'm not going to get into a fight with you.

BOBBY

Right, you fucking pussy.

(shouts in Brendan's face)

Pussy! Pussy! You're not a man. You're a fucking pathetic waste.

BRENDAN

I'm not doing this now, Bobby.

BOBBY

You're just like my fucking Father: well-organized, cold, focused, disciplined. Always running from anything that might not turn out according to your detailed plan.

BRENDAN

I don't know your Father.

BOBBY

A complete fucking reptile. Careful, organized, never allowed any margin of error to creep into his slithering through life. I mean, this guy, this blue collar guy who sells fucking sinks . . . but he owned his own business, such as it was. It had to be Harvard for me. It had to be sports, not theater or music; steak, not salad. Belittled me when I sang in the house. He thought it was too . . . girly, I guess.

BRENDAN

I let you sing in the house. In fact, I rather enjoy it.

BOBBY

Right. And you got me kicked out of Harvard.

So there are *some* differences. But your souls are the same. Never admit wrong. Never own up.

BRENDAN gets up from the couch and starts for the bedroom.

BRENDAN

Give me a break! You fucking hated Harvard. You wanted to be at Berklee School of Music or at some place like Carnegie-Mellon, majoring in music performance. But your Dad wanted you at Harvard.

BOBBY

I was doing okay there.

BRENDAN

And you hated crew. You were good at it, but you hated it, Always disappearing as co-captain so you could go off and do something with the music and drama twink.

BOBBY

You loved that. It left you to micromanage everything as the solo co-captain.

BRENDAN

At least I know who I am.

BOBBY

So do I! What a laugh! Know who you are. Shit.

BRENDAN

Well you may *know* who you are. Hard not to, as campy as you act. But you've never had the courage to *be* who you are.

BOBBY

I've never had the courage?

BRENDAN

Right. Harvard, not Berklee. Co-captain of the crew, not co-captain of the Glee Club.

Don't give me your shit.

He turns away, and then thinks of something else.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

And then? After the Harvard albatross has been removed from your neck, do you go to Berklee or Carnegie-Mellon? No. You insinuate yourself into being a fucking sports commentator, butchering it up on camera. I'll give you credit. You butcher it up well. I didn't think you had it in you.

'Course you have to snort coke first thing in the morning to get yourself all wound up for the macho sportscaster imitation.

*BOBBY springs up, jerks off the towel, and shoves
Brendan into the doorframe.*

BOBBY

You've ruined my life, you shit! Go ahead, cower there.

BRENDAN tries to move into the other room.
BOBBY grabs his arm.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Fight back! You fucking wimp. You're so terrified about letting anyone know you're gay, you fucking run and hide all the time, even from me.

Whoo hoo! I could beat the living shit out of you and you'd never even call the police because you're afraid they might investigate our "relationship."

BRENDAN

So beat me up. You're right that I'm not going to fight back.

BOBBY

Just like I said. Chickenshit.

BRENDAN

Just like I didn't fight back when your Father excluded me from that trip to Thailand. You didn't fight back then either. You were a chickenshit with your Father. You hid--just didn't show up--instead of confronting him.

BOBBY shoves Brendan hard again. BRENDAN takes it.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

It's not my fault you got kicked out of Harvard. I told you not to do it.

BOBBY

Yeah. You were terrified then, too. I was man enough to 'fess up.

BRENDAN

You were a fool. It wasn't our fault.

BOBBY

It *was* our fault. But you were too fucking scared. I protected you.

But you know what?

BOBBY shoves Brendan into the doorframe again.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I'm done protecting you. I'm going to fucking ruin your life, you shit. Your hidden, respectable, fantasy life. I'm going to let everyone know, not only that you are a cocksucker—though not a very good one. But also that you are a fucking snake.

*BOBBY shoves Brendan into the doorframe again,
and stomps onto his bare foot with his street shoe.
BRENDAN winces and moves his foot, but
otherwise does not react.*

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Indy the snake. When I'm done, no one in Chicago will have anything to do with you.

Indy the snake. No one in the *world* will have anything to do with you.

*BOBBY's attention is drawn to a framed
photograph of the two of them lifting a pair crew
shell into the water. He snatches it off the wall and
hurls it across the room, shattering the glass.*

[ACT BREAK?—LONGER ACT I]

SCENE 12

(Flashback) BRENDAN is in a Spartan motel room. He's lying on the bed in his underwear, reading. His cellphone rings. He picks it up and looks at the caller ID. He waits until the ringing stops and then waits a little longer. The phone chirps, signifying that he has a voicemail.

He clicks on the voicemail icon.

BOBBY

Hey, Brendan. I'm not sure where you are. But I'm really sorry about last night. I just want you to know that I love you, and I miss you. I shouldn't have acted like that.

BRENDAN's finger hovers over the callback icon, but then he puts the phone down and goes back to his book.

The cellphone rings again. Same response by BRENDAN.

BOBBY

I'm so sorry, man. (voice begins to break) I love you and I want you back. I was thinking about that time in English Lit, when you said, "I think, therefore I am," —or maybe that was in some other class—and you said, "Yeah, but what's important is who you think you are." I love you, man. Please call me.

BRENDAN puts the cellphone down and sets the alarm clock beside the bed. The cellphone rings again. He takes it, wraps it in a shirt, and throws it in the dresser drawer, slamming the drawer shut. He heads into the bathroom. After a moment, sobbing sounds come from the bathroom.

SCENE 13

RICHARD and BRENDAN enter the restaurant together and are shown their usual table.

RICHARD

We could have met in your office. That would have been more convenient for you.

BRENDAN

I thought this would be better.

*They sit down. BRENDAN picks up the menu.
RICHARD looks at him.*

RICHARD

Did you talk to the airline again? I found some more emails . . . I don't think they add anything really, and I know you don't like it when I bring a big pile of . . . but I'm afraid not to tell you . . .

BRENDAN

Listen. I don't think this is going to work.

RICHARD

(alarmed)

"Not going to work?" What do you mean? What did American say now?

BRENDAN

No. That's not it. I haven't talked to them again.

RICHARD

Then, what? What's happened?

BRENDAN

Look, there are lots of lawyers in Chicago—most of them a lot more seasoned than I am.

RICHARD

But I specifically selected you. I wanted you. You are young enough . . . I mean, sometimes it's good not to have . . . Am I misunderstanding you, here? Maybe I am. Sometimes, I misunderstand and get all upset about nothing.

*BRENDAN puts the menu down and looks up
squarely at Richard*

BRENDAN

I'm sorry, but I don't think I can represent you.

RICHARD

But why? I don't understand.

BRENDAN

I just don't think . . . Well, it's a judgment call that I have to make. Don't worry. Part of my ethical responsibility is to continue until we find you someone else—someone you're comfortable with.

RICHARD

But I am comfortable with *you*! Why should I look for someone else?

BRENDAN

I'm sorry, but that's what we need to do.

RICHARD

And you won't tell me why?

BRENDAN

*(beginning to lose his
command of the situation)*

It's hard to put words around it.

RICHARD

Well at least you can try. This is important to me. I know I'm difficult to deal with; sometimes I'm not as straightforward and organized as I used to be. I promise that I won't waste your time like I have so far. Just tell me what you want me to change.

BRENDAN

No . . .

RICHARD starts to speak again. Then he stops himself and picks up the menu. He can't seem to focus on it. He reaches for his everpresent envelope from the floor under his chair and then puts it back. Tears begin to well in his eyes. He picks up the menu again, and tries to read it.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Has it ever occurred to you that I am "Indy?"

RICHARD

What?

BRENDAN

Right. I was Bobby's—Rob's—boyfriend. There was a time when we were going to get married.

RICHARD

What? But your name isn't . . .

BRENDAN

"Indy?" Of course my real name is not "Indy." It was a pet name. You said it yourself. Take off the "Br" from "Brendan," and substitute a nice-sounding diminutive for the "an," and you get "Indy."

RICHARD stares at Brendan. Looks him up and down and though checking off some mental image.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You are Indy?

And so . . . the trip to Bangkok . . . It was you?

RICHARD picks up the menu and lowers his eyes to it. He picks up his wine glass and drains it. He looks back at Brendan, and then fumbles with his papers.

RICHARD

You are Indy? And you and Rob . . .

BRENDAN

So I guess it's a good thing we didn't make the Bangkok trip with you.

RICHARD

No, I never wanted to meet . . . I didn't know it was you, for Christ's sake. It was okay, who he wanted to go to bed with, it was just . . .

BRENDAN

That must have warmed his heart: your support.

RICHARD

I *did* support him. A little discipline was all I wanted—a sense of propriety.

BRENDAN

Your sense of propriety is not offended by having me as your lawyer. But it was then?

RICHARD

I didn't know who you were—who you would become.

BRENDAN

Right. So now, I want to reinforce your sense of propriety, to get you back in touch with your true self.

I'm withdrawing.

RICHARD

Wait! Let's talk this through. All this is horribly confusing. I didn't know you were "Indy." Well I knew, but I didn't know that you are now. I mean I . . .

BRENDAN

Yeah. All the confusion is a problem for me, too. That's why--

RICHARD

Just because you couldn't . . . then . . . doesn't mean that now . . .

BRENDAN

Yes it does. Some things don't change.

RICHARD

A lot has changed.

Brendan starts to stand up and make a dignified exit, but then he can't stop himself from going further.

BRENDAN

He was a musician, a good one. That was his dream. But it wasn't yours. And you made sure he lived *your* dream, and not *his*. You had this design for him. He was kind of like a sink, actually, and you weren't going to let the sink decide for itself to be something different from the design. How could a sink not mimic the blueprints?

Your sink couldn't bring a another male sink on the trip to Thailand. That wasn't in the blueprint.

You probably didn't even know that Bobby had a drug and alcohol problem. That wasn't in your blueprints either.

RICHARD
(looking up sharply)

What?

BRENDAN
Did you know that your son abused drugs and alcohol?

RICHARD
I'm not sure what . . . Sure he drank some. All kids do . . . Drugs? What kind of drugs?

BRENDAN
Right. You didn't give a shit, so long as he didn't embarrass you by being gay—or by bringing Indy home.

RICHARD
You are . . .

BRENDAN
You couldn't be bothered to know that he barely was able to make it in to work most afternoons.

RICHARD
He was 28 years old, for Christ's sake! I was supposed to make sure he got out of bed and put his clothes on him?

Of course I didn't like that he was a complete flake. He had no direction. That's why I was tough on him. But I couldn't monitor every moment.

BRENDAN
I'm not telling you that you were supposed to do anything. I just asked if you knew that he had a problem.

RICHARD
Well, I guess I sort of sensed that . . .
(trails off)

BRENDAN
Right.

RICHARD struggles to regain control.

RICHARD

Don't you preach to me! You know nothing about raising kids. How frustrating it is to have to show them how to act about *everything*, when they're old enough to know for themselves.

BRENDAN

How to act about what?

RICHARD

Everything! It was a constant battle. He had no sense of propriety on anything. He never corrected me when I asked him about girls. So he had *some* sense.

Why should he bring his fucking boyfriend on a trip with me, his Father?

Why should he bring it home when it didn't even, according to him, didn't even exist?

BRENDAN

He was well aware that "it" existed. It's who he *is*. *I* existed. He was trying to introduce us.

RICHARD

*(collects himself and focuses
his anger)*

Is that what this is all about? "Bobby," as you call him?

*BRENDAN looks at his menu again. Then he looks
up, slowly.*

BRENDAN

Yeah. Yeah, that's pretty much right. Yeah. It is about Bobby.

RICHARD

I don't see what Bobby has to do with my difficulties with the airline

BRENDAN

He doesn't, directly.

RICHARD

So what does Bobby's use of alcohol and – according to you, "drugs," have to do with whether you represent me?

BRENDAN

*(seething, hesitates, then
decides to go for it)*

When did you figure out that Bobby was gay?

RICHARD

What!

BRENDAN

When did you know that he was gay? It's a simple question.

RICHARD

What does *that* have to do with anything?

BRENDAN

More than you can ever know.

RICHARD

This is the most bizarre lunch conversation I think I have ever had.

BRENDAN

Oh, right. Sorry to be the one to bring bizarreness to the table.

Decides whether he wants to leave. Decides to stay.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Do you want to order?

RICHARD

What? Oh, yes. I guess . . .

They both escape into the menus.

RICHARD puts his menu down after a moment.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

*(more steel has come into his
voice)*

Of course I knew he was gay. Do you think I'm an idiot? He never dated—or at least not girls—after he went away to college. And he was always bringing his hunky crew mates home . . . they all looked like models—or someone from the covers of Sports Illustrated. I saw the way they looked at each other when they thought I was attending to something else.

And all he ever talked about was "Indy"—which, it turns out was you. I didn't think Indy was a woman.

Of course I knew he was gay.

BRENDAN

And so you banned me from the trip.

RICHARD

As for the drugs and the booze—do you think you're so much smarter than I am, so much more perceptive that it was obvious to you, and not to me?

Of course I knew he had a problem. We fought about it constantly. That's why I sold my business. So I could concentrate on him. But he was determined not to let his nosedive be interrupted—after he left Harvard. I'm amazed he was able to get it together enough to get the TV job.

BRENDAN

Did you ever talk about it?

RICHARD

I just told you we argued about it all the time.

BRENDAN

No. Not about that. About his being gay.

RICHARD

I didn't give a shit if he was gay. I wasn't thrilled about it, but he was who he was. We didn't have to have a big to-do about it. He sensed that I was okay with it.

I just wanted him to *get* straight, not to *be* straight.

I guess I just didn't want him to bring it home

BRENDAN

You wanted him to stay in the closet—at least when he was around you?

RICHARD

I didn't want him to bring it home.

BRENDAN

Right. You didn't want him to bring *me* home.

Seems like I remember hearing about a conversation.

RICHARD

What conversation?

BRENDAN

The one where he finally worked up the courage to tell you, to talk to you.

Do you remember what you said?

RICHARD

No, ah—

BRENDAN

You said, "I don't want to hear about it. I don't want it anywhere near me." Remember that?

RICHARD

That's not--

BRENDAN

Do you know why he left Harvard?

RICHARD

He said he wanted to take some time off. I wasn't opposed to that—as long as he didn't just sit around and watch TV.

BRENDAN

He got *kicked out* of Harvard—for protecting *me*.

(his voice breaks)

Richard stares at him for a long moment.

RICHARD

May I ask you a question, Brendan?

BRENDAN

Uh, oh.

RICHARD

What?

BRENDAN

That's what Bobby always said before he dropped some kind of bomb on me and started a fight.

RICHARD

Why has Bobby taken over?

BRENDAN

Taken over what?

RICHARD

Our conversation. Our professional relationship. We came here to talk about my legal claim.

BRENDAN

Maybe that's why you came here. But I came here to put an end to our "talking" about your "claim." You're the one who insisted I tell you why. Bobby is the why. Now that we're talking about him --and now that I am withdrawing from representing you—I'm curious to find out about you and Bobby. He suffered—as long as I knew him, he suffered. And I was never sure why. Part of it was Harvard, but not all of it. Being there, competing, excelling at crew, working to stay at the top of his class, trying to find time for music. Getting kicked out.

But that's not the whole story. He used to try to insult me by comparing me to you.

I've always been curious why that was. I'm pretty well put together. You seem to be a mess.

RICHARD

I wasn't always . . . Time was . . .

BRENDAN

Yeah, I guess so. Like control over which seats you booked.

RICHARD

That's not . .

BRENDAN

(interrupting)

OK.

Stands up and beckons aggressively for the waiter.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

We're done.

RICHARD

Don't be an ass. Sit back down.

You barely know me. I don't have to account to you for my private family affairs.

BRENDAN laughs sarcastically. But he sits down.

BRENDAN

It turns out I was *part* of your "private family affairs," only you closed your eyes, stopped up your ears, and turned your head away from that part.

BRENDAN stands up and again waves at the maître d'. Then he sits back down.

BRENDAN

You're right. You don't have to account to me for anything. And I don't have to represent you.

Tell me something that still puzzles me.

RICHARD

(wary)

OK

BRENDAN

(looking for the waiter or the maître d')

Why is your last name "Ginsburg" and his last name "Spurlock?"

RICHARD

That was his mother's maiden name. He started using it just before he left for Harvard. Or maybe after the trip.

BRENDAN

(not caring all that much)

Oh. That explains it. Declarations of independence come in strange formats

The waiter brings the check. RICHARD waves him off.

RICHARD

We're not ready for it, yet.

We have some more talking to do.

BRENDAN

No we don't. I already told you that I will find someone else for you to work with.

(suppressing a snarl)

You didn't even know that Bobby and I lived together. That we were boyfriends. That we broke up because of his drugs and booze. And now, you want me, as if a stranger to the whole thing, to fight your ridiculous, irrelevant battle with some airline—a battle that started with Bobby's declaration of independence—becoming the first empty seat beside you.

Well, guess what. I'm not doing it.

RICHARD

You don't have to do anything you don't want to do. But I think you owe me—and yourself—a little rationality here.

BRENDAN

No. I've told you . . .

RICHARD

Wait. What is the possible harm in talking through this a little more? You're not so fragile you can't do that, are you?

BRENDAN

"Fragile?" I'm not fragile at all.

RICHARD

You sure as hell are acting like it.

BRENDAN

OK. Where do you want to start with this "rationality."

RICHARD

Are you a lawyer?

BRENDAN

You know I am.

RICHARD

And you are a good one.

BRENDAN

I like to think so.

RICHARD

I seek you out because of your track record. I ask you to represent me. You agree. You file suit. You have multiple conversations with the other side. You drill through whatever frustrations I present as a client. You've even shown flashes of enthusiasm for the case.

BRENDAN

All that is correct.

RICHARD

So what's changed?

BRENDAN

You know what's changed. I find out that your son is my former boyfriend—someone who meant the world to me, but who couldn't . . . wouldn't let me . . . I find out that you are the Father who didn't let him be who he was, who shunned me—without ever having met me

It's a difficult part of my life. Though behind me, now.

RICHARD

That's where I go off the tracks. Whatever difficulty you had with Rob, what does that have to do with whether you continue to represent me?

BRENDAN

Because . . .

RICHARD

Because?

BRENDAN

It's distracting me from . . . No. That's not what I mean. It raises a conflict of interest.

RICHARD

How does it do that? I thought a conflict was about not being able to serve two masters. How is Rob your "master," going forward? I thought you broke up with him.

BRENDAN

I did. It was impossible. I didn't want to but . . . Anyway . . .

RICHARD

You broke up with him, put your relationship behind you—you said it was "in the past." But he's still your "master," limiting what you can do professionally? Anything that touches on the memory is off limits?

BRENDAN

No, no. That's not the way I feel.

RICHARD

So what's the connection, except that continuing to represent me makes you think of Rob?

BRENDAN

It's . . .

He looks down. His lip is trembling. He's horrified as the prospect that he is about to cry.

RICHARD

I need to visit the men's room.

He gets up and leaves the table.

BRENDAN almost breaks, but then gets himself under control. He dips the corner of his napkin in his water glass and wipes his face and his eyes.

RICHARD returns to the table.

BRENDAN

I want to apologize to you, Mr. Ginsburg. I have been over-reacting here. I invited you here to explain why I can't continue to represent you, and it's developed into this unseemly argument. I'm really sorry for that.

RICHARD

You don't need to apologize. We both have been dealing with a considerable surprise. It's natural that would throw things out of kilter.

BRENDAN

Still. All that's personal, and I should have enough discipline to keep that in its place and to be professional.

He drops his eyes.

RICHARD

Yeah, well. Discipline is a virtue.

Discipline may have been better served if Bobby had never surfaced. But he has. We can't pretend that Bobby doesn't exist, that he never lived a relationship with you.

Trying to avoid that complication is very disciplined of you. I can relate to that, actually.

But there are other virtues as well.

BRENDAN looks up at him again.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Like being able to love someone.

BRENDAN is not sure how to respond. He looks down, then back up at Richard. Then he smiles.

BRENDAN

Like loving someone.

SCENE 14

*BRENDAN is in his office, talking on the phone.
He periodically pulls something up on his computer
and looks at it.*

BRENDAN

Irene, this is Brendan Scope in Chicago. I am calling about the Ginsberg matter.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Right. We got your latest round of discovery responses and I want to talk to you about one of them.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

It's a memo from the President of AAdvantage, George Limani, dated 17 February 2009. The first page has a Bates number of 12506.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

No. Take your time.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Right. That's it. As I read it, it directs his staff to find excuses to cancel the lifetime flight rights of people like Ginsberg, without regard to their entitlement. This does not seem to be too good for your position in the lawsuit.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I think my client might be willing to settle this. He's mainly interested in getting his privileges reinstated, not in spending the rest of his life in litigation against you.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Okay. Well, talk to your people and get back to me. Nice . . .

(listens)

SCENE 15

BRENDAN is in his office sitting at the coffee table. He's got documents spread around him and he's working on a notebook computer sitting on the table.

RICHARD knocks at the door.

BRENDAN looks up and smiles.

BRENDAN

Hey! How are you?

RICHARD

She said I could just come on back.

BRENDAN

It's fine. Come in. Have a seat.

RICHARD enters and sits in a chair at the end of the table.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I think we're making progress. I found a memo from the head of AAdvantage that shows the real reason they cancelled your membership.

RICHARD

Really? Well that's good news.

Something in Richard's voice makes BRENDAN look at him more intensely. He stops working on the computer.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I thought we had a really good conversation the other day.

BRENDAN

So do I. I appreciate your . . . uh . . . getting me to be more . . . uh . . . rational about everything.

RICHARD

Both of us needed to get more focused.

BRENDAN

(laughs)

Right. Usually, that's not a problem for me.

RICHARD

No. I have seen that. But I was thinking afterwards, and I want to make sure we are on the same page about something.

BRENDAN

Okay.

RICHARD

You know that Bobby is dead, right?

BRENDAN

Brendan freezes.

What do you mean?

RICHARD

Rob—or Bobby as you knew him—is dead. He died last Christmas Eve.

BRENDAN

Dead? What do you mean? He can't be dead. He is only 28.

RICHARD

Even so, he died. Expired. Passed away.

You didn't know that?

BRENDAN

How could he be dead?

RICHARD

Pump enough cocaine, vicodin and alcohol through your system and it happens.

You didn't know that?

BRENDAN

No, goddamit! No! I didn't know it.

So he was dead all that time we were talking about him as though he were still alive?
How could you do that and not tell me?

RICHARD

I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to mislead you. I thought you knew, close as you were. I just assumed And then it occurred to me that we never talked about that part—not explicitly. I just assumed it.

And then I realized that you might not. That it might explain why you weren't at the memorial service. I wondered if I would meet "Indy" there, but I saw no candidates.

That's why I came over here today.

BRENDAN

Jesus Christ! He's dead?

BRENDAN stares at Richard, stupefied.

RICHARD

I'm sorry, son.

BRENDAN continues to stare at Richard.

RICHARD waits for him to say something, and then realizes that he is not going to.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Do you want me to go, or stay? We could talk some more about what happened, if you want.

He is completely composed, radiating concern for Brendan.

BRENDAN

(finally)

I'm not sure.

RICHARD

I'll stay a few minutes.

BRENDAN

Okay. No. Maybe you should go.

RICHARD

You remember how I had just returned from the hospital when I got the letter from American?

BRENDAN

(uncertainly)

Yes. I think so.

RICHARD

That was when Bobby died. That's why I was at the hospital.

BRENDAN

(thoughtfully, to himself)

Loving someone.

RICHARD

Okay, Brendan. Call me if you want to talk about it some more.

RICHARD heaves himself up and, still looking at Brendan with an expression of concern, slowly exits.

BRENDAN sits where he is for a long moment. Then he slowly gets up and moves behind his desk. He jiggles the mouse and opens up a web page that shows the home page of a business: "Sinks and Stuff." He clicks on a link and a large photograph of Richard appears, smiling, dignified, dressed in a perfectly tailored suit, not a hair out of place, very much in command.

BRENDAN goes to Facebook and enters the name "Bobby Spurlock." A Facebook home page appears, with a photograph of Bobby in the upper left hand corner. BRENDAN clicks on the "Photos" link, and begins to browse through a dozen or so pictures. The first couple of photos show Bobby staring into the camera with a serious and sad expression, stubble on his cheeks, wearing a non-descript tee shirt. Other poses show the same sad expression with his face and upper body in various positions: profiles, looking into the distance, looking directly into the camera, as though he was trying to capture a mood of reflection and isolation.

BRENDAN clicks through other photos, showing Bobby in happier circumstances, laughing, cavorting on the beach with Brendan, straining on his oar in an eight-man shell as it crosses the finish line, in the same shell apparently a few minutes later, joining his teammates as they pump their fists in the air.

Other photos show Bobby on the air in the television studio.

Another shows the two of them lifting a pair crew shell into the water. It's the same picture Bobby smashed during their last argument.

BRENDAN lingers over a picture showing both Bobby and Brendan, arms around each other's shoulders, shirts off, looking into each other's eyes.

Tears begin to pool in his eyes. He struggles to regain his composure, fails, and puts his head down on the desk and sobs, his shoulders shaking.

He goes back to the picture of dignified Richard.

SCENE 16

The restaurant. RICHARD is dressed in a smart sports jacket, and open-necked matching shirt. He is already seated.

*BRENDAN, 20 minutes late, is wearing bluejeans, flipflops, and a teeshirt bearing the logo of a band and large letters that read "If you give a F***, you are a pussy." His hair is dirty, and he appears unshaven.*

BRENDAN unsteadily plops down in the chair across from Richard.

RICHARD

I was glad to get your call. I was worried about you.

BRENDAN

Yeah. Your little bombshell about Bobby broke my stride, shall I say. But then I thought about what you had said the other day and pulled myself together and refocused on the litigation.

And then, come to find out that you had another bomb that you hadn't dropped yet.

RICHARD

What do you mean?

BRENDAN

You were smuggling drugs for him.

RICHARD

I was *not* (whispers) "smuggling drugs for him." What the hell are you talking about?

BRENDAN

American says you were using all these trips to Thailand to bring drugs back.

RICHARD

And you believe them?

BRENDAN

Were you? Were you bringing drugs back from Thailand so your son could feed his habit?

RICHARD

On *one* occasion, I brought a considerable quantity of Vicodin.

BRENDAN

And you got caught.

The waiter comes. BRENDAN pushes away the menu and orders a martini. RICHARD declines.

RICHARD

Not as far as I know.

BRENDAN

I can't believe this. You lean on me to continue to represent you and you don't tell me about this? Play the father-figure counselor about not letting my feelings for Bobby drag me down, and you hide this?

RICHARD

It was two weeks after he got kicked out of Harvard. He was in a complete tailspin.

BRENDAN

(sarcastically)

Tell me about it.

BRENDAN has finished the martini and beckons the waiter for another.

RICHARD

I was afraid he would go off the deep end. I persuaded him to go see a shrink—once. The shrink prescribed the Vicodin, so he could sleep. But then he wouldn't go back, and the doc wouldn't refill the prescription without seeing him.

BRENDAN

Well-founded fear, I guess. He did go off the deep end.

RICHARD

Yeah. Five years later. A few Vicodin tablets didn't kill him.

BRENDAN

That's not the point. This drives a stake in the heart of your case. You were the one who said Bobby had nothing to do with the litigation, and it turns out he has everything to do with it.

RICHARD

Come on now. Get hold of yourself. You spent a hell of a lot more time with him than I did. You know how hard it was to know what to do.

I would have done anything, anything, to weld him back together. I could see the cracks spreading, propagating, about to erupt into a fracture.

BRENDAN

I...

RICHARD

Right. We both knew he was about to fracture. In our separate little worlds with him, we both knew it.

BRENDAN

You were his father.

The waiter comes and BRENDAN orders a third martini.

RICHARD

And you were his lover. He spent more time with you than he did with me.

BRENDAN

Should I have stayed with him? Let him beat me up when he came home drunk? Look the other way when he inhaled all the pills?

Find some way to go back, to undo what happened at Harvard?

Tried harder to find you? Or someone else who could help?

I tried everything I could think of. And none of it stalled the diatribes and the blows.

So I quit trying. I threw in the towel. Cut my losses. Convinced myself I should move on, that I could put it all behind me. And so he went off the precipice alone.

RICHARD

Those are not helpful questions. They're not good things to ask, for you or for me.
But there is something that we have some control over.

BRENDAN

What's that?

RICHARD

You.

BRENDAN looks at him.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

We need to make sure you are all right. That's more important than anything else.

BRENDAN

I'm not all right.

They look at each other. RICHARD can see the tears that BRENDAN is trying to suppress.

RICHARD

Bobby is dead. I wish he weren't, but he is. You don't have any control over that. You can think about him, dream about him, sing about him. But he's not going to show up some day, suddenly appearing in your office or bedroom.

BRENDAN

No.

RICHARD

So are you going to ruin your life, too?

BRENDAN

(starting to get hot again)

No, I'm not going to ruin my life, but I *am* going to cut my losses on this fucked up affair.

RICHARD

Why?

BRENDAN

Why not? You're an impossible client. We slither through one disaster after another, and then I discover a new grenade that you have thrown and not told me about.

Anyway, all this shit about free travel on an airline awards program is trivial nonsense. Why should I put any more energy into it?

RICHARD

Sit down, son. Let me tell you something.

BRENDAN bristles at being patronized, but he sits back down.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

Most of what we do in life is trivial.

Do you think that the last court battle that you won saved the world?

BRENDAN

No.

RICHARD

To you think the last bathroom sink I sold should have won me a Nobel Prize?

BRENDAN

No.

RICHARD

But you try your cases and counsel your clients, and I sell my sinks—or used to, anyway. And other people sell their stuff and practice their professions. All the sinks sold, all the court victories won, all the other millions of little things that people do as they go about their daily lives: trivial most of it, looked at up close. But in the aggregate, it adds up to something.

Sometimes, for some of us, we get a chance to care about someone, maybe even to love him. And sometimes we get loved back, and sometimes we don't. Sometimes we try our hardest and yet nothing works. But there is nowhere to hide. That's one thing that we cannot do, not really.

BRENDAN

So?

RICHARD

So, do your job.

BRENDAN

Your case does not define my job. I have other clients.

RICHARD

Of course you do. And their squabbles with airlines, or Internet service providers, or other merchants who cheat them will allow you to avoid your sudden distaste for "trivia?"

BRENDAN's defensiveness recedes. He's thinking about what he is hearing.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

You know as well as I do that this "drug smuggling" argument is a bunch of crap. If they cared about the Vicodin, they would have raised a stink when it happened. It happened five years ago. They found out—then or now—and they think they can use it to intimidate you. To scare you off, because you backed them into a corner. Maybe it's a trivial corner, but you got them cornered. You ought to be proud of that.

So now the question is whether you are going to slink away and hide in some other case.

BRENDAN

I'm not trying to hide.

RICHARD

I think you are. We know someone else who tried to hide. I know the symptoms.

BRENDAN struggles to formulate a response. He's not sure how he wants to respond.

BRENDAN

What do you need from me?

RICHARD

I want you to act like you did when I first met you.

Neither one of us, it turned out, could do anything about Bobby's life.

But you can do something about yours.

SCENE 17

BRENDAN is in his office, dressed in a polo shirt and khakis and loafers without socks. He is talking on the telephone.

BRENDAN

Hey, Irene. This is Brendan.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

I hope you had a nice weekend.

(listens)

He pulls up Irene's Facebook page, then his, and toggles back and forth between them.

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Well, I did, but I spent most of it working on the Ginsburg case.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

(laughs) Yeah, but you should be pleased that people are so obsessed with flying on American Airlines—and that your frequent flyer promotions have such pull.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Oh, come on. You know you always have seats to spare on those trans-Pacific flights . . .

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Well, anyway, I know you are busy, and I appreciate your taking my call. Your very-efficient guard dog would have preferred, I am sure, to say, "Ms Gifford is unavailable. May I have her call you back?"

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Guard dog, in that context, is not pejorative. She's very nice—just efficient at guarding you.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

No. I've never heard her bark or growl. She actually has a nice voice. What does she look like? Does she have prominent canine teeth and a long pink tongue?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Ha!

Anyway. I've found a couple of things I want to talk to you about. You and I both have been perfectly professional in this case.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Your assertion that Richard was carrying drugs is based on a quantity of Vicodin found in one of his checked bags, right?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Well that's not exactly the drug trafficking ring of the century, particularly not out of Thailand.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Oh, I know. We're not disputing the technical illegality—under U.S. law. God only knows whether it violated Thai law. Almost certainly not. Nothing is against the law in Thailand.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Right. I respect that. It seems that you base your information that Richard was carrying drugs on a report from a baggage handler, right?

(listens)

The baggage handler who

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

And he was arrested for drug trafficking about three years ago, right?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Involving several kilos of heroin, on several occasions. Not a couple of cartons of Vicodin.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Thanks. I'm actually pretty good at getting intel—maybe even better than your folks, who probably are mired in all kinds of bureaucratic restrictions.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Yeah. You make more money working in bureaucracies than for boutique law firms, but you have less fun.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

No. Shit. One or two big successes make the headlines, but they don't report the bills from the losers.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

So, anyway: you all glommed on to the report by this drug-king baggage handler, and went after Richard.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

(laughs)

Well, I admit, he almost certainly was a *bigger* target.

But you got the first report in—when—August of 2005, and you let Richard continue to fly until May of 2010? You were—I mean your bureaucracy was--investigating this for five years? Not a very efficient bureaucracy.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Oh, no. I can appreciate that. My clients don't pull me in until things have gone to hell, either.

There's one other thing that puzzles me.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

As I read it, the Federal Aviation Act and the rules that the FAA has promulgated, augmented by rules of the Homeland Security Department . . .

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Right. They criminalize conduct by an airline that knowingly transports illicit drugs.

Weren't you in the position of doing that for who knows how long? If he did it once, it probably wasn't the only time. You knew of allegations that he was transporting drugs, but you didn't do anything about it.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

You are the ones who have classified it as a "drug violation." If it was too trivial and borderline to report to DEA and the FAA, why isn't it too trivial for you?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, but you sat on it for five years. You didn't take any action until you got a new VP for passenger rewards, who was on a cost-cutting kick. That seems like a awfully sudden awakening to your duty under federal drug law.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

No. I understand. I just wanted to keep you in the loop of my thinking on this.

Thanks. I'll wait to hear from you.

He hangs up the phone and smiles.

SCENE 18

BRENDAN and RICHARD are in the usual restaurant—in the evening. RICHARD wears a perfectly tailored suit. His hair is styled. It looks like he has lost some weight. He has no folder or other papers with him. His table manners are impeccable. Brendan is similarly dressed, and again looks like a model.

A piano is playing in the background.

He and BRENDAN click their glasses.

RICHARD

You did it.

BRENDAN

We did. And it's really a "we."

Thank you.

RICHARD

Why are you thanking *me*?

BRENDAN

For talking sense to me.

RICHARD

I made it hard for you.

BRENDAN

(smiling)

Yeah. In some ways you did.

RICHARD

I'm sorry about that.

BRENDAN

You're forgiven. But you also did something for me – something that was infinitely more important than the ways you made it hard.

RICHARD

I'm glad, son. Do you mind if I tell you something else?

BRENDAN

Oh shit! What now?

Go ahead.

RICHARD

I'm proud of you, Brendan, really proud of you.

BRENDAN looks at him, and then pushes his chair back and walks to Richard's side of the table.

RICHARD is surprised.

BRENDAN

Stand up.

RICHARD

Why?

BRENDAN

Just stand up.

RICHARD stands.

BRENDAN wraps his arms around him and hugs him. RICHARD does not respond for a moment, and then he hugs him back. Neither is in a hurry to break it off.

Brendan's cellphone rings. He looks at the caller ID.

BRENDAN

It's Irene.

RICHARD

Do you want me to excuse myself?

BRENDAN

No, no. It's all right. You might enjoy this.

BRENDAN answers the call and holds the phone to his ear.

BRENDAN

Hello, Irene.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Yeah, we got the check. We signed the consent judgment of dismissal and Fedexed it back. Did you get it?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Good. Well, I'm glad we were able to get it resolved.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Really? Next weekend?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Actually, I am free. But, hey, I have a better idea.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Do you have a brother?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Does he look anything like you?

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Well, your Facebook page makes you look pretty stunning, you know.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

Why don't you send him up instead? That might work better.

(listens)

BRENDAN (CONT'D)

You got it. Well, send him up if he's free. It's been a pleasure working with you, Irene.

He terminates the call, puts the phone back in his pocket, looks at Richard, and they both erupt in laughter.

The piano begins playing the musical theme from "Beside You."

BRENDAN

Listen!

RICHARD

What?

BRENDAN

I know that song. Wait. That sounds like one of Bobby's songs.

RICHARD

(a little perplexed)

Oh. That's good. It's pretty.

BRENDAN gently disentangles himself from Richard, with affection, grasping a shoulder in each hand as the last act of letting go.

BRENDAN

I'll be right back.

BRENDAN walks toward the piano, which might or might not be visible to the audience, but BRENDAN does not leave the stage.

He listens some more, and then begins to sing, softly and hesitantly at first, and then with greater confidence and intensity.

BRENDAN
(singing)

THE LIGHT WE SEE IS FAR,
FAR OLDER THAN WE THINK
TO REACH US, IT TAKES YEARS
SO EVEN IF IT DIED
WE CAN STILL SEE IT IN THE SKY

BLUE WHEN WE TUMBLED INTO BED
RED WHEN I PUSHED HIM AWAY
I THOUGHT MY EYES PLAYED TRICKS
LOOKING BACK TO THE PAST
BUT IT WAS A DOPPLER SHIFT
BRINGING OUT THE CONTRAST
BETWEEN OUR LOVE AND OUR CONFLICTS
TINTING THE PRESENT GRAY
FILLING ME WITH DREAD

OF A LIFE I CAN'T DENY
A LOVE I CAN NO LONGER HIDE
A LOVE NOW WITHOUT FEAR
I WOULD HAVE MISSED IT IF I'D BLINKED
BECAUSE HE WAS A SHOOTING STAR

YOU ARE STILL BESIDE ME
LIMBS ALIGNED
SPIRITS FUSED
HEARTS BEATING TOGETHER

The music fades.

LIGHTS DOWN