

Liberty
&
Joe DiMaggio

by David Ian Lee & L. Jay Edenmeyer

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

© 2007 by David Ian Lee & L. Jay Edenmeyer

CAUTION: Professionals and Amateurs are hereby warned that performance of **Liberty & Joe DiMaggio** is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of The United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth) and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission of which must be obtained from the Author in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for **Liberty & Joe DiMaggio** are controlled exclusively by Next Stage Press. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance written permission and paying the requisite fee. Inquiries concerning production rights should be addressed to licensing@nextstagepress.net

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce **Liberty & Joe DiMaggio** is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm, or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

Because so many can't.....we are.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

Liberty & Joe DiMaggio was originally produced in New York City, NY at Manhattan Theatre Source, under the direction of Nat Cassidy, Stage Managed by Sandra Yaklin, and featuring the following cast (in order of appearance):

ErikDavid Ian Lee
AlexL. Jay Edenmeyer
TherapistNat Cassidy
Vocal TalentJennifer Boutell
 Jess Draper
 Jason Howard
 Greg Skura
 Diane Vilardi

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

CAST: (2M, 1GN, Multiple Voice Roles)

Male

Erik (late 20's/Early 30's) – intelligent, direct, conservative, passionate

Alex (Mid 30's) – intelligent, no filter, broad, a bit of an imp, equally passionate

Gender Neutral

Therapist (40's-50's) – Voice only - Patient, assertive, persistent

VOICE ROLES (order of appearance)

Brian – Friend of Erik

Kim – Brian's wife – Also friend
of Erik

Erik's Mother

Ben – Alex's brother

Alex's Father

Mike – Colleague of Alex

Electronic Voice

Telemarketer

Man's Voice (Spanish)

Woman's Voice (Spanish)

Alex's Mother

Time: July 15, 2000 – June 1, 2003

Place: Battery Park Apartment, NYC

Note to Reader/Director: These two men genuinely love each other. They have differing opinions that they *enjoy* exploring together, even passionately. They are each other's willing and able foil, and it is their admiration and devotion that blinds them to their differences. There is danger in erring on the side of fighting....fight it.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

Scene 1 (The Morning After)
July 15, 2000

Lights up on the apartment of a young Manhattan professional. There is a fashionable sofa, a desk and chair, and a coffee table. There is a telephone answering machine with speakerphone. Exits lead to the kitchen and the bedroom. There is also a front door (practical) and a window (in the fourth wall). A hastily strewn trail of clothing leads from the front door to the bedroom. A few newspapers, half-read, lay on the sofa and coffee table. Billy Joel's "We didn't start the fire" is playing in the pre-show. During the musical intro, the lights shift and blackout. When lights are up in the scene, the music is coming from a laptop on the desk.

ERIK, late-twenties, corporate, is getting ready for work. He is reading the Wall Street Journal while brushing his teeth and "mmmphing" to the lyrics. After a moment, multitasking, he crosses to where his shoes lay by the door and slips into them.

Enter ALEX from the bedroom. Mid- thirties, clean-cut with an edge of the Bohemian. Bed hair. He crosses to the sofa to pick up the jeans discarded there the night before and puts them on as he watches Erik, who has not seen him yet. After a moment, Erik looks back and sees him there. A moment.

ALEX. Hi.

ERIK. Hi. (He stops the music which has been playing on his computer.)

ALEX. (newspapers.) What's goin' on in the world? (Erik hands the newspaper to Alex and crosses into the bedroom, heads for the bathroom. The conversation continues without interruption.)

ERIK. (offstage) Bill Clinton's invited Arafat up to Camp David.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Oh. Good luck with that...*(Sees another paper on coffee table.)*
Oh, Garfield. *(Crosses around sofa, grabs paper and sits.)*

ERIK. *(offstage.)* Don't you need to get dressed?

ALEX. My assignment ended last week.

ERIK. *(reentering, tying his tie.)* Aww, Alex... Who'll bring me my files from the microfiche room?

ALEX. Whatever young thang they hire to temp next.

ERIK. Hot. *(to computer table – packing up office/computer/work stuff.)*

ALEX. I float during the summer. Next week I'm on 44. Lunch by that big . . . ball thing?

ERIK. The Sphere. Maybe.

ALEX. Did you like the play last night?

ERIK. Uh. Yeah, I liked the, uh...the part, uh –

ALEX. You didn't like it?

ERIK. No. Not really my thing, I'm afraid. But I'm glad we finally got together. Look, you can stay here as long as you want. There's eggs and O.J. in the 'fridge; I'd make you a Texas omelet, but I'm running late.

ALEX. *(crossing to 4th wall window.)* Erik, My God, your view is fantastic.

ERIK. *(joins Alex in looking out the window.)* The real reason I live in Battery Park. *(he puts his arm around Alex, of which Alex is acutely aware)* That's our floor, where we work. Well, where I work and where you used to work before you got fired.

ALEX. My assignment ended. *(Close to one another, they begin to touch, nuzzle, Erik plays with the chain around Alex's neck)* I want you to know...on a first date, I don't...I've never done that. Before.

ERIK. One of my two favorite "morning after" lies, the other being. I usually last longer.

ALEX. I do.

ERIK. Me, too. *(They are about to kiss, but Alex pulls away and bolts for the bathroom.)*

ALEX. Not yet I didn't brush my teeth I'll taste like cow pie. Do you have any mouthwash? *(The conversation continues as Erik finishes getting ready for work.)*

ERIK. Yeah, under the sink. So, what'll you do today?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. *(Offstage. Intermittent gargling and spitting noises.)* Write. I promised my editor new pages a week ago.

ERIK. Uh-oh.

ALEX. Yeah, “uh-oh”. I have to deliver WHOA, whoa! *(Alex reenters, covering shock.)* Why do you have a poster from the '92 Republican Convention hanging over your toilet?

ERIK. I was a treasury intern with the leadership that came down from Ohio.

ALEX. You were in Houston?

ERIK. Yeah. Why? Did you go?

ALEX. Yeah. I led a protest march outside.

ERIK. Aha... *(The men share a look.)*

ALEX. Erik O'Brien, you are an enigma.

ERIK. Is that a problem?

ALEX. *(Beat)* No. I prefer things messy and delicious.

ERIK. Well...see you later, Blue Stater. *(heads for door.)*

ALEX. After while, you...Godless Republican twat.

ERIK. *(Laughs, stops at door.)* Yeah, we'll talk about my poster, and we'll talk about that thing around your neck.

ALEX. *(Putting pendant ERIK had pulled out back in shirt.)* It's called a cross.

ERIK. Oh, I'm sorry. It looked like an albatross. *(Another look. These men enjoy playing rough.)*

ALEX. So...I'll call you, I guess?

ERIK. *(crossing to Alex, who remains still, uncertain.)* Alex, do your writing here *(leans in and bites Alex's lip)* and you'll see me at five. *(Erik turns and heads out the door, Alex watching him as lights fade.)*

Scene 2 (Moving In)

April 7, 2001

In the shift, the machine beeps.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

BRIAN. *(message)* So, Erik, you're off to Texas to meet the in-laws, huh? Be brave, friend. Kim and I will miss you at the annual Christma-channah-quanzikah feast... We really like Alex, buddy. Happy holiday! *(The two men enter from front door bringing on boxes and personal affects. Alex heads for the bathroom as Erik places box on the coffee table and puts a throw on the back of the sofa.)*

ALEX. I'm gonna put my DVD's on the shelf by your fishbowl.

ERIK. Just don't scare Goldwater. He's skittish.

ALEX. *(stops and turns)* You named your goldfish Goldwater? What kind of gay man are you? *(Exits)*

ERIK. There's no such thing as gay or straight, only different shades of bi.

ALEX. *(Offstage.)* Really?

ERIK. Scientifically proven.

ALEX. *(Entering with personal items he places on shelves, books, bible, framed pictures, a childhood animal.)* And how, exactly, do you feel about poonanni?

ERIK. Barf.

ALEX. Preeeeetty.

ERIK. Thanks.

ALEX. And he's a goldfish, of course he's skittish.

ERIK. What does that mean?

ALEX. He's a goldfish! *(looks at him. Looks suddenly to left, completely startled)* Gasp! I'm under water! *(looks around totally relaxing. Looks suddenly to the left, completely startled.)* Gasp! I'm under water! *(he cracks up. Erik stares.)* You don't think that's funny? *(Erik stares)* A goldfish? Memory - like 3 seconds? *(Erik stares. Alex gives up.)* Fine. *(crosses to coffee table box.)*

ERIK. *(Fidgeting with the answering machine.)* Do you know how to work this?

ALEX. Erik, that's your machine.

ERIK. I'm techno-tarded. Can you do it?

ALEX. *(crossing to him.)* Sure, you just...no. *(Joins in the fidgeting.)*

ERIK. Well, we're relatively intelligent people, I'm sure we can figure it out.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. I don't know, we may be different shades of intelligent...Okay, here, we push this and then. Start talking. (*pushes button.*)

ERIK. Okay.

ALEX. No, start talking, talk!

ERIK. What? Oh, oh hey -- Hi!

ALEX. (*Pushes the off button.*) Maybe we should plan this.

ERIK. You wanna script something?

ALEX. Well, I don't think we need to call the Writer's Guild, but... (*Alex smiles, shrugs. The two share a conspiratorial grin.*) Ready? I'm pushing the button in 3, 2, 1 –

ERIK. (*Overlap.*) I don't know what to say!

ALEX. Make it up! (*Pushes the button.*)

ERIK. Uh, you've reached Erik --

ALEX. And me! (*kneels by machine.*)

ERIK. And Alex. We can't get to the phone right now --

ALEX. Or don't want to.

ERIK. Stop.

ALEX. No.

ERIK. (*joining him.*) So, if you're friends or family, you're aware of what I have to put up with.

ALEX. Hey!

ERIK. And if this is work related – we need the money.

ALEX. Are you done?

ERIK. I am in 3, 2, 1. (*pushes the off button.*) That's a fun message. (*Alex makes a face.*) You wanna tape it again? (*The phone begins to ring. Erik reaches to answer it.*)

ALEX. No, look at that! It's a sign! It's the first call in my new home, with you, with our answering machine message. It's lucky! It's a -- what do you call it? – it's a *mitzvah*!

ERIK. Not sure that's what you mean. (*The answering machine beeps.*)

ERIK'S MOTHER. -- can't work this damn thing? I don't know. Erik? Erik? Did you move? Why is this man's voice on your telephone? Erik, it's your mother. (*Alex crosses to sofa and sits trying to keep from laughing.*) In Chicago! It's Passover; did you even try to call your poor mother and your Mick-goy of a father on this day? No, no. Your sister, she

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

called! But you, you're in New York. Big deal! For five minutes you could – *(The machine beeps as the message runs out of available space.)*

ALEX. Not a *mitzvah*? *(Erik shakes his head. Alex bursts into laughter. The lights shift.)*

Scene 3 (Happy Anniversary)
August 15, 2001

In the shift, the machine beeps.

BEN. Hey big brother, this is Ben. Uncle Sam called me up for the weekend; I'm doing a training mission at the base at Autec Andros. That's in the Bahamas, baby! They called me up for the weekend to go to the Bahamas! *(Laughs.)* Hope you and Erik are enjoying August in New York! I love ya. I love that message, bro. Bye! *(The lights come up, low, on Eric and Alex sitting on the sofa. Erik has a wrapped package, which he hands to Alex. In the blackout they have put on matching rings.)*

ERIK. And, the last. This is from my mother.

ALEX. Your mother? Uh oh. *(ALEX opens the gift and stares into the box.)*

ERIK. *(stare in with him)* What is that?

ALEX. I don't know. But it scares me.

ERIK. Happy Anniversary, Alex.

ALEX. Happy happy. *(The begin to kiss. As the passion ignites, lights shift.)*

Scene 4 (Family Prep)
September 10, 2001

The beep of the answering machine, and we hear.

ERIK'S MOTHER. Still clever, Erik. I would have thought you would have changed that message by now. We will see you tomorrow. *(The lights come up on Erik, sitting on the sofa, folding laundry. There is an exasperated growl from Alex offstage. After a Beat, he enters from the*

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

bathroom wearing yellow latex gloves. He removes them as he crosses to the desk, puts gloves on desk and sits. He watches Erik for a second.)

ALEX. *(A bit aggressive.)* That's a bad hat, Erik.

ERIK. October 9th, 1993, my dad bought this hat for me at Skydome; Scott Radinsky signed it from the dugout.

ALEX. Scott Radinsky pops a fly into the stands tomorrow you're gonna be able to catch it with your left ear and throw it back with your right.

ERIK. He's retired, and he was a pitcher.

ALEX. *(heads toward bookshelf.)* Funny, I pegged him for a catcher.

ERIK. Honey, if you wanted to go you should have said something.

ALEX. I shouldn't have to. Your brother should have just gotten me a ticket.

ERIK. You don't even like baseball.

ALEX. It's passive aggressive.

ERIK. *(laughing a little – this is all light.)* Look, he knows you don't follow the game. And we have tickets for the series, it's three whole days. I'm sure he just didn't want to make you feel left out.

ALEX. Really? *(as he crosses to beside Erik.)* Because not inviting me? SO inclusive.

ERIK. No . . . I'm sure he just meant to . . . alright, fine! I hear what you're saying. But, don't be difficult, you know what I mean. It's kind of a family thing.

ALEX. Oh, see, you're really not very good at this!

ERIK. I mean my family. *(Alex makes 'Ahhhh' sound as he vigorously displays ring finger.)* OKAY WAIT! I -- It's the White Sox, we're from Chicago!

ALEX. *(Light.)* It's okay, I get it. It just . . . It wouldn't have hurt for him to get me a ticket, that's all I'm saying. *(Erik playfully throws an article of clothing at him. In his effort to avoid, Alex knocks tchachke off the phone table. Playing with Erik.)* Son of a bitch. *(realization.)* Oh – Shit!

Ohshitohshitohshit!

ERIK. What?!

ALEX. The . . . thing! Oh, shit!!

ERIK. Use your words.

ALEX. Shit is a very appropriate word right now!

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. Stop. Breathe. Explain.

ALEX. That thing that your mother gave us. (*he is picking up pieces.*)

ERIK. What thing?

ALEX. (*showing.*) This. . . THiNG! I don't know what the hell it is. It's a thing, from the mother.

ERIK. Throw it away.

ALEX. Throw it away?!

ERIK. You never liked it anyway.

ALEX. Not the point.

ERIK. It doesn't matter.

ALEX. Have you met your mother?

ERIK. It's not important.

ALEX. Oh, it is to her. Every time she comes here – it's like this laser shoots from her eyes and catalogues every item in the room she has ever given us.

ERIK. Could you stop making my mother sound like a goddamned cyborg?

ALEX. Erik, I've asked you not to say that?

ERIK. Cyborg?

ALEX. No! G.D.

ERIK. But, if you don't use all your letters you can't say all your words.

ALEX. (*not amused.*) Ha.

ERIK. Every other word out of your mouth is "fuck".

ALEX. "Fuck" is not taking the Lord's name in vain.

ERIK. (*accommodating.*) Alright. Sorry.

ALEX. Thank you. (*Beat.*) What's a cyborg?

ERIK. (*laughing.*) Nevermind.

ALEX. (*about tchotchke.*) Well, what am I supposed to do about this?

ERIK. It's just a thing, it doesn't matter.

ALEX. Said the man who didn't break it.

ERIK. You're way too stressed about this. You don't even like it. Throw it away and help me fold.

ALEX. It doesn't matter if I like it or not. She gave it to us! (*Erik takes it from him and heads toward the kitchen to throw it away. Alex calls after him.*) And gifts from a mother to her son and his . . . insert euphemism

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

here - are supposed to mean more ... because they ... I don't know.... the gay thing. (*picks up shirt Erik had thrown at him – starts to fold and then throws onto sofa.*) I don't like folding.

ERIK. (*enters carry small brush and dustpan set, hands to Alex.*) Or washing, or drying, or doing the dishes. How's that bathroom coming?

ALEX. (*cleaning up shards.*) Can't I just sweep up broken stuff?

ERIK. There's nothing else broken. (*Behind Erik's back Alex reaches for the telephone unit – Erik doesn't even look.*) Put it down.

ALEX. (*exits to dump pan.*) Oh, your mother called.

ERIK. Was that her on the machine? What did she say?

ALEX. (*re-enters to behind sofa.*) She said, "Why do you still have a machine?" Something stoic. And that she would see *YOU* tomorrow. When do they get here?

ERIK. Their flight leaves Chicago at noon, so, here by 3. You know, I really wish you would relax. They like you. Besides, I love you, it doesn't matter what they think.

ALEX. (*sitting on sofa.*) Oh, that's crap and you know it. Everyone wants their family to like their spouse.

ERIK. Well, they do like you.

ALEX. Except your brother the homophobe.

ERIK. Why are you being so aggressive?

ALEX. I'm not. I'm being antagonistic. Aggression is destructive. Antagonism is entertaining.

ERIK. Well, you're about to lose your audience. Look, you can't change them and they don't want to change you. Be yourself. I've learned to tolerate you. (*Alex smacks his leg.*) Ow, I mean, you and I are as disparate as they come, but, we've managed. And your family and I aren't exactly ideologically bound, but they accept me.

ALEX. That's because we're liberals. We accept everyone. Even the wrong ones.

ERIK. And we exclude everyone equally, so I don't know why you feel especially singled out. Okay, *basta*. I really need to get this laundry done and the bathroom cleaned and you need to shape up because it will be my turn to freak out tomorrow and I need you back in the game.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. *(coming onto him a little and leaning in for kiss.)* Baseball reference. Nice.

ERIK. Now. *(taps Alex's forehead with the bill of his cap.)* Please help me with the laundry?

ALEX. Alright.

ERIK. And, just for the record. My brother is not a homophobe.

ALEX. Well, he's not exactly an ally.

ERIK. Besides, you can't be a homophobe if you don't believe in homosexuality.

ALEX. You wanna run that bit of mental gymnastics past me again?

ERIK. There's no such thing as –

ALEX. *(Overlap.)* ... as gay or straight, just blah blah blah. Erik, is there something you wanna tell me?

ERIK. No, absolutely not. I am definitely on your team. You're all I want. Done reassuring you now.... But, the theory is valid.

ALEX. This conversation is way too Kinsey for me. *(Erik finds a blue button-down shirt in the laundry, throws it over his shoulder.)* Oh, I love that shirt on you.

ERIK. I'm gonna wear it tomorrow.

ALEX. *(taking shirt.)* Let me iron it.

ERIK. Really?

ALEX. Well, I'll steam it.

ERIK. Steam it?

ALEX. Okay, I'm gonna take a shower later and let the steam, ya know, steam it.

ERIK. Thanks?

ALEX. Not your bitch. *(throws down garment, gets up and walks to side of sofa.)* I can't do this anymore. Why didn't we take it to Mrs. Wu?

ERIK. Doesn't hurt to handle your own laundry every now and then. Keeps you grounded.

ALEX. *(crosses to desk to pick up the latex gloves.)* I'm a recovering redneck with an apparently bi-sexual, heathen of a husband bound for hell. That's all the grounding I need.

ERIK. I might get to go to that purgatory place.

ALEX. Hmmm. No. Not Catholic.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. So, straight to hell?

ALEX. You don't believe in hell.

ERIK. Jew's are smart, what can I tell you?

ALEX. You're only Jewish when it's convenient.

ERIK. Damn. Hell's gonna suck.

ALEX. *(crossing to kitchen.)* Well, ya never know. People change.

ERIK. Leopards and spots and all that.

ALEX. *(stops and turns.)* Honey, that's about leopards. You're a people.

ERIK. Still lookin' to convert, huh?

ALEX. I'm patient. I've got time.

ERIK. *(putting laundry basket in ALEX' hands.)* How do you know I won't leave you for a Pagan?

ALEX. 'Cause you're an atheist – you like structure. *(exits as ERIK heads for desk. Blackout.)*

**Scene 5 (How's your day?)
September 11, 2001**

The set remains dark, but on the wall we see the projection of a computer screen and the following instant message conversation.

AlexTGr8. Morning Erik.

SoxROX. thnx for staying home today

AlexTGr8. I have work I can do here and this way can prep for your family.

SoxROX. awwww

AlexTGr8. Shut iup

AlexTGr8. Up

SoxROX. thnx.

AlexTGr8. Besides, BEAUTIFUL DAY! So BLUE! Later will probably sit in the park. I still get all Forrest Gump over the ground fountain.

SoxROX. should be outta here by 3

AlexTGr8. Are you going straight to the game or coming here?

SoxROX. there. parents arriving from newark 4ish

AlexTGr8. I have you alone for a whole hour or so? ☺

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

AlexTGr8. ;-)

AlexTGr8. ;-)

AlexTGr8. ;-) WHY won't this damn thing wink?

SoxROX. I got it

SoxROX. and you might have me for an hour

SoxROX. or so ☺

AlexTGr8. Yay ME!

AlexTGr8. What are you wearing (DAMN WINK GOES HERE!)

SoxROX. nothing ☺

AlexTGr8. NICE!

SoxROX. basta.

AlexTGr8. Okay. Just know that when you get here I holy shit! Did you hear that?!

SoxROX. Hold on.

AlexTGr8. What the hell was that? The apartment just shook like an earthquake! Can you see anything over this way?

AlexTGr8. Erik. Look out your window.

AlexTGr8. BUZZ!

AlexTGr8. Erik?

****Erik has left the chat*** (Slow blackout as we hear the phone ring. The machine picks up. Message and then.)*

ERIK'S MOTHER. Erik? Are you there? It has taken forever to get through. Call me as soon as you get this! *(pause.)* Erik?! *(click. Phone Rings; Machine. Message and then.)*

ALEX'S FATHER. Alex? Son? Oh, God. Call us. Please. We just want to know that you are okay. Is anyone there? *(Click. We hear a phone ring, a click of an answer and.)*

ELECTRONIC VOICE. This box is full. *(Blackout.)*

Scene 5 (Politically Incorrect)

November 28, 2002

Lights rise on Alex who is asleep on the sofa. After a couple of moments, we see him jerk awake, perhaps from a nightmare. He slowly sits up, he is

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

very groggy. He is wearing some variation of sleeping clothes. After re-orienting himself, he looks around the room.

ALEX. *(in a sudden panic.)* Erik?

ERIK. *(entering from the kitchen. He is dressed for the office. He crosses around sofa to take Alex's hand.)* Yeah?

ALEX. There you are, I –

ERIK. Are you okay?

ALEX. Yeah, of course, I just...didn't know where you were.

ERIK. *(sitting beside ALEX and putting his arm around him.)* You look exhausted.

ALEX. I slept. All. Day. I wandered out here, and went back to sleep, I woke up, Martha was making macaroni mosaics, so I made a sandwich with mayonnaise, I thought about going online, and instead I went back to sleep. My day.

ERIK. You're gonna be up all night.

ALEX. I am a creature of the night.

ERIK. Children of the night, blah blah blah.

ALEX. *(overlap.)* Less Van Helsing, more Buffy Summers.

ERIK. She'd still put a stake in your heart.

ALEX. You wouldn't let her.

ERIK. Are you kidding? I'd fuckin' sell you out for a Happy Meal. Speaking of – you hungry?

ALEX. Gettin' there. Ah! Wait here! *(Alex disappears into the kitchen. Offstage)* Wanna ruin your dinner? *(Reappears, and from behind his back produces an ice cream bar.)* C'est bon, n'est pas?

ERIK. Very nice. A bit out of season, but –

ALEX. *(sitting back on sofa.)* I had a craving.

ERIK. You went to the store?

ALEX. No, I had them delivered.

ERIK. Oh.

ALEX. Oh, and something came for you today. *(Points to a large, open box on floor by desk.)*

ERIK. Oh! Good. *(Erik crosses to box.)*

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. That thing weighs fifty pounds. The delivery guy said something in Spanish when he dropped it off; I don't know what, but it sounded mean...and not just a little hot, but --

ERIK. Paper is one of the heaviest, most expensive things to ship. It takes up so much space --

ALEX. *(Snores. Erik kneels and begins looking the box, fascinated. Alex crosses behind him and begins unloading and stacking books.)* What are these?

ERIK. They're called books.

ALEX. *(leaning his knees into Erik's back.)* None by me, they can't be good.

ERIK. You haven't published any yet, my dear. But when you do, I left an entire shelf blank to be filled with your bestsellers.

ALEX. Thank you.

ERIK. Did you write today?

ALEX. Did you listen? *(crossing back to flop on sofa.)* In between bouts of sleeping, lolling, and dreaming about the sultry delivery man?

ERIK. Sultry?

ALEX. So you are listening! I was beginning to think you weren't really here.

ERIK. Sorry. *(Let's out a long breath. While crossing to Alex.)* Hi!

ALEX. Hi! *(they kiss.)* Eat your ice-cream, it's melting. *(Erik opens his mouth, leans over, tastes the ice cream.)*

ERIK. My God, that's good. Too rich. *(walks away back to desk and books.)*

ALEX. So, really...what's with all the books?

ERIK. Just a little extra-curricular reading. Afghanistan, The Sudan, Middle East --

ALEX. Okay, have fun with that. Those, stay out here.

ERIK. Sure. You'll hardly know they're here.

ALEX. Really? 'Cause you could open another wing at the New York Public Library.

ERIK. Did you know the main branch is strictly a museum and research library?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. I'll remember that the next time we play *Trivial Pursuit*, damn you're literal!

ERIK. Okay, fine. (*rises.*) You wanna hear a joke?

ALEX. I'm all ears.

ERIK. I thought I was all ears?

ALEX. (*Disappointed, lying back and covering head with throw.*) Oh, tell me that wasn't it.

ERIK. What do gay cows eat?

ALEX. (*Beat – then holds a finger in the air, not looking at Erik.*) This already does not bode well for you...

ERIK. “Ha-ay!”

ALEX. Not funny.

ERIK. Oh, come on.

ALEX. Not funny. You know better than that.

ERIK. It's a joke.

ALEX. (*sits up.*) It's bigoted, offensive, and not just a tad self-hating.

ERIK. I'm not self-hating, I hate everybody, equally.

ALEX. Lame and juvenile.

ERIK. I thought you liked that I was your comparative juvenile?

ALEX. I'd prefer you hover around the level of Harvard Lampoon, not MAD Magazine.

ERIK. You don't understand, Alex. Spend all day in a little grey cubicle speaking Corporate-ese, and all the things you're not “supposed” to say start to rattle around inside your head. I don't know why the caged bird sings, but I'm sure whatever he's singing about would get Howard Stern fired. (*crossing to kitchen.*)

ALEX. Maya Angelou no doubt appreciates your generous contemplation of her work.

ERIK. (*entering back to desk.*) The last time I was in a meeting with our comptroller, all I'm thinking is, “Dear God, Birnbaum's nose is *huge*, is anybody gonna mention the size of Birnbaum's nose? We're all seeing it, are we just going to pretend we're more interested in the fiscal quarter when this Jew's nose is the biggest thing in himey-town?”

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Ah ah ahhhh! You think you're clever, you think because you're Jewish and because you're gay it's okay for you to make offensive comments, but it's not. You're doing damage.

ERIK. You sing show tunes. You lust after Pedro from UPS and I'm the one doing damage?

ALEX. Excuse me, but, one, in the privacy of my own home I could wear fishnet stockings and dance around with a riding crop in my ass if that was my choosing –

ERIK. That'd be a bad choosing. (*crosses to chair and sits.*)

ALEX. And, B, you, with your different-shades-of-bi *bullshit* have lost all legitimacy when it comes to lecturing on what a gay man shouldn't think, let alone, do. If you're not on the boat you don't get to rock it.

ERIK. I'm sorry, but I have science on my side on this one –

ALEX. Must be a lonely side.

ERIK. It wouldn't be quite so lonely if the Religion Over Reason crowd wasn't always taking a leap of faith *off* my side and into the Gulf of Idiocy.

ALEX. (*laughing.*) What does that even mean?

ERIK. What? Is my metaphor too far reaching -- ?

ALEX. Obtuse and convoluted. What does it mean?

ERIK. I just don't understand aligning oneself with a people who find scientific thought to be such a threat, but who have no problem believing in a godda ...

ALEX. Ah.

ERIK. ... in a book ghostwritten by an invisible man in the sky.

ALEX. The book was Holy-Ghost written. And everything you say is, as always, reductionist, refutable, and fucking *wrong*.

ERIK. I can't drop a G.D. bomb, but fucking is okay?

ALEX. Better than okay, when you're doin' it right. (*Erik makes snapping gesture*) And you are a sanctimonious prig to condemn people of faith, when faith is the belief in that which is unseen. Because, Erik, when small government doesn't bring prosperity and NAFTA makes the trade deficit higher, what are *you* gonna believe in?

ERIK. The mountains, the oceans, giraffes, and earwigs were all created by Saturday, and on Sunday God put up his heels and watched the Packers?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. It's a metaphor!

ERIK. A Metaphor! (*rising and crossing to sit on back of sofa behind Alex.*) A rhetorical device, often used for humorous intent, as in, the grazing patterns of homosexual cows as related to a common exclamation heard on Christopher Street. And lo, from whence we beget and began we do return. (*kisses ALEX' forehead.*)

ALEX. (*Beat.*) You don't call yourself gay; you don't get to make fun of gay people.

ERIK. All right, fine, I'm gay; I'm gay as the day is long, happy? Can I tell a joke now?

ALEX. You never could before.

ERIK. But, now that I am really gay, aren't I supposed to be funnier?

ALEX. You're in a probationary period and probably shouldn't risk it.

ERIK. Can I make fun of the Irish?

ALEX. (*Beat. Wary...*) I'm listening....

ERIK. Well, have you heard about the two gay Irishmen, Michael Fitzpatrick and Patrick Fitzmichael? (*Alex smacks Erik's leg.*) (*Laughing.*) Oh, come on, that was funny!

ALEX. How would you like it if I started making fun of the Jews?

ERIK. (*as offended.*) Hey, hey, hey – (*sotto voce*) What's the difference between a Jew and a pizza?

ALEX. STOP! (*rises and crosses around sofa toward desk as Erik collapses on the sofa.*) You can't do that. You can't say these things that you think are so cute. Language matters, words matter. This is hurtful language.

ERIK. It's all just context! Some stranger walks in here, says, "Hey, Mick, Yid, Fundy." Okay, that's unacceptable, but, com' on, this is me!

ALEX. Fundy?

ERIK. Fundamentalist.

ALEX. (*grimace.*) But the context of this conversation is that these words do bother me. I hate when you say them. I get your point, but what you're really talking about is numbing. My grandmother died when I was seven, she was the first person I ever lost, and the image of her in that casket...It still hits, you know? And I want that. I don't want to re-contextualize that.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

I don't want to be desensitized. To me, this is the same. The things that matter . . . matter!

ERIK. Really?

ALEX. Yes. So...can you just, not?

ERIK. Okay. (*pause.*) Okay, not a dig at your faith, but, I don't get that whole Christian *mishigoss*, "Hey, let's all go check out the body," bit. Jews don't do that.

ALEX. (*mocking a little.*) Your dad's Irish. You never went to a wake?

ERIK. My dad's from Cleveland, he doesn't sit at home playing "Danny Boy" on his fife and drum.

ALEX. (*crosses and sits on sofa, pulls Erik's legs into his lap.*) You've never been to a funeral, like, of the open-casket sort?

ERIK. Oh, of course. I didn't say I don't go, I said I don't get it. It's just not something we do. Jews are pragmatic, smart --

ALEX. Efficient?

ERIK. Well, that has a touch of German on it. But, Jew's aren't interested in the *show-and-tell bit*. "Ishmael is dead, the desert's hot, we're on the move...Let's get some heavy rocks and plant this guy before he starts to stink --"

ALEX. Okay, you know...can we just, change the subject, just a bit?

ERIK. (*sits up as Alex puts his legs in Erik's lap*) Sure. What do you want to do tonight?

ALEX. Make some pasta, watch *The West Wing* --

ERIK. The Left Wing.

ALEX. You prefer The History Channel? QVC?

ERIK. I'll trade you an hour of Martin Sheen and Aaron Sorkin for an hour of *Hannity & Colmes*.

ALEX. No.

ERIK. That's a concession, really;

ALEX. (*over. Sitting up on sofa.*) No!

ERIK. (*over*) Colmes is a big ol' granola-eating Left-Tard.

ALEX. Erik. I don't want to see the news. Any news.

ERIK. Ah, okay. I gotcha. Uh...well...You know what we could do?

ALEX. Hmm?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. You said pasta, pasta is good. (*rises and crosses to the side of the sofa by Alex.*) There's a new Mario Batali place in the Village. Why don't you call up Kim and Brian, you haven't seen them in months. (*Alex is shaking his head.*) Come on, they have tables in the back, you won't be bothered. Very private. And then, walk over to Union Square, that movie with all the elves and trolls opened last week. You liked the first one.

ALEX. You loved when we went to the Batali place over by the park. ...He's got a new place?

ERIK. It's Mario Batali, he's got, like...thirty.

ALEX. And this new one...? Do they deliver? (*Erik is about to speak.*) I'm sorry, I'm just –

ERIK. No, it's okay. Really. It was just an idea. (*kneels beside Alex.*) It does have to happen at some point, though.

ALEX. I know.

ERIK. You haven't left this apartment in over a year, Alex.

ALEX. I know. (*pause*) Hey, good news. I did do something today.

ERIK. Yeah?

ALEX. Yeah. I'm seeing my therapist again.

ERIK. Finally, thank God. (*Alex slaps Erik in the back of the head.*) Ow! No, this is good news. You went to his office?

ALEX. We talked over the phone. He agreed to work over the phone. For now.

ERIK. Hey, that's great.

ALEX. It is what it is.

ERIK. No, I mean, it's a start, it –

ALEX. It is what it is.

ERIK. Yeah. Yeah. (*Beat.*) Kinda hurt when you hit me in the head.

ALEX. Really?

ERIK. No. I didn't feel a thing.

ALEX. Come 'ere. (*Alex leans in and kisses the back of Erik's head. Lingers. Erik senses a change in Alex, a turn for the sentimental.*)

ERIK. You didn't hurt me. You couldn't hurt me.

ALEX. I know, I just...Wow. (*Gets up, moves to phone table. Distancing, all smiles.*) Wow!

ERIK. What?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Nope. Nothing.

ERIK. You -- ? *(rises)*

ALEX. Yep, yep! *(Eyes wide, a realization...)* Okay. Oh! It's Tuesday! That Russell Crowe movie is on at eight!

ERIK. That's in...five minutes. Hey, what was this thing, just a second ago --?

ALEX. Nothing. I wanna see that movie, that's what we're gonna do tonight. I'll order in, and we'll watch that movie. It's the one where he's the --

ERIK. I know, I've seen it.

ALEX. You don't want to watch the movie with me?

ERIK. I think maybe I want to read a little bit.

ALEX. Oh. Okay. *(Beat. Erik moves to the stack of books, his back to Alex, who watches him, waiting for him to change his mind. When it becomes clear that he won't...)* I missed you today. That's all. That thing before was. I missed you. *(Erik looks back at Alex [we don't need to see the look])* Agh, don't do that!

ERIK. Do what?

ALEX. *(Laughing, crossing away toward kitchen exit.)* That smile! It's that *smile thing* you do, you tilt your chin down and you look up at me like you're reading my head and it totally creeps me out but I *like it*, and I hate that you make me like it!

ERIK. I'm mentally projecting conservative brainwaves.

ALEX. Well, stop it. So much about you makes me want to shake you until your little Republican head jiggles on your little Republican neck like that awful adobe bobblehead on the dash of your mother's SUV --

ERIK. Scott Radinsky!

ALEX. You're an egghead and you make awful jokes and I'd swear you're a closeted homophobe were it not that you've had my dick in your mouth --

ERIK. I can't do that, I'm Jewish.

ALEX. *(quickly crosses toward him.)* And, I cannot, I cannot BELIEVE you registered in Ohio for the 2000 election --

ERIK. You'll never forgive that one, huh?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Four points? *Four percentage points?!* And you didn't even live there! *(begins to exit.)* And somehow, somehow, in the midst of all this neo-conservative log cabin mishi-gishi...

ERIK. *Mishigas.*

ALEX. *(turns to him)* Thank you, *THAT...* I love you. I could just...*(Makes a strangling gesture as he turns to exit.)*

ERIK. Alex, in that Russell Crowe movie, about twenty minutes in --

ALEX. *(turns back and crosses to Erik as he speaks.)* Ack! That's another thing you do! Stop! I don't wanna know anything, I want to be surprised. I have an MFA in English literature. I have a dizzying command of structure and rhetorical device - *you* wanna play Show & Tell *with the movie I haven't seen!* *(as he kneels in front of Erik)* Stop it, zip it, save it -- And I promise when we debate and discuss it later, I'll even tell you how you *misinterpreted* the scene, just like you ALWAYS do, because. NO, Bruce Willis was NOT a figment of the wee boy's imagination, you Neolithic fuckwit, he was a *ghost.* *(rising)* I love you, *you're wonderful, but please...* *(crossing out)* *Let me have my Russell Crowe experience.* *(stops and turns back.)* And when I'm done, if you've not come to bed, I may just put in my DVD of *Romper Stomper* and touch myself inappropriately. I'm sorry, I know - he was a Nazi in that film. But he was a hot, naked, pretty-damn-gay-shade-of-bi Nazi. I'll repent later, but, for now, I am only human. *(takes a bow and begins to exit.)*

ERIK. Alex. In that Russell Crowe movie, there's a plane crash. About twenty minutes in.

ALEX. *(freezes him.)* Thank you. *(Beat. Erik opens the book he pulled from his briefcase, begins to read. ALEX, puppy dog, mumbly.)* You really sure you don't...wanna...you know...watch the movie...with me?

ERIK. Can I read a bit first?

ALEX. How long?

ERIK. About twenty minutes. *(Alex smiles, exits into bedroom.)*

ALEX. *(From offstage.)* Make it nineteen. *(blackout)*

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

Scene 6 (Taxi Ride)
January, 2003

In the black, we hear a machine beep and then.

MIKE. Yo, Alex! Mike. Sorry it took so long to call. Listen, it took awhile but we're finally back up and running. We're over in Jersey and the demand for design is outta control. I got promoted. Man, I am somebody's boss! *(a little smug)* Several somebodies' actually, he-he. Anyway, I gotta hire a couple a guys, and I would really like if you would consider coming back. Permanent this time. No more temping like before. Take your time to decide, but it would be great to have you on my team. Call me. And watch ya back. *(Lights rise on Alex who is leaning against the back of the sofa. He speaks to the speaker phone, which is on the coffee table. He is speaking to his therapist.)*

ALEX. Okay, clarify for me, is that Oedipal or Freudian or are they the same thing?

THERAPIST. I just asked if you had heard from your mother.

ALEX. Yeah, but it's like a lawyer LITERALLY chasing an ambulance – as a therapist, do people even take you seriously when the word mother comes out of your mouth? *(no response.)* Okay, so no answer forthcoming?

THERAPIST. Oedipal IS Freudian.

ALEX. *(crossing around in front of coffee table.)* I can't see you anymore if you're gonna be wittier than me.

THERAPIST. I haven't SEEN you, yet.

ALEX. *(stopping USB by desk)* And no bantering so no, my mother and I are not talking.

THERAPIST. Why?

ALEX. *(offhand correction.)* Why not - Ummm can't communicate without contact.

THERAPIST. I mean the reasons.

ALEX. *(continuing a circle.)* There are a lot. She seems to have some problems with my current lifestyle.

THERAPIST. I thought your family was fine with your sexuality.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Hello! Millennium! She organized a chapter of PFLAG in my hometown of 2000 people. Got no problem with it. She's better about it than I am. *(stop by desk and turn to phone.)* And no! I am fine with my orienta . . . I just, I'm making a point. She doesn't understand my, uh, staying at home 'thing'. She kinda wiggled out on me and I - sort of - told her to - mind her - own - fucking - business. So, she's currently not a fan.
THERAPIST. Is it insurmountable?

ALEX. *(to sofa arm.)* Not sure. But when a church organist steps out of her Sunday School class - which she teaches by the way - to call and tell you she was thinkin' of you while talking to Jesus - "mind your own fucking business" tends to leave a mark. *(Erik enters the room - looking for his laptop - Alex approaches him and paces back and forth while Erik is present - this is all for Erik)* But, she is very happy for me about the book. Even the subject. It's so hard, in this society, to identify as a Christian and a Liberal AND a homosexual. *(Erik gives a thumbs up)* People want so desperately to compartmentalize. I mean, how do you justify believing in the purity of Christ's sacrifice and being pro-choice? Or, ya know, how do you suck cock and love Jesus? *(Erik, God help us, crosses himself and finishes with an international sign for blowjobs.)* And to be put in the position of constantly having to defend all of your beliefs and to almost everyone becomes taxing. So, the book really addresses - - the dichotomy we find more and more in society as morality, political views, and religion continually evolve. *(Erik has slowly left during this last line or so - as soon as he is gone, Alex can stop talking - around the double hyphen section.) (almost to himself)* And wouldn't that all be nice.

THERAPIST. Well, have you come up with a title?

ALEX. *(absent.)* For what?

THERAPIST. The book.

ALEX. Oh! Umm no. I haven't really even started on it.

THERAPIST. But, you said your mom was happy about it.

ALEX. Oh, *(crossing and leaning toward phone - softly.)* that was for Erik.

THERAPIST. For Erik?

ALEX. Yeah. He came in while I was talking about mom and I don't want him to know we're having problems. And, he thinks I am just tearin' away

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

on that book. (*crosses upstage of sofa.*) I mean, the topic IS interesting and maybe that is the direction, but, I kinda made all that up.

THERAPIST. Alex, you shouldn't be making things up.

ALEX. (*laughs.*) Well, let's not get dramatic. Call it brainstorming for book ideas.

THERAPIST. That's enough. We're done today.

ALEX. No post-cranial-coital spooning? (*nothing.*) Fine. (*crossing to pick up the phone base.*) I simply cannot wait to pick this up again. (*nothing.*) Are you there? (*nothing – Alex takes phone US to phone table.*) And, goodbye.

ERIK. (*re-entering at the end of the call*) So, how'd it go?

ALEX. He's abrupt!

ERIK. Ummmm, Alex, darling. . .

ALEX. I know! But, he's not paying *me*!!

ERIK. Would that he were!

ALEX. Stop it, we're doing fine.

ERIK. Oh, and I know I'm gonna come up in your therapy, but I take some offense to you lying about –

ALEX. That's private!

ERIK. Hon, there's really very little private between you and me anymore

--

ALEX. (*over*) Eric, enough! We're fine and I am not going to discuss this right now.

ERIK. Would you at least. . .

ALEX. No, I won't. And, seriously, I am done with this conversation. (*he heads into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee. ERIK sits on sofa with laptop and earpieces.*)

ERIK. Whatcha doin'?

ALEX. Coffee. Want some?

ERIK. No. (*Alex returns and goes to the table to begin working on the computer*) It's beautiful outside.

ALEX. Uh-huh.

ERIK. The fountain's on.

ALEX. You are really pushing today.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. I just said . . .

ALEX. Okay, let me make this easy. *(pointing to each as he “says their lines.”)* *(Erik)* Beautiful day, Alex. *(self)* No, Erik. *(Erik)* I will now pretend to talk about something random when what I really mean is you should leave the house. *(self)* Not gonna happen. *(Erik)* Can I push you to the breaking point? *(self)* Quite possibly! But, I will not, under any circumstance, leave this apartment today. Are we done here?

ERIK. I guess so. *(he walks out of room.)*

ALEX. *(after a pause – to the other room.)* So, it was clear, when you married me that I was part bitch, right?

ERIK. *(from off.)* I had an inkling. *(he re-enters.)*

ALEX. Sorry. You got stuck with a half-breed.

ERIK. Now, why is half-breed okay and himey is not?

ALEX. *(smiling.)* Cause I said it. *(crosses to Erik.)* A little more time. I really wanna see it. All of it. I do miss it, *(crossing to L of sofa.)* even in January. *(Sits.)* What does it look like out there?

ERIK. *(crossing to window.)* Austere. Commercial. There are street vendors, selling shirts and picture books. Paperweights. They’ve cleared the pit, but it’s --

ALEX. *(stopping him.)* No, not that. I mean...?

ERIK. Beautiful. *(as he crosses to Alex behind sofa.)* There’s a powdering of snow. They’re sending ferries to and from the Statue again. All the people along the river walk are wearing turtlenecks and scarves. Walking their dogs. Laughing. And there are so many children out there, playing. A lot of them are playing with those video game things, but...at least they’re playing.

ALEX. I want one.

ERIK. They’re pretty cheap now, you can buy them on Canal for, like, a hundred bucks.

ALEX. *(laughing.)* No. I mean. I want one.

ERIK. Ah. Well. First things first. You can be a stay-at-home dad, but...you probably shouldn’t literally stay at home. *(Erik and Alex take a moment – connected. Erik smiles and walks over and pats the seat of the rolling chair.)* Come here.

ALEX. *(misunderstanding – pats the sofa next to him.)* You come here.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. No, not that, miscreant! Come. Sit. Here.

ALEX. Why?

ERIK. Just, please. In the chair. *(Alex complies. Erik, in a broad Indian accent.)* Thank you for riding in Erik's cab.

ALEX. Oh, more racism, please!

ERIK. *(Erik kisses the top of Alex's head.)* Where to, Sir?

ALEX. *(Hesitant, then with a roll of the eyes.)* Battery Park.

ERIK. *(fast acceleration to DSR.)* Battery Park is home to the ever popular ground fountain, Castle Clinton, and offers a spectacular view of Lady Liberty.

ALEX. Huddled, yearning, yadda.... Next.

ERIK. Fine, *(crossing stage front and ending DSL.)* as we journey round the southern tip towards the Brooklyn Bridge and the - can't remember the name of that other bridge....

ALEX. Manhattan.

ERIK. Thank you -- you have South Street Seaport boasting schooners, luxury ships and ferries!

ALEX. Ha-ay!

ERIK. See, I told you that was funny.

ALEX. *(pointing.)* Where we first met. *(Erik reaches over, grabs Alex's arm and readjusts it slightly.)*

ERIK. Fast forward to...*(spins and heads upstage eventually ending behind sofa.)* 5th Avenue! Rockefeller Center on your right. And to your left, St. Patrick's. God must be home, there are an awful lot of people visiting. *(Erik takes in Alex, who is still looking off to the left.)* Alex?

ALEX. *(Pointing, nostalgic.)* You taught me to ice skate.

ERIK. Too crowded. If you want we could turn around and head up toward Central Park?

ALEX. Oh! Drive me to Bethesda Fountain.

ERIK. *(spins him in a huge circle and ends sitting on the edge of the coffee table and holding Alex's hands, looking in his eyes.)* And here we are.

ALEX. Broke laws to get here.

ERIK. We have a lot to see.

ALEX. Oooh, but this is the one. This is my favorite.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. How very Kushner of you.

ALEX. *(covering Erik's face.)* I don't care. She's perfect. The sculptor was amazing.

ERIK. Sculptress.

ALEX. What?

ERIK. Emma Stebbins, the sculptress. The first woman ever commissioned by New York City for a major work of art.

ALEX. A veritable font you are.

ERIK. *(smirks)* In front of a fount! *(smiles. Beat.)* Why do you say she's perfect?

ALEX. *(working it out)* Because, she tells me God understands. She's an angel – above humans and human things. But, look at her face. That's human. That's emotion – it's . . .

ERIK. What?

ALEX. There's a fine line that exists between intense euphoria and unbearable pain. Two extreme, conflicting emotions hit the body the same way; a tightening in the pit of your stomach and a pounding in your heart. It's visceral. *(using Erik's torso to indicate, lost in his feelings for the statue and Erik.)* It swells through your chest and rushes up your throat and, at the last minute, your brain jumps in and decides whether it's agony or ecstasy.

ERIK. Which do you think it is?

ALEX. When I look at her face? Both.

ERIK. *(softly)* Should we stay?

ALEX. *(out of the spell)* Nope. Take me somewhere else.

ERIK. You got it! *(returning to back of sofa.)* Back down 5th and, oh what is that?!

BOTH. The PLAZA!

ALEX. Where I lost my virginity!

ERIK. Really?

ALEX. Well, my Erik virginity! *(Erik tilts chair back and looks in ALEX' face.)* That's where we first made love. *(Erik confused.)* Not you? *(Erik shakes his head.)* Okay, what's next!?

ERIK. The Joe DiMaggio. *(heads DSL.)*

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Erik, it's the West Side Highway. You're the only person who calls it Joe DiMaggio.

ERIK. Call it what you like, we're headed south.

ALEX. I know. Take me to Chelsea! *(turns chair with legs and tries to head back up stage – Erik turns it into a big circle and continues crossing to DSR. Singing to tune of 'Where the boys are'.)* "Where the gays are."

ERIK. That's another trip. We are heading south now.

ALEX. Why?

ERIK. Just take in the view.

ALEX. I've seen the view.

ERIK. Well, things have changed.

ALEX. You know, that's enough.

ERIK. Wait.

ALEX. Erik, stop.

ERIK. Just a little further.

ALEX. I'm serious, stop the chair.

ERIK. Just up to the window.

ALEX. *(jumping out of chair.)* NO! What's the matter with you? STOP it!

ERIK. Alex, you just need to . . .

ALEX. No, I don't need to.

ERIK. Honey . . . *(Alex holds up a hand and stops him. He wants to speak, to explain, and can't. He goes into the bedroom. Blackout.)*

Scene 7 (Mrs. Wu)

March, 2003

In the blackout – a beep and then.

FEMALE TELEMARKETER. *(chipper - recorded)* . . . orida. So be sure and give us a call back at that number to find out how you, too, can take advantage of this great offer and claim your prize with your winning number! Have a great day! *(Lights up on Alex flipping through a magazine. He is in the rolling chair with his feet on the coffee table – he is talking to the speaker on the coffee table.)*

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

THERAPIST. Where is Erik during our session?

ALEX. Sometimes he goes for a walk in the park. Or work – bills need to be paid.

THERAPIST. You're living off his money?

ALEX. Excuse me?! I'm writing my book. And, Erik works hard and gives me my space because *he's* kind and respectful.

ERIK. (*Offstage from bedroom area.*) Shut up! Shut up! Kid, tell your mother to either speaky English or shut her mouth!

ALEX. Uh, I gotta end the session early today, Doc –

ERIK. (*Offstage.*) SHUT YOUR NECK-HOLE!

ALEX. (*rising, grabbing phone and taking it to phone table.*) Gotta go, bye!

THERAPIST. Alex – (*Alex disconnects the call as Erik bursts into the living room.*)

ALEX. What is wrong with you?

ERIK. (*A Beat. ERIK calms.*) You know, you may have to pick up the laundry from now on. I don't really think I should.

ALEX. Were you yelling out the window at Mrs. Wu?

ERIK. (*Shrugs, makes a "just a bit" gesture with his fingers.*) Maybe.

ALEX. You were yelling at Mrs. Wu...!

ERIK. There are almost seventy-thousand people per square mile in Manhattan and I'm willing to bet sixty-nine-thousand of them have virtually no command of the English language.

ALEX. You yelled at Mrs. Wu!

ERIK. (*sitting L sofa.*) And, hey, I've asked you not to misrepresent me when you're talking to your therapist.

ALEX. (*crossing to L of Erik.*) You *leaned out the bedroom window* and yelled at Mrs. Wu?

ERIK. And her son.

ALEX. You yelled at the Wus?

ERIK. And after that chew-down, I don't think we should use them anymore. You're just gonna have to do it.

ALEX. (*Beat – kneels next to him.*) Erik, the Wus pick up the laundry, launder it and bring it back. I haven't seen Mrs. Wu face-to-face in a very long time.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. Yeah, but after what I just said to her...I mean, I made fun of her sideways..., you know...? I'd pick a new place, but...I'm busy all day. I'm afraid it has to be you.

ALEX. Oh ho ho ho. "Clever girl." Clever, my defamatory little friend. Nice try. May I show you something? (*He walks to the phone table, grabs yellow pages and phone and walks DR of sofa – opens book to a certain page and drops the book onto the floor. He covers his eyes, and circles his bare foot over the page. He puts his big toe down on the book, randomly. ALEX checks to see the number. Dials. Into the phone.*) Yes, is this Liberty Drop-Off and Dry Clean...? Do you offer door-to-door service...? Oh, okay. (*Hangs up. He returns book to table and looks at Erik – as he exits.*) Yes! I love this town! In your FACE!

ERIK. Ah, shit.

Scene 8 (Do Your Taxes)
April, 2003

Alex is sitting on the sofa, lazily typing on his laptop. He wears earphones, plugged into his computer. Erik enters from the bedroom, his laptop under his arm.

ERIK. Mail come?

ALEX. (*Removes earphones.*) Hmm? Oh, yeah.

ERIK. And? (*Alex points at stack on the table*) Wow. (*Alex raises a finger in halting gesture, points at another stack on phone table*) Wow. (*ALEX makes whole room circling gesture with his hand to indicate they are scattered throughout*) Wow.

ALEX. I don't think there's anything for you.

ERIK. You checked? (*he crosses to phone table.*)

ALEX. No.

ERIK. This can't all be from today?

ALEX. No...

ERIK. No...?

ALEX. Neither rain nor sleet nor snow shall prevent me from telling you to kiss my pucker.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. *(Looking at the mail.)* Cute, but, you know there are bills in here? Your AMEX, Sallie Mae -- What is this, from the IRS? *(indicates a brown envelope.)*

ALEX. Hey, felony.

ERIK. *(Dismissive.)* Whoops. *(re. envelope.)* You haven't done your taxes?

ALEX. Yet the fifteenth isn't for another week.

ERIK. From 2001?

ALEX. *(Beat)* I washed the bathtub.

ERIK. They can garnish your wages --

ALEX. Which always sounds like salad dressing for math geeks.

ERIK. -- if you had wages.

ALEX. I get my check.

ERIK. *My check. (while crossing to R sofa.)* This is serious, you need to file. *(indicates Alex should move over.)*

ALEX. *(moving.)* I thought you'd handle that, you always do our taxes.

ERIK. *(sits, opens his laptop. Both men type throughout the scene.)* There is no *our* taxes, there are your taxes and my taxes, to do otherwise would threaten the sanctity of marriage.

ALEX. Thank you, Red State Economics. Damn barbaric, backwards country.

ERIK. That's a tad hyperbolic; barbaric would be the theocratically state sanctioned beheading of gays every Friday in the center of town, along with the infidelitous and the insane.

ALEX. Guess there's no "different shades of bi" in Saudi Arabia.

ERIK. It's a tough sell.

ALEX. Is that a word? "Infidelitous?"

ERIK. Sure. Like, one whose behavior is full of infidelity. Do your fucking taxes.

ALEX. Shh. Don't be pushy.

ERIK. I am the antithesis of pushy.

ALEX. You're pully?

ERIK. Gentle and accommodating, I qualify for sainthood. How's the writing?

ALEX. Keeping me busy. There's no such word as "infidelitous."

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. Of course there is.

ALEX. Nope. I just checked. *(turns his laptop, shows it to Erik.)*

ERIK. Yeah, that writing's keeping you real busy.

ALEX. Blahhhh. *(Beat – re. computer.)* Oh. Kim's online.

ERIK. Ah, say hi.

ALEX. *(Briefly considers, a flash of something, then puts in his headphones.)* Later.

ERIK. What are you listening to?

ALEX. Nothing...

ERIK. You say that and I'm inclined to reach over there and pull those earphones out of the computer.

ALEX. *(defensive.)* You're gonna make fun...

ERIK. No, I promise.

ALEX. *(reluctant.)* KJOJ – the Joy of Jesus *don't make that face*, you promised not to --

ERIK. Did I say anything?

ALEX. We listened to this station when we visited my family at Christmas. It's not all fire and brimstone. They have all kinds of programming --

ERIK. Oh, they had Chris Hitchens on.

ALEX. *(Shudders.)* Yes, *and* they play Sandy Patty.

ERIK. Good Irish name but I don't know who that is.

ALEX. *(Sings.)* Oh lord, our lord, how domestic is your name --

ERIK. Domestic?

ALEX. *(confused, then)* Majestic. Majestic!

ERIK. *(Overlap.)* Domestic?

ALEX. *(Continuous.)* Lemmie alone, I'm tired.

ERIK. Domestic...

ALEX. *And* they have a news show -- see, news, you should be very happy and proud, I'm listening to the news --

ERIK. *(Overlap.)* I am.

ALEX. It's called *The Good Word*. And it's all positive stories. Good things. Optimistic. Like, this morning, they were talking about Alsace --

ERIK. Alsace?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. (*Showing off a bit.*) There are over 1,200 pipe organs in Alsace, the area being known for their organ music, their boat locks, and as the unofficial Christmas capital of the world --

ERIK. And that whole Hitler-thing.

ALEX. They are also famous for their love of hearty beer, fine wine -- Riesling! -- and a plethora of gourmet sausage.

ERIK. Ooo, we should've gone there on vacation.

ALEX. I know! Or. *The Good Word* had a story yesterday about this painter in London who is completely color blind, but because of a computer implant that lets him *hear* color he's now painting again; he has a studio on the Thames. *And* because of that implant, do you know what he is?

ERIK. Hmm?

ALEX. A cyborg! See, I even learned your word. You teased me, I learned your word.

ERIK. Did I tease you about that?

ALEX. And then, Afghanistan. for all the bad you can say about this country, we have still done some wonderful things. I know, maybe we shouldn't have gone, but we did and we did something good there. It gives me tentative hope.

ERIK. How say?

ALEX. Iraq.

ERIK. It hasn't even been two weeks.

ALEX. The first time around only took a month and a half.

ERIK. That's not entirely true.

ALEX. January 16th to February 27th, I remember very clearly. Ben was in Nasiriyah.

ERIK. Hmm.

ALEX. What?

ERIK. Nothing.

ALEX. (*dawning – closes laptop and puts it on coffee table.*) Ohhh, do I detect a break with party loyalty?

ERIK. (*Beat*) You think this is a good idea?

ALEX. Yes. I don't know. No. No, I said I have hope. Tentative. adjective.

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ERIK. This is a terrible mistake. adjective, noun. There will be no liberating Iraq.

ALEX. That's not what this is about –

ERIK. Deposing Saddam will change nothing. (*looking for a place to put laptop on table, giving a look at Alex who moves the carnage to make room.*) Capturing Baghdad will change nothing. All the land from the Tigris to the Euphrates would change nothing because these are not a people who recognize borders and barriers. They're tribal. They recognize blood. It's like invading Little Italy to wipe out the Corleones, but forgetting about Sonny on Staten Island and Fredo in Vegas.

ALEX. That just sounds harsh. I mean kudos on the simile, but they're not street thugs with a vendetta. (*he lays on the sofa, head in Erik's lap – a sense of intimacy and connection comes over this conversation.*)

ERIK. Oh, let's cut the P.C. crap; some civilizations are better than others. More sophisticated, more evolved. And the benchmark, I'd say, is how one treats their people. Look. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Winston Churchill oversaw the remapping of the Middle East –

ALEX. (*playing along*) Cairo Conference - '21.

ERIK. Very good.

ALEX. (*Texas twang*) I read books.

ERIK. And a gold star for you. The land was carved up to serve British interests, with little regard to the people already living there. Tribes -- some nomadic, some not, many wanting to kill each other for any number of reasons –

ALEX. Hatfields and McCoys.

ERIK. Yes -- were thrown together and told to play nice. So, there is no Iraq that exists for Iraqis in the way it exists for us. For us, it's a country on a map, bound in tangible space. But for them...Sunni. Shia. Kurd. Wahabi. Theirs is a melting pot that will never mix. Only burn. And our President, I fear, misses that.

ALEX. (*looking in his eyes.*) I don't get it. (*spell broken, he gets up and crosses to desk.*)

ERIK. Look, each faction, each bloodline, whatever you wanna.....

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. NO! *(laughing and turning back.)* What am I, four? I get THAT! YOU! Republican Gay Male, why did you vote for this guy? Could it really just be the tax-thingy? I mean, do we make that much money?

ERIK. *(Little laugh.)* You see the check every month ... And after eight years of a boorish, intern-diddling hayseed who single handedly destabilized the African region with his homicidal bombing of the Sudan, I was ready for a change. *(Alex rolls his eyes in defense of Clinton and at desk.)* And Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, East Timor – Clinton gave us eight years of Nation Building. In the debates, and on the campaign trail and on David Letterman, Bush promised that was a hobby he would not entertain. So. that was my vote. And I don't regret it. But, no, it's not all good news. *(Beat. The men look at one another, sharing a moment of understanding and respect. Then in a Texas drawl.)* But why didn't you vote for him? He's from Texas. *(he picks up his laptop.)*

ALEX. *(crossing back to sofa, sits, retrieves laptop.)* My being from Texas is precisely why I didn't vote for him. And, besides watching the man apply his lack of love for Nation Building to road building and education building and community building...that Yankee son of a bitch's from *Maine*.

ERIK. He's from Texas.

ALEX. He's from Maine.

ERIK. He considers himself a Texan.

ALEX. He's from Kennebunkport!

ERIK. Semanticist.

ALEX. Semite.

ERIK. And don't say that word again.

ALEX. Semite?

ERIK. No.

ALEX. *(Understanding, then sotto voce.)* Let's. Go. Yan. Kees. *(hand claps [tap – tap – taptaptap] then starts to repeat until...)*

ERIK. *(stopping chant)* Write.

ALEX. “Infidelitious.”

ERIK. “Domestic.” *(They begin their prospective laptop work. Alex begins to look at Erik's laptop. Erik hides it. Alex reaches for it and Erik closes it as the phone rings. Alex goes back to typing.)* You gonna get that?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. No.

ERIK. No?

ALEX. No. You get it.

ERIK. It's not for me. *(The answering machine picks up. We hear two voices.)*

MAN'S VOICE. *Tomas? Hola, Tomas? Donde esta?*

WOMAN'S VOICE. *Porque tu no me escuchas?*

MAN'S VOICE. *Ah, dios mio! Shhh!*

WOMAN'S VOICE. *Yo te dije tienes un nuevo numero.*

MAN'S VOICE. *Hijo de puta ! Porque no te callas la boca, pinche cabron! (The caller hangs up. Alex and Erik stare at one another.)*

ERIK. See? Told you it wasn't for me. *(They resume. The phone begins to ring again, they share a look and break into laughter as. Lights change.)*

Scene 9 (What happened?)

April, 2003

Alex is seated on the floor at the coffee table staring at his laptop. He slowly begins typing on the computer. The phone is on the coffee table near him.

THERAPIST. *(after a moment)* Alex? Alex? At some point you will have to start communicating.

ALEX. I am. I'm sending emails.

THERAPIST. I meant with me. Spouting platitudes and avoiding topics is not communicating.

ALEX. I want a refund. I signed on for a coddling therapist. I got Annie Sullivan.

THERAPIST. I was hoping you would be ready to talk about the real issues surrounding your recovery. Paying me to listen to you make witty remarks is a waste of your money and both of our time. Let me know when the situation changes. *(there is a click on the line)*

ALEX. *(Beat)* Are you there? *(Alex stares at the machine for a minute. He looks back at his computer and continues to type – stealing glances back at*

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

the phone. In frustration, he closes his computer and looks at phone. Picks it up, hits redial, he listens for a minute, puts it on speaker and sets phone down.)

THERAPIST. *(Hear a ring and then, answering.)* Yes?

ALEX. Is that really ethical?

THERAPIST. How do you mean?

ALEX. *(Rising, crosses to back of sofa.)* What if I were suicidal?

Tantamount to murder, isn't it? *(Begins fixing the throw on the back of sofa.)*

THERAPIST. Alex, you are many things, the least of which is suicidal. So, on that day, you were at home.

ALEX. Damn, no segue?

THERAPIST. You've had a year and a half. *(Beat)* Alex, you know, it's okay that you didn't go to work that day.

ALEX. I know that.

THERAPIST. Maybe you do. But, it's okay.

ALEX. *(Paces through scene.)* Everyone in my office got out, so, it's not like I was one of those stories.

THERAPIST. No. But you have your own – as valid as anyone else's and no less a tragedy. But, we have to find a way for you to move forward.

ALEX. I'm trying.

THERAPIST. Alex, it happened. It's over. It's not going to happen again.

ALEX. You can't know that! We piss more people off every day. We set ourselves apart and believe we are, somehow, divinely entitled. Hell, it may come from here. Read the papers, the anthrax was sent by Americans!

THERAPIST. Maybe. But, Alex, I'm talking about you. Your nightmare, your tragedy, it happened. It's over.

ALEX. *(Stops by desk, looking back at phone on coffee table.)* And it could happen again.

THERAPIST. Do you know the astronomical odds? Alex, if someone, anyone, were to do something like this again, what are the odds that you would be right there?

ALEX. One hundred percent.

THERAPIST. *(Beat)* Alex, why would you think that?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Because someone fucked up. And someone, somewhere, knows it. They missed me.

THERAPIST. *(Pause)* You know, Alex, you've never told me.

ALEX. *(Crosses to behind sofa.)* Not true.

THERAPIST. Yes. All this time and you've never told me what happened. *(Beat)* You don't have to, but you do have to be aware of that. *(Beat)* Maybe you would consider writing it down.

ALEX. No! I know what happened, I was there.

THERAPIST. It's not to help you remember --

ALEX. Good. Because the bits I don't remember I don't need to. *(Sits on sofa.)* People like Erik, they're collectors. They chase down all the details. But if I can't remember? Fine. It's a gift.

THERAPIST. *(Moving swiftly forward)* First response, what do you still think about? *(No response.)* Alex! What do you still think about?

ALEX. The man in the chair.

THERAPIST. Who? *(Nothing.)* What man, Alex? *(Nothing.)* Alex? What are you talking *(Alex quickly disconnects the call. He looks at the phone a moment. Then he quickly returns it to the telephone table and exits into the kitchen.)*

Scene 10 *(Hey, It's Your Birthday)*

May, 2003

During the blackout we hear a beep and the message.

MACHINE VOICE. Erik O'Brien. Your total fines for overdue books is . . . four-hundred twenty-three dollars and one cent . . . Overdue fines can be paid at all branches of the New York Public Library. Thank you. *(Lights up on Erik during the machine message, watching something on his laptop. Alex enters after the message. Erik casually covers his laptop.)*

ALEX. Whatcha watching?

ERIK. Puppies and snowflakes.

ALEX. I'm not *that* gullible.

ERIK. But, you're a little gullible?

LIBERTY & JOE DIMAGGIO

ALEX. Do you know how many times I've PLAYED 52 card Pick-Up?
(Alex tries to look again. Erik pulls it away and closes the laptop. Alex makes an "ooh, secret!" gesture – (I know! Make one up!) He crosses over to desk and begins to work on own laptop)

ALEX. *(Dawning.)* You have a birthday next month.

ERIK. I do.

ALEX. What'd we do last year?

ERIK. Uh...you stayed in bed and drank my '91 Riesling Icewine.

ALEX. Oh yeah. *(Rolls chair to Erik.)* That was a very expensive hangover.

ERIK. Half a G.

ALEX. Ugh. Well...*(Playful.)* Then this year you can have whatever you want.

ERIK. Oooo! I saw an '83 Riesling Icewine on the Internet.

ALEX. How much is that?

ERIK. A G.

ALEX. Well, then this year you can have whatever you want. Except that.
(Rolls chair back to desk.)

ERIK. You are so sexy when you're not spending my money on me.

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—
ORDER A COPY AT WWW.NEXTSTAGEPRESS.COM***