

Fourteen Hundred and Sixty Sketches of Your Left Hand

by

Duncan Pflaster

FOURTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY SKETCHES OF YOUR LEFT HAND

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FOURTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY SKETCHES OF YOUR LEFT HAND

Fourteen Hundred and Sixty Sketches of Your Left Hand was originally produced in September 2013 as part of the UNFringed Theatre Festival at The Secret Theatre in Long Island City, NY with the following cast (in order of appearance):

PaulEmilio P. Tirado
BlancaNeysa Lozano
AlonsoRoberto Alexander
GabrielW. Derek Jordan

DirectorDuncan Pflaster
Fight ChoreographyTeddy Lytle
Production PhotographyAlan Sauvage

The play won Festival Awards for *Best Play* and *Best Actor* (Emilio P. Tirado).

Two monologues from the play have been published in Smith and Kraus' *Best Men's Monologues 2014* and Applause Theatre & Cinema Books' *Best Contemporary Monologues for Men 18-35*.

Thanks to Tony Chioldes for assistance with Spanish translations (given at the end of the script).

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Cast: 3 Men, 1 Woman

PAUL MONTI: 26, male. Any race. A funny, chubby and hairy bro-dude, with a roguish grin. A college friend of Alonso's.

ALONSO NARANJO: 26, male, American Latino. A gay painter. A sweet and sensitive artist. Has Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.

BLANCA NARANJO: 29, female, American Latino. Alonso's sister. Sensible and buttoned-up. Hates how stern she has to be to deal with her brother and his friend.

GABRIEL CROZIER: 30s, male. Any race. A United States soldier. Brutal and arrogant. Very muscular and effortlessly masculine. Blanca's boyfriend.

Time: One summer.

Place: Blanca's Ranch in Taos, New Mexico.

This piece was inspired by the combative friendship between Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Gauguin, when they were living together in Arles in 1888

This is a memory play and scenes should change quickly, so not everything needs to be literal; a dreamlike interpretation is encouraged. The original production used blackouts and music between scenes, but any other smoother transitions could be employed.

The play was written to be performed in one act, but if an intermission is desired, one could go after scene 9.

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PROLOGUE

At Rise: PAUL stands center stage with a piece of paper and reads.

PAUL. “First Fig” by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—
It gives a lovely light.

SCENE 1

Blanca’s ranch in Taos, New Mexico. Alonso lives there, too. ALONSO, a young Latino man, is pacing. His older sister BLANCA enters with sheets, and begins to fold them.

BLANCA. Your friend won’t mind these sheets? I mean, they’re flannel and it’s Summer.

ALONSO. He won’t care about the sheets, I’m sure we’ll be up all night painting.

BLANCA. Well, he’ll have to sleep sometime; I want him to be comfortable.

ALONSO. Of course he’ll sleep, we’ll sleep, it’s just that we’ll pass out from exhaustion, and he won’t give a shit what the sheets are like. He’s

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slept worse places. He slept on my carpet at college a lot, when he was just too tired to go home.

BLANCA. Just on your carpet?

ALONSO. Well, yeah. He's totally adorable, of course, and I had a little crush on him in college, but he's straight. Not that it stopped me trying. He's an okay kisser.

BLANCA. Kisser? You said he's straight.

ALONSO. Well, it's college. Things happen.

BLANCA. I'm not sure I like this boy coming to stay.

ALONSO. What? Why?

BLANCA. He sounds like a foolish frat boy, *un alborotador*. I don't want any *bromas* in my house.

ALONSO. He's not just a party boy! Trust me; you're going to love Paul. I wouldn't have survived college if it wasn't for him. (*He looks out the window*) Where IS he?

BLANCA. It takes a while from the airport.

ALONSO. I should have met him. I should have met him there.

BLANCA. You know I'm not letting you drive out to the airport.

ALONSO. I know. I'm just worried.

BLANCA. Relax, don't get yourself worked up. He's a big boy in his 20s, he'll be fine.

ALONSO. I'm excited for you to meet him.

BLANCA. Well, anyone who means so much to you will always be welcome in my house. ...to a point.

ALONSO. Thank you.

BLANCA. Ugh, these sheets are threadbare. I should have bought new ones for your friend. He'll think we're slob.

ALONSO. He won't care about the sheets. Trust me, he's very laid-back and easygoing.

BLANCA. Well, all right, if you say so. But if he does complain, you let me know.

ALONSO. I will, I will. Calm down about it.

BLANCA. I just want you to be happy, Alonso. (*The doorbell rings.*)

ALONSO. That's him! He's here! (*Alonso rushes to the door and flings it open. PAUL enters, a chubby but roguishly handsome guy. He's dressed in*

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sweatpants and a ratty t-shirt ripped up the sides. He carries a small suitcase and a guitar.)

PAUL. Hey, Lonzo! What the fuck is UP, man?! (*Paul drops his bags and envelops Alonso in a big bear hug, gives him a kiss on the forehead, then lets him go, tousling his hair.*) So good to see you, bro!

ALONSO. So good to see you too! I can't believe you're here! Oh, Paul, this is my sister Blanca. (*Paul drops to one knee and kisses Blanca's hand.*)

PAUL. So beautiful. Lovely to meet you.

BLANCA. Thank you. (*She retrieves her hand and looks disdainfully at his outfit.*) You weren't kidding, he is very laid-back.

PAUL. Oh, sorry I'm not wearing something nicer, I always like to dress down for the plane. Be comfortable, you know?

BLANCA. Well. Of course. I hope you'll have a good time here.

PAUL. Art is always a good time.

ALONSO. You're going to love it. The light here is amazing. And the landscapes, the architecture.

PAUL. I know; I already saw a fuckin' pueblo on the way in here. The cab driver showed it off. Gorgeous. Everything's so big and spread out here. It's a nice change from New York.

ALONSO. Wait'll you see the studio we set up in the old back room. Beautiful sunlight, windows. Two brand-new easels. It's super-quiet and perfect. You can spend all day and night there, working to your heart's content. It does get a little warm, but...

PAUL. Oh, I don't mind that. I like to paint with my shirt off anyway, you know.

ALONSO. Yes, I remember.

BLANCA. Yes, well, let me show you to the guest room. I just still have to put these sheets on the bed...

PAUL. Guest room? Aw, naw, you don't have to do anything fancy for little old me, I thought I'd just sleep on Alonso's floor.

ALONSO. Don't be stupid, we have all kinds of room here. It's not like it was in New York. And I wouldn't let you sleep on the floor anyway. Not for three whole months.

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PAUL. It's good for my back. I have to sleep with this funny little pillow anyway, let me show you- (*He opens his bag and finds a banana*) Oh hey, I brought this banana to eat on the plane and forgot about it. You want it? Banana? Banana? (*He offers it back and forth*)

BLANCA. No thanks.

ALONSO. Oooh! We can paint it, later.

PAUL. Sure!

BLANCA. Well. Come along, I'll get you tucked away. Alonso, will you run down to the corner store and get me some Tylenol? I think I have a bit of a headache coming.

ALONSO. Sure, of course.

PAUL. Thanks again for letting me come here. You have a beautiful home.

BLANCA. Thank you. (*Paul grabs his bags. Paul and Blanca exit.*)

SCENE 2

Paul's guest room. Blanca puts the sheets on the bed, as Paul sets down his bags. She might also straighten up the room a bit more.

BLANCA. I'll be serving dinner at seven. It's nothing fancy, just *arroz con pollo*. I haven't had much time to cook, what with my day job.

PAUL. I'm not fancy, you'll learn. Alonso always says you're a great cook, I'm sure it will be delicious.

BLANCA. Well. Thank you. Listen. I wanted to talk to you a bit about Alonso. Just sort of warn you a bit.

PAUL. Warn me?

BLANCA. Yes, Alonso may not be quite as you remember him. Do you remember his accident sophomore year?

PAUL. Oh, yeah, when he fell and hit his head? He missed a few weeks of class.

BLANCA. He didn't only hit his head, exactly. He had a seizure. He was diagnosed with "temporal lobe epilepsy". He has kind of a lesion on his brain, probably born with it, which leads to his massive mood swings, anxiety, and partially impaired vision.

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PAUL. Vision? But he's an artist!

BLANCA. Indeed, it's very common in artists. Van Gogh had it. It can cause intensified sensation, sometimes very painful. Even aside from big seizures, which are like what we think of as "epileptic seizures": grand mal, with the shaking and all; he has brief minor seizures that you might not even notice. You've probably seen him drift off once or twice?

PAUL. Yeah, we used to make jokes about it. "Alonso's off in another world again..."

BLANCA. Yes, well, it's a medical condition. He was very likely seeing something that didn't exist. Symptoms can range from painfully intensified sensations, like heat or the color red, hallucinations, sleepwalking, *déjà vu* and *jamais vu*,

PAUL. What's that?

BLANCA. The opposite of *déjà vu*. The feeling that you've never done something before, when you obviously have. It's a kind of aphasia. He wanted to keep it quiet amongst his school friends, but since you'll be here living with us for a while, I wanted you to know. Please don't tell him I told you about it. He'd been uninterested in taking his meds, but he had a big seizure in March, so he's been pretty dutiful, I think, recently; so you probably don't need to worry about anything.

PAUL. I'm not worried, he's my friend.

BLANCA. His seizure nearly made him kill himself, you know.

PAUL. What?

BLANCA. People with temporal lobe epilepsy can have mood swings similar to extreme bipolar disorder. Additionally, having a body that you can't control makes people severely emotional. Depression is a very real possibility for Alonso. He can't control it without help. I need you on my side about this. He HAS to keep taking his medication. Other people with his condition have become suicidal or homicidal. Something in the brain just snaps and...

PAUL. Well, I wasn't worried till now.

BLANCA. Oh, don't be; he'll be fine, or should be, as long as he keeps up his medication. He's only had two really big seizures since he's been here. And he's been on a new medication since the last one, which so far has been working out.

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PAUL. Well, that's good. What do I do if-

BLANCA. Oh, he probably won't, but if he does have a seizure, just use your common sense. Don't restrain him, just move things out of his way. You don't need to put anything in his mouth, he won't swallow his tongue, that's a myth. But most of Alonso's big seizures have only lasted a minute or so, if one lasts more than five minutes you should call 911.

PAUL. Right.

BLANCA. Put him on his side after it's over. There may be puking afterward.

PAUL. Right.

BLANCA. Paul. You're his best friend from college. He greatly admires your art. He thinks of you as his brother. His *hermano*. You can provide an even and calm time for him, while you're here. He loves you.

PAUL. I know.

SCENE 3

The art studio. 3am that night/the next morning. There is music playing, maybe something fun with a danceable groove; (original production used the Joe Vasconcellos cover of Victor Jara's "Ni Chicha Ni Limona"). Paul and Alonso are super-drunk and Paul is shirtless. The banana is on a stool. They've been up all night. Paul has a nearly-empty bottle of tequila. Paul is holding his liquor a bit better than Alonso.

PAUL. Oh man, the weather here is, just, so beautiful. It's, like, hot, but not oppressive.

ALONSO. I guess I never appree- appreciated it till I went to New York and came back.

PAUL. Beautiful.

ALONSO. Hey, you know what, I want to dance! (*Alonso goes to the stereo and cranks the music up loud, and begins dancing seductively. He takes off his shirt.*)

PAUL. Hey, hey-

ALONSO. What?

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PAUL. Maybe you shouldn't be drinking so much.

ALONSO. You're not my real dad. Gimme that. *(Alonso takes the bottle from him and drinks the remainder, still grinding to the music.)*

PAUL. Yeah, okay.

ALONSO. Dance with me! Come on!

PAUL. No, I can't, we shouldn't.

ALONSO. Come on, don't be a pussy.

PAUL. Shut up.

ALONSO. Live a little.

PAUL. I'm a terrible dancer.

ALONSO. You are not. I dare you to get up and dance with me.

PAUL. Aw now, that's not fair.

ALONSO. I know you can't resist a dare, brother.

PAUL. Fine. *(Paul gets up and dances, too. He at first dances jokingly, but soon gets into the groove. They both are having a good time, getting sweaty.)*

ALONSO. Yeah, that's hot! *(Alonso starts to get a little flirty with Paul, who is basically amused and tolerant of it, till Alonso leans in to kiss him.)*

PAUL. Hey, whoa now, brother. You know better than that.

ALONSO. I know; you're just so beautiful.

PAUL. Stop it, I am not. Come here. *(Paul pulls Alonso to him in another bear hug.)*

ALONSO. Ow.

PAUL. You know I love you, brother, right? I just can't go that way with you.

ALONSO. I know. *(Paul lets him go, and holds Alonso's head intensely, looking into his eyes.)*

PAUL. You're super-talented and an amazing guy and I promise you'll find a guy who's right for you someday.

ALONSO. Yeah yeah. I just wish it was you.

PAUL. You're drunk, baby. You always get like this when you're drunk.

ALONSO. Yeah. ...Can you hug me again?

PAUL. Of course, come here. *(Paul holds him. They sway to the music. Alonso's hands stray down to Paul's butt. Paul rolls his eyes and is about to move his hands back up, when Blanca enters, wrapped up in a robe.)*

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BLANCA. What the hell's going on in here? Why are you blasting music at 3am?

ALONSO. Oh crap. I'm sorry. (*Alonso rushes to turn off the music.*)

PAUL. We... didn't mean to wake you.

BLANCA. I have to work in the morning, you know. Now I'll never get back to sleep.

PAUL. I'm so sorry. (*He takes her hand and holds it.*) Is there anything I can do? (*He goes to kiss her hand and she whips it away.*)

BLANCA. No thank you, just everybody go to bed now.

ALONSO. Blanca's right. We should go to sleep. It's super-tired out.

BLANCA. Have you been drinking?

ALONSO. Uh... only a little.

BLANCA. Alonso! You know Dr. Schwartz said alcohol might mess with your meds.

ALONSO. We were celebrating!

BLANCA. And you let him drink!?

PAUL. Well, he wanted to. You didn't tell me he shouldn't.

BLANCA. When someone is on heavy medication, of course they shouldn't drink, you idiot!

ALONSO. *Espera, espera ¡ustedes hablaban de medicamentos! ¿Le dijeron?*

BLANCA. *Estaba preocupada.*

ALONSO. *¡No quería que Paul supiera!*

BLANCA. *¿Y qué tal si le daba un ataque, o algo, y estaba sólo? ¿Entonces? Se hubiese muerto de miedo. ¡Yo tenía que decírselo!*

ALONSO. *Olvídate. Me voy a dormir.* Good night, Paul. (*Alonso, near tears, feeling betrayed, exits.*)

PAUL. What was that?

BLANCA. He's upset I told you he's sick. God damn it.

PAUL. ...That's the first time I've ever heard you swear.

BLANCA. What, do you take some sort of perverse pride in that?

PAUL. A little. There's something beautiful in breaking in an innocent.

BLANCA. Believe me, I am no innocent.

PAUL. You look really innocent all wrapped up in that robe.

BLANCA. How could you let him drink? It should have been obvious.

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PAUL. How was I supposed to stop him? You told me not to tell I knew about his meds. We just did what we always did in college, stay up all night and party.

BLANCA. All the drinking in college is what exacerbated his condition and led to his first big seizure. Finally all his swallows came home to roost.

PAUL. All his roosters came home to swallow. Oh wait, “cocks” would have been funnier instead of “roosters”.

BLANCA. Isn't there anything you take seriously?

PAUL. Only painting.

BLANCA. Look, I was hoping you cared about Alonso. That you were interested in his well-being.

PAUL. I am.

BLANCA. I want you to take him seriously, okay? I mean, what was going on between you two when I came in? You're just using him for sex. Getting him drunk,

PAUL. Whoa, sex? I'm straight.

BLANCA. ...what? But I thought... I assumed you and Alonso had hooked up in college.

PAUL. No no, I'm straight. Straight as a— as a very heterosexual thing.

BLANCA. Alonso implied that some things happened.

PAUL. Well, I mean, some dumb grabass messin' around kinda stuff now and then; I can't resist a dare. Lonzo has seen me naked a few times because of that. ...And I think maybe we kissed once or twice when there were some girls around.

BLANCA. That's sick.

PAUL. What? Naw, chicks like to see guy-on-guy action as much as guys like to see girl-on-girl.

BLANCA. Untrue.

PAUL. Well, making out with Lonzo got me laid on more than one occasion.

BLANCA. Well. Good for you. I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't tease him any more while you're here. He's sensitive.

PAUL. But he wants it; he can't keep his hands off me when he gets drunk. He gets all handsy.

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BLANCA. All the more reason to keep him sober. He'll be sane and you'll be unmolested. Look, you're supposed to be here to paint. You're supposed to be here to work. You're supposed to be here to be with Alonso and help Alonso, and if you're not going to do that, you can go back to New York.

PAUL. You're quite a hostess.

BLANCA. Hostessing is not my job, bucko. Go to sleep, I'll see you tomorrow.

SCENE 4

The painting room, next day. Paul and Alonso are at easels, painting a banana on a stool. It is hot, Paul is shirtless. Music plays as they paint quietly. After the song is over, Paul stops to mop the sweat from his brow.

PAUL. So hot. You weren't kidding.

ALONSO. Yeah, sorry. It just costs too much to air-condition this big room.

PAUL. How'd you get this place, anyway?

ALONSO. Blanca and I grew up here. When our parents died a few years ago, Blanca got the ranch.

PAUL. Well, that's nice.

ALONSO. Kinda. I mean, we have a place to live, but the upkeep is pretty expensive. We're not wealthy. But it's a great blessing for me. New Mexico has always had a thriving artist community, and I have the space and time to paint. To make my art. Not everyone gets that. And, of course, the opportunity to bring you here for the Summer. It's so good to see you again.

PAUL. You too, buddy.

ALONSO. This blue is so gorgeous.

PAUL. You're using blue for a painting of a banana? *(Alonso doesn't answer, he is having a minor seizure, he is overcome by the intensity of the color blue on his brush. He shivers with a frisson of almost sexual, almost painful pleasure.)* Lonzo, you ok? *(Alonso comes back to himself)*

ALONSO. Yes. Sorry, just off in my—

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PAUL. —own little world. I know.

ALONSO. I'm sorry I didn't tell you about my condition. I thought you wouldn't want to come otherwise.

PAUL. It's okay, buddy. I still like you no matter what.

ALONSO. Thanks.

SCENE 5

Living room. Blanca and Paul are together. She is reading a magazine. He has coffee.

PAUL. You know what I think would really help Lonzo? A project.

BLANCA. Like what?

PAUL. Like an epic painting. A landscape. A triptych. Or a painting of someone beautiful. Like you.

BLANCA. Stop.

PAUL. Think of it, a painting of his beautiful sister? Dalí made tons of paintings of his sister, now all masterpieces.

BLANCA. But I'm not— I'm not a worthy model for a masterpiece.

PAUL. Oh pshaw. You're beautiful. You have such lovely hands.

BLANCA. Hands?

PAUL. On a beautiful woman, I always notice the hands first. In school, they made us draw hands all the time. Freshman year, Mr. Theo suggested we draw a hand every day. For four years.

BLANCA. That's a lot of hands.

PAUL. Yeah, most of them are my own left hand. You know, in case I can't find someone else's hand, I always have my own. Most hand pictures look all the same, but I can always tell which is mine because I have this little scar on the knuckle here. I've got these big dumb paws. But you have these delicate sweet little hands, they're beautiful. I would love to paint them.

BLANCA. Just my hands?

PAUL. And the rest of you, of course. You have a pretty, but unique, face. I think you would be a fantastic model for us. I think it would really help Alonso.

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BLANCA. I'm not taking off my clothes to model for my brother.

PAUL. I never said anything about nude modeling.

BLANCA. No, I— No, I guess you didn't.

PAUL. Wear anything you want. It would be an honor to commit your face and hands to canvas.

BLANCA. Well, I don't know, I'd have to do it when I get home from work, the first sitting.

PAUL. That's fine. Whatever suits you.

BLANCA. You know, you're a very smooth talker.

PAUL. So you don't think I'm all that bad?

BLANCA. I didn't say that.

PAUL. Oh.

BLANCA. Well. Maybe not ALL bad.

SCENE 6

The studio. Soothing music. Blanca sits on a stool, angled, but with her back to the audience. Alonso and Paul sit at an angle, facing her and painting. Perhaps mostly back-lit. Blanca giggles.

BLANCA. I feel like Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

ALONSO. Shhhhh.

BLANCA. Sorry. (*Quiet for a bit as music plays, Blanca poses, and Alonso and Paul paint. After a bit, Alonso steps out of the action, forward, and addresses the audience. The music from the scene rises to underscore him*)

ALONSO. When I was growing up, I always just assumed that Vincent Van Gogh was gay. I have the same mental issues as Vincent, and he was a painter, and I'm a painter, and I'm gay, and so I thought somehow that something would go back and forth between them. And the more I look at his tortured relationship with Gauguin, the more I think Gauguin was an unrequited heterosexual crush of Vincent's. I mean, lord knows I've been there, too. I've seen some photographs of Gauguin. He was kind of a mustachioed hot daddy. But Gauguin was clearly heterosexual; looking at

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his paintings, gorgeous use of color, but soooo many boobs. Everyone thinks that Van Gogh cut off his ear and gave it to his lover, like some fucked up valentine, but he actually just dropped it off with a prostitute he knew. AFTER He'd had an argument with Gauguin. Gauguin refused to see Vincent in the hospital. Very sad. But still, Vincent was always forgiving. Even after all that drama, he wrote to his brother about Gauguin: "Why then not consider him as not responsible for the sorrows and damage which unconsciously he could have caused us in his blindness, you as much as me." Nobody except them really knows what happened between them, but I can imagine. (*Alonso goes back to his chair and action resumes.*)

BLANCA. I'm tired.

PAUL. We can stop now, if you want.

BLANCA. May I... May I see?

ALONSO. I don't usually let people see a painting till it's done... but okay. (*Blanca steps behind and looks.*)

BLANCA. Oh! All those lights around me, like fireflies. This glow. It's all so fanciful. And yet, I look so real, so detailed. So much care. My hands.

ALONSO. I only paint what I see.

BLANCA. May I see yours, Paul?

PAUL. Of course. (*Blanca steps behind and looks at Paul's painting. She gasps.*)

BLANCA. Why, I'm beautiful.

ALONSO. Of course you are.

PAUL. I said you were.

ALONSO. Of course you're beautiful. Anyone can see that.

PAUL. And we paint what we see. (*Blanca straightens up a bit, having seen herself in a way she didn't expect. She glances coyly at Paul.*)

BLANCA. Yes.

SCENE 7

Paul's Room. Paul and Alonso are there. Alonso has a bottle of wine and a corkscrew and Paul is trying to take the wine away from him.

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PAUL. You can't, baby! I promised your sister.

ALONSO. Promised, shmomised. I want to get lit!

PAUL. Look, come here, give it **HERE**. (*He pulls the bottle away from Alonso. Alonso collapses on the bed, dramatically depressed.*)

ALONSO. Why do you hate me?

PAUL. You know I don't hate you, Lonzo. This shit is bad for you.

ALONSO. It's bad for you too.

PAUL. Not as bad.

ALONSO. If I'm not having any alcohol, you shouldn't have any either.

PAUL. Fine. Boom. Done.

ALONSO. **NO!** You're supposed to fight me! We're supposed to party! Take our shirts off and dance!

PAUL. Nope.

ALONSO. God, I mean, can't we just forget about this medication epilepsy stuff, and just have fun sometimes? Like we used to? I want to be normal.

PAUL. Listen to you: you've never wanted to be normal in your life.

ALONSO. Well, yeah, I wanted to be special, not broken. (*pause*)

PAUL. You're not broken.

ALONSO. I am. Nothing is any fun anymore. I can't do what I want, all because of my dumb broken brain.

PAUL. I wish I could give you some wine.

ALONSO. You don't have to. Just leave it there and leave the room, I'll take care of it while you're not watching...

PAUL. No...

ALONSO. ...and I'll meet you later in the paint room where we can party some more.

PAUL. No.

ALONSO. But it makes me feel better. Like I'm a real person again.

PAUL. I can't let you have it; it affects your medication.

ALONSO. Well. Okay yeah. What if—

PAUL. What?

ALONSO. No never mi— Okay, okay. You have to promise not to tell my sister.

PAUL. Oh god, what?

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ALONSO. Promise first.

PAUL. I promise.

ALONSO. I haven't actually been taking my medication. Not in a month.

PAUL. What? Holy fuck man, are you trying to kill yourself?

ALONSO. I've been fine. I can handle it. I know what sets me off, and I can avoid them. I don't really need the medication.

PAUL. But—

ALONSO. Look, taking the pills dampens everything down for me. It's like wearing a blindfold made of a black and white movie. I can't do it. There's that Leonard Cohen line: "There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in." The broken part is where the art comes from. I can't paint, I can't do it, I can't do anything right when I'm on these fucking pills.

PAUL. This is stupid. You have to take the pills or you're putting yourself in danger.

ALONSO. Pfft, danger. People didn't have these pills in olden times. Like they didn't have dentists. And they were fine.

PAUL. They weren't fine. They died years earlier. And had terrible teeth. Someone like you would have been dead already; they'd have killed you because they thought you were possessed by demons or something.

ALONSO. No, I know. All my life I've been told I had a special gift. That my art was something magical. I liked it, I wanted to be special. A brilliant tortured artist. Right? We all fall for that image. But then I went to college and met you and bunch of other tortured artists, and we were all special. I mean, you remember Lenny, with his fauvist style? All those bright colors just exploding everywhere. And Sarah's intricate line work, so tight and controlled. How could I compete with Monti, who made me cry once with a painting of Dominick's elbow? And god: and you. We were all the gifted children wherever we came from, and I had no idea how to cope once I got in with everyone who was just as talented and special and stressed just like me. I had to up my game. And then I realized that this talent, this weirdness I have of seeing things a different way, that's what really makes me special. I don't see things like anyone else, so I don't paint like anyone else. I am unique. Without my fucked up brain, what am I?

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PAUL. You're my friend and I don't think you should shorten your life for some damn paintings.

ALONSO. Oh man, you've changed. You used to be so James Dean. Live Fast, Die Young, leave—

PAUL. —a beautiful corpse, I know.

ALONSO. We're shooting stars, that's all we are. Burn brightly, then fade away. Wouldn't you give your life up if it meant that you could be the genius you always knew you were? And you are a genius, my friend; don't be bashful, you know that. If someone was going to take that away, but let you live forever, would you take that bargain?

PAUL. ...yes.

ALONSO. I'm disappointed in you. What happened to the Rebel Without a Clue who used to smoke and drink and wanted a motorcycle but couldn't afford one?

PAUL. I stopped smoking.

ALONSO. Yeah.

PAUL. Look. I'll make you a deal.

ALONSO. No, no deals.

PAUL. Hear me out.

ALONSO. What?

PAUL. I'll strip for you every time you take a pill.

ALONSO. ...What?

PAUL. How many pills do you take a day?

ALONSO. Two. One in the morning with breakfast and one in the evening before dinner.

PAUL. Great, we'll set up a reward system. I'll drop trou or something if you take a pill.

ALONSO. That's ridiculous.

PAUL. Whatever it takes, I'll just show you my dick, or whatever, twice a day.

ALONSO. Your butt?

PAUL. Why are you so obsessed with my ass?

ALONSO. I dunno, I'm an ass man, I guess. It's beautiful. Can I touch it?

PAUL. Sure, yes: whatever you want.

ALONSO. Can I take pictures?

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PAUL. ...If you keep them private. You just have to stay on your meds, dude. If this is what it takes, I am more than happy to give you a little show to keep you with us. I will strip naked right here, but you go take a pill right fucking now. You hear me? Are we agreed?

ALONSO. Yes, okay. (*beat*) This is the nicest thing anyone's ever done for me.

PAUL. God, I hope that's not true.

SCENE 8

The living room, night. A shaft of bright moonlight. Everyone's asleep. Paul enters, in a pair of ratty boxer shorts. It's very hot, and he's been suffering.

PAUL. Ugh. (*He crosses to the kitchen, gets a large bottle of water out of the refrigerator, and crosses back into the room, holding the bottle to his head to cool himself down. He holds it to his chest and rubs it around, slings it onto his back for a bit. It is very soothing.*) Aw yeah. (*He thinks for a moment, looks down at his crotch, looks around, then pulls open the waistband of his boxers. Blanca enters, as he puts the bottle in against his crotch. It suddenly is much colder than he expected, and he jumps.*) Oooh, oh! Geez! Ahhhhhhh.

BLANCA. What are you doing? (*Paul quickly whips the bottle out of his boxer shorts and pretends he was just getting ready to drink it.*)

PAUL. Aiegh! Oh, whew, the heat was getting to me. I couldn't sleep.

BLANCA. Oh god, was it the flannel sheets? I'm so sorry. I'll go out and get some new tomorrow. Alonso said you wouldn't mind.

PAUL. No no, I've been sleeping in Alonso's room the last few nights. Tonight it just got really hot.

BLANCA. ...Oh.

PAUL. Warm. Nothing sexual. We just get talking about art, and then I get too tired to go back to my room. And it's better for surveillance- I'm trying to keep him under control. Keep him on his medication.

BLANCA. Well, thank you. I sincerely appreciate you trying to help. But do you really think that parading your sexy hairy body around in boxer

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shorts in front of a *maricón* with a crush on you is really a good idea? Let alone—

PAUL. You think I'm sexy?

BLANCA. ...From Alonso's point of view, I meant. I thought I was clear.

PAUL. Are you blushing? You do think I'm sexy!

BLANCA. Don't play with me. It's too dark for you to see if I'm blushing.

PAUL. You forget I'm an artist. I am extremely attuned to subtle fluctuations of light and dark and color.

BLANCA. If I am blushing, it's only because you embarrass me.

PAUL. I've had worse reactions from beautiful women.

BLANCA. What is wrong with you? Your persistence is wearying.

PAUL. What's wrong with any of us? Artists are drawn to beautiful things.

BLANCA. I'm not an artist.

PAUL. And so, you're drawn to big dumb me instead.

BLANCA. Okay, look. You're a very talented man. I think you're possibly as much of an artistic genius as my brother. I'm incredibly flattered by the way you seem to see me, you look at me like I'm the most beautiful woman you've ever seen, and that's touching, but I'm sure this is a practiced act that has gotten you laid from tons of ladies in the past, hasn't it? But please believe me when I tell you that it's a bad idea for us to get together.

PAUL. But you want to.

BLANCA. It's not smart, it's not rational. I have-

PAUL. Sometimes you have to be a little dumb in life to get the good stuff. Give me your hand.

BLANCA. Paul...

PAUL. Just your little left hand. How much harm could that do?

BLANCA. This isn't a good idea.

PAUL. Here. *(Paul takes her left hand and kisses it.)*

BLANCA. That's good.

PAUL. Tell me when you want me to stop. *(He slowly begins kissing up her arm, first turning it to kiss the pulse in her wrist, then the inside of her arm. When he gets to the pit of her elbow, she gasps, and almost pulls away. He places her hand on his chest, and holds it there, letting her feel*

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his heartbeat, as well as the hairiness of his chest. He gently pulls her face toward him, and kisses her. They kiss deeply, then He lets go. She steps back.)

BLANCA. *Coño.*

PAUL. I don't want you to do anything you don't want to do.

BLANCA. This is all wrong, Paul. I have—

PAUL. Don't speak. Don't ruin it.

BLANCA. But no, we can't. I have-

PAUL. Shhhh. *(Pause. She takes his hand and slowly raises it to her lips and kisses it. He drops his water bottle. Blanca laughs.)*

BLANCA. You make me feel so desired.

PAUL. I'm glad. You should know how lovely you are. *(Pause)*

BLANCA. ...Come to my room in five minutes.

PAUL. Okay.

BLANCA. But please. Alonso can't know.

PAUL. No. No, of course. *(She exits. He exits after.)*

BANANA INTERLUDE #1

Music. Something like King Charles' "Love Blood". A Banana sits on the stool center stage between Alonso's and Paul's easels. They paint it. They alternately break out of the tableau to interact with Blanca or each other, in a montage of discrete scenes. If possible, the full song chosen should play, like a music video.

1. Boys painting.
2. Alonso takes out his phone camera; Paul flashes him his dick and Alonso takes a picture of that.
3. Paul and Blanca are alone together. She bares her breasts and he kisses and nuzzles them.
4. The Boys paint some more.
5. Alonso feels up Paul's bare ass, as Paul rolls his eyes.
6. Blanca kisses Paul roughly up against a wall.

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7. The Boys paint some more. Alonso has a brief seizure, he stares into space. Paul waves his hand in front of his face, and he snaps out of it after a moment.
8. Blanca puts her hair up in a bun, and looks at herself in a mirror.
9. Paul drops trou, and poses provocatively with the banana on the stool in his underwear as Alonso takes a photo.
10. Blanca kneels before Paul, giving him a blowjob, we see this from behind, with Paul's ass facing us. He throws his arms up in ecstasy.
11. Boys paint banana some more, leading into next scene...

SCENE 9

The painting Room. Just before 6pm. Alonso and Paul are painting industriously. Paul is shirtless, as usual, wearing cargo shorts.

PAUL. How many bananas have we drawn? It seems like thousands.

ALONSO. I like drawing bananas. They're always all essentially the same, and yet there are always intimate differences that make them each unique.

PAUL. Like hands. Like noses.

ALONSO. Yes. Maybe someday art historians will look back on the Banana Period of Alonso Naranja and Paul Monti.

PAUL. You don't think it's too Warhol?

ALONSO. Nah. *(Pause.)*

PAUL. Still, we could try some other fruits sometime. Grapes, an orange.

ALONSO. No, can't do oranges. It's my last name.

PAUL. What?

ALONSO. "Naranja" means "orange".

PAUL. Whoa. The color or the fruit?

ALONSO. Both.

PAUL. Wow, just like in English.

ALONSO. *Si. (An alarm goes off - Paul's cellphone or a timer.)*

PAUL. It's time for your drugs. What would you like this afternoon?

ALONSO. How about an ass photo?

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PAUL. (*rolling his eyes.*) Okay, go get your pill and camera. I'll get ready. (*Alonso exits. Paul drops trou and faces away from the door, maybe bracing himself, posing against a wall, waiting for Alonso to come back. He calls off to Alonso.*) I'll never understand what you see in this fat ol' thing. (*Blanca enters, just home from her day job.*)

BLANCA. How come you always seem to have your clothes off whenever I enter a room?

PAUL. Oops! (*He starts pulling up his shorts*) ... You don't seem to mind most of the time.

BLANCA. Well, there's a time and place for everything. Right after work is a bit too much for unexpected man-ass. What were you doing?

PAUL. I'm considering a new painting concept, using semen.

BLANCA. What? No.

PAUL. Oh, *si*. If I use my own jizz and make religious iconography, I could become an *enfant terrible* of the art world, really make a name for myself. It could be bigger than Elephant Dung Madonna or Piss Christ! (*Alonso enters, with water and a pill, and his phone camera out.*)

BLANCA. Please tell me you're joking.

ALONSO. What? What is it?

PAUL. My great new idea- Cum Paintings. I'll just mix in some pigments, and voila! It can't be harder than watercolors, right? Although probably faster-drying.

ALONSO. It would be more of a gouache, really.

PAUL. Yes, I'll have to bone up on my technique from Mrs. Honnaker's class. And, see, I'll make it a religious subject, so I get all kinds of horrified press and become a household name overnight.

ALONSO. You'd certainly cause a sensation in the art world.

PAUL. They'd sure say I got spunk. The only problem I can see is getting a supply of the medium in quantity. I can only personally jerk off five or six times a day. That's not enough for a big canvas. If I ran out of jizz, you'd lend me a hand, wouldn't you, Lonzo?

ALONSO. Only if you lent me a hand.

PAUL. HEYO. (*They high-five.*) I'll bet if I made some calls, I could get all our male classmates to help. Think about Geoff and Lenny, they'd

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probably jerk each other off directly onto the canvas just for shits and giggles.

BLANCA. That's disgusting. This whole idea is disgusting.

ALONSO. You're right, it is.

PAUL. Nooooo.

ALONSO. Offending the religious right? Just for publicity? That is completely disgusting. You'd be selling out, Paul. You're better than that. You'd be no better than a Kardashian.

PAUL. God, you guys— I'm only joking. I just thought it was a funny idea. I'm not actually going to spread my spooge on a canvas and show it to people.

BLANCA. Thank god.

PAUL. Some people just don't know satire when they hear it.

ALONSO. Hilarious.

BLANCA. So then, why did you have your pants down when I came in?

PAUL. Uh, Alonso and I have been posing for each other from time to time. It gets boring painting fruit over and over, and you only posed for us once.

ALONSO. And there's nothing prettier than Paul's booty, am I right?

BLANCA. Disagree.

PAUL. Thanks, buddy. You're so good for my ego.

BLANCA. Well. I'm going to go make dinner. We're having tamales.

ALONSO. Great.

BLANCA. And, I have some news. Gabriel is coming.

PAUL. The angel? We planning an annunciation?

ALONSO. No, Gabriel is Blanca's boyfriend, he's been in the army for the past few years.

BLANCA. Yes, he got a two week leave so he can come spend part of the summer with me. And you two, of course. He just e-mailed me at work today

ALONSO. That's great! What a surprise!

PAUL. When is he coming?

BLANCA. His e-mail said tomorrow afternoon. We'll have to clean up a bit.

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ALONSO. That's awesome! You get two whole weeks with the man you love. Paul, you're going to love Gabriel, he's so nice. And pretty hot. I can't wait to see him again, it's been ages. I'm so happy for you! (*Alonso hugs Blanca. She and Paul stare at each other over Alonso's shoulder.*)

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