

**THE
EDGE**

SCENES/SONGS

ACT I

- 1) Overture / The Greatest Measure
- 2) High-Flown Expectations
- 3) Half Been This Content
- 4) Vexed and Unprepared
- 5) No Ulterior Motive
- 6) Wouldn't Think Twice To Intercede
- 7) A Mother's Worst Nightmare
- 8) Proud of His Son / Leader of the Pack
/ A Matter of Time
- 9) Now That You're Here

ACT II

- 1) The Edge
- 2) Outside Looking In
- 3) Motorcycles and Mystery /
Intensity / Every Now And Then
- 4) Overdose on the Histrionics
- 5) What We Never Were
- 6) Somebody To Save
- 7) Bound by Neuroses
- 8) Many Factors Here At Play /
Favorite Son
- 9) No Reprieve
- 10) Finale: The Greatest Measure /
The Edge (Reprise)

CHARACTERS

JAROD – Early 30s. **Big brother** of the suicidal character Josh. He should have a smooth and suave demeanor in front of his brother, and should demonstrate a great deal of concern, support and affection—even tough love—for Josh, whom he has looked after for most of his life. It is only when Josh isn't around, or when he's interacting with their mother Lilly, that the cracks begin to show. Jarod should have charisma and presence on stage; he should be the big brother that everyone will fall in love with and wishes they had. **Baritenor.**

LILLY – Early 50s. **Josh and Jarod's mother**, who has hidden the truth about her marriage to their father for the longest time; it is only in finding a new partner that secrets are revealed. She's overly protective of Josh and clearly favors him, while keeping Jarod at arm's length, oftentimes without even realizing it. She should be, by all appearances, motherly and loving—seemingly oblivious of her distance towards Jarod and smothering nature towards Josh. **Mezzo-soprano.**

RYAN – Mid-20s. **Josh's close friend** since high school. He should be awkward and nervous, with a flair for the dramatic and a tendency to ramble, which should create a lot of comedy. He's also gay and not-so-secretly harbors feelings for Josh, which is at odds with his subtly implied religious background; this comes to a head when his drinking habit gets the better of him. Ryan is almost oblivious to how he sabotages Josh's relationships with women, and is jealous of Josh's friendship with Michael. **Baritenor.**

MICHAEL – Mid-20s. **Josh's best friend** since they were kids. He grew up in a broken home and has grown resentful of what he perceives to be Josh's advantages: the loving and supportive family, the brains and creativity, etc. He's now a mechanic—a job he doesn't hold in high regard—and demonstrates a low self-esteem despite of his own jock build and good looks. It is suggested that he might have spilled the beans about Josh having stolen money at work; and his eagerness to 'one-up' Josh results in an affair with Deanna. He often butts heads with Ryan. **Baritenor.**

DEANNA – Mid-20s. **Josh's fun-loving girlfriend** who has a thing for intense, passionate men, which is why she was initially drawn to him. She is sassy, flirtatious and independent, and wants Josh to stand on his own two feet, too. However, when Josh proposes to her, her free-spirited instinct kicks in and she ends up rejecting him and hooking up with Michael. **Mezzo-soprano.**

APRIL – Mid-20s. **Josh's colleague**, an earnest and well-meaning waitress at the restaurant where they work—the outsider of the group. Having previously gone through a similar experience, she is distant enough from Josh to notice the tell-tale signs of depression and his impending suicide attempt. She's rather bookish with an active online social life, which she uses to keep tabs on Josh's state and his relationships. April, too, has self-esteem issues, which might explain why she hides behind her computer screen. **Mezzo-soprano.**

ACT I

Scene I

(OVERTURE)

We open with a funeral: the entire COMPANY on stage. There is LIGHTING FX DSC in the shape of a COFFIN. It is AFTER Josh's suicide attempt.

Lights up on JAROD.

(THE GREATEST MEASURE)

JAROD

YOU OPEN YOUR EYES. IT'S JUST ANOTHER SUNDAY MORNING:
THE SUN STILL RISES TO GREET A NEW DAY.
YOU OPEN YOUR EYES TO REALIZE
TODAY'S A DAY OF MOURNING...
THE SEVERING OF TIES: THE PRICE THAT YOU PAY.

THAT FACE THAT OUGHT TO BE HERE
IS FAR AWAY; REMAINS LYING OUT OF REACH.
THAT FIGURE SO FAMILIAR NO LONGER IN SIGHT,
WITHIN THE SCOPE OF ALL THAT YOU HOLD DEAR.
AND YOU WISH YOU HAD THE POWER TO TURN BACK THE TIDE,
REPAVE THE PATH OF LIFE THAT LED YOU HERE.

FOR YOU NEVER IMAGINED
IT WOULD END UP BEING ANYTHING LIKE THIS—
COULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED
IT WOULD END UP BEING ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

JAROD introduces each character as the lights come up on them. First up is RYAN, who is holding a beer bottle.

RYAN

WE OPEN OUR EYES.

JAROD

Ryan.

RYAN

FEELS LIKE A DAY LIKE ANY OTHER.

LIGHTS UP on DEANNA.

JAROD

Deanna.

RYAN, DEANNA
BEAUTIFUL SKIES, SO CLEAR AND SO BLUE.

LIGHTS UP on LILLY.

JAROD

Lilly. Our mom.

LILLY

WHAT A SURPRISE—
EVERYTHING'S CHANGED, BUT I'M STILL HIS MOTHER.

JAROD

I'M STILL THE BROTHER.

JAROD, MICHAEL

SAYING GOODBYE.

RYAN

(Throwing the bottle away) Goodbye.

JAROD, RYAN, MICHAEL

GOODBYE TO YOU!

LILLY, DEANNA, APRIL

GOODBYE

COMPANY

TO YOU!

LILLY

THEY SAY THE GREATEST MEASURE OF CRUELTY IN LIFE
IS TO HAVE A MOTHER LAY HER OWN SON TO REST.
SO YOU THINK, PERHAPS HE'S SLEEPING; HE'LL OPEN HIS EYES
AND BE THE CHILD YOU ONCE HELD TO YOUR BREAST.
AND YOU TELL YOURSELF, NO WEEPING: LAUGHTER, NOT SIGHS.
BUT THE TRUTH IS FAR TOO PAINFUL TO DIGEST... *(She weeps)*

LIGHTS UP on MICHAEL and APRIL, who approach LILLY.

JAROD

Michael. And April.

APRIL

(To LILLY) You don't know me, but I'm so, so sorry.

MICHAEL

I'm sorry, too.

LILLY

It's my fault, it's all my fault—

JAROD

Mom... don't— *(He falters)*

LILLY

Oh, Jarod.

MICHAEL, APRIL

PLEASE HOLD ON. TOMORROW'S
ANOTHER DAY BEGINNING.

LILLY

HOW CAN I BE STRONG WHEN HE'S GONE?

MICHAEL, APRIL

WE HOLD ON
TO SORROW

RYAN, DEANNA

WE HOLD ON
TO SORROW

LILLY

SORROW IS ALL I DESERVE!

MICHAEL, APRIL

BUT WE ALL
DESERVE

RYAN, DEANNA

WE ALL
DESERVE

COMPANY

REDEEMING!

PERHAPS IF WE KNEW WHY! WHY GOODBYE?
“GOODBYE!”

JAROD, MICHAEL, APRIL

A WORD THAT'S EVER-PRESENT!

LILLY, RYAN, DEANNA

A WORD THAT'S EVER-PRESENT!

JAROD, MICHAEL

SO OFTEN SAID WITHOUT GREATER PERMANENCE!

RYAN, DEANNA

SO OFTEN SAID WITHOUT GREATER PERMANENCE!

LILLY, APRIL

USED WITH A FUTURE TENSE!

JAROD, MICHAEL, RYAN, DEANNA

IT DOESN'T

COMPANY

MAKE ANY SENSE!
OUR COPIOUS CONFESSIONS WON'T ALTER THE FACT:
THE SIGNS WERE THERE BEYOND THE TEARS WE CRIED.
SO WE ASK OURSELVES THE QUESTIONS:
HOW SHOULD WE REACT?
COULD WE HAVE CHANGED A DAMN THING IF WE TRIED?

JAROD, RYAN, MICHAEL

FOR WE NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD
END UP BEING ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

LILLY, DEANNA, APRIL

WE NEVER IMAGINED IT COULD
END UP BEING ANYTHING LIKE THIS.

JAROD, RYAN, MICHAEL

COULD HAVE

COMPANY

NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD END UP BEING
ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

LILLY

ANYTHING LIKE THIS...

MICHAEL

ANYTHING LIKE THIS...

RYAN

ANYTHING LIKE THIS....

DEANNA, APRIL

ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

JAROD

OPEN YOUR EYES!

*LILLY, DEANNA, RYAN, MICHAEL and APRIL exit, leaving JAROD alone CS.
Straight into next scene.*

Scene II

JAROD addresses the audience.

JAROD

Okay, so...this is about Josh. It's always about Josh. I tried to be a good big brother, I really did. And we were close, we had lots of good times... but every so often he'd get into one of his moods and I'd want to...

(Quietly) I'd want to kill him. *(A PAUSE)*

I'm sorry; I don't know to say this in a way that makes sense. With everything that's just happened, I'm just not myself, you know? It's like I'm not really here right now. *(LONG PAUSE)*

But okay. Let's reconstruct. Some key moments that might've led up to everything that transpired. For example... *(More deflated)* For example, the last conversation I had with him, before he—

I remember I was at work...

*There is a **SHIFT**: This is to indicate a different time and/or space, incorporating a change of light state, or blocking, or combination of techniques at director's discretion.*

We are now in the very recent PAST. JAROD is on the telephone, speaking to Josh, who never appears on stage. Initially JAROD is good-humored, but as with all interactions with younger siblings, his patience eventually wears thin.

JAROD

I said not now, buddy, I've got a meeting in about half an...

No, no, Josh, call me tonight. Actually, I'll call *you*.

No, no, no, listen. I don't have time, I—

(He sighs) Where are you?

(He hangs up and calls out) Come in!

SFX: Door opening and shutting. Josh has entered.

(HIGH-FLOWN EXPECTATIONS)

JAROD

Josh. WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING HERE?

Wait, wait, wait. DON'T TELL ME —

LET ME GUESS: YOU'RE A MESS.

Tired, frustrated, in need of a break, yes?

DID YOU GO FOR LUNCH at 4pm,

ONLY TO REALIZE YOU WERE OUT OF CASH?

HENCE YOU SHOW UP UNINVITED. See?

DON'T EVEN NEED YOU TO CONFESS!

(Laughing) What do you mean I'M SUCH A JERK?? Come on, YOU'RE ALWAYS IN THIS STATE OF PERPETUAL BLUNDER. AND NO WONDER: FULL-TIME WORK ONLY STIFLES YOUR EFFORTS AT TRYING TO CREATE. Those are *your* words. So great, YOU'RE STUCK IN A JOB THAT PAYS YOU PEANUTS— IT'S BARELY A MINIMUM WAGE.

THOUGH OUTRAGEOUS, IT'S YOUR PATTERN: WHEN YOU'RE BROKE, NO NEED TO FRET; TURN TO SOMEONE ELSE — PERHAPS YOURS TRULY AND PLAY THE “JAROD, WE ARE FAMILY!” CARD!

YOU MAKE THINGS HARDER THAN THEY HAVE TO BE. I mean, YOU COULD BE WORKING RIGHT HERE WITH ME. BUT *NO*, I GET IT, JOSH:

YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT FOR YOU'RE A BIG BOY NOW. YOU DON'T NEED BIG BROTHER HOLDING YOUR HAND. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU FEEL THE NEED TO CONTROL YOUR OWN DESTINY, AND FIGHT YOUR OWN FIGHT; FOR YOU'RE A BIG BOY NOW— INDEPENDENT, TRULY. SURELY YOU DON'T NEED ME HERE, INTERFERING. YOU'VE SHOWN THAT YOU WILL BE FINE ALONE. SO GO ON, MY CONSCIENCE IS CLEAR. I WON'T SHED A TEAR. NOW GET OUT OF HERE FOR YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN!

Bye-bye now. *(A PAUSE)*

How much do you need? *(ANOTHER PAUSE)*

How much, Josh? *(ANOTHER PAUSE; then JAROD reacts with incredulity)*

What?

Forget it! THERE'S NO WAY I'LL LOAN YOU THAT AMOUNT! DO I EVEN WANT TO KNOW, JOSH, HOW YOU'LL PUT THAT CASH TO USE— UNNECESSARY SPENDING IN THE WAITING? Fascinating fact: WHILE YOU ARE AIMING FOR YOUR “PERFECT SCRIPT”, YOUR “PERFECT SONG”, YOUR “PERFECT NOVEL”, YOU KEEP RUNNING OUT OF JUICE! Creatively. Financially. And *emotionally...!*

DO I LOOK LIKE I CARE WHEN YOU KEEP FALLING SHORT OF YOUR OWN HIGH-FLOWN EXPECTATIONS? ASPIRATIONS THAT ARE OVER YOUR HEAD, WHEN YOU SHOULD, INSTEAD, FACE REAL LIFE! AND TO BE FAIR, FOR SO MANY YEARS I HAVE BEEN SUPPORTING YOUR ASS! I SAID YOU COULD MOVE IN WITH ME. “No, no, Jarod, I need my own space.” *Fine.* THEN LET ME GIVE YOU AN ALLOWANCE.

“No, no, Jarod, I’ll pay my own way.”
YOUR CAR INSTALMENTS? YOU REFUSED. SHREWD.
IN THE NAME OF YOUR PURSUITS, DUDE,
I SALUTE YOU. WELL DONE!

I mean, after all, who am I? Just some guy who’s looked after you all your life!

YOUR WISH IS MY COMMAND:
YOU DON’T NEED MY HANDS ON THE HANDLEBARS,
TO KEEP YOU FROM HITTING THE GROUND.
YOU DON’T NEED ME THERE IN THE DEEP,
HELP YOU FLOAT AS YOU’RE SPLASHING AROUND.
YOU DON’T NEED ME FRIGHTENED TO DEATH
THAT YOU’RE LOST AND MIGHT NEVER BE FOUND!
And it’s all through your *own*—! *You*—!

He stops himself and struggles to keep his temper in check.

JAROD

I’D GIVE EVERYTHING, JOSH — AND I HAVE! —
SO YOU WON’T TAKE EACH PLUNGE — AND FALL.

(Weary now) Whatever you need that much money for— forget it. Go ask Mom. She gives you *everything*.
Now go away.

PAUSE. Then JAROD reaches for his wallet.

JAROD

(Gently) Josh.
Get something to eat. Please?

*Josh clearly leaves without taking the money. There is a LONG PAUSE.
JAROD sighs and turns introspective, and you can now hear the bravado in his voice.*

JAROD

LOOK AT YOU, JOSH. I GET IT. I DO.
YOU DON’T WANT BIG BROTHER HOLDING YOUR HAND
YOU UNDERSTAND, THOUGH,
IT’S MY ROLE TO TRY TO MOULD YOUR DESTINY!
BUT I’LL BE JUST FINE SINCE YOU’RE A GROWN-UP NOW.
AND IF IT’S TRUE I’M NO USE TO YOU ANYMORE,
GREAT! I’M FINALLY FREE! THE WEIGHT IS OFF ME,
AND MY HEART IS LIGHT. YOU’RE OUT OF MY SIGHT!
WHAT ENDLESS DELIGHT TO BE ON OUR OWN!

*JAROD looks in the direction of Josh’s exit. An expression of wistfulness and sadness crosses his face, just enough for the audience to see the inner turmoil within.
FADE TO BLACK.*

Scene III

(HALF BEEN THIS CONTENT)

LIGHTS UP on LILLY, who addresses Josh in the not-too-distant PAST. They are in the RESTAURANT where Josh works with his colleague APRIL.

LILLY

So, honey. THE OTHER NIGHT I WAS WITH ROGER.
YES, I KNOW YOU DO NOT LIKE HIM.
BUT IF YOU OPEN UP YOUR MIND,
I THINK YOU'D FIND HE'S QUITE ALL RIGHT.

Actually, the reason I wanted us to have lunch is...

(APRIL approaches them, and LILLY addresses her)

Oh, could you give us another minute, please?

(APRIL moves away, eyeing them surreptitiously. LILLY turns back to Josh)

Technically, you could take our order.

(She forces an awkward laugh, and then she's subdued again)

Anyway, I've got some news. About Roger and me.

LOOK, I WILL NEVER FORGET YOUR FATHER.
THE WAY HE CHANGED MY LIFE FOREVER. Be that as it may,
ROGER AND I, WE ARE TOGETHER.
AND YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TRY...!
I KNOW IT'S TOUGH, BUT DEAR, ENOUGH,
PLEASE FACE THE FACT THAT HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
HE'S HERE TO STAY. HEY. LET'S SEE THAT SMILE, MY DARLING.
WON'T YOU ACT LIKE YOU ARE LOOKING FORWARD
TO MY WEDDING DAY. By the way,
THE OTHER NIGHT YOUR MOTHER GOT ENGAGED!

WE WERE WALKING PAST THE MARKET SQUARE,
WHEN SUDDENLY HE TOOK MY HAND
AND HE SAID, "WHAT IF WE MARRY?"

He didn't get down on one knee... and there was garbage *everywhere*,
AND YET IT WAS ROMANTIC LIKE YOU WOULDN'T CARE!
SO AMID THE FRUIT AND VEGGIE STANDS,
I SAID, "YES! WE'D BE SO HAPPY!" WE'LL BE SO HAPPY!

Honey, wait. Don't go! Please, just—

*It is clear that Josh has left. There is a **SHIFT**, and LILLY addresses the audience.*

LILLY

How could I blame Josh for the way he reacted? It's not as if I'm always supportive of *his* choices. Make no mistake, though, I *wanted* to support him, of *course* I wanted to support him, and yet — a mother knows what's best for her child; a mother's always on top of things; a mother's always... *aware*...
(PAUSE) ...isn't she?

There is a **SHIFT**: it's another moment in the not-too-distant PAST.

LILLY

So you're absolutely serious about her.
HOW QUICKLY TIME HAS COME AND GONE. Next month, one year.
But DON'T RELATIONSHIPS NEED CONTEXT? I'm just saying,
YOU SHOULD HAVE MORE TO DRAW UPON,
EXPERIENCE AND EXPLORE.

I'm *not* getting back at you, I'm just—

Look, Josh, THE WAY I AM WHEN I'M WITH ROGER...

The way I think, the way I feel...
IT'S ALL SO—DIFFERENT—THAN WITH YOUR FATHER.

You think you know everything, but
YOU COME TO REALIZE THERE ARE *OTHER* THINGS
YOU NEVER KNEW BEFORE.

What can I say?

HE TURNS MY WAY AND SUDDENLY I'M YOUNG AGAIN.
HE MAKES ME SMILE; HE MAKES ME LAUGH UNTIL I'M SPENT.
MMM, IT'S SO CLICHÉ, BUT I FEEL TWENTY-ONE AGAIN.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE I HAVE HALF BEEN THIS CONTENT.
MMM, EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES I SEE
ROGER AND ME,
WE'RE WALKING PAST THE MARKET SQUARE,
THAT BUNCH OF FLOWERS IN MY HANDS.
AND I'VE NEVER BEEN SO HAPPY! HAPPY!

NOW WILL YOU? Be happy? For us?
AND CAN YOU? Be happy? With her?

*Perhaps there's a **SHIFT** to indicate this is an argument that has been going on for a while.*

LILLY

IF YOU BELIEVE SHE'S PERFECT FOR YOU, THEN GREAT.
WHY RUSH INTO THINGS? GIVE IT SOME TIME AND WAIT.
Oh, I *see*. SO IF *YOU* CAN'T BE HAPPY, *I* CAN'T BE HAPPY, TOO?
I DON'T NEED YOUR PERMISSION BUT YOU NEED *MINE*—
Yes, you do!! Okay?! You *do*!!
WELL, IF YOUR FATHER WAS HERE—and he's *not*—
HE WOULD NOT HAVE THE RIGHT
TO STOP ME BEING HAPPY for *once*—!!

She realizes might have said too much, so she pulls back. There's an almost mortified PAUSE. When LILLY finally resumes, she sounds like she's on the verge of tears:

LILLY

LOOK, I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT.

Nothing. Nothing, Josh.

There is A LONG PAUSE before she finally relents.

LILLY

Maybe it's time you knew.

Your father walked out on me and your brother. Before you were born, he got...fed up, I suppose, and... he left. For a while. And he found— other women. *(She shrugs and tries to smile)* So...

OKAY.

FOR MANY YEARS, HE MOVED AROUND. AND THAT'S A FACT.

THEY MADE HIM SMILE. THEY MADE HIM LAUGH.

THEY MADE ME CRY.

HEY, I DIDN'T KNOW WHO ELSE TO BE, HOW ELSE TO ACT,
THANKS TO MY GUILTY. YES, IT WAS ROUGH, BUT I GOT BY.

I DID NOT KNOW ANY BETTER. SO I RESIGNED

MYSELF TO PLAY THE WIFE AND MOM,

RESENTING WHAT I HAD BECOME: A WOMAN SO UNHAPPY.

BUT NOW I HAVE THE CHANCE AT LAST TO SHINE!

TO MAKE UP FOR THE PAST UNKIND, JOSH,

AND FINALLY BE HAPPY!

WITH *ROGER* I AM HAPPY!! BUT *DEANNA*—!!

(More quietly) WON'T MAKE YOU HAPPY.

(A PAUSE)

I'm sorry, honey—!

SFX: A door slamming loudly. LILLY flinches. Complete FADE TO BLACK.

Scene IV**(VEXED AND UNPREPARED)**

LIGHTS UP on the very recent PAST. DEANNA and Josh are on a rooftop. Josh is excited about something; DEANNA is growing tired of the mystery.

DEANNA

Josh, WHY ARE WE HERE? WE'VE GOT TO...
What? OH, YEAH, YEAH, IT'S NICE.
YOU CAN SEE THE STARS FOR MILES. Okay, fine. KILOMETERS.
YOU DON'T COME UP HERE BY YOURSELF, DO YOU?
Right. A PLACE TO THINK. MORE LIKE A PLACE TO... JUMP.
(Laughs weakly) IT'S COLD UP HERE.

She reacts as Josh presents an engagement ring.

DEANNA

What the hell is that? (Gasps) Is that a...?
OH, MY GOD. IT'S—BEAUTIFUL.
But— why...? (Realizing) Oh, no...
(To herself) Oh no, he can't be serious.

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE REALLY HERE.
LOOK, HE'S DOWN ON BENDED KNEE.
Shit. I THINK I NEED A BEER. THIS IS CRAZY. IT'S CRAZY.
I SHOULD BE TOUCHED, OR FLATTERED, I GUESS.
BUT WHAT THE HELL, THIS IS SUCH A MESS.
SO SUDDENLY, WHERE IS HE GETTING THE IDEA
THAT I WOULD TELL HIM 'YES'?

THE TIMING HERE COULD NOT BE WORSE.
THIS REALLY MAKES IT HARD FOR ME
TO SAY THE THINGS I HAD REHEARSED...
(Wearily) Oh, Josh... this is — this is great, but
I CAN'T. I'M SCARED. I COULDN'T COPE—
No, THE PROBLEM'S ME, NOT YOU. I'M JUST SO
VEXED AND UNPREPARED. I'M HOPELESS.
CAN'T YOU SEE, I REALLY MUST SAY NO.

It's *too soon*, Josh. And your mom doesn't even like me, you said so yourself, I'm a bad influence. Sue me for trying to untie you from her apron strings! (She tries to change the subject) Hey, Josh—?

LET'S GO ON A SPONTANEOUS VACATION,
INDEFINITE DURATION.
OR LET'S DRIVE AROUND AND VISIT EVERY STATE.
OR WAIT, START EVEN SMALLER,
AND JUST GO OUT EVERY WEEKEND
LIKE WE USED TO WHEN WE FIRST BEGAN TO DATE.

REMEMBER? A LIFETIME AGO, LIKE, LAST NOVEMBER?

RIGHT NOW, LET'S GO DOWN INTO TOWN, GO CLUBBING.
OR MAYBE CATCH A MOVIE. My treat!
SEE, YOU WON'T EVEN DO SOMETHING SIMPLE,
SOMETHING *SOCIAL*—WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, JOSH??

THERE'RE SO MANY THINGS I'VE YET TO DO,
SO MANY PLACES LEFT TO GO;
SO MANY PEOPLE YET TO MEET.
ADVENTURES LIE AHEAD, AND SO
MY ANSWER WILL REMAIN UNTIL I'M READY.
NO, I HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THAT WILL BE,
BUT DO WE REALLY HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS RIGHT NOW?

CAN'T WE JUST HAVE OUR FUN? Hmm?
THE NIGHT HAS ONLY BEGUN.
COME ON, LET'S DO SOMETHING FUN.
Josh? (*A PAUSE*) YOU WANT TO GO HOME, DON'T YOU?
(*SHE SIGHS*) THEN JUST — TAKE ME HOME.

There's an uncomfortable silence between them. Eventually:

DEANNA

I've been thinking— we should... take a break. Indefinitely.
Until you figure out.... (*She trails off*) Josh?

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TONIGHT
WOULD BE THE NIGHT I SHOULD DECIDE?
THE TRUTH IS, THINGS HAVE NOT BEEN RIGHT
BETWEEN US. GO AHEAD. DENY IT.
No, you're the one who's changed.
YOU'VE BEEN MOROSE. YOU'VE BEEN WITHDRAWN.
YOUR DRIVE, YOUR PASSION— IT'S ALL GONE.
THEN SUDDENLY THERE'S THIS. COME ON. IT'S UNREALISTIC.
UNREALISTIC...

On her wistful look, FADE to BLACK.

Scene V

Lights up on RYAN. He addresses the audience:

RYAN

Josh and I were close friends. Not *too* close... though sometimes I think not close *enough*. We could have been a little closer. (*Dreamily*) A *lot* closer. (*Realizing himself*) But! Sometimes, the things you want and things you get aren't...um.... necessarily... (*He trails off, then abruptly shifts gears*)

Josh and I were roommates. Twice. Well, sort of. The first time was, like, seven or eight years ago, after high school. Josh didn't want to stay at home anymore, he wanted to get out into the world and explore it or conquer it or something — I wasn't really listening—so he moved out of *there* and moved in *here*, and... well... that was... a really... *interesting*...time.

I mean, of course I would think that. I don't know if *you* would. But... anyway... (*He gestures awkwardly*) Um. Yeah.

A **SHIFT**. RYAN addresses Josh, in the distant PAST, seven or eight years ago:

(NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE)

RYAN

Look, Josh, it makes sense. I've got more than enough room, you can have all the privacy you want. We'll be like... the two amigos, the two Musketeers, the two... (*He fumbles, unable to complete that thought*)...amigos. At least think about it.

(A BEAT) You'll think about it? (*Overexcited and high-pitched now*) Great!!!! (*Catching himself and trying to act nonchalant*) I mean, great.

THIS IS EXCITING. MY BEST FRIEND AND I
LIVING TOGETHER. WE'LL GIVE IT A TRY.
DIVIDING THE CHORES, SPLITTING DRINKS, SHARING SPACE.
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, I'LL SEE HIS FACE
A WHOLE LOT MORE OFTEN, FOR LATELY HE'S BEEN
SIDETRACKED BY THOSE OF MORE INTEREST THAN ME.
BUT IF WE ARE ROOMMATES, RIGHT HERE HE WILL BE—
YES, I KNOW THAT WE CAN! IT'S A MARVELLOUS PLAN!

WE'RE STARTING COLLEGE; WE'VE STARTED TO DO
THE THINGS THAT REAL GROWN-UPS,
NOT CHILDREN, WOULD DO!
WHAT BETTER START THAN TO GET OUR OWN HOME—
TO MOVE OUT FROM FAMILY, LIVE ON OUR OWN!
WE WERE IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN WE FIRST MET;
I NEVER IMAGINED HOW TIGHT WE WOULD GET.
COULD WE BE TIGHTER? HELL, YEAH, YOU BET.

IT'S A TIRESOME GAME, WISHING HE FELT THE SAME...

I JUST WANT US SOME QUALITY TIME.
JUST TO HEAR HIM TELL ME THAT I'M
SOMEONE SPECIAL. THAT WOULD BE SUBLIME!
BUT HONESTLY SPEAKING, JUST WHO AM I KIDDING?

JOSH IS SO FUNNY, AND GIFTED, AND SMART.
I COULD SEE IT IN HIM FROM THE START. We were
FIFTEEN YEARS OLD, YET ALREADY I KNEW...
I TRULY ADMIRE HIM. THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING. That's all I'm saying.
Did I say *roommates*? I meant *housemates*. There's a difference.

MICHAEL enters and crosses from SR to SL.

MICHAEL

Twink.

RYAN

Jock. Itch.

MICHAEL

You still sniffing about these parts? (*He exits*)

RYAN

(*Sputtering in vain, trying to think of a comeback*)

I'm—you're—you're sniffing... parts...!

(*He addresses the audience*)

MICHAEL COMES OVER A LOT, AND THAT'S — FINE.
JOSH HAS KNOWN MICHAEL MUCH LONGER THAN I HAVE.
IT MAKES ME WONDER. AND PONDER. AND WORSE,
EACH TIME I SEE THEM TOGETHER, I CURSE.
I TELL MYSELF, MICHAEL'S FAT. AND HE SUCKS.
AND NOT IN A GOOD WAY. OF ALL THE LUCK...
LOOK, WHAT I MEAN IS, WHY MICHAEL? NOT ME?
I AM SO MUCH MORE FUN! I DRESS BETTER, FOR ONE!

And then there were Josh's girlfriends. Not many. But enough.

A ***SHIFT***: *RYAN's mood is now frantic, excitable:*

RYAN

Josh, I *KNOW* I SAW HER THERE. KIM WAS WITH ANOTHER GUY.
THEY WERE SITTING BY THEMSELVES IN A CORNER BOOTH,
SHARING FRIED NOODLES. AND IF THAT'S NOT PROOF—
NO, THEY DIDN'T SEE MY FACE.
THEY WERE LOCKED IN AN EMBRACE.
NOODLING AND CANOODLING THERE AT THE TABLE.

FORKING AND SPOONING— Anyway.
 AREN'T YOU ABLE TO SEE there's something going on, right?
 THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT INSTANTLY!
 IF SOMEONE'S LYING, IT'S NOT ME! IT'S NOT ME!

Another **SHIFT**:

RYAN

DIDN'T LAUREN SAY SHE'S SICK?
 THAT WAS WHY YOU COULDN'T MEET?
 WELL, CALL ME SUSPICIOUS, A PARANOID FOOL,
 BUT I SAW HER WITH THAT GUY,
 THAT HAEMORRHOID FROM SCHOOL—at the cinema!
 THEY WERE BOTH IN LINE.
 LOOK, I'VE GOT SOME PROOF THIS TIME.
(Whipping out his cell phone) CHECK IT OUT, BABY! SEE, THAT'S HIM
 And that's Lauren. YES, THE PICTURE'S RATHER DIM,
 WHO CARES?! Look at it!
 THAT'S HER SHOULDER, THAT'S HER HAIR!
 Limp curls, bad dye job and everything!
 I'M NOT WRONG THIS TIME, I SWEAR!

Again: a **SHIFT**. The mood has changed; RYAN is now more defensive, though it's unclear at this point whether he's telling the truth:

RYAN

I KNOW HOW IT LOOKS; BUT REALLY,
 THE THINGS I'VE SAID ARE TRUE: I SAW THEM!
 WHY THE HELL WOULD I LIE? I HAVE NO ULTERIOR MOTIVE!
 I KNOW THEY WERE THERE, AND THEY SEEMED TO BE
 MUCH MORE THAN FRIENDLY...
 I DIDN'T SEE HIS FACE, BUT I COULD VENTURE A GUESS: YES,
 IT WAS MICHAEL. DEANNA AND MICHAEL.
 I'M TELLING YOU, JOSH, THEY'RE BOTH CHEATING ON YOU.
 Whoa, wait! THAT'S TOO MUCH.
 I'M NOT SABOTAGING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS!
 I SWEAR, CROSS MY HEART, I'M JUST TRYING TO HELP—

NO, NO, NO, JOSH, PLEASE STAY. I'm sorry, I'm sorry!
 I'LL KEEP OUT OF YOUR WAY. I promise!
 NO, DON'T GO, JOSH, PLEASE STAY!

A **SHIFT**: he addresses the audience, more subdued now:

RYAN

HE MOVED OUT ANYWAY.

(To Josh) Why do you immediately assume I'm not telling the truth?
 That I'm sabotaging you? I'm just trying to stop you from getting hurt.

Sometimes you have to put an end to relationships that cause you more harm than good, Josh!

(More to himself, shaking his head)

Sabotaging you...!

I JUST WANT US SOME QUALITY TIME.
JUST TO HEAR HIM TELL ME THAT I'M
SOMEONE SPECIAL. IS THAT SUCH A CRIME?
DAMNED IF I DO; IF I DON'T, IT'S STILL DAMNING.

GOD, IF I TOLD HIM, WOULD THINGS BE THE SAME?
COULD HE ACCEPT ME, OR WOULD IT BE STRANGE?
GRANT ME GRACE: I'M RESIGNED I CAN'T CHANGE!
I'VE TRIED AND I'VE TRIED AND IT'S TOO OVERWHELMING—!

(He picks up a bottle)

IT'S TOO OVERWHELMING.

RYAN raises the bottle to his lips and drinks. LIGHTS FADE to BLACK.

Scene VI

(WOULDN'T THINK TWICE TO INTERCEDE)

Lights up on APRIL, who addresses Josh. They're at their workplace, the RESTAURANT. It's the very recent PAST. She occupies SR.

APRIL

JOSH, ARE YOU OKAY?
YOU'RE NOT LOOKING TOO GOOD THESE DAYS.
YEAH, I KNOW HOW IT IS:
YOU DON'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP FOR WHATEVER REASON.
SOMETHING WEIGHING YOU DOWN?
I CAN TELL BY JUST THE WAY YOU WALK.
HEY, IF YOU'D EVER LIKE TO TALK ABOUT ANYTHING AT ALL,
YOU JUST GIVE ME A CALL. Skype!

Lights up on MICHAEL, in another time and space; he occupies SL.

MICHAEL

HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON?
I HEAR YOU'RE NOT FINISHING COLLEGE.
FOR THE SAKE OF YOUR ART...?
WELL, IF YOU THINK THAT'S SMART—
I'M... JUST A MECHANIC.

APRIL

TABLE THREE NEEDS THEIR BILL.
WILL YOU SEE WHAT THEY NEED,
AND CLOSE UP THE TILL, THEN WE CAN TALK.

MICHAEL

SO YOU'RE GONNA WALK? DUDE, THAT'S REAL SWEET.
YOU'VE GOT THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET.

MICHAEL, APRIL

I TRUST YOU KNOW, WHENEVER YOU MIGHT NEED A FRIEND,
IF ONLY TO LEND YOU A HAND OR AN EAR,
HOPE YOU KNOW YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND ME HERE.
IF IT'S A SHOULDER YOU WANT,
I'LL GLADLY BE YOUR CONFIDANT.
SAY THE WORD: ANY TIME, ANY DAY, YOU'LL BE HEARD.

MICHAEL

Hey, bro, you've got my support. You were never cut out to have a nine-to-five job like your brother. Now you're doing what you *really* wanna do. That's— that's ambitious, man. That's...brave.

(With a hint of resentment) That's — something.

APRIL

Josh, please don't think I'm being nosy, it's just...

YOU'RE DISTRACTED. IT'S A NOTICEABLE FACT. IT
MEANS YOUR DUTIES ARE AFFECTED.
YEAH, THESE THINGS ARE ALL CONNECTED...
I DON'T MEAN TO BE RUDE.
AND I TRULY DON'T WANT TO INTRUDE,
BUT IF SOMETHING'S BEING A WEIGHT ON YOUR MIND,
I'VE A SENSE YOU MIGHT FIND that if you talk to someone,
IT MIGHT HELP YOU TO UNWIND.

You just have to be patient and not let yourself get you down.

(She takes a moment to revel in pride at the sagacity of that statement)

Well? Welcome to your quarter-century crisis. *(LIGHTS DOWN on her)*

MICHAEL

(To the audience, almost good-naturedly)

That Josh. Always aiming for more. Never satisfied with what he has.

I'm not sure he even *knows* what he has.

JOSH AND I WOULD SOMETIMES TALK
ABOUT THE THINGS WE'D DO WHEN WE GREW OLDER.
HE ALWAYS HAD THESE CRAZY GOALS,
WHILE I POSSESSED MORE SENSIBLE AMBITION.
"I WANT MY NAME IN LIGHTS!" HE'D SAY.
WELL, *THAT* WILL BE THE DAY! *(laughs)*
THROUGHOUT OUR FRIENDSHIP, WE ENGAGED
IN JUST A *LITTLE* HEALTHY COMPETITION.

*There is a **SHIFT**: MICHAEL and Josh are kids. He now moves DSC and sits on the floor, engaging in some playtime activity.*

MICHAEL

You win. This sucks. Can we play something else?

(He sees something impressive: a new addition to Josh's toys)

Hey, what's that?

OH, WOW, THAT'S REALLY COOL!
YOUR FATHER BOUGHT THIS FOR YOU?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, JOSH, I WANTED THIS FOR CHRISTMAS!
MY DAD SAID NO, OF COURSE—
THESE KINDS OF STUFF, HE DRAWS THE LINE.
OH, WELL, HAVE LOTS OF FUN.
MAYBE I COULD BORROW IT SOMETIME!
(Under his breath) Lucky sunnuvagun. *(A BEAT)* That's not a bad word.

Another SHIFT; they are now teenagers.

MICHAEL

So? How did you do??
 COME ON, YOU HAVE TO TELL ME!
 I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I SCORED IF YOU JUST TELL ME— *B minus?!*
 Shit, dude, THAT'S NOT SO BAD.
 YOU'RE STILL MORE BETTER THAN ME.
 I GOT A MUCH MORE LOWER GRADE BECAUSE OF —
 BAD GRAMMAR. (*He shrugs*)
 IT'S JUST A STUPID TEST. GUESS I'LL DO BETTER NEXT TIME.

A **SHIFT**, back to the original state. MICHAEL returns SL, but the monologue seems to have taken on a dark turn, and this should be reflected in his voice, which is now colder and harder.

MICHAEL

WE'VE COME THIS FAR
 BECAUSE WE BOTH KNOW WE ARE FRIENDS.
 AND THAT'S ALL THAT COUNTS IN THE END.
 THAT'S JUST FINE. HE'S THE DREAMER, THE SCHEMER, AND I'M
 THE SIDEKICK WHO'S NEVER ON PAR.
 THAT'S BEEN THE WAY THAT WE ARE.
 THIS IS WHERE WE BOTH STAND: WHAT A PAIR, *BEST OF FRIENDS*.

LIGHTS UP on APRIL, SR. A **SHIFT** indicates it's another moment in time—a more recent occurrence. She has observed Josh from a distance, and she is incredulous as she approaches him.

APRIL

What... the— Did he just... *do that??*
 (*In sharp whispers*)
 Josh! What are you *doing??* Do you have any idea how much trouble
 you'll be in?? You've got to put that money back!

MICHAEL

(*Addressing the audience*)
 Then *this* happened. Right out of the register.

APRIL

Look, nobody has to—just put it back. I didn't see anything.

MICHAEL

He had to tell *someone*, I guess. I said to him, "You're safe, bro! Trust me."

APRIL
 HONEY, JUST PUT IT BACK.

AND I'LL CLOSE BOTH
 MY EYES AND FORGET
 THAT THIS EVEN OCCURRED...

MICHAEL
 YOU KNOW I WOULDN'T
 TELL A LIE.

DUDE,
 NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW.
 ANOTHER LUCKY BREAK,

WE'LL JUST GET BACK TO WORK
I KNOW I'M BEING KIND OF SOFT
BUT I KNOW THINGS ARE ROUGH

AND YOU KNOW THAT
I CALL YOU A FRIEND.

Josh,
IF YOU NEEDED SOME CASH...
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO BE
ABASHED AT ALL.

AND IT GOES TO SHOW
THAT'S JUST THE WAY IT IS:
THE JOSH AND MICHAEL
STORY:

THE NEAREST AND
DEAREST OF FRIENDS!

SO I SWORE NOT TO TELL...

"I SWEAR, BRO.
WHAT THE HELL!"

MICHAEL, APRIL

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT I'M ON YOUR SIDE!

APRIL

SO THERE'S NO NEED TO HIDE...

MICHAEL

AND IT CAN'T BE DENIED:

MICHAEL, APRIL

I AM YOUR FRIEND! STRONG AND SECURE, LIKE A FORT!
IF ONLY TO GIVE YOU SUPPORT OR ADVICE TO SUFFICE:
WE ARE NICELY A TEAM!

APRIL

IF IT'S JUST SOME MONEY
YOU NEED...

MICHAEL

IF EVER YOU'RE
BLINDED BY GREED,

MICHAEL, APRIL

I WOULDN'T THINK TWICE TO INTERCEDE,
AND THOUGH THINGS MIGHT BE ROUGH,
WE WILL STILL BE—

JAROD enters angrily, leading to an abrupt CUTOFF as he yells at Josh:

JAROD

Enough!! Seriously. Seriously?! You were fired?! For what?!

It doesn't matter who told me—what the hell were you thinking?!

You know what? That's it, Josh. Forget about your plans, forget about your art. I've tried to be supportive, but you're not getting anywhere with it, and you just might have to accept the fact that you'll never get anywhere with it.

For God's sake, go back to college! Finish your degree, get out there, get a real job, do something useful with your life!

(Disgustedly) Get away from me. Yeah, go, go and cry to Mom. You child!

He staggers backwards as Josh pushes him. After a tense moment, JAROD retreats.

JAROD

(Coldly) You know what? You're dead to me.

Straight into NEXT SCENE.

Scene VII

(A MOTHER'S WORST NIGHTMARE)

LIGHTS UP on COMPANY: they're in the "PRESENT": the night of the suicide attempt. For the bulk of the exchange, APRIL watches from the sidelines.

JAROD

Mom, I don't know where he is. I can't find him anywhere, I can't reach him—

LILLY

What do you mean? Jarod...!

JAROD

(On his cell phone now)

Josh? Where are you?

What? I can't — I can't hear you, what did you say? *Josh??*

DEANNA

We've been together for just a year, and we've never even discussed marriage...!

LILLY

(To JAROD)

Why weren't you keeping your eye on him??

MICHAEL

(To RYAN)

It was *you*, you—

RYAN

(Challenging)

What? Huh??

MICHAEL

You just couldn't help yourself, could you? You couldn't leave him alone—

RYAN

Back off. You don't know me, you don't know what it's like—

DEANNA

That ring sure looked expensive though...

LILLY

(To JAROD)

Why can't you ever support him, why on earth do you have to be such a — such a dream crusher??

JAROD

I'm not a dream crusher, Mom, I'm a *realist*. There's a difference!

RYAN

(To nobody in particular)

I was drunk. I made a mistake. That's all.

DEANNA

God only knows how he managed to *afford* it...!

MICHAEL

(To RYAN)

Yeah, right. A *mistake*, when every goddamn thing you do has a hidden agenda—

RYAN

Oh, look who's talking, Mr "I'm his best friend but once he's not looking I'll stab him in the back!"—

MICHAEL

Yeah? *You're* the expert on stabbing in the back!

LILLY

(To JAROD)

Did he say where he was? Where *is* he??

JAROD

He wasn't making any sense...

HE SAID HE COULD SEE THE STARS FOR MILES!

FREEZE:

DEANNA

Oh my God.

RESUME:

LILLY

HERE WE ARE. A MOTHER'S WORST NIGHTMARE COME TRUE.
THIS HAS TO BE A JOKE—

RYAN

Was he serious?

MICHAEL

I can't believe it...

DEANNA

Is he really going to jump...?!

LILLY

OH MY GOD...!

MICHAEL

IT'S A STUNT.

APRIL

HE NEEDED HELP. I *knew* it...!

I COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING MORE...

RYAN, MICHAEL and DEANNA exit.

LILLY

Jarod, help him. You have to help him—

JAROD

Mom, I will.

LILLY

Jarod, *please—!!*

JAROD

Mom! I always help him!

LILLY frantically exits, followed by JAROD and finally APRIL.

Music CRESCENDOES into a brief interlude, which SEGUES into the next scene.

Scene VIII

(PROUD OF HIS SON)

Lights up on JAROD, who addresses Josh. They're in a car. JAROD is in the passenger seat, trying to teach his brother to drive. We are clearly in the PAST.

JAROD

CAN'T BELIEVE I'M LETTING YOU DO THIS.
BEFORE WE LEAVE, LET'S PRAY WE GET THROUGH THIS.
GOD HELP US — WE'RE GONNA GO FOR A RIDE,
AND I'M NOT ON THE DRIVER'S SIDE.
DEEP BREATH. NO, THIS ISN'T LEGAL, BUT
NEVER MIND, I'M SURE WE COULD WRIGGLE
OUT OF IT. WE'LL JUST OFFER A BRIBE:
THAT'S THE BEST ADVICE I CAN PROVIDE!

All right. CHECK ALL YOUR MIRRORS; SIDES AND THE REAR VIEW;
IS YOUR SEAT FEELING RIGHT? Can your feet reach the pedals?
KEY IN IGNITION; SEAT BELTS ARE FASTENED,
AND I'M HOLDING TIGHT! Remember the rules, Josh:
GO WHEN IT'S GREEN; SLOW DOWN WHEN IT'S YELLOW;
STOP WHEN I'M WHITE!

Okay. Start it up. *(There is a JERKING MOTION)*
Gear in neutral. Gear in *neutral!* Moron!

(Exhaling heavily) All right...

DOING WELL. OUT OF THE DRIVEWAY.
BLOODY HELL, I'M SCARED FOR MY LIFE. HEY,
NOT SO FAST. MOM IS WATCHING US GO! *(He waves)*
YOU KNOW, I BET SHE'S FREAKING OUT RIGHT NOW!
QUICKLY, BRO, BACK INTO THE DUSTBIN!
NO, NO, NO! JOSH, I'M ONLY KIDDING.
HIT THE BRAKE. AND NOW SHIFT INTO FIRST.
AND IT'S DEAD. DUDE, YOU'RE THE WORST DRIVER.
Good luck with your test tomorrow.

A **SHIFT**: the following day.

JAROD

You did it?? You really did it?!
WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT;
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BLOW IT, BUT, CLEARLY, MAN,
YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING!
CONGRATS, BRO, YOU'VE PROVEN ME WRONG.
NOW YOU DRIVE *ME* AROUND FOR A CHANGE!
DIDN'T THINK YOU'D THE SKILL TO MANEUVRE THAT HILL,
YET YOU DID IT. STRANGE!

I'LL FLOAT ON A CLOUD:
(In an obvious reference to himself)
DAD WOULD BE PROUD OF HIS SON!

Another **SHIFT**, to a different point in Josh and JAROD's childhood.

LIGHTS UP on LILLY, aside.

LILLY
LOOK AT HIM, MY JOSH. OUT IN THE SUN THERE,
ABOUT ON THE COURT.
GROWING UP QUICKLY. TRUSTING HIS BROTHER
TO TEACH HIM SOME SPORT.
OLDER AND YOUNGER, HAVING THEIR FUN THERE:
QUALITY TIME.
Make sure he's got sunblock on!

JAROD
Aw, Mom, he'll get his hands greasy—!

LILLY chucks a bottle of sunscreen at JAROD, who catches it and sighs. Lights fade on LILLY. A **SHIFT** to another sports training session: basketball.

(LEADER OF THE PACK)

JAROD
Okay, remember, if you're running, you have to dribble it. The ball has to bounce.
Bounce it. Bounce it.
(Yelling, and this should be funny)
Bounce it!!!!

Yeah!! JOSH HAS GOT THE BALL, AND HE'S DRIBBLIN' LIKE A PRO
IN SQUEAKY-FLASHY NEW ADIDAS!
THE OPPOSITION FALL IN THE DEADLY FACE OF FOE,
AND THEY'RE CRYING, "WE KNOW HE'LL DEFEAT US!"

WATCH HIM FLY 'CROSS THE COURT, HE'S AMAZIN'!
HE'S STRONG ON THE REBOUND, FRIGGIN' HOT, HE'S A-BLAZIN'!
SWERVE AND DODGE, VEER AND DUCK, HE'S UNFAZIN'!
A LEAP TOWARDS THE NET, AND HE'S SET, SLAM-DUNK!

AUDIO FX: A ball bouncing anti-climactically on the court.

JAROD
HEAR THE CROWD GO MAD FOR THE LAD,
THEY ARE CHEERING FOR HIM:
JOSH! JOSH! LEADER OF THE PACK—
SHOVE IT THROUGH THE BASKET
WITH A DRIBBLE-LEAP-AND-SMACK!

JOSH! JOSH! HERO TO THE MAX—
SMOOTH AND SUAVE, HE'S DEADLY,
SEE THE FIRE IN HIS TRACKS!
THE CHEERLEADERS SCREAM, HE'S THE CREAM OF THE TEAM,
HEAR THEM CRYING! SIGHING. HE'S FLYING. DEFYING!

MICHAEL suddenly enters, stealing the ball.

MICHAEL

MICHAEL'S GOT THE BALL, AND HE'S TEARING UP THE COURT
IN SUPER-STYLISH, WELL-WORN REEBOKS!

(He shoves Josh)

Out of my way!

JAROD

(Taking a threatening step towards MICHAEL)

Hey—!

MICHAEL

(Backing off)

LOOKIN' LIKE A PRO IN HIS P.T. RUNNING SHORTS
AND SINGLET. JUST ADMIT IT, HE ROCKS!
WATCH HIM STEAL FROM HIS CHALLENGER! EASY!
HE'S FAKIN', PRETENDIN' TO SHOOT, BUT IS HE?
WHAT THE HELL! WHY'S THIS BALL SO DAMN GREASY?

JAROD

(Dejectedly, with a jerk of his thumb)

Mom.

MICHAEL

A JUMP TOWARDS THAT RING, BADABING, *SLAM DUNK!*

Similarly, the ball misses the hoop entirely and bounces dully against the court.

JAROD

HEAR THE CROWD GO NUTS FOR THE KLUTZ!

MICHAEL

YEAH, I HEAR THEM CHANTING
MIKE! MIKE! HE'S THE ONE WE LIKE!
SPORTY AND A HOTTIE! ALL YOU LOSERS, TAKE A HIKE!
MIKE! MIKE! LEADER OF THE TROUPE!
SO UNNERVIN' AS HE'S CURVIN',
WHOOSH, RIGHT THROUGH THE HOOP!

THE BABES OUT THERE SCREAMIN',
GOING WILD BEYOND REDEEMIN',
FOR HE'S SOARIN' AND SCORIN' WITH LEGIONS ADORIN'!

MICHAEL suddenly stumbles—he's been shoved by Josh. MICHAEL retaliates with some fist-clenched swipes. JAROD rushes to intervene.

JAROD

Hey, hey, hey, break it up! *Break it up!*

He shoves MICHAEL aside, moves in on him.

JAROD

Don't you ever, *ever* lay a finger on Josh!

MICHAEL

He started it—!

JAROD

The only person who's allowed to hit him is me!

MICHAEL

But—

JAROD

Don't make me whack you...!

*A **SHIFT**. Lights up on JAROD, RYAN and MICHAEL, sitting side by side, as on a bench. Josh, MICHAEL and RYAN are aged fifteen.*

MICHAEL

I'll do it. She's hot; she's out of your league, Josh.

JAROD

Tough, I saw her first.

MICHAEL

Hello. You're like twenty years older than us—

JAROD

For *Josh*, you idiot.

RYAN

And Jarod's only seven years older...

MICHAEL

Shut up.

JAROD

Go on, Josh.

WALK UP AND SAY HELLO. GO ON, SHE'S LOOKING AT YOU.
YOU'VE GOT TO NOTICE ALL THE SIGNS: SHE SAYS SHE'S *OPEN!*
WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN?
SHE'LL JUST SAY NO—

MICHAEL

FOR SHE'LL BE MINE!

JAROD

Oh, no, she won't.

MICHAEL

BECAUSE I'M FINE!

JAROD

Oh, no you're not.

RYAN

(To MICHAEL)

You're really not.

JAROD

I KNOW WHAT WOMEN WANT.

MICHAEL

Yeah, right.

THAT'S WHY YOU'RE SINGLE AND ALONE.

(JAROD shoots him a deadly look)

Sorry.

JAROD

Josh, trust me, simply look interested. Pretend to appreciate their... inane little stories.

JUST BE A GENTLEMAN. AND WHEN SHE TALKS, YOU LISTEN.

THESE THINGS MIGHT COME UP:

FEELINGS, HONESTY, COMMITMENT.

JAROD, RYAN, MICHAEL

(Shrugging simultaneously) Eh.

JAROD

PAY HER A COMPLIMENT. AND SHE MIGHT PAY YOU IN RETURN!

(Mischievously)

You know what I mean? You know what I mean?

RYAN

(Irritably)

Yes, we all know what you mean.

MICHAEL

SHE'S LOOKING THIS WAY AGAIN!

RYAN

(Getting up and walking away)

BOYS, THIS IS DUMB. I'LL DO IT.

JAROD, MICHAEL

What?!

RYAN

I'LL GET HER NUMBER.

MICHAEL

YOU'RE INSANE!

And she's out of your league, Ryan! Trust me: way out of your league!

JAROD and MICHAEL observe keenly as RYAN interacts with the girl. Perhaps RYAN even moves into the audience to interact with a female audience member.

JAROD

She seems... to be... giving him...her... number...

MICHAEL

You... are... joking.

JAROD

No... I'm... not.

RYAN

(Striking a pose)

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE BOY! JUMP FOR JOY!

IT'S THE ONE AND ONLY RYAN! RYAN! SEXY AND DIVINE!

ENIGMATIC, CHARISMATIC, FUNKY AND SO FINE!

RYAN! RYAN! LEADER OF THE GUYS!

COOL CUCUMBER, GOT HER NUMBER!

NOW, WHO WANTS THE PRIZE?

JAROD, YOU CAN HAVE IT.

MICHAEL

No way, it's mine!

JAROD

Sit down! It's for Josh.

MICHAEL

But—

JAROD

Don't make me whack you...!

*LIGHTS DOWN on them. A **SHIFT**. JAROD is now aged thirteen, in Josh's bedroom. Josh has just woken up and is frightened. JAROD moves to comfort him.*

(A MATTER OF TIME)

JAROD

Hey, hey. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT THERE?
DID YOU HAVE A NIGHTMARE? I'LL TURN ON THE LIGHT.
HEY, I'M RIGHT HERE, JOSH.
THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR, JOSH. JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES.
YOU'RE NOT ALONE, PAL. TILL MOM COMES HOME, WELL,
I'M BY YOUR SIDE.

*A gradual **SHIFT**. Lights up on LILLY.*

LILLY

(To Josh)

Darling... sssh. Sssh. It's okay. I miss Daddy too...
But everything's going to be all right.

(JAROD moves towards her)

Jarod. I've got him.

JAROD

(Quietly)

Yeah, but.... who's got me...?

LIGHTS DOWN on LILLY.

JAROD

I TRY MY BEST. I ONLY KNOW SO MANY THINGS.
AND THEN THE REST...I GUESS AND SEE WHAT FORTUNE BRINGS.
I DO GO WRONG. I'M ONLY HUMAN AFTER ALL.

SEE, I TOLD OUR DAD... BEFORE HE DIED, I TOLD HIM HE
SHOULD NOT BE SAD. I'D CARE FOR JOSH WITH ALL MY LIFE.
THROUGH GOOD AND BAD.
I'D TEACH HIM ALL HE NEEDS TO KNOW:

AND THAT IS EVERYTHING I'VE GOT TO GIVE.
EVERY RIGHT AND WRONG THING SO THAT HE MAY LIVE
A HAPPY LIFE.

So sometimes I give in to him. Sometimes I don't. Sometimes I tell him off
when I shouldn't, and *don't* tell him off when I *should*...

BUT THEN, THAT'S LIFE.

There are times you've got to put your foot down, right?
Tough love and all that?

IT'S NOT A CRIME. IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME.

LIGHTS DOWN on JAROD.

Scene IX**(NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE)**

Lights up on LILLY, in the very recent PAST:

LILLY

Happy birthday, darling! Twenty-five. My God.
You know, I can still remember so clearly the day you were born.

A **SHIFT** to twenty-five years ago. LILLY is holding newborn Josh in her arms.

LILLY

LITTLE BABY, HUSH, DON'T CRY.
WELCOME TO THE WORLD. I'VE BEEN WAITING:
ANXIOUS, SCARED, EXCITED. MY,
I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE. I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE.
LITTLE DARLING, CLOSE YOUR EYES.
EVERY DAY WILL BE A NEW ADVENTURE.
YOU WERE SUCH A BIG SURPRISE; BUT NOW YOU'RE HERE...
NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, IT FEELS SO RIGHT.

(To the audience) Josh's father used to sing this song. It's a reminder of
of the happier life we had, after he walked out, and after all the women...
... Before he died.

And no, we didn't plan to have Josh, but... all it took was one strange,
unanticipated night — the emergence of a kind of passion that had hardly
existed after Jarod was born... fueled by too much whiskey and the fact the
other women weren't around to keep my husband preoccupied. *(A BEAT)*
Well, good for me.

IF SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME THAT WE
WOULD HAVE ANOTHER BABY, I WOULD HAVE SAID,
"THAT CAN'T BE"— FOR YOUR DADDY, HE'S BEEN
RUNNING AWAY FROM HIS FAMILY
TO DIFFERENT FACES IN DIFFERENT PLACES.

(To baby Josh) BUT I LOOK AT YOU: YOU'RE SO GORGEOUS,
AND I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I WAS UNCERTAIN AND NERVOUS.
YOUR DAD MIGHT LEAVE,
BUT I'M RIGHT WHERE I WANT TO BE, JOSH.
FOR I'M SO HAPPY. INCREDIBLY HAPPY.
SO BLESSED AND HAPPY...!

LITTLE CHILD, SWEET VALENTINE.
NO HARM IN THIS WORLD SHALL BEFALL YOU.
YOU'LL BE SAFE, PRECIOUS CHILD OF MINE.
NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE.
NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, WE'LL BE JUST FINE!

LITTLE ONE, SO PURE, SO SWEET!
WHO KNOWS WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR YOU?
THIS WIDE WORLD LIES AT YOUR FEET...!

AND NOW YOU'RE HERE...
NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE...
BECAUSE YOU'RE HERE...
I AM COMPLETE!

BLACKOUT.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene I

(THE EDGE)

Lights up on the COMPANY, CS.

JAROD

WHY ARE YOU TREMBLING THERE?
WHY WON'T YOU COME BACK IN?
WHY AREN'T OUR VOICES REACHING YOU?
TURN AROUND AND HEAR US BESEECHING YOU.

DEANNA

WHY ARE WE FAR APART?

RYAN, DEANNA

WHY AREN'T WE MEANT TO BE?

APRIL

THOUGH THERE'S NO REAL UNDERSTANDING HERE...

APRIL, DEANNA

STILL I KNOW

RYAN, DEANNA, APRIL

THIS CAN'T BE HOW WE'RE ENDING HERE.

LILLY

AND I CAN'T HELP BUT TO WONDER
WHAT PULLED YOU UNDER?
WHAT WERE THE REASONS THAT YOU NOW ALLEGE
THAT LIFE'S NOT WORTH LIVING?
WE NEED FORGIVING

JAROD, LILLY

IF WE PUSHED YOU SO FAR
THAT YOU'RE NOW WHERE YOU ARE, ON THE EDGE.

JAROD

WHY AREN'T YOU AT MY DOOR?

LILLY

WHY AREN'T YOU AT MY SIDE?

MICHAEL

WHY ARE THESE FEELINGS SO RAW?

RYAN

WHY DO WE RUN AND HIDE?

JAROD, LILLY, APRIL

I WISH

WE COULD START

THIS NIGHT OVER.

RYAN, MICHAEL, DEANNA

COULD WE START

THIS NIGHT OVER?

COMPANY

TELL ME PLEASE,

COULD WE START THIS RIGHT OVER?

JAROD, LILLY

AND I CAN'T HELP BUT TO WONDER

WHAT PUSHED YOU UNDER?

JAROD, LILLY, DEANNA

BUT THINGS WILL BE BETTER, WE PROMISE, WE PLEDGE,
THAT THERE'S GREATER GLORY

JAROD, LILLY, RYAN, DEANNA

AND WE'RE SAYING SORRY

COMPANY

IF WE HAD A HAND IN THE

FACT THAT YOU STAND ON THE EDGE.

MICHAEL, DEANNA

BUT NOW HOLD ON, TOMORROW'S

ANOTHER DAY BEGINNING.

COMPANY

WHY HOLD ON TO SORROW?

WE ALL DESERVE REDEEMING.

RYAN, MICHAEL, APRIL, DEANNA

AND WE BELIEVE IN YOU.

JAROD

SO PLEASE...

BELIEVE IN US.

LILLY

SO PLEASE...

BELIEVE IN US.

They observe Josh, on the edge, in trepidation, and REACT when Josh seems to make a move.

COMPANY

NO, WE CAN'T HELP BUT TO WONDER

WHAT TORE US ASUNDER?

HOW IN THE WORLD DID WE WIND UP THIS WAY?

THINGS WON'T BE THE SAME;
IS THERE SOMEONE TO BLAME HERE?
THE PRICE IS JUST TOO HIGH TO PAY!
HEY, THE NIGHT'S GETTING COLDER.
AND WE WANT TO HOLD YOU
AND TELL YOU IT'S OVER: TOGETHER WE'LL STAY.
WE LOOK, LOVE, AND WONDER, HOW DID WE BLUNDER?
DID WE PUSH YOU TOO FAR?
LOOK, WE'RE FALLING FOR YOU'RE ON THE EDGE!

JAROD, LILLY

YOU'RE ON THE EDGE!

FADE TO BLACK.

Scene II

LIGHTS UP on APRIL, who's sitting at her computer. It is the recent PAST.

(OUTSIDE LOOKING IN)

APRIL

Like. Like. Unlike. Approve. Approve.

(She makes a face)

Eew. Reject.

(A BEAT)

What's this?

COOL! JOSH HAS APPROVED MY FRIEND REQUEST.
LOOKS LIKE WE'LL BE BEST FRIENDS, BY ALL ACCOUNTS.
Get it? All accounts? I've got Reddit, Tumblr... never mind.
LET'S SEE IF THERE'S ANY JUICY STUFF...
I LOVE MY SOCIAL LIFE...!

(A PAUSE)

What? THIS STILL COUNTS.

She scrutinizes her computer screen.

APRIL

Ha! SEE, THE ARTIST AIMS TO WOW
WITH SONGS AND ARTWORK POSTED ON HIS WALL.

And his own comment:

“THOUGHT I WOULD BE MAKING IT BIG BY NOW...”

Oh, Josh.

(A BEAT)

Hmm, what's this?

SOMETHING VERY STRANGE,
I WONDER WHAT HE MEANS BY WHAT HE'S WRITTEN HERE.
He says: “I REALLY HATE MY LIFE AND NO ONE UNDERSTANDS
I'VE GOT ALL THIS SHIT IN HERE.”
STUFF ABOUT HIS BROTHER, MOM AND GIRLFRIEND...
THERE IS QUITE A BIT IN HERE.
CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S ALL PUBLIC, LIKE HE *WANTS* TO BE SEEN...!

“EVERYTHING FEELS HOPELESS, FEELS LIKE I AM DROWNING,
GETTING NOWHERE FAST.” Yikes.

“I JUST WANT TO SLEEP AND NEVER WAKE AGAIN —
REALLY, HOW LONG CAN I LAST?” Is no one else reading these??
DAMMIT, JOSH, DON'T DO THIS TO YOURSELF,
ALL THESE DOUBTS THAT YOU'VE AMASSED—

BUT I'M JUST ON THE OUTSIDE. OUTSIDE LOOKING IN,
OUT HERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR.

WHEN YOU'RE ON THE OUTSIDE, OUTSIDE LOOKING IN,
SOMETIMES YOU MIGHT FIND THAT YOU SEE MORE.
THAT'S FOR SURE...

A **SHIFT**: Lights UP on RYAN, who's out for a jog. Comically, APRIL joins him.

RYAN

Wait, who are you again?

APRIL

I work with him. At the restaurant. I saw you were his friend on Facebook—

RYAN

He's just being a drama queen.

APRIL

He's being a drama que—?

(She stops herself, her hands at her mouth)

RYAN

Ya. I have to run.

APRIL

Okay, but—

RYAN

Esca-later! *(He EXITS)*

APRIL

Follow me on Twitter!

A **SHIFT**: she's back at her computer.

APRIL

LET'S SEE THE LATEST ON MY FEED.
IT'S ALMOST GUARANTEED I'LL LEARN SOMETHING NEW.
Huh. RYAN. WAXING LYRICAL INDEED...

“IT'S THE PEOPLE YOU KNOW BEST
WHO CAN HURT YOU THE WORST.”

“A MAN SHOULD NOT BE WORTH YOUR TEARS,
BUT YOU SHOULD BE WORTH HIS.”

“THE WORST WAY TO MISS SOMEONE
IS TO BE RIGHT NEXT TO THEM
KNOWING EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT NOW
AND CAN NEVER BE THE SAME.”

Hmmm! CURIUSER AND CURIUSER.

RYAN, RYAN. WHAT'S YOUR GAME?

BUT I'M JUST ON THE OUTSIDE. OUTSIDE LOOKING IN...!

Another **SHIFT**: *Lights up on JAROD, walking from SL to SR.*

JAROD

Sorry, what?

APRIL

Well, you've seen his status updates, haven't you?

JAROD

I don't have Facebook.

APRIL

(Aghast, in a comic reaction)

You don't have *Facebook*? *(A PAUSE)*

JAROD

Look, I know my brother. He's—

APRIL

(Still aghast, in a comic reaction)

You don't have *Facebook*? *(Another PAUSE)*

JAROD

Josh is the tortured artist. The cliché. Honestly—what was your name again?

APRIL

April.

JAROD

April. Hi—

APRIL

Hi.

JAROD

Honestly, it's no big deal.

APRIL

But...!

JAROD

I'm sorry, I have to go. But I wouldn't worry about it, okay?

LIGHTS DOWN on JAROD as he EXITS.

APRIL

But—I *am* worried.

IN MY PREVIOUS JOB I KNEW THIS GUY;
I WOULD SMILE AT HIM AND SAY HELLO.

I NEVER LEARNED HIS NAME,
BUT HE SAT IN A CORNER CUBICLE.
HE WAS RATHER QUIET,
FIGURED HE WAS JUST A LONER. SO...
THEN ONE DAY HE WAS GONE.
AND I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.

ON HIS DESK WERE PHOTOS,
MAYBE FAMILY? FRIENDS?
THE TYPICAL TABLEAU.
BUT HERE'S THE THING:
WHILE THE GUY WAS ANTI-SOCIAL,
NO ONE THOUGHT HE'D GO
AND TRY TO TAKE HIS LIFE. He's okay, though.
THE POINT IS— YOU NEVER KNOW.

If I had known, maybe I could've said something, *done* something...
And now with Josh ...

She PAUSES, momentarily lost in her reverie. Then she snaps out of it:

APRIL

BUT I AM ON THE OUTSIDE, OUTSIDE LOOKING IN,
WHERE SOMETIMES YOUR OWN MIND PULLS NAUGHTY PRANKS.
FOR WHEN YOU'RE ON THE OUTSIDE, OUTSIDE LOOKING IN,
YOU MAY HAVE TO FILL IN CERTAIN BLANKS!

(Gesturing to her forehead)

DRAW UPON YOUR BANKS TO FILL IN THE BLANKS...
LET'S FILL IN THE BLANKS!

LIGHTS DOWN on APRIL. Straight into next scene.

Scene III

LIGHTS UP on DEANNA and MICHAEL, seated at a table in the restaurant.

(MOTORCYCLES AND MYSTERY)

DEANNA

So who're you seeing?

MICHAEL

No-one.

DEANNA

Really? *You*, Mr Hot Stud, not seeing anyone?

MICHAEL

It's true.

DEANNA

(Playfully) Bullshit.

MICHAEL

(Laughing) It's true!

DEANNA

MR SMOOTH AND MR SLICK.

MICHAEL

Stop it!

DEANNA

ALWAYS ON THE QUICK
TO GET HIMSELF A LITTLE ACTION.

MICHAEL

"I can't get no... satisfaction."

DEANNA

REALLY, MIKE?

MICHAEL

WHAT CAN I SAY?
I'm going through a dry spell.

DEANNA

GUYS LIKE YOU DON'T GO THROUGH SPELLS.

MICHAEL

(Chuckling)

What do you mean, guys like me?

DEANNA

The *playa*.

MICHAEL

WHAT THE HELL?

DEANNA

LOOK, SINCE I'VE MET YOU, YOU'VE BEEN— HORNY.

MICHAEL

Hey.

DEANNA

BUT IN A GOOD WAY.

MICHAEL

Yeah, *okay*. Look,
LATELY, NO-ONE'S CAUGHT MY FANCY.

DEANNA

What is this, the Fifties?
COME ON, MICHAEL—

MICHAEL

(Sighing)
WHAT THE HELL. PERHAPS THERE'S SOMEONE—

DEANNA

Ha! I KNEW IT!
There *is* someone! Who is she?

MICHAEL

I CAN'T TELL.

DEANNA

WELL, IS SHE PRETTY?

MICHAEL

PRETTY AWESOME.

DEANNA

Ah!
DOES SHE KNOW YOU LIKE HER?

MICHAEL

MAYBE... NOT.

DEANNA

WELL, HAVE YOU ASKED HER OUT?

MICHAEL

I THINK SO.

DEANNA

Huh?

APRIL approaches their table with their order: she has been eavesdropping.

APRIL

CAREFUL, GUYS, IT'S REALLY HOT.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

After she serves them, APRIL exits, eyeing them surreptitiously.

DEANNA

(Chuckling)

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE EATING HERE.

MICHAEL

Why?

DEANNA

WHAT IF SOMEONE SEES?

MICHAEL

Like who? Josh?

IT'S NOT LIKE WE ARE DOING ANYTHING.
BESIDES, IT'S HIS DAY OFF.

He's not here today.

AND EVEN IF HE WAS, SO WHAT?

DEANNA

Yeah, you're right.

MICHAEL, DEANNA

WE ARE JUST FRIENDS.

(They share a look that lasts a touch too long)

DEANNA

I GUESS I'M JUST BEING PARANOID THEN.

APRIL approaches them.

APRIL

ALL GOOD, GUYS?

MICHAEL

(Not happy at the interruption)
BRILLIANT. THANKS.

APRIL lingers just a touch too long before walking away. She exits.

DEANNA

You know,
YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE.

MICHAEL

Really?

DEANNA

Yeah. THIS GUY THAT I USED TO DATE.

MICHAEL

Remind you in what way?

DEANNA

HE HAD A GIANT— MOTORCYCLE.

MICHAEL

(Laughs, perhaps unconvincingly)
AND I FIX THEM. I RELATE.
SO... FROM A BIKER GUY TO OUR FRIEND JOSH.

DEANNA

Yeah.

MICHAEL

A STRANGE TRANSITION.

DEANNA

IT'S THE THRILL.
(Off MICHAEL's amused and puzzled look)
I LIKE MOTORBIKES AND MYSTERY.

MICHAEL

(Chuckling)
What?

DEANNA

(Teasingly)
MAKE OF THAT WHAT YOU WILL.

MICHAEL

Well, whatever the case, I'm glad you got together with Josh, otherwise I'd never have met you. And honestly, what you two have...I want that.
I want what Josh has.

DEANNA

(More subdued now)

Well, be careful what you wish for.

MICHAEL

What do you mean?

DEANNA

It's just—a year ago...

(Referring to the restaurant)

You know, this was where we met. *(MICHAEL nods)*

I gave him a tip and he said he'd put it in his Milky Way Fund.

MICHAEL

Oh, God, not his Milky Way Fund.

DEANNA

The Milky Way Fund, because it would help him

MICHAEL, DEANNA

Reach for the stars!!

They LAUGH, even though MICHAEL is derisive. When they stop, DEANNA is even more subdued.

(INTENSITY)

DEANNA

Just a year ago, he was more gung ho about his dreams and his prospects.

MICHAEL

(Cynically) Must be nice to have prospects.

DEANNA

Mm. He talked about going places and being *somebody* by the time he turned 25.

WHEN I MET HIM, THERE WAS THIS SOMETHING IN HIS EYES
IT WOULD COME AND GO, BUT IT WAS MOSTLY THERE, ALIVE.
HE WOULD TELL ME THAT HIS CRAFT WOULD TAKE HIM FAR
AS I FOUND MYSELF BEING REELED IN BY

INTENSITY. HIS TALK OF THINGS THAT OUGHT TO BE.
THAT FERVOR TRULY GOT TO ME. I JUST LOVED
INTENSITY. OF PASSION AND PROPENSITY,
'REACH FOR THE STARS' IMMENSITY.
AND SO WE SOARED!

AS I KNEW HIM, HIS MOODS WOULD COME AND GO.
HE'D BE POSITIVE ONE MINUTE, IN DESPAIR THE NEXT.

BUT I WAS WITH HIM, AND I FOUND IT SO EXCITING
TO CHEER HIM ON, IGNITING HIS

INTENSITY. HIS UNPREDICTABILITY. DEPRESSIVE BIPOLARITY
IT WOULD SPUR INTENSITY, ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY.
IF EVERYTHING WERE UP TO ME

I WOULDN'T CHANGE A THING.
I WOULD KEEP HIM ON HIS JOURNEY.
BUT LATELY WHAT I THINK IS THAT HE'S MOVING TO THE BRINK
OF GIVING IN, AS IF HIS DREAMS BECAME UNWIELDY
AND UNLIKELY TO COME TRUE. SO WHAT IS HE TO DO?
WHAT IS HE TO DO?

WHEN I MET HIM HE COULD SOMETIMES BE INSECURE
AND I LEARNED HE HANDLES BADLY NEGATIVITY.
BUT I SUPPORT HIM, THOUGH IT'S HARDER TO ENDURE
AS HE SINKS EVEN MORE INTO HIS MISERY.
AND IT'S HARD TO KEEP MY FAITH IN HIS INTENSITY.
AND PERHAPS WE SHOULD EMBRACE
SOME THINGS AREN'T MEANT TO BE.

Almost as if remembering that MICHAEL is there, she snaps out of her reverie.

DEANNA

Sorry.

MICHAEL

That's okay.

DEANNA

What about you? You've been friends with him forever, right?

MICHAEL

Yeah.

DEANNA

And yet... here you are. *(She touches his hand lightly)*

(EVERY NOW AND THEN)

MICHAEL

JOSH AND I WERE FRIENDS FROM THE OUTSET,
SINCE WE MET IN KINDERGARTEN.
EVERY TIME I LOOK BACK ON THE PAST,
I'M AGHAST AT HOW WE CHANGED.
THE INTERESTS THAT WE HAD IN COMMON, EVEN AT THAT AGE:
ROBOTS, TRUCKS, TOY GUNS AND VIDEO GAMES.

He gradually addresses the AUDIENCE.

MICHAEL

WE WENT TO SCHOOL TOGETHER; WE WERE CLASSMATES...
A CO-ED — EDUCATION.
WE'D SHOOT SPIT BALLS AT THE GIRL ACROSS THE AISLE
AND ALL THE WHILE THINK SHE WAS CUTE.
WE WERE CALLED THE "DYNAMIC DUO",
OR "THE TERRIBLE TWO".
WE WERE BARELY TEN: YOUNG MEN OF ILL-REPUTE.

WHEN THE BELL WOULD RING TO GO BACK HOME,
FROM OUR SEATS WE'D SPRING AND RUSH RIGHT OVER
TO JOSH'S PLACE!
WE'D DO OUR HOMEWORK, WATCH CARTOONS;
I'D STAY THE WHOLE DAMN AFTERNOON;
EVENINGS WERE OFTEN THE CASE.
AND ONCE IN A WHILE, EVERY NOW AND THEN,
I'D STAY TILL DARK, AND SOMETIMES SPEND
THE NIGHT. THEY'D NEVER COMPLAIN.
HIS FOLKS WERE KIND, HIS BROTHER WAS COOL.
THE NEXT DAY WE'D GET UP FOR SCHOOL
AND START ALL OVER AGAIN.
EVERY NOW AND THEN—

JOSH AND I WOULD SOMETIMES TALK
ABOUT THE THINGS WE'D DO WHEN WE GREW OLDER.
LATER ON, I REALIZED I REALLY WANTED
TO BECOME A DOCTOR.
BUT I KNEW MY DREAMS WOULD NOT COME TRUE.
I DIDN'T HAVE THE BRAINS.
That's what my father always said.
WHILE JOSH EXCELED AT MOST THINGS. IF HE DIDN'T...
WELL, IT WAS NO CRYING SHAME.

DEANNA

Oh, Michael—

MICHAEL

HE CRUISED THROUGH LIFE, HE FOLLOWED HIS BLISS!
AND IF MY LIFE COULD BE MORE LIKE HIS,
I WOULDN'T TAKE IT FOR GRANTED!
HIS MOM AND BROTHER WERE ALWAYS THERE;
ALWAYS CARING; THEY WOULD GIVE HIM
WHATEVER HE WANTED!
MY DAD WAS CRUEL, MY MOM WITHDRAWN;
WHILE JAROD MADE SURE HIS BROTHER WON,
LIKE HE WASN'T A WINNER ENOUGH...
WITH HIS LOOKS AND SMARTS; THE GIRL HE COURTED;
HIS FAMILY SUPPORTIVE; HIS OUTLOOK UNTHWARTED—
(*Sarcastically*) HE SURE HAD IT ROUGH!

YET HE WOULD OFTEN COMPLAIN.
IT WOULD DRIVE ME INSANE—
HE IS MY BEST FRIEND... BUT EVERY NOW AND THEN,
(Points to his heart) IT WOULD GET ME, RIGHT HERE...!
EVERY NOW AND THEN— IT'S NO BIG DEAL, IT'S JUST
EVERY NOW AND THEN—! EVERY NOW AND THEN—!
EVERY NOW AND THEN—!
EVERY NOW AND THEN—!
EVERY NOW AND THEN—!
EVERY NOW AND THEN—!

*DEANNA pulls him to her and kisses him: a long, passionate kiss right on the lips.
When they pull apart, MICHAEL is stunned, and it takes him a while to recover.*

Lights up on APRIL, aside.

MICHAEL, DEANNA

EVERY NOW AND THEN...

APRIL

I'M HERE ON THE OUTSIDE...

MICHAEL

JOSH AND I WERE FRIENDS...

APRIL

OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.

MICHAEL

EVERY TIME I LOOK BACK ON THE PAST...
HOW WE CHANGED.
HE — CHANGED.
AND I...

I win.

They move in for another kiss as LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK.

Scene IV

LIGHTS UP on RYAN, who addresses the audience.

RYAN

So Josh came over, not long before that Friday when...

(He makes a vague gesture to indicate the suicide attempt)

And he asked if he could please, please stay here again. Till he could figure things out. *(RAMBLING)* See, he'd been kicked out because he couldn't pay the rent and he didn't want to move in with his *mom* because that would mean seeing more of her *partner* and he didn't want to tell his *brother* about any of this because more poo would've hit the fan, and...ugh.

So Josh was, like, "Could I please, please stay with you? Please, please, please, pretty please?" And I was, like: *(AUTHORATIVELY)* "No! *Absolutely* not! Not a chance in hell!"

(A LONG PAUSE)

I didn't say that.

You see, he was such a mess, and... I couldn't...

So I let him in. No harm in just— talking, right?

A **SHIFT**. RYAN is seated on a couch with Josh, holding a bottle of alcohol. He pours a shot each for himself and Josh. In the following sequence, RYAN's speech is only slightly slurred: a light tipsiness is settling in.

(OVERDOSE ON THE HISTRIONICS)

RYAN

SO! THIS MIGHT BE FUN. I'M ACTUALLY GLAD YOU CAME.
JUST CHILLIN' LIKE WE USED TO. HEY,
YOUR ROOM'S PRETTY MUCH THE SAME.
NEVER GOT ROUND TO STORING YOUR STUFF.
I GUESS I HAVE BEEN HOLDING ON AND HOPING
YOU WOULD COME BACK. ANYWAY. SORRY THINGS ARE ROUGH.
BUT JAROD MIGHT BE RIGHT. NO, I'M NOT ON ANYONE'S SIDE,
THOUGH YOU KNOW HE HAS YOUR WELL-BEING AT HEART.
I REMEMBER ONCE YOU WERE SICK IN BED
WITH THE STOMACH FLU
AND HE WENT AHEAD AND LOOKED AFTER YOU,
AND I THOUGHT IT SWEET HOW HE SAW YOU THROUGH.
HE WAS THERE FOR YOU. HE'S BEEN THERE FOR YOU, JOSH.
ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR YOU... *(He drinks)*

SO YOU PLAN TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL?
I MEAN COLLEGE. SORRY. YES.
YOU KNOW YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES.
THEN YOU WOULDN'T NEED THAT DUMB, DEPRESSING JOB;
THE LIMIT'S THE SKY! I THINK I GOT THAT BACKWARDS.

ANYWAY IT DOESN'T MATTER.
 YOU'D BE BETTER OFF BACK IN CLASS.
 MOVE YOUR ASS! NO, JUST IGNORE THAT.
 DUDE, WHAT HAPPENED?? WE HAD A PLAN
 TO FACE THE WORLD TOGETHER. DARLING, I UNDERSTAND
 YOU CHANGED YOUR MIND; YOU NEEDED MORE TIME
 TO GIVE YOUR ART A SHOT. THAT'S YOUR TRACK RECORD:
 "LET'S TRY SOMETHING NEW!"
 YOU ALWAYS WANT SOMETHING NEW!
 (*Suggestively*) HEY, WANNA TRY SOMETHING NEW...?!

(*Realizing himself, he retreats*) Another shot?

A **SHIFT**: RYAN is now on his feet. He addresses the audience, despite his words:

RYAN

PLEASE, JOSH! WE WERE ONCE SO CLOSE.
 HELP ME STAY COMPOSED
 AND NOT OVERDOSE ON THE HISTRIONICS!
 PLEASE, JOSH. I AM SO AFRAID.
 I HAVE KEPT YOU AT ARM'S LENGTH,
 BUT UNDERSTAND, I'VE HAD TO.
 GOD ABOVE, PLEASE GRANT ME STRENGTH
 TO BE A FAITHFUL FRIEND.

*He makes the sign of the cross—the implication being that he might actually be religious?—and takes another drink. There is a **SHIFT**: RYAN is back on the couch with Josh. His speech is more slurred now.*

RYAN

WOW, YOUR BROTHER BLEW HIS TOP
 WHEN YOU SAID YOU WERE DROPPING OUT!
 HE REAMED YOU LONG AND HARD. OO, THAT SOUNDS DIRTY.
 (*To the audience, in a stage whisper*) THAT SOUNDS HOT!
 (*Back to Josh*) WELL, JAROD WAS PAYING YOUR FEES,
 HE HAD EVERY RIGHT TO BITE YOUR HEAD OFF.
 AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF
 WHAT HE'LL DO NOW, GIVEN THIS MESS?

I CONFESS, YOUR STRAIGHTFORWARDNESS
 IS SOMETHING I WISH I HAD.
 YOU'RE OPEN WITH YOUR FAMILY,
 AND YOU TELL THEM THE GOOD AND BAD.
 I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF SUPPORT.
 I WISH I COULD AFFORD TO TELL THE TRUTH,
 BUT HOW TO SAY TO THEM—?
 WHAT *COULD* I SAY TO THEM—? CAN'T BE THIS WAY TO THEM—!
 Gotta pee!!

Desperately, he scrambles off the couch, away from Josh. He pours himself a shot.

RYAN

WHY MUST I CONTEND WITH THESE
APPREHENSIVE FEELINGS IN ME?
I'LL BE GOOD, LORD. I'LL PRETEND
TO BE A FAITHFUL FRIEND...!

He drinks the shot—and then takes a big mouthful directly from the bottle, before stumbling very ungracefully back to the couch.

In the following sequence, his speech is very noticeably slurred. Against his better judgment, he starts to make awkward sexual advances on Josh.

RYAN

Bottoms up, Josh! Let me tell you something:
YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY!
IT'S TRUE, BABE! AND MAYBE I'M FOOLISH TO KEEP ON
PRETENDING THAT THINGS ARE FINE.
OBVIOUSLY *YOU* HAVE GOT FEELINGS FOR *ME*,
AND THAT'S COOL, DEAR; NO RULE, DEAR, THAT
FRIENDS CAN'T BE MORE THAN JUST FRIENDS!

COME ON, WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO LOSE?
GO ON, JOSH, YOU CAN MAKE A MOVE!
THIS HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING!
LIFE'S TOO DAMN SHORT, JOSH. JUST GIVE US A SHOT!
SHIT OR GET OFF THE POT, JOSH!
I'M HERE FOR YOU! I'M RIGHT HERE FOR YOU, JOSH!
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN HERE FOR YOU—!

There is a sudden scuffle, and RYAN falls off the couch. It's enough to jar him back to "reality". He unsteadily picks himself up, mortified.

RYAN

What the hell am I doing? Oh, God. I'm sorry...!

RYAN slowly turns to Josh and can barely meet his gaze.

RYAN

YOU'VE GOT TO GO. YOU'VE GOT TO GO, JOSH,
YOU'VE GOT TO GO. YOU HAVE GOT TO GO, JOSH.
Please—go.

LIGHTS DOWN on RYAN. There is a brief MUSICAL INTERLUDE as we SEGUE into the next scene.

Scene V

(WHAT WE NEVER WERE)

Lights up on JAROD and LILLY. From this point onwards, the characters are in the PRESENT, at the scene of the suicide attempt.

JAROD

Mom.
I CAN'T BELIEVE WE'RE REALLY HERE.

He reaches to LILLY, who's focused on looking upwards.

LILLY

JAROD...

JAROD

MOM, ARE YOU OKAY?

LILLY

HOW DID THINGS END UP THIS WAY? HE NEEDS ME.

JAROD

Mom, I want to talk to you—

LILLY

JOSH NEEDS ME.

JAROD

CAN'T YOU SEE I NEED YOU, TOO?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, HE'S NOT YOUR ONLY SON!
I'LL DO MY BEST TO GET HIM DOWN—

LILLY

(Snapping suddenly) It's my fault, Jarod!

(LONG PAUSE)

LOOK AT WHAT I'VE DONE.

JAROD

What are you talking about?

LILLY

I ruined his memory of your father and he doesn't want me marrying again.
So it's over. Me and Roger, it's over. I've got to tell him—

JAROD

Mom, you don't know that.

LILLY

Or maybe— maybe—

JAROD

(Talking over her) It could've been me. I was the one who put my foot down—

LILLY

— what I said about Deanna —

JAROD

I was the one who crushed his dreams...!
Mom, don't do this to yourself. Please, don't...!

He tries to embrace her, but she pushes him away. There is a hurt-filled PAUSE.

JAROD

Thanks. Thanks a lot, Mom. Just typical.

LILLY

What?

JAROD

YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN TOO CLOSE TO HIM.
BUT ME, YOU'VE KEPT A DISTANCE FROM. WHY?

LILLY

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.

JAROD

YES, YOU DO, MOM. Yes, you do.
JOSH IS ALWAYS NUMBER ONE.

LILLY

I DON'T PLAY FAVORITES...

JAROD

No?

LILLY

No! FOR GOD'S SAKE, I DEPEND ON YOU...

JAROD

To be like a father!

(A BEAT; he pulls back)

BUT I AM YOUR SON.

It's always *my* responsibility to help him, *my* responsibility to fix—

He stops wearily, looking away. There is a PAUSE; then:

JAROD

What were you saying about Deanna?

LILLY

Nothing...

JAROD

Mom.

LILLY

Just that I didn't think she was right for him...

JAROD

For God's sake, you barely even know her—!

LILLY

I was trying to keep him from getting hurt!

JAROD

No, you're more caught up in the idea that she's stealing your precious Josh away from you—and you always do this, Mom!

LILLY

That's not true—!

JAROD

—You're always thinking no one is good enough for him and it's *my* job to pick up the pieces, it's *my* job to stop people from *sabotaging* him...!

LILLY

Jarod—

JAROD

*Mom, STOP BUTTING IN! HE'S NO LONGER A KID!
YOU BOTHER HIM, AND YOU SMOTHER HIM,
AND HE ENDS UP PROTESTING!
WE ARE BOTH GUILTY OF SIMILAR CRIMES:
WE DO WHAT WE FEEL IS THE BEST THING FOR HIM.
BUT IS THE BEST THING FOR HIM THE REASON WE'RE HERE?*

He holds her gaze challengingly. LILLY is the one who looks away first. JAROD shakes his head, close to defeat.

JAROD

*MOM, I KNOW THIS BREAKS YOUR HEART —
AND MY TIMING COULD NOT BE WORSE —
BUT WHEN THIS IS DONE, WE HAVE TO START ANEW, MOM.
AND SO I'M TELLING YOU FIRST:
I'LL BRING HIM IN. I'LL BRING HIM HOME.
I'LL MAKE THIS NIGHTMARE DISAPPEAR,
IF YOU CAN PROMISE ME ONE THING:
THAT YOU AND I CAN BE WHAT WE NEVER WERE.*

LILLY

And what's that?

JAROD

Close. *(A PAUSE)*

LILLY

(In a WHISPER) Close.

JAROD, LILLY

CAN YOU AND I BE WHAT WE NEVER WERE?

They hold a long look.

LILLY

Please save him, Jarod.

(He takes a step back, looking stricken)

Please.

She exits, and JAROD watches her, his expression defeated. He crosses the stage.
SEGUE:

Scene VI

LIGHTS UP on APRIL, who addresses JOSH.

APRIL

I'm sorry you're here, Josh. And I... I knew.

You've got so much ahead of you. You're not a failure; I don't know why you'd think that. You need to surround yourself with people who support you. People who sincerely care for you.

ASIDE, JAROD stops and listens.

APRIL

The kind of people who'd either cheer you on or smack you in the back of your head when you stop believing in yourself and what you're capable of. I don't think you *have* that kind of support, without the politics, and the dramatics, and the—

JAROD approaches her; he's still driven by the anger and hurt of the previous scene, and overall fear.

JAROD

What are you doing?

APRIL

(Reacting) Oh! I—

JAROD

Who—who the hell *are* you? I mean, what business is this of yours—?

APRIL

I just— I was just—
Look, I tried to tell you—

JAROD

Whoa, whoa, whoa. You are *not* telling me “I told you so”.

APRIL

I wasn't, I just meant—

JAROD

Honestly, you're pathetic. What the *hell* does *any* of this have to do with you? Seriously. *Get. A. Life.*

He starts to exit, but stops when APRIL speaks up:

APRIL

You're right. This... really isn't my business.

But you know what's funny about life, and about death?
It draws you in.

Even when you're not directly involved— it draws you in.

FOCUS on APRIL; lights dim on JAROD.

(SOMEBODY TO SAVE)

APRIL

SOME PEOPLE TALK ABOUT ME FROM A DISTANCE.
“SHE IS NOTHING. SHE’S NOBODY. SHE’S JUST— THERE.”
SO I’M FINDING AN INCENTIVE FOR MY EXISTENCE
BY SHOWING THAT I CARE.
SOME PEOPLE HATE THAT PERSON IN THE MIRROR.
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT I HAD THAT POINT OF VIEW.
STILL, I’M SEARCHING FOR A WAY I MIGHT BE FREER
BY DOING WHAT I DO.

MAYBE IF I HELPED YOU—
PLAYED TWO ROLES: YOUR SAVIOR, YOUR SLAVE.
MAYBE I’D FIND MY WAY! SO I SEEK SOMEBODY TO SAVE.
HOW I NEED SOMEBODY TO SAVE.

Now she addresses JAROD.

APRIL

I KNOW SOME PEOPLE THINK THAT I’M A MESS. TRUE,
I CONFESS. I GUESS THEY HAVE NO CLUE
HOW IT FEELS TO WANT TO COME TO SOMEONE’S RESCUE...
FOR WHAT ELSE CAN I DO?

THERE’S A REASON I PUT EVERYONE ABOVE ME.
SEE, I’M NOT PRETTY. I’M NOT SMART. I JUST... MAKE DO.
BUT PERHAPS I COULD MAKE PEOPLE THINK MORE OF ME
IF I KEEP DOING WHAT I DO. WOULDN’T YOU?

“APRIL, SERVE A PURPOSE.”
IN MY MIND, THESE WORDS ARE ENGRAVED.
TRUST ME, I’M NOT BEING BRAVE:
I JUST NEED SOMEBODY TO SAVE.
WE ALL NEED SOMEBODY TO SAVE!

MOST PEOPLE DISAGREE.
“YOU’RE JUST FINE THE WAY YOU ARE.”
THAT IS WHAT THEY ALWAYS SAY.
BUT HERE’S WHERE THEY DON’T SEE:
I’D LIKE TO BE MORE THAN OKAY.
I’M STRIVING EVERY DAY! I’M GONNA FIND MY WAY,
ON THIS PATH I PAVE!

WE'VE ALL ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE!
DON'T WE NEED SOMEBODY TO SAVE?
YES, INDEED, SOMEBODY TO SAVE!
IT'S MY CREED, SOMEBODY TO SAVE.
HOW I NEED SOMEBODY TO SAVE!

She starts to EXIT, tearfully. JAROD stops her.

JAROD

Look, I'm sorry. I get it. I think. I didn't— I didn't mean...to...

APRIL

It's okay.

JAROD

I'm sorry.

APRIL

It's okay.

JAROD starts to walk away, but then turns to address her:

JAROD

Let me ask you something.

If *we're* so busy, running around, having to look out for someone else...
always having to save *other* people...

...Who saves *us*?

APRIL opens her mouth, but appears flummoxed by the question. She can only stare helplessly at JAROD. He responds with a gesture of defeat and walks away as lights fade on him, leaving APRIL alone for a brief moment before FADE TO BLACK.

Scene VII

LIGHTS UP on MICHAEL and RYAN. This entire exchange should be DARKLY COMIC, in contrast to the scenes before and after—to demonstrate how inane and self-involved some people can get in times of crisis.

(BOUND BY NEUROSES)

MICHAEL

Ryan.

RYAN

Michael.

MICHAEL

YOU DID THIS. YOU GAVE JOSH A HEART ATTACK BY GETTING TOO CLOSE. WHAT A PAL!

RYAN

Come on. You always stab him in the back.

MICHAEL

Hah!

MICHAEL, RYAN

POT CALLING KETTLE BLACK!

RYAN

HOW'S DEANNA? I HOPE SHE'S WORKING WELL FOR YOU. YOU'VE BEEN SO EAGER TO STEAL HER AWAY.

MICHAEL

DO YOU HEAR WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?

RYAN

What?

MICHAEL

(Mocking him) "What?"

RYAN

(Confused) What??

MICHAEL

SINCE YOU AND JOSH MET, ALL YOU'VE DONE IS COME UP WITH SCHEME AFTER SCHEME, TO SPLIT HIM AND HER UP—

RYAN

WOW, I'M STUNNED BY THAT PLANK IN YOUR EYE!

MICHAEL

What?

RYAN

What what?!

MICHAEL

What??

RYAN

YOU ARE THE SAME WAY. YOU HATE HIS GUTS!

MICHAEL

Screw you.

AT LEAST I DON'T HATE MY *OWN* LIFE LIKE YOU DO.

RYAN

YES, YOU DO. SO IT'S TRUE: WE'RE BOTH— NUTS.
YOU AND ME, LOOK AT HOW WE HAVE SUNK SO LOW.
WE SAY HE'S OUR FRIEND, BUT IS HE TRULY SO?

MICHAEL

GOD KNOWS, THERE'VE BEEN TIMES
WHEN I'VE WISHED THE WORST...

RYAN

Me, too. JUST TO KEEP ME FROM GETTING CLOSE.

MICHAEL

WHEN DID WE LET OUR WHOLE LIVES BE DEFINED
BY THINGS THAT ARE OUT OF OUR CONTROL?

RYAN

LIFE'S A BITCH, AND IT CONSUMES YOU WHOLE.

MICHAEL

Nice.

RYAN

DID WE DRIVE HIM UP THERE, MICHAEL?

MICHAEL

I'VE NO IDEA.

RYAN

(Sarcastic) Well, *that's* new.

MICHAEL

WHAT, YOU THINK YOU KNOW ME NOW?

RYAN

HEY, MR PARANOID!

MICHAEL

MISS INSECURE!

RYAN

(GASPS)

THAT'S BELOW THE BELT.

MICHAEL

IT'S ALWAYS WITH YOU, I'M SURE.

RYAN

Oh, jeez—

MICHAEL, RYAN

YOU DRIVE ME CRAZY!

RYAN

WHAT'S YOUR *PROBLEM?*

MICHAEL

PROBLEM? I HAVE NO PROBLEM!

RYAN

YOU'RE A MESS.

MICHAEL

(Bitterly) Right.

AND I AM USELESS, YES?

RYAN

Well...!

MICHAEL

IT'S OKAY. "*USELESS* MICHAEL,
THE LOSER!" I COULD CARE LESS.

RYAN

You mean "couldn't".

MICHAEL

THAT'S WHAT MY DAD USED TO SAY:
"YOU'RE PATHETIC, YOU'LL NOT AMOUNT TO ANYTHING!"
AND THEN HE WOULD HIT ME—!

There's an AWKWARD PAUSE.

RYAN

SO THAT'S WHY YOU PRETEND TO BE COOL...

MICHAEL

WHAT DO YOU CARE? YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO JUDGE ME.

RYAN

You've no right to judge *me!*

MICHAEL, RYAN

I DO IT MYSELF, I'M MY OWN JUDGE AND JURY, SO THERE!

They stare at each other, momentarily taken aback by this commonality between them. LIGHTS UP on DEANNA, who snaps them out of their reveries.

DEANNA

Michael.

RYAN, MICHAEL

Deanna!

RYAN

(To DEANNA)

YOU CAUSED THIS, YOU CHEATER!

DEANNA

Mike!

MICHAEL

WASN'T ME. I SWEAR I DID NOT SAY A WORD.

RYAN

Look, I saw you. *(To MICHAEL)* And you!

DEANNA

(To RYAN) I'M SURE YOU ARE HAPPY.

RYAN

THAT'S ABSURD.

RYAN, DEANNA

WHY WOULD I WANT HIM HURT?

MICHAEL

IT MEANT NOTHING.

DEANNA

(Rounding on him) Excuse me?

MICHAEL

I mean—

RYAN

I DON'T GIVE A CRAP.

DEANNA

Don't give me that.

YOU HAVE BEEN EAGER FOR MICHAEL TO STEAL ME AWAY.

MICHAEL

(To RYAN) Ha!

RYAN

OKAY, SO I'M *SHIT*.

MICHAEL

Yes.

DEANNA

(Simultaneously) No.

RYAN

I MIGHT BE CONFUSED—

DEANNA

YOU'RE NOT THAT AT ALL.

YOU JUST CAN'T ACCEPT YOU WHO ARE.

MICHAEL

(Snorts) Damn straight. MR PARODY GAY.

RYAN

(Rounding on him) MR TAT FOR TIT!

RYAN, MICHAEL

Now you've gone too far! *(They start to advance on each other)*

DEANNA

(To the audience, referring to the previous exchange) I didn't get it...

(To RYAN and MICHAEL) Stop!

RYAN

ALL RIGHT, FINE!

SO MY FEELINGS SOMETIMES GET THE BEST OF ME,

AND ALTHOUGH I DON'T LOVE WHO I AM,

(To DEANNA)

I'M NO CHEATER.

(To MICHAEL)

OR BEATER.

DEANNA

INDEED—

MICHAEL

Right, that's *it!*

MICHAEL takes a swing at RYAN and punches him in the face. RYAN staggers back, clutching his nose, and he looks at his hands expecting to see blood. There's a shocked silence, with both boys staring at each other and DEANNA looking horrified.

RESUME:

MICHAEL, DEANNA, RYAN

TELL ME HOW THIS LOOKS, HURLING INSULTS
AND THROWING PUNCHES; CHILDISH BEHAVIOR
LEAVES A FLAVOUR SOUR AND BITTER
AS THE MOOD TURNS EXPLOSIVE!
DID WE PLAY A ROLE
IN THIS WHOLE MESSY DRAMA UNFOLDING?
IF WE CANNOT TAKE THE BLAME,
LET'S BLAME OTHERS INSTEAD!

MICHAEL

IT WAS RYAN!

DEANNA

MICHAEL!

RYAN

DEANNA!

MICHAEL, DEANNA

IT WAS LILLY!

DEANNA, RYAN

OR JAROD!

MICHAEL

DON'T BE SILLY!

MICHAEL, DEANNA, RYAN

CAN'T BEAR IT!
HOW THE HELL SHOULD WE ACT
WHEN SOMEBODY HAS A TERMINAL MOTIVE?
CAN WE KEEP ON TELLING OURSELVES AND HIM:

They suddenly have their arms around each other's shoulders, feigning best buds.

MICHAEL, DEANNA, RYAN

WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS! STRONG AND SECURE LIKE A FORT!
IF ONLY TO GIVE YOU SUPPORT AND ADVICE TO SUFFICE,
WE ARE NICELY A—

DEANNA

(Stepping forward)

I SPENT MOST OF MY GROWING-UP YEARS WITH DAD
AFTER MOM DIVORCED HIM. THINGS WERE PRETTY BAD:
DAD GAVE UP, LOST ALL LIFE, GAVE IN TO THE VOID.
AND NOTHING EXCITED HIM.
NOW I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS
THAT I'M DRAWN TO GUYS
WHO HAVE PASSION AND FIRE, EXCITEMENT!

MICHAEL, RYAN

(Flatly) Freud.

DEANNA

ALL I KNOW IS I WANT GUYS
WHO CAN RAISE THE BAR, you know?
BUT THIS IS A STEP TOO FAR.
JOSH, YOU'VE TAKEN A STEP TOO FAR.

MICHAEL

(To RYAN)

WHAT ABOUT YOU? BROKEN FAMILY?

RYAN

NOPE, JUST A BROKEN NOSE.

MICHAEL

Sorry.

RYAN

THEY'RE HAPPILY WED.

DEANNA

GO AWAY.

RYAN

BUT THEY DON'T KNOW I'M GAY.

MICHAEL, DEANNA

(Triumphantly) AH, THERE IT IS!!

MICHAEL, DEANNA, RYAN

WE'RE ALL BOUND BY NEUROSES!

MICHAEL

YOU WERE RIGHT. IT'S REALLY MY PROBLEM.
IT'S THAT VOICE.

DEANNA

Whose?

MICHAEL

MY DAD'S, IT RESOUNDS IN MY HEAD.
I FIX CARS — THAT'S ALL—
WHILE JOSH COULD BE A COLLEGE GRAD.
(Getting riled up again) HE HAS A CHOICE,
YET HE'S THROWING HIS CHANCES AWAY...!

RYAN

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE THINGS WE ACCOMPLISH,
OR WHAT WE DO. IT SHOULD BE ABOUT WHO WE ARE.

MICHAEL

(Bitchily) Thank you, Oprah! *(A PAUSE)*

RYAN

You know, there's no shame in what you do.

DEANNA

(To RYAN) Just like there's no shame in what you are.

RYAN

Wow, it's like you're reading lines from a really overwritten script.

MICHAEL

SO HOW DOES OUR CRAP GET RESOLVED?

DEANNA

PERHAPS WE COULD START NOW
BY NOT BEING SO DAMN... SELF-INVOLVED.

MICHAEL

YOU MEAN... PUT OTHERS BEFORE OURSELVES?

RYAN

Right...

DEANNA

WE COULD START WITH...

MICHAEL, DEANNA, RYAN

JOSH.

Each of them steps forward to deliver his/her lines.

MICHAEL

(Quietly) Hey, Josh. Someone once told me that if you spend your life in constant comparison to other people, you're going to drive yourself crazy.

(A BEAT) I think I've been crazy. Shit, man, I've broken your trust more times than you even know.

I'm sorry.

RYAN

A very wise man once said, sometimes you have to put an end to relationships that do more harm than good. I think this might be one of those times.

Not forever, though. Someday, when I'm able to better accept who you are, and who I am, warts and all... maybe... *(He trails off, clearly fighting back tears)* I'm sorry, Josh.

DEANNA

Josh, I'm so sorry for how I reacted. It's like—I'm drawn to intensity, but when things get too much, I run away. *(With a brief look at MICHAEL)* And then I look for it all over again. *(A PAUSE)*

I'll do better, Josh, I promise. So whatever you're going through—please let me in. Let's give ourselves some time. Let's talk about our future.

Give us a future, Josh.

Give yourself a future.

MICHAEL, DEANNA, RYAN

CAN YOU AND I GO BACK TO WHAT WE WERE?

LIGHTS DOWN on them. SEGUE:

Scene VIII

LIGHTS UP on JAROD. He addresses Josh, and while there is an implication here that he and later LILLY are up where Josh is, perhaps close to the edge where Josh stands, whether or not this is a literal representation can remain ambiguous.

(MANY FACTORS HERE AT PLAY)

JAROD

Hey. It's me. Wow, it's— it's pretty cold.
Can we talk, please?

WHOA, JOSH, THAT ISN'T FAIR.
MAYBE I *HAVE* BEEN RATHER HARSH.
BUT IT'S JUST BECAUSE I CARE.
ALL I'VE TRIED TO DO IS LOOK AFTER YOU, I SWEAR.
LOOK. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT ME TO SAY.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO,
BUT I SWEAR I WILL MAKE IT UP YOU.
JOSH. I AM SORRY THAT YOU FEEL THAT WAY.
BUT YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE WITH ALL MY HEART,
I ONLY WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU.
I'D GIVE ANYTHING NOW TO RID YOU OF YOUR PAIN.

LIGHTS UP on LILLY, next to JAROD.

LILLY

DARLING, IT'S GETTING COLD.
I BROUGHT SOME SOUP FOR YOU TO DRINK.
YES, I KNOW IT'S CRAZY—
YOU'RE STANDING ON A LEDGE. I HAVE A FLASK...
WHAT MUST YOU THINK?
LOOK,

JAROD

LOOK,

JAROD, LILLY

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAS MADE YOU UPSET,
IF IT'S ONLY ONE SINGLE THING
OR MANY FACTORS HERE AT PLAY.

JAROD

BUT IF

LILLY

BUT IF

JAROD, LILLY

THERE'S ONE THING I NEED YOU TO GET,

IT'S THAT NOTHING IS SO SEVERE
THAT I CAN'T MAKE IT BE OKAY.

JAROD

LOOK AT ME, JOSH.

I'M SORRY. I AM.

BUT RIGHT NOW

I NEED YOU HOLDING MY HAND.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND.

LILLY

LOOK AT ME, JOSH.

I'M SORRY. I AM.

JAROD, LILLY

I FINALLY BELIEVE YOU'LL BE ALL THAT YOU WANT TO BE.

LILLY

I'LL LET GO. IT'S TIME,

JAROD/LILLY

THOUGH/FOR YOU'RE A GROWN MAN NOW,

JAROD

YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY KID BROTHER.

I'D GIVE ANYTHING, JOSH...

LILLY

I'D GIVE EVERYTHING...

JAROD, LILLY

JUST TO SEE YOU SAFE AND SOUND.

JAROD

Dad would want you to come back in.

Dad would want *me* to get you to come back in.

(Despairingly) Come back in, Josh. Please. *Please?* (A PAUSE)

PLEASE??

Lights down on JAROD and up on LILLY, who addresses Josh.

(FAVORITE SON)

LILLY

You remember I was telling you about your dad? I didn't tell you the whole story. But—you should know.

Something... happened after I had your brother. Something inside of me changed. I couldn't see the joy in anything. I didn't want to get out of bed, I didn't want to socialize with anyone. I just couldn't see a future...

They say it could be hereditary.

DARLING, YOUR DAD AND I— I'm sorry.

I REALLY SHOULD HAVE SPENT MORE TIME

TO EXPLAIN IT ALL TO YOU.

I WAS THE UNHAPPY WIFE.
I GREW DEPRESSED, THAT PART IS TRUE.
AND THAT WAS THE POINT WHEN YOUR DAD PULLED AWAY—
OVER SIX LONG YEARS I CLOSED MY EYES AND HEART
AND SAID, “HEY, IT’S OKAY.”
SO WITH JAROD, YOUR FATHER WAS HARDLY AROUND.
HE’D SPEND NIGHTS AND DAYS AWAY FROM HOME
HIS FAMILY WASN’T GOOD ENOUGH.
BUT THEN THINGS GOT BETTER...
BECAUSE, JOSH, YOU CAME ALONG!

THEN, SUDDENLY— WELL, THINGS WERE DIFFERENT.
HIS AFFAIRS BECAME LESS FREQUENT.
AND THOUGH WE HADN’T REUNITED,
I WAS EXCITED HE CAME HOME.
THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT YOU, JOSH,
THAT MADE US SEE THINGS ALL ANEW, JOSH.
I CAN’T EXPLAIN IT. BUT IT’S TRUE, JOSH:
YOU MADE YOUR DADDY STAY.

HE’D PLANNED TO LEAVE. HE TOLD ME SO,
BUT CHANGED HIS MIND,
BECAUSE WE HAD THIS UNEXPECTED BABY BOY.
I WAS SO RELIEVED AND OVERJOYED WHEN HE DECLINED
THE OTHER WOMEN’S CHARMS IN FAVOUR OF YOURS AND MINE.
I COULD ONLY TELL HIM, “DARLING, WELCOME HOME!”
AND HE’D GO WALKING PROUDLY THROUGH THE TOWN
A FATHER SECOND TIME AROUND...
AND HE’D NEVER BEEN SO HAPPY!

SO IT’S TRUE THAT YOU BECAME OUR FAVORITE SON.
HE WOULD TUCK YOU IN AND KEEP YOU WARM.
MY GOD, YOU MADE HIM HAPPY!!
YOU MADE US HAPPY!

But then, of course, twist of fate: he fell sick, and he... (*She falters*)

I’M SORRY I NEVER TOLD YOU THE TRUTH ‘BOUT YOUR DAD!
WOULD IT HAVE MADE SUCH A DIFFERENCE, MY DEAR, IF I HAD?
WHEN THE ONLY IMPORTANCE IS HOW MUCH HE LOVED YOU,
AND HOW HE’D PUT NOTHING AND NO-ONE ABOVE YOU:
HE’D SING YOU A LOVE SONG EACH NIGHT
AS YOU WERE SLEEPING—
A SONG *JUST FOR YOU* — FOR YOU MADE LIFE WORTH KEEPING.
I’D HEAR HIM SINGING:

LITTLE BABY, HUSH, DON’T CRY.
WELCOME TO THE WORLD. I’VE BEEN WAITING:
ANXIOUS, SCARED, EXCITED. MY...!!
WHY ARE YOU HERE, JOSH? WHY ARE YOU HERE??

*As music swells, LILLY finally breaks down and cries. JAROD exits completely. DEANNA, RYAN, MICHAEL and APRIL gather around LILLY to comfort her, when suddenly there is a **SHIFT**, and they turn to look in one direction, their expressions transforming from sadness to disbelief, and then wonder, and then joy.*

LILLY

Josh? Oh — oh, my God, Josh??

From joy to excitement and relief, LILLY, DEANNA, RYAN, MICHAEL and APRIL rush forward as music swells. Through everyone's reaction (AD LIB) it should be evident that Josh has finally come back inside.

Music CRESCENDOES, until it cuts off abruptly:

APRIL

Where's Jarod?

SHIFT *straight into next scene.*

Scene IX**(NO REPRIEVE)**

LIGHTS UP on JAROD, standing CS, perhaps at the highest point on stage. From this point he's mostly calm, blank-faced, possibly in acceptance of the step he's going to take. The others are fretting over his disappearance but not too concerned—yet.

MICHAEL

(Aside, on the phone) Hey, Jarod, where are you, man?
What? I can't — I can't hear you, what did you say?

APRIL

What's going on??

MICHAEL

Jarod, Josh is—hello??

JAROD

LOOK AT ME. I'M LOST. I'VE FAILED THEM.
I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M HERE.

MICHAEL

I couldn't really hear him, I have no idea where he is—

JAROD

JOSH. AND MOM. AND DAD. I'VE FAILED YOU ALL.
THERE'S NO REPRIEVE, I FEAR.
I PROMISED I WOULD KEEP HIM SAFE!
I'M SORRY THAT I LET YOU DOWN,
BUT THAT'S THE STORY OF MY LIFE:
TO DISAPPOINT MY DAD AND MOM.
THOUGH FAILURE CUTS ME LIKE A KNIFE,
I'M NOT FEELING ANYTHING AT ALL...
(He slowly raises his cell phone to his ear)

RYAN

Aunt Lilly, we should get Josh to the hospital.

MICHAEL

(On the phone)
Jarod? Hey, man, we're kinda worried...

JAROD

(To MICHAEL, on the phone)
This is about Josh. It's always about Josh.

MICHAEL

What? You're not making any sense.

JAROD

Goodbye.
(*He throws the phone aside*)

MICHAEL

(*More fearfully now*) Jarod? Hello—?

JAROD

LOOK AT ME. YOU'D THINK I WAS STRONGER, BUT NO.
YOU WOULD HAVE FIGURED WRONG.

DEANNA

(*To MICHAEL*) Did he say anything? Anything to let you know where
he might be?
(*MICHAEL shakes his head*)

APRIL

He can't have gone very far!

DEANNA

(*To APRIL*) Who are you??

JAROD

WHAT'S THE POINT IN TRYING TO DO MY BEST?—
JOSH WAS— IS!—THEIR FAVORITE SON!

I'VE ALWAYS TRIED TO MAKE YOU PROUD!
BUT WHY MUST I BE SO RESIGNED
TO BEING HIS GUARDIAN AND HIS GUIDE,
SO MUCH SO THAT IT DEFINES
MY VERY SELF, MY WORTH, MY PRIDE?
HE FACED DEATH; I'M DEAD INSIDE!
I'VE TRIED. I'M TIRED. I COULDN'T KEEP HIM SAFE...!

RYAN

(*With a lot more urgency now*)
Is there a place Jarod would go? *Aunt Lilly!* Is there someplace you can
think of?

LILLY

(*Numbly, distantly*)
No... no!

RYAN

A favorite location? Somewhere he goes to think? Anything??

LILLY

I— I don't know!

APRIL

How can you not know?!

JAROD

I'LL FLOAT ON A CLOUD—

LOOK! AREN'T YOU PROUD OF YOUR SON??

LIGHTING FX etc to indicate that JAROD has JUMPED.

LILLY

(Fearing the worst) Jarod??

Music CRESCENDOES to a climax as we SEGUE into the final scene.

Scene X

(FINALE)

We're back at the FUNERAL, as per the opening scene. LIGHTS UP on JAROD, while the others remain in silhouette.

JAROD

YOU OPEN YOUR EYES.
IT'S JUST ANOTHER SUNDAY MORNING:
THE SUN STILL RISES TO GREET A NEW DAY.
YOU OPEN YOUR EYES
TO REALIZE TODAY'S A DAY OF MOURNING...

Gradually LIGHTS UP on the others.

LILLY

THEY SAY THE GREATEST MEASURE OF CRUELTY IN LIFE
IS TO HAVE A MOTHER LAY HER OWN SON TO REST...

She weeps.

RYAN

BUT NOW HOLD ON, TOMORROW'S ANOTHER DAY BEGINNING.

RYAN, MICHAEL, DEANNA

WE HOLD ON TO SORROW...

LILLY, RYAN, MICHAEL, DEANNA, APRIL

BUT DON'T WE ALL DESERVE REDEEMING?

COMPANY

REDEEMING!

STILL WE CAN'T HELP BUT TO WONDER
WHAT PULLED YOU UNDER,
WHAT WERE THE REASONS THAT MADE YOU ALLEGE
THAT LIFE'S NOT WORTH LIVING?
WE NEED FORGIVING
IF WE PUSHED YOU SO FAR
THAT WE'RE NOW WHERE WE ARE, ON THE EDGE.

NO, WE

JAROD, RYAN, MICHAEL
CAN'T HELP BUT TO WONDER
WHAT TORE US ASUNDER...
HOW IN THE WORLD DID WE
WIND UP THIS WAY?
THINGS WON'T BE THE SAME

LILLY, DEANNA, APRIL
CAN'T HELP BUT TO WONDER
WHAT TORE US ASUNDER...
HOW IN THE WORLD DID WE
WIND UP THIS WAY?
THINGS WON'T BE THE SAME

IS THERE SOMEONE
TO BLAME HERE?
THE PRICE IS JUST
TOO HIGH TO PAY.
HEY, THE NIGHT'S
GETTING COLDER
AND WE WANT TO HOLD YOU
AND TELL YOU IT'S OVER,
TOGETHER WE'LL STAY.
WE LOOK, LOVE, AND WONDER,
HOW DID WE BLUNDER?

IS THERE SOMEONE
TO BLAME HERE?
THE PRICE IS JUST
TOO HIGH TO PAY.
HEY, THE NIGHT'S
GETTING COLDER
AND WE WANT TO HOLD YOU
AND TELL YOU IT'S OVER,
TOGETHER WE'LL STAY.
WE LOOK, LOVE AND WONDER

COMPANY

FOR WE NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD END UP
BEING ANYTHING LIKE THIS.
NO, WE NEVER IMAGINED IT WOULD EVER BE
ANYTHING LIKE THIS!

Music CRESCENDO to a climax before gradually softening. Lights begin to dim on LILLY, RYAN, MICHAEL, DEANNA and APRIL.

JAROD is now in his own spotlight, CS, and we now see that he has moved into the COFFIN LFX.

DEANNA

(Very, very quietly) Come on, Josh... let's take you home.

DEANNA reaches out to Josh and leads him away. RYAN exits in another direction; MICHAEL in yet other direction. APRIL passes LILLY a bunch of flowers—a grim and ironic reference to Lilly's song in Scene III—before EXITING herself.

LILLY places the bunch of flowers on Jarod's coffin, blows him a kiss, and EXITS.

Final chord as lights fade, leaving JAROD alone on the stage, for a moment illuminated in his solitude and grief, before complete FADE TO BLACK.

THE END