

THE TURKEY MEN

A Play in Two Acts

By Douglas Whaley

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NOTE:

This play takes its inspiration from the true story of Frank Chick, Confederate soldier, and Nicholas Brill, Union Army, who met when Chick was a prisoner being guarded by Brill in Camp Chase, Columbus, Ohio. Both were in their early twenties. When the war ended in 1865, Chick had nowhere to go and Brill invited him to stay on his farm near Mount Sterling, Ohio. They lived together there for 57 years, raising turkeys and known as the “Turkey Men” until they died in the 1920’s within a year of each other. No one knows whether their relationship was merely a great friendship or something more. They are buried next to each other, set off a bit from the other graves, in Pleasant Cemetery in Madison County, Ohio.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The Couple:

ALEXANDER SMALL . . . a man from Ohio, mid 30s to early 40s, casually dressed.

WEBSTER RANDOLPH CARTER III . . a man with a slight Southern accent, same age as ALEX, casually dressed.

The Victim:

LOGAN HENDRICKS . . .a girl, 16 years old, casually dressed.

The Tormentors:

BETHANY FROST . . .a woman in her 40s or 50s. She has a very short haircut. She is nicely dressed and carries a large purse.

MICAH JANSON . . . a man in his 40s or 50s. He wears a coat and tie, but somehow looks disheveled.

SETTING

The living room of an old farm's main house, somewhere in central Ohio. Due to neglect the room is in shabby shape, but once upon a time it would have been considered quite handsome. There's a large picture window stage right, now covered by a white sheet, and to the left of the window is the front door. Various pieces of furniture, dusty and unkempt, are scattered around the room, including a sofa, covered with a sheet, against the up center wall, with an end table at one side. A portion of a stairway, stage left, leads to the upper floor. To the left of the stairway is a hall leading to the kitchen. A chandelier once hung in the center of the room. All that remains of it is a bare light bulb on a wire, with a cord hanging from it to turn it on. The year is 2016.

ACT ONE

Scene One

Morning. The room is mostly dark except for a brightly-lit light bulb hanging on a wire mid-stage. The mood is established, and then WEB CARTER slowly comes down the stairs. HE sees the bulb and stares at it astounded. After a moment HE walks over and pulls the cord, whereupon the light goes out. HE pulls it again and the light comes back on.

WEB

I'll be damned.

HE looks around, confused, and then goes to the stairway and calls upstairs.

Alex! Come down here and see this.

ALEX
(From upstairs)

What?

WEB

We have electricity!

ALEX

What?

WEB

Electricity. You were very fond of it.

WEB points to the light as ALEX comes down the stairs.

ALEX

I'll be damned.

WEB

That's just what I said. We'll both be damned. You've predicted that since the incident.

ALEX

Not *damned*—judged. I'm planning on being immediately assigned to heaven, and once there will put in the good word for you, atheist and sinner though you be.

WEB

I'm all atremble.

ALEX switches the light off and on.

ALEX

You know what this probably means.

WEB

Yup. We're about to have visitors.

ALEX

Shall I get out the good china and clean the joint up a bit?

WEB

Manifesting enough energy to do that would likely deplete what little substance you have left. You'd blink right out of existence.

ALEX

It'll be nice if whoever comes . . . opens up the place, gives us a view.

WEB

Listen, Alex, however charming or attractive it might be to mingle with real people, we both have sworn that won't happen again.

ALEX
(Absently)

You're right.

WEB

Alex! I know that tone of voice. Do you *want* to disappear forever? Leave me here alone?

ALEX

No. Of course not.

WEB

Then, damn it, promise me you won't manifest yourself to these people in any way: not talking to them, not moving things around physically, and certainly not making yourself visible.

ALEX

It was stupid of me just now to materialize enough to pull that light cord off and on.

WEB
(Sheepishly)

I did the same thing.

ALEX

You did?

WEB

Before you came down. I didn't think before I did it. And with new people arriving this sort of right-brain response will only get worse, more dangerous. Remember our last visitors and what they did to us.

ALEX

The poltergeist investigators!

WEB

You were awful! Materializing in drag and grabbing their crotches!

ALEX laughs with delight, and jumps up a char to perform the routine he did for them, loudly, overwhelmingly, right at the audience.

ALEX

GHOMBUSTERS! WELCOME TO SODOMY'S DEN OF HELL! HAVE YOU FOUND THE DUNGEON YET? MANDATORY FOREHEAD TATOOS FOR *EVERYBODY!* WHO'S FIRST?

WEB

Oh, lord!

ALEX

The reverse of what they'd planned happened: I exorcised *them!* They went screaming into the night like stampeding cattle. Their equipment was here for a week before that tiny little woman came and collected it one bright sunny morning.

WEB

It would be interesting to know what their final report said.

ALEX

Hell! The look on their faces was worth the loss of substance!

WEB

(Almost angry)

Substance that's gone forever! It *never* comes back. Who knows how much is left? So let's be very clear here: no contact with the new visitors.

ALEX

(Contrite)

I agree completely.

WEB

No touching, no materializing, no speaking so that they can hear us. Nothing.

ALEX smiles evilly as he leans toward WEB's neck.

ALEX

What if - right now, like this - I get close enough that I'm almost but not quite kissing you?

WEB

(Walking away quickly)

No! Stop that.

ALEX

I'm not touching. Just *nearly* touching . . .

WEB

No.

ALEX

Aww!

WEB

You God damn well know it wouldn't stop at "nearly" touching. Decades of habit would take over and the next thing is we'd be naked and not giving a damn if it's the last blastoff of our lives.

ALEX

Might be worth it for one final ... (*claps his hands once*) ... ricochet off the moon.

WEB

Like our hundredth anniversary when we got so excited we fell off the bow of Howard Ray's yacht and his little poodle jumped into save us! Very embarrassing!

ALEX

Oh, yes! Very!

WEB

No and no again! I'm not ready to end my life today, not even with a grand finale and a standing ovation.

ALEX

But, Web . . . We might start screwing in this life and climax on a cloud in heaven.

WEB

Sex in heaven! Tell me again: what sort of church did you attend?

ALEX

In the religion I subscribe to we sort of make up the rules as we go along.

WEB

Just like most people.

We hear the sound of a car pulling up and parking outside.

ALEX

Here comes company.

We hear the sound of the car door closing.

WEB

Here comes trouble.

The door opens. BETHANY FROST and MICAH JANSON enter, leaving the front door open as they look around.

No one here.

BETHANY

Just as advertised

MICAH

Where shall we put her?

BETHANY

MICHA pulls the sheet off the sofa up center.

Here will do just fine. Pull down that sheet and let's get some light in here.

MICAH

BETHANY nods, pulls the sheet from the window, and THEY exit, still leaving the door open.

Hmm.

ALEX

Not "exorcists" is my guess.

WEB

Help!

LOGAN,
(Outside, off stage.)

Shut up!

MICAH
(Outside, off stage.)

Come on!

BETHANY
(Outside, off stage.)

Help! I'm being kidnapped!

LOGAN
(Outside, off stage.)

BETHANY and MICAH enter, dragging LOGAN behind them. LOGAN's hands are tied in front of her. LOGAN is forced onto the sofa by MICAH as BETHANY shuts the front door.

WEB

Jesus!

LOGAN

Is there anybody here? Help me! Call the police!

MICAH

Shut the hell up!

BETHANY

Micah! Language!

MICAH

She's heard worse!

LOGAN

Help me!

MICAH

Don't make me hit you!

BETHANY sits beside LOGAN, after giving MICAH a look that would melt glass.

BETHANY

Logan, Logan, look at me! (She turns Logan's head towards her with her hand.) We're not going to hurt you.

LOGAN

He just said he'll hit me!

BETHANY

He was excited and didn't mean it. (Pointedly) Isn't that right, Micah?

MICAH

(After a deep breath)

Yes, yes. I'm very, very sorry. I was much out of line and stupidly forgot myself. Bethany's right. No one is going to hurt you, Logan.

ALEX

Don't believe him, Logan. He's a snake.

Note: Until they decide to make their presence known – starting in Scene Two – comments made by ALEX and WEB are only heard by each other.

BETHANY

We're your friends. We're here to help you, to make things right again between you and God.

LOGAN

God and I are good. Real tight. I've known him all my life.

MICAH

No, Logan, that's not true.

BETHANY

You abandoned God, Logan, when you went to bed with that other sinner.

MICAH

In your parents' house.

BETHANY

More than once.

MICAH

Your mother found your diary.

BETHANY pulls the diary from her purse.

BETHANY

Weeks of lust are chronicled in your own handwriting, with disgusting exclamation marks and smiley faces.

MICAH takes a cell phone from his pocket.

MICAH

Your parents gave us your phone which is filled with filthy texts between you and that same shameful sinner. I'd read them out loud but frankly they shock Bethany and me. The emojis were very pornographic!

BETHANY

Your parents are devastated. So is Reverend Haddox.

LOGAN

Everyone at the church knows Reverend Haddox is cheating on his wife with the first soprano in the choir.

BETHANY

Logan!

MICAH

Sin and calumny!

LOGAN

The janitor caught them in the vestibule.

BETHANY

My child!

LOGAN
(Imitating Bethany)

Twice.

BETHANY

Logan! If that were true he'd be fired!

LOGAN

It was all over Facebook.

MICAH

(Dropping to his knees, eyes on the ceiling)

Lord, Lord, forgive this poor child, she knows not what she says.

ALEX

Sounds to me like she knows exactly what she says.

BETHANY

Let's get things from the car.

MICAH pulls ankle cuffs from his pocket and snaps them around LOGAN's ankles.

MICAH

Don't try and go anywhere. You'd just fall and hurt yourself.

BETHANY

We'll be back before she could even struggle across the room.

BETHANY and MICAH exit.

ALEX

I don't like this one bit.

WEB

God People? Oh, please not God People!

LOGAN begins to cry softly.

ALEX

We have to help her, Web.

WEB

NO! NO! NO!

ALEX

Web!

WEB

NO!

ALEX

She's crying.

WEB

(Looks at her, and then mutters)

Damn it.

LOGAN cries harder. The front door opens and BETHANY and MICAH struggle in with suitcases and other things. MICAH frowns when he sees LOGAN crying.

MICAH

(Heading for the stairs with the suitcases)

I'll cart these things upstairs. See if you can't calm her down.

BETHANY

All right.

LOGAN

Please, *please* let me go. You can't kidnap me like this! My friends will miss me - they'll call the police!

MICAH

Kidnap? You are *not* being kidnapped! You're here because your parents contacted our organization and asked for our assistance in returning your soul to grace in the eyes of the Lord.

BETHANY

You're only 16, honey. The decision for us to help you rests with your parents—your legal guardians.

ALEX

Is that right?

WEB

Yes. They likely financed this villainy.

MICAH

(As he exits up the stairs)

Listen to what Bethany says. She has your best interests at heart.

WEB

Are you going to stay here and watch all this?

ALEX

Of course I am. How could I leave?

WEB

It's none of our concern, Alex.

ALEX

Oh, yeah? Let's see you leave.

BETHANY

Logan, our organization is called "The Normal Path" because our stated mission is rescuing those the devil has tempted with deviant desires, leading them into unnatural practices.

ALEX

Deviant desires? Unnatural practices? What did you do, Logan—vote Democratic?

BETHANY

Deep down you know your behavior was wrong . . . that it disgusted the very God who made you.

LOGAN

No! It's not wrong! I love Susan!

ALEX

Oh, Web, she's one of ours! Logan's a lesbian!

BETHANY

She's a pervert! You can't love a pervert! It's a sin.

LOGAN

But it feels holy when we're sinning! She's the nicest, most caring person I know, and what we did it was ... wonderful! Beautiful! Heavenly! Everybody should try it!

BETHANY

(Shocked)

Oh, child! The devil has grappled you to his chest! Can't you feel his slimy arms around you?

LOGAN

Nope, just ropes and shackles put there by human bigots.

(Suddenly yells, loudly, hoping to catch BETHANY unprepared.)

HELP!!!

WEB

She's got spunk.

ALEX
(To LOGAN)

You tell her, sweetheart! Stamp on her foot.

BETHANY

Logan! Logan!

MICAH re-enters, coming down the stairs.

MICAH

Let her yell. No one can hear her way out here in the middle of nowhere.

ALEX

Nowhere? This is prime property. We once raised the best turkeys in Ohio on this farm.

BETHANY

Please calm down, Logan. Let us help you.

MICAH

(Pointing to the front door.)

You have the keys to this door at your disposal, my dear.

LOGAN

Huh?

MICAH

Oh yes. We'll put you in the car and drive you home the minute we're convinced you understand the seriousness, the magnitude of your transgression against God, against society, against the natural order of our civilization, and truly repent your sin, never to return to it again.

BETHANY

A holy quest! A wonderful journey we've seen others take again and again!

LOGAN sinks to the sofa, very dispirited.

MICAH

Bethany and I, we've seen miracles! You may not believe it now, but a better life is coming.

BETHANY

Say something, Logan. Tell us what you're thinking.

LOGAN

(In a low voice)

I'm never getting out of this place—I'll die here.

MICAH

You don't believe us now, but we're going to have long discussions, exercises that you will find fascinating, many heartfelt prayer sessions. Eventually the light will shine so brightly that you'll have to shield your eyes.

LOGAN

Am I sleeping on the sofa?

BETHANY

Of course not.

MICAH

There are bedrooms upstairs. You'll have your own room.

LOGAN

Will I be tied to the bed?

BETHANY

No. You'll be locked in at night, but just this one time. Tomorrow there will be other arrangements. Things will soon be much more comfortable.

MICAH

We'll take you up to your room now. Here - I'll take these off.

MICAH uncuffs her ankles. BETHANY places the cuffs in her purse, beside the sofa.

BETHANY

And we have a hamper of delicious food your parents prepared for our lunch, which we'll have as soon as we've gotten settled. All right?

LOGAN

I don't want any lunch.

BETHANY rises. MICAH picks up the other things and BETHANY leads LOGAN up the stairs, MICAH following.

BETHANY
(As they climb)

Don't decide now, child. Lie down for a bit and we'll see how you feel in a little while.

THEY all three exit.

ALEX
Well?

WEB
Well, what?

ALEX
What are we going to do about this?

WEB
(Annoyed)
Alex . . .

ALEX
(Imitating him.)
Web . . .

WEB
We can't get involved! Whatever problems the rest of the world has, they are no longer our problems! You and I have been through the horrors of a great war, seen boom times and droughts, births and deaths, and after all this we're hanging on to what's left of our lives by a thread. We're barely here! We can't get involved! You know this!

ALEX
I'll tell you what I know, Webster Randolph Carter III. When you were only a year or so older than that girl, your father discovered you having sex with another boy and beat you unconscious, leaving you bleeding all over the front yard. So you ran away, joined the army, and—to prove your worth—you damn near died at the Battle of Franklin! Ever since then you've fought like a tiger to protect any poor soul mistreated by bigots. (HE pauses.) And now, my love, there's a new poor soul, a new victim, under attack right here in our very own home. (Another pause.) That's what I know.

There is a final long pause as WEB looks up the stairs.

WEB

Damn it to hell.

The lights fade out.

The scene has ended.

Scene Two

Sunny morning, the next day. Sheets have been removed from all windows. LOGAN, a small collar fastened around her neck, sits on the sofa with BETHANY while MICAH paces, Bible in hand. ALEX and WEB watch from the sidelines.

MICAH

In Romans one twenty-seven, Saint Paul condemns men who “burned in their lust one toward another,” and in Romans one twenty-six he calls out such “vile affection; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.” That was written over 2000 years ago!

WEB

And sounds like it.

MICAH

Don’t you see, Logan—women can’t reproduce by lying with other women. Nature, as well as common sense, requires the mating of man and woman.

BETHANY

If you believe in evolution, that just reinforces the message.

MICAH

Evolution?

BETHANY

All of civilization—from the beginning of time—has condemned same sex couplings.

ALEX

Civilization in 2016 seems to be handling gay sex just fine.

BETHANY

I know this seems old fashioned to you, honey, but you need recognize how shocking your behavior is to most people.

MICAH

To your parents. To your family.

LOGAN

My sister, Helen, doesn't care. She has lots of gay friends.

MICAH

Is she gay?

LOGAN

Nope. Married with a four year old son.

BETHANY

Oh, we know there are changes going on in the world—and the values keeping us wholesome for millennia are under attack. We must sound like dinosaurs to you.

MICAH

But we're the majority!

WEB

I doubt that's true.

BETHANY

Logan, when you make this choice, look at all you're giving up—the approval of much of society, the chance to marry and produce children . . .

MICAH

The thrill of real sex with a man!

THEY ALL look at him.

ALEX

You know, he has something there. That argument's a winner with me.

BETHANY

Let's take a break. Time for lunch!

MICAH

Okay.

(To LOGAN)

Remember that until we take that collar off of you, you cannot leave the house without setting off an alarm and at the same time receiving an electrical shock that will bring you to your knees.

ALEX

Such a charmer.

LOGAN

My dog collar, you mean.

BETHANY

It's for your own good, honey, even though it sounds extreme. Please don't test it.

MICAH

It's the size recommended for giant dogs. It works.

BETHANY

Come with me, Micah. Lunch isn't just woman's work.

MICAH

(To LOGAN)

I'll leave the good book here. (MICAH places the Bible on the table beside the sofa.) This copy is yours to keep. Look through it.

MICAH and BETHANY exit into the kitchen.

ALEX

How are we going to do this?

WEB

I'll do the talking; follow my lead.

WEB crosses to the back of the sofa and speaks over Logan's head. For the first time, now when WEB and ALEX speak, LOGAN can hear them. As yet she can't see them.

WEB

Logan, don't be afraid. My voice is being piped into this room. There are two of us here, the owners of this house—a married gay couple—and we've been watching what these people are doing to you.

ALEX

And don't like it.

LOGAN

Where are you?

WEB

Hidden, for reasons we'll explain to you when there's lots of time.

LOGAN

Can you get me out of here?

WEB

Yes, if we can figure out how to remove that collar. But where would you go? Your parents would just send you right back.

LOGAN

My sister Helen would help me. She lives in Cincinnati. Can you call her?

There is an awkward pause.

ALEX

We don't have a working phone in the house.

LOGAN

Not even a cell?

ALEX

Not anymore. It's a long story.

LOGAN

What are your names?

WEB

I'm Web Carter.

ALEX

And I'm Alex Small. We're local boys—though Web is originally from Tennessee.

LOGAN

Why didn't you show yourselves when we first arrived?

WEB

That's part of the long story. Everyone thinks we're dead.

ALEX

But we're not! We're very much alive.

LOGAN

Where are you right now?

WEB

Okay. This is the part that you might think is strange, even scary. Can you prepare yourself for something like that if we promise you it can all be explained?

ALEX

It'll look like something supernatural, but it's got a logical explanation.

LOGAN

What is it?

WEB gestures for ALEX to walk with him so they are both facing LOGAN on the sofa.

WEB

You're about to see us right here in the living room, and we'll just stand here, not moving, until you say you're ready to hear our strange story.

LOGAN

Okay.

ALEX

Please don't be frightened. We're just harmless old queens.

WEB

Hey!

ALEX
(To WEB)

Ready?

WEB

Yes, now.

A shift in the lights and musical notes as ALEX and WEB become visible to LOGAN. She almost screams, looks around wildly, then stares fixedly at them.

LOGAN

You're ghosts!

WEB

I promise you, we're not.

ALEX

We're live humans just like you.

WEB

Only we can make ourselves invisible if we want to.

LOGAN

Like a superpower?

ALEX and WEB laugh.

ALEX

Yeah—sort of like that.

WEB

More like a curse.

LOGAN

Awesome!

ALEX

How are you doing?

LOGAN

(After a long pause.)

Convince me. Make yourselves invisible again.

ALEX and WEB look at each other, shrug, nod at each other, and become invisible again, with the same light shift and musical notes. LOGAN rises and looks all around.

LOGAN

Wow! That's just . . . impossible! Come back—tell me how you do it.

WEB

Okay.

ALEX and WEB reappear, and whenever they appear or disappear the light shifts and musical notes occur.

ALEX

Here we are, still handsome as ever. Is it okay if we sit down?

LOGAN

Sure.

Everyone sits.

LOGAN

Tell me your names again.

WEB

(With appropriate gestures)

Web Carter, Alexander Small.

LOGAN

And, Web, you're from Tennessee, is that right?

WEB

Yes, Ma'am. But I've lived in the north since I was 18, so most of Tennessee, including the accent, is long behind me.

ALEX

Except when he gets drunk, in which case the South rises again! Yankees beware!

WEB

Alex!

LOGAN

And the two of you are married?

ALEX

Since 2005—right after Massachusetts made it legal. The marriage license is in a hidden place in the basement in a spot where we keep things from prying eyes.

WEB

(using air quotes)

If those two “Pray Away the Gay” nuts come back into the room we’ll disappear fast, but we’ll still be here.

LOGAN

I hate them.

ALEX

They mean well, and probably so do your parents. They just don’t know what they’re talking about.

WEB

We might whisper a suggestion or two in your ear if they go too far.

LOGAN

Okay. But now tell me how you got this superpower.

ALEX

Well, it happened a long time ago.

WEB

We’ll just give you the short version for now. They’ll be back soon.

ALEX

For many years we ran a turkey farm on this property, and everyone around here thought we were just business partners, close friends who lived together in this house. We supposedly slept in separate bedrooms. The truth was we’d been in love since we met as teenagers—we were both 18. Our birthdays are within four days of each other.

WEB

Late one night there was a tremendous meteor shower—spectacular—and this one large meteorite

ALEX

They're called "meteorites" once they hit the ground.

WEB

It must have weighed well over 200 pounds.

ALEX

Huge!

WEB

Smashed into the area between the water trough and the barn, shaking the earth with a loud boom, causing us to leap from bed and come running.

ALEX

The turkeys were going nuts! And I'm here to tell you that a hundred crazed turkeys give new depth and meaning to the word "nuts."

WEB

It looked like the barn would catch fire.

ALEX

So we grabbed the water trough and dumped it on the meteorite and that put out the fire with a loud "whoosh!"—scaring the turkeys to new levels. Some of them died of fright.

WEB

But the big thing was that the water, which was cold, caused the meteorite to explode, and we were both instantly slammed with hot, wet debris.

ALEX

Like burning powder on our skin!

WEB

We'd just come from bed and were only wearing shorts so we really got it.

ALEX

We were seriously burned—in the hospital for a couple of days with burn marks all over. (Points) Here and here. I still have scars. Fellows from the university—Ohio State—professors—came out to the site of the hit, and so did the newspapers, neighbors, folks from all around. We were sort of temporarily famous. They called us "The Turkey Men."

WEB

But all that hoopla died out and we thought it was a one-off event, until . . .

LOGAN

Until?

ALEX

Well, it gets strange at this point.

WEB
(confessing)

We didn't get older.

LOGAN

Huh?

WEB

From that day - long ago - to this one, we've stayed ___ years old.

(Fill in the blank with the approximate age of the two actors).

ALEX

We haven't aged at all.

LOGAN

Wow! Are you punking me?

WEB

It would be a very odd joke.

BETHANY
(from off stage)

Logan, who are you talking to?

ALEX and WEB immediately become invisible.

LOGAN

What?

BETHANY sticks her head into the room. LOGAN pretends to be examining her shoe. BETHANY looks around but then shrugs and goes back into the kitchen.

LOGAN
(after making sure BETHANY is gone)

What did the doctors say about your not aging?

WEB and ALEX become visible again.

WEB
At first they thought we were imagining it.

ALEX
Hell—they thought we were crazy.

WEB
But as time went by they became more interested, puzzled.

ALEX
Confused.

WEB
There were various tests.

ALEX
So-called experts poked and prodded.

WEB
One big medical study was published, but mainstream science promptly gave it the horse laugh.

ALEX
Said we must be scamming the doctors. And those doctors became defensive. The whole thing was an embarrassment to them, so they just dropped it.

WEB
We were left to deal with it on our own.

ALEX

So we decided to age ourselves. We became very creative with wigs, makeup, got pretty good at acting older, walking slower, talking with more deliberation.

WEB

But we still didn't age, and we couldn't just keep getting impossibly old, so we moved away from here. Started over in New York City, with new names, back story, a place where we could be our apparent age again. Since then, whenever people noticed we weren't aging we'd pick a new place to live and explore life there.

ALEX

We always kept this house and property—rented it out. It was paid for before I even inherited it as a teenager.

WEB

But as time went on, in recent years, something new began happening.

ALEX

We started fading out unless we concentrated on remaining . . . corporeal.

LOGAN

Fading out?

WEB

Like you experienced just now.

ALEX

Becoming invisible to everyone else.

WEB

More than that. You can actually walk through us when we're invisible and not even know we're there. You can't hear us unless we let you.

LOGAN

No way!

ALEX

Way!

LOGAN

But your clothes fade away with you.

WEB

Strange thing that. We discovered that if we wore something or held it for awhile . . . a piece of clothing, or our wedding rings . . .

Or a gun.

ALEX

LOGAN looks at him, startled.

ALEX

Oh, child, there were many adventures - some *scary* dangerous.

WEB

In any event, anything we hold long enough becomes one with whatever this (indicates his own body) is.

ALEX

Outer space voodoo.

WEB

Alex!

ALEX
(Correcting himself)

Unexplained medical condition.

LOGAN

And what's next for the two of you? Your bodies, I mean.

WEB

We've discovered that it gets harder and harder to remain corporeal—visible—each time we do it.

ALEX
(After a slight pause, a confession)

We think we're fading away.

LOGAN

Into what?

WEB
(After another pause.)

We don't know.

ALEX

Death? And then to heaven? Yes, maybe. That's what I think will happen to me . . . but Web, here—smart man—he's an *atheist*. He'll just blink into nothingness.

WEB

Thanks, my love. My last thought before I blink out of existence will be of you.

BETHANY and MICAH enter from the kitchen with trays of food. ALEX and WEB once again become invisible.

BETHANY

Sandwiches and soup!

MICAH

You said you weren't hungry but your parents gave us these tempting goodies, so we hope you'll change your mind.

LOGAN glances around for ALEX and WEB, but they have become invisible to her as well as to the other two.

LOGAN

I am feeling strangely better. What kind of sandwiches?

BETHANY

Turkey.

ALEX and WEB exchange glances as MICAH distributes the food. LOGAN giggles.

LOGAN

Yum! Are you two a married couple?

MICAH

No. We met at Grapes of Wrath Ministries and Bethany, once she heard of my mission, asked me if she could help me return confused people like you to the grace of God.

WEB

(To Logan)

These “pray away the gay” schemes never work. The victims “find the light” for a few months and then their hormones announce the truth. I’ll explain later.

MICAH

Did you look at your Bible? It’s filled with amazing stories.

LOGAN

I’ve been thinking about an amazing story. (She takes some food.) Thank you, Micah.

MICAH

I started memorizing the Bible when I was a boy---won a competition when I was twelve, and another a year later. Always loved religion—it’s been my purpose in life.

LOGAN

Torturing children?

BETHANY

Logan!

MICAH

Helping them find their way to God. It’s the most *rewarding* work, even when, like you, they start out suspicious and embattled.

ALEX

(Quietly, to LOGAN)

Ask him how much money he earns.

LOGAN

How rewarding?

MICAH

Pardon?

LOGAN

How much money have you made from your rewarding work?

BETHANY

Now, Logan, that’s hardly your business.

LOGAN

(To BETHANY)

Is he paying you?

BETHANY

Me?

MICAH

Bethany is a volunteer. She is motivated by the Christian charity in her heart.

LOGAN

But your organization charges for its services, doesn't it?

MICAH

Yes. I have to make a living in order to keep "The Normal Path" going.

LOGAN

How big a living? What's your yearly take-home pay? Over a hundred thousand dollars? Two hundred thousand?

BETHANY

Logan!

MICAH

I won't say. What I earn is irrelevant as long as I am doing God's work.

WEB starts whispering in LOGAN's ear.

BETHANY

It isn't anything like that much, is it, Micah?

MICAH

Let's get back to your spiritual health.

LOGAN

Yes, let's. I'd like some references.

MICAH

References?

LOGAN

Yes. Testimonials from kids like me who went through this process and changed from wretched homosexuality to being happy heteros. There must be lots of them who'd be eager to encourage me to listen to every word you say.

MICAH

I can't reveal their names. It would be an invasion of privacy.

LOGAN

Nah! If I end up being one of your satisfied customers feel free to have new kidnapes call me up for reassurance that it will all end well.

MICAH

Well . . .

LOGAN

How about you, Bethany? How many success stories can you name from your work with Micah here?

BETHANY

Success stories?

LOGAN

How many of these gigs have you worked with him?

BETHANY

You're the third.

LOGAN

Tell me what happened to the other two.

BETHANY

They were . . . how to put this?

LOGAN

Boys? Girls?

BETHANY

One of each. The girl was more successful.

MICAH

Bethany.

LOGAN

Successful how?

ALEX

Logan should be a lawyer.

BETHANY

Her parents now trust her to go out alone.

LOGAN

Oh, big step!

And she's no longer cutting herself.

BETHANY

Jesus.

WEB

What about the boy?

LOGAN

Let's move on.

MICAH

What about the boy?

LOGAN

Logan, this is profitless.

MICAH

LOGAN grabs BETHANY's hands.

What about the boy?

LOGAN

He killed himself.

BETHANY
(Softly, almost crying)

I've lost my appetite.

LOGAN
(Pushing the food away.)

Me too.

BETHANY

BETHANY runs upstairs, literally fleeing the room.

Yikes!

ALEX

MICAH

You were right before, prophet that you are! You're going to be here a long, long time.

MICAH storms out, following BETHANY.

LOGAN

(After a pause.)

Either of you guys like a sandwich? No one ate a thing.

WEB

We never eat turkey.

The lights fade out.

The scene has ended.

Scene Three

Later that night. BETHANY and LOGAN are seated on the sofa. ALEX and WEB, invisible, are watching them.

BETHANY

I know how difficult your situation is.

LOGAN

Do you?

WEB

(Quietly, to LOGAN)

Yes, she does.

ALEX
(Quietly, to LOGAN)

She's a dyke.

LOGAN

What?!

BETHANY

What?

LOGAN
(To BETHANY, covering)

I mean, what makes you think you know how difficult my situation is?

ALEX
Look at her haircut. It advertises "dyke."

LOGAN

I wondered.

BETHANY
The truth is I too was once very attracted to women. But, thankfully, my benevolent God intervened, and I was made to see—I came to see, to understand that those feelings had to be suppressed, replaced.

WEB
So she got married.

LOGAN
So you married a man.

BETHANY
(With a smile.)
And I have three children.

ALEX
What about sex? Was it satisfying?

LOGAN
What about sex? Was it satisfying?

BETHANY
Satisfying?

(A pause.)

No, not really. But I took my guidance from Queen Victoria.

LOGAN

Queen Victoria?

BETHANY

She told her daughters on their wedding nights that the way to get through it all was to . .

(English accent)
“Close your eyes and think of England.”

LOGAN
(Laughing)

England!

BETHANY

How about Ohio? Listen, it worked for Queen Victoria and it worked for me.

LOGAN

I could never do that. Being with Susan, loving the touch of her, her surprising humor, her beauty, what happens when Susan touches me, all that . . . is a religion on its own! You must have felt something like that. Think back! Remember! What was her name?

BETHANY

Who?

LOGAN

The “her” in your life. The one you kissed. The love of your life who adored you.

BETHANY

(After a pause as she remembers)

I really don’t . . . it was Katherine. Kate. The only important one was Kate. There were two others, but they weren’t Kate.

LOGAN

Was Kate beautiful?

BETHANY

Not to most people—she was cropped and curt, she would tell anyone off! But, to me, yes. It was her strength that grabbed me by the heart. No one knew what we were up to. We would steal away to our secret places, create a world of our own. And then, one afternoon, our mothers caught us “together,”—yes, both of them at once! Everything after that was a nightmare and we never saw each other again.

LOGAN

You could still find Kate!

BETHANY

That is not why I’m . . . (telling you this).

LOGAN

Even after all these years later. That’s what the internet is for. She would still remember you, love you! You know that!

BETHANY

No!!! Stop this! With Kate I was out of control! What she did with me . . . what we did . . . was a violation of God’s plan for us both. This was made very clear to me, and I am very clear with it. Logan, I quickly came to see that my love for God had been highjacked by the demons of Satan, and that it was his claws in my soul!

LOGAN

But some nights, when you’re lonely, you do think about Kate. And you cry, you wish you could see her again!

BETHANY

Please stop.

LOGAN hugs her.

LOGAN

It’s all right, Bethany. You did what men told you to do. They always tell women what they have to do.

BETHANY
(Lost in thought)

Are you trying to confuse me?

WEB

Come on to her.

LOGAN snorts.

Really? LOGAN

Yes, really. BETHANY

LOGAN
Are you tempted by thoughts of women these days? Remembering what you did with Kate and others? Sexual things?

Unobserved, ALEX begins to search through BETHANY's purse, which is still on the floor beside the sofa. He removes her phone, and places it in his pocket.

BETHANY
No, I'm older. I've lost my desires.

LOGAN
You still look good. I'd bet that lots of interesting women still notice you.

BETHANY swats LOGAN's hand away.

BETHANY
No, they . . . What are you doing?

LOGAN
Come on! Micah went to bed. Our bedrooms are two stories above us. One kiss.

ALEX
Don't ask, don't tell.

BETHANY
No, Logan! I too am going to bed. You go to yours.

LOGAN

(Lying back on the sofa.)

Sorry if I offended you. I just want to lie here and think a little while, sort it all out, I'll be up shortly.

BETHANY

I hope you're not considering a run for it. The electronic fence is on.

LOGAN

Don't worry. I'm scared of that thing. Micah's demonstration this afternoon made me a believer.

BETHANY

Well . . . good night then. (She turns back.) Please don't mention anything I've told you to Micah or anyone.

LOGAN

Of course not. Our secret. Good night.

BETHANY goes up the stairs hurriedly, taking her purse with her.

LOGAN

Guys, can I see you now?

ALEX and WEB look at each other, nod, and become visible to LOGAN.

LOGAN

Ah, my saviors!

ALEX

Unexpected saviors, but here to do what we can.

WEB

We tried to get that collar off this afternoon, but it's on too tight. There are some tools in the garage I want to try tomorrow when they're not looking. Or maybe I can rig the system once I investigate it carefully.

ALEX

Why don't you just call your sister?

LOGAN

How would I do that? They took my phone.

ALEX holds up the phone he took from Bethany's purse.

ALEX

This is Bethany's. I took it from her purse while you were distracting her.

LOGAN

Lit! Give it to me. (LOGAN takes the phone from ALEX.) Oh, please let me remember her number. (LOGAN punches in numbers.) Please, please. Yes! (LOGAN speaks into the phone.) Helen! It's Logan! Mom and Dad had me kidnapped. You know? What did they tell you? (LOGAN listens.) Yeah. Yeah. Me too. Oh, Helen, you would? Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!!! Huh? (LOGAN Listens.) Hang on, a friend of mine will give you the address. This is Alex.

LOGAN

(hands the phone to ALEX, speaks to Web)

She's coming up late tomorrow night. Arriving about nine or nine thirty.

ALEX

Hello, Helen. The address is the old Turkey Men Farm, 2918 Kingsdale Road, Mount Sterling, Ohio.

WEB

(To ALEX)

Tell her to park next to the barn on the south side where she can see the front porch.

ALEX

Park next to the south side of the barn, away from the road—where you have a good view of the front porch.

WEB takes the phone from ALEX, and speaks into it.

WEB

When the front porch light goes off and on twice, Logan will be coming out fast, okay? (WEB listens.) You're welcome. (WEB listens.) We love her too. Here she is.

WEB hands LOGAN the phone.

LOGAN

Oh, Helen, it's been quite a ride—depressing, surprising, and also filled with wonder. I've made two terrific friends. (LOGAN listens.) Yes, me too. Love you forever! Good night. (LOGAN punches the phone off.) Oh, you guys!

LOGAN throws her arms around ALEX and WEB, and they all hug. At the same time LOGAN speaks to WEB.

LOGAN

You told Helen you love me---well, you're the strangest friends I've ever met but I love the two of you back!

WEB

Been a long while since we made a new friend.

ALEX

Or been hugged. (He takes the phone from LOGAN.) I'll sneak this back into Bethany's purse when she's not looking.

WEB

Going to bed now?

LOGAN

Oh no, I'm too wound up. Stay up with me and let's talk a bit.

ALEX

About what?

LOGAN

You two, of course. How you met, how you coped, your adventures, all that.

WEB

Well, we have a ton of stories about turkeys.

ALEX

And about learning to be a gay couple in an age when there were not supposed to be gay couples.

WEB

We've watched gay history happen as it happened.

LOGAN

Stonewall?

ALEX

Magnus Hirschfeld.

LOGAN

Who?

WEB

He started a major gay rights movement in Germany in the early 1900s.

LOGAN

The early 1900s? What happened?

WEB

Adolph Hitler happened. The Nazi's first book burning was of Hirschfeld's library.

LOGAN
(Amazed)

You were alive in the early 1900s?

ALEX laughs.

ALEX

Oh, Logan, dear. Much before that!

LOGAN

What? When were you born

WEB and ALEX

1846.

LOGAN

1846!

ALEX

I was born in this house. Upstairs.

LOGAN
(To WEB)

And you?

WEB
Woodbury, Tennessee, south of Nashville.

LOGAN
How did you meet?

WEB and ALEX look at each other. WEB motions to ALEX to go first.

ALEX
When the Civil War started we were in our early teens, about your age. I joined the Union Army in the last part of 1864, when I was 18. We both turned 19 the following March. I was a private in the 91st Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and was assigned to guard duty at Camp Chase in Columbus, where Confederate prisoners were held. That's where I met Webster Carver.

LOGAN
In a prison?

WEB
Yup. My home life, back in Tennessee, was . . . difficult. My father caught me with another boy, his best friend's son, and he almost beat me to death. I ran off and joined the Confederate Army. Since I was a farm boy who knew how to ride a horse, I ended up in the cavalry under General Nathan Bedford Forrest, famous for saying his winning strategy was to get there "the firstest with the mostest." In the Battle of Franklin, in Tennessee, November 30, 1864—General Forrest's only loss—my horse was shot from under me and I was knocked unconscious, captured, and taken to Camp Chase in Columbus. That's where I fell for my scrawny jailer.

LOGAN
Aaah . . .

WEB
Yeah. Union prisons are very romantic. They were known for that.

ALEX
You should have seen him: so young, so handsome, so butch.

WEB

So dirty.

ALEX

His muscles . . .

WEB

Alex. enough. (To Logan) It was crowded and dark and disease-ridden, but I swear to you, the instant I saw this sweet wet-behind-ears beanpole, I was so crazy in love with him it hurt. Physically hurt. I tried not to look at him because I wanted him so much. I didn't even know his name.

ALEX

I learned to control my drooling, and I made sure I knew his name. It was on the roster of prisoners.

LOGAN

Be serious, Alex. How did it start?

ALEX

Okay. I was terrified.

WEB

We both were.

ALEX

We knew we couldn't say anything, but the *looks* we gave each other . . . Years later I ran across a Shakespeare quote that was dead on: "Hear my soul speak: The very instant that I saw you, did my heart fly to your service."

WEB

Our eyes conveyed criminal desire, and I mean *criminal*. Sodomy was a hanging offense.

LOGAN

What was your first real conversation? How did that go?

WEB

He brought me a blanket.

LOGAN

A blanket?

ALEX

It was January. He was freezing – we all were, so I brought him a blanket.

WEB

And I refused to take it. There were other prisoners, badly hurt. I told him to give it to one of them.

LOGAN

What did he say?

ALEX

I told him there were over 9000 Confederate prisoners in Camp Chase, and a huge number of Union soldiers, but there were nowhere enough blankets even for all the Union guys. Many of the Rebel soldiers were wounded, unable to fight off disease, dying daily and laid out in rows. No one was going to survive that January without a blanket, so . . . did he want to die or take the damn blanket?

WEB

I really thought about it. You had to see the conditions. No food you'd call edible, disease everywhere, bodies being carted out in bags all day long. I'm not proud of it, but, yeah, I took the damn blanket. Treasured it. Cuddled in it at night and thought a lot about Alex.

ALEX

Every morning I took it back.

LOGAN

Why?

WEB

To hide it. Otherwise it'd be stolen.

ALEX

I'd return it late every night, even on my days off. Sneak it back because I didn't want anyone to see what was going on. I'd be court martialed if I was caught.

WEB

Not exactly your typical love story.

ALEX

We hid everything about what was really going on. We had to be inventive. It was all in code. Fell in love---in code. Proposed---in code. Mostly with our eyes.

WEB

Hell, our armies should have made us spies! We were very good at hiding things.

ALEX

But, hallelujah, the war ended almost immediately, just months later. Suddenly it was over. We were no longer soldiers, just ordinary human beings out of work. We just stood there, outside Camp Chase, free to do whatever the hell we wanted, looking at each other, blinking in the sunlight on a lovely April day.

WEB

I certainly didn't want to go back to Tennessee.

ALEX

My daddy had died years before, leaving me the farm. I'd had an older brother, but he'd been killed early in the war. My mother was running the place. So I asked Web if he'd like to come help me raise turkeys in Ohio. The farm wasn't that far away.

WEB

Raising turkeys! Romance doesn't get any better than that.

ALEX

My mother had no warning he was coming, but once she met Web he laid on that Southern charm and thereafter she always treated him as she would've treated . . . well, my wife.

WEB

We never fooled her - Mother Small. The rest of the people in the county were deaf, dumb, and blind to what we really were, but Mother Small always knew.

LOGAN

Unbelievable. So how old are you both now?

ALEX

A hundred and seventy.

LOGAN

(Blown away)

A hundred and seventy?

WEB

Basic math. Eighteen forty-six to twenty sixteen.

ALEX

But we don't look a day over a hundred and fifty! Sing her our song, Web.

WEB

(Shy, but he wants to.)

No.

LOGAN

What song?

ALEX

Web wrote us a love song, early on. Used to sing it in this room, playing the guitar, every few months or so. But—dang!—he also sang it to me at the top of the Eiffel Tower one lovely romantic night many decades ago.

LOGAN

Sing it now!

WEB

No. No guitar.

LOGAN

Just for me!

ALEX

Come on, Web. (To Logan) It's very short.

LOGAN

Wing it. We'll pretend there's a guitar. Perfect ending to the strangest day of my life.

WEB

All right. (To ALEX) Come here. (They cuddle as WEB sings.)

I DREAMED OF YOU
BEFORE WE MET
AND WHEN WE MET
I KNEW

YOU'RE THE ONE
MY STAR, MY SUN
MY ORBIT CIRCLES YOU

NOW WE TRAVEL
LIFE A PAIR,
LOVERS, PARTNERS, FRIENDS

WEB and ALEX

I DREAMED OF YOU
BEFORE WE MET
AND THIS IS HOW—

WEB

OH, ALEX, WOW!!

WEB AND ALEX

THIS IS HOW IT ENDS

WEB and ALEX kiss.

LOGAN

That's just . . . perfect!

ALEX

I love you, Reb.

WEB

I love you too, Yank.

BETHANY

(Calling from upstairs)

Logan, it's getting late. Prayer service is at first light. Come to bed.

The lights fade out.

ACT ONE has ended.

ACT TWO

Scene One

The next morning. MICAH is sitting in a chair sipping a cup of coffee and tapping on an iPad. LOGAN come in from the kitchen, carrying a cup of coffee.

LOGAN
May I join you?

MICAH
Oh? Yes, I'd like that.

LOGAN
What you doing?

MICAH
Playing Angry Birds.

LOGAN
Ah, violence. Protection of the nest, evil pigs dying from bombs slingshoted into their midst.

MICAH
Hmm. Are you angry?

LOGAN
At you, yes.

MICAH
Okay, I can see that. But do you doubt my good faith?

LOGAN
(Nodding)
Oh, yes. You kidnapped me, slapped me with an electric lightning-rod dog collar, threatened me with endless arrest, and stomped on my freedom in many ways, so, yeah, call me a doubter.

MICAH
What if I were a nice guy under all that?

LOGAN

Call me surprised.

ALEX enters. LOGAN sees him but they don't acknowledge each other.

MICAH

When I was twelve years old in a very devout evangelical family, my best friend in school told me in strictest confidence that most of the church people we knew were only pretending to believe in God, while in real life they whored and drank and were frequent tourists to Sodom and Gomorrah. That shocked me silly, but on some level it made sense. I'd always been suspicious that my father, often too drunk to climb to the second floor, wasn't a shining example of a Good Christian, and there were other dubious suspects who witnessed regularly for the Lord at Sunday services: speaking in tongues, handling snakes, lying on the floor and kicking . . . the sanctuary resembled more a circus than a place of worship.

LOGAN

Lit. Tell me more.

MICAH

Well, being twelve, one Saturday morning I confronted my father and told him the jig was up: I "knew" that he and most others were merely pretending to believe in God, but that I wasn't going to play along any longer.

LOGAN

And he said, "You're right, son" and gave you a fist bump.

MICAH

He said nothing. He went into the kitchen, fired up a burner on the stove and soon came back with a bucket of almost boiling water. He set it down at my feet, and—he was a big man—grabbed hold of me and took my foot, poised it above the water and announced, "Heretics go to hell!" Then, as I screamed, he forced my foot into the bucket. I bucked and tried to get away and it's amazing I didn't pass out. The pain was so great I hoped I would just die so it would end. But at the last second he pulled my leg out of the water and tossed me to the floor, where I flopped around like a fish.

LOGAN

Eew!

MICAH

Then you know what my father said? (LOGAN shakes her head.) He said, "That was only a few seconds of agony, you coward! Hell is *eternity*." Dad bent down—two inches

from my eyes, still holding my squirming body tight. “If I ever even suspect you’re denying God again, I’ll make sure you get to eternity right quick.”

LOGAN

And that made you a true believer.

MICAH

Yes it did. I’d *seen* hell. I’d *felt* hell.

LOGAN

So child torture is the only training method you know.

MICAH

I know you think I’m a jerk who only brought you here to fill my pockets. You, wise 16 year old, put a negative spin on everything. Well, here’s the spin *I* put on everything. In each atom of the universe: in your desire to sleep with another female, in that cup of coffee in your hand, in the synapses in your brain that despise me as I say these words, there lurk telltale signs of the God who created everything. Everything. (Pause) Drink your coffee. He created that too.

LOGAN

(After a long pause.)

Okay.

MICAH

But, Logan . . .

LOGAN

Yes?

MICAH

Don’t doubt my motives again. I earn a living, sure, but I’m not in this for the money.

LOGAN

Right. You don’t have a boiling bucket of water to work with, but you’ll bring me to my knees with electrocution if I don’t play slave to your wishes, Master.

MICAH

More advice: Shut up.

ALEX

(Whispering to LOGAN.)

Girl! Be nice. It won’t help if he’s your enemy.

LOGAN

(Slight pause while she accepts this,)

Micah, okay. I'm sorry. I hate that your father did that to you. It would scar you forever—it would scar anyone. I apologize for my smart mouth.

MICAH

(Surprised)

Oh. (A pause.) Thanks.

ALEX

(Whispering to LOGAN.)

Come on to him.

LOGAN

What?

MICAH

I said thanks.

ALEX

Like with Bethany last night. See what happens.

LOGAN

Um. I've been thinking. Part of my problem with you is that I've always fiercely resisted strong men.

MICAH

Strong men?

LOGAN

My father loves me, but he's a wimp really. Mom is the one who runs things. When I see you taking charge, knowing what you're doing, being forceful, I feel jealous that I never knew a man who could tell me what to do.

MICAH

(Not buying this.)

Really?

LOGAN

Do you have a daughter?

MICAH

(Not cooperating)

No.

LOGAN

A wife or partner?

MICAH

Leave me alone, little girl. Let me just drink the coffee and fling angry birds.

LOGAN

You can't tell me that a man as attractive as you doesn't know women who appreciate what they're seeing.

MICAH

Logan, aren't you . . . eh . . . trending lesbian?

LOGAN

Aren't you supposed to be encouraging my heterosexual side?

MICAH

If you aren't something completely new! Yesterday you were the world's meanest prosecutor, nailing me to the witness stand. Suddenly you're Mata Hari about to unzip my fly. Are you really only sixteen? Tomorrow you'll be 27 and probably CEO of a major company. By 50 you'll be running for president.

LOGAN
(Delighted)

And at a hundred and seventy?

MICAH

WHAT? *A hundred and seventy?* That makes no sense.

MICAH flees into the kitchen and ALEX becomes visible and they collapse in laughter.

ALEX

Darling, you *flunked* Seduction 101.

LOGAN

Well, you know, I'm really a dyke and his anatomy is nothing to me. Why don't you have a run at him, gay boy?

ALEX

He *is* sort of butch, but—hey—I'm a married man.

LOGAN

Sissy.

ALEX

Now, now. Web and I said vows.

WEB enters.

WEB

What's going on?

ALEX

I told her we exchanged vows.

WEB

And so much more. Sweat, semen, saliva, even blood which I had to donate when you were in that motorcycle accident. Hitchhiking by showing a knee! Then he talked the guy who picked him up into letting him drive!

LOGAN

Motorcycle? I thought you were nineteenth century men.

WEB

Well, of course, at first, but then we became twentieth century men and now men of the twenty-first. We always lived in the moment.

LOGAN

The good life?

ALEX

In good times. The bad life in bad times. We've starved together. (To WEB) Remember Memphis?

LOGAN

Did you dance together in public places? Two men?

WEB

Yes, Ma'm.

WEB smiles and suddenly hugs ALEX, who leans against him.

ALEX

(Remembering as they dance)

At gay parties and later gay bars. Waltzes in the 1800s, the Charleston in the twenties, then jitterbug, disco, etc.

WEB

Not as much in more recent years. We were always a bit too old for the young crowd and their fashions.

ALEX

We sometimes danced alone out there in the barnyard, on the paved surface where the trucks park. The turkeys seemed to like that. Web would sing to me as we wowed the birds with our fancy steps.

MICAH reenters, coffee cup in hand. ALEX and WEB become invisible again.

MICAH

Who are you talking to?

LOGAN

Daydreaming out loud. Practicing what I'm going to say about all this when I'm rescued. Preparing my speech to the press on the courthouse steps at your trial.

ALEX
(To WEB)

She's quick.

BETHANY comes down the stairs. She sets her purse beside the sofa.

BETHANY

Hello, folks. Is there coffee?

MICAH
(Putting his cup down)

In the kitchen. I'll get you a cup. Cream and sugar?

BETHANY

Just black. Thanks.

MICAH goes into the kitchen. BETHANY sits and takes her phone from her purse. She punches a few icons and then looks puzzled.

Hmm. (Calls) Micah?
BETHANY

MICAH enters with a cup of coffee, which he gives to BETHANY.

Yes?
MICAH

Did you use my phone last night?
BETHANY

Huh? Your phone? No. I have my own.
MICAH

Strange. According to my "Recent Calls" list there was a call made from this phone last evening to what appears to be the Cincinnati area code.
BETHANY

BETHANY looks suspiciously at LOGAN, who is pretending to be absorbed by something outside.

Logan, did you somehow get hold of my phone and make a call?
BETHANY

What's that?
LOGAN

Her sister Helen lives in Cincinnati.
MICAH

I don't know how she got my phone. It was in my purse, and the purse was always with me.
BETHANY

LOGAN

I didn't take your phone!

BETHANY

Let's see what happens if I call this number.

BETHANY punches the screen.

LOGAN

No!

BETHANY

Hello. Is this Helen? Hello, Helen. I'm calling about your sister Logan, who you talked to last night. (She listens) Yes. Yes. Alex? Hmm, I don't know him. But in any event Logan asked me to tell you that things are now fine with her and she no longer needs your help. Yes. I'm sure. No, not now. She can't come to the phone, but I'll have her call you tomorrow when she's free. What? No. I'm afraid not. Goodbye.

BETHANY punches the phone off and puts it back in her purse.

BETHANY

Who is this "Alex" who talked to your sister last night? And how could he have used my phone?

LOGAN

I don't know what you're talking about. Alex who?

MICAH suddenly slaps LOGAN hard, and she falls to the floor.

BETHANY

Logan! Micah, no!

WEB pushes MICAH from behind, and he falls forward landing on BETHANY.

LOGAN

All right! I did snag your phone and made the call. Then I lowered my voice and pretended to be someone named Alex to make my sister think I wasn't alone in trying to get the hell out of this place.

MICAH
(Bewildered, rising)

Who just pushed me?

ALEX
(Quietly, to LOGAN)

He slipped on the rug.

LOGAN

You slipped on the rug.

MICAH

Like hell I did!

LOGAN

Clumsy man. Loses his balance when striking a teenage girl!

WEB

I want to slam my fist into his face.

ALEX

That won't help.

BETHANY

Everyone sit down. We need to figure out what's going on.

LOGAN and MICAH sit.

MICAH
(Glaring at LOGAN)

Damn right. It's as if she has hidden powers.

LOGAN

Oh, yes! Strike me and I'll call down the wrath of God on you. He protects helpless lesbians. What would my parents say if they knew you made advances to me this morning and, when I repulsed you, you slapped me?

BETHANY

Did you do that?

MICAH

Of course not. She came on to me!

LOGAN gives loud derisive snort.

LOGAN

You're not my type, Bible boy.

BETHANY

She tried the same thing with me last night.

LOGAN

Bethany confessed to me that she was a dyke too and had been hiding it all these years!

BETHANY

I did not!

LOGAN

Lying is a major sin! Bethany, Bethany! I may have to use my powers on you.

MICAH

How did you push me from behind when you weren't even near me?

LOGAN

You must have tripped over your own big feet.

BETHANY

I want to know about that phone call. What did you arrange with your sister?

LOGAN

I pleaded with her to help me but she said that our parents knew best and I should do what they say. So then I pretended to be a man named Alex and told her that the situation here was out of control, but she hung up on me.

BETHANY

How did you get my phone?

LOGAN

I grabbed it from your purse last night when you weren't looking. And this morning, when I heard you in the shower, I sneaked it back into your purse.

MICAH

“Sneak” *is* the word for you.

ALEX

Says the man standing proudly on the high moral ground.

BETHANY

Well, we’ve foiled your little escape plan.

MICAH

It wouldn’t have worked anyway. The collar would have still stopped you when you tried to leave. Didn’t you think of that?

LOGAN

I was going to endure it. Get past it and keep going.

MICAH

You would have passed out as you crossed through the gate, and that would have ended that. We’d have carried your unconscious body back into the house.

LOGAN

So I’m still imprisoned and subject to your beatings. This plan to bring me back to God has some very ungodly parts.

BETHANY

I know it’s a cliché, but this really is for your own good.

LOGAN

Which *you* get to decide and not me.

BETHANY

Which your *parents* get to decide and not you. You want me to get them on the phone?

LOGAN

No. (Remembering her last awful conversation with them) They’re part of the Gestapo all right.

BETHANY

Such ugly words.

LOGAN

Such ugly deeds.

MICAH

Just shut that smart aleck mouth of yours or I’ll shut it for you.

ALEX

Be cool, Logan.

BETHANY

(Rising)

Enough! Enough! Prayer service on the sun porch in half hour. It will be followed by morning counseling and then gay situation avoidance practice. Let's all calm down first.

BETHANY grabs her purse and goes upstairs.
MICAHA starts to follow her, but stops on the stairs
and turns back.

MICAHA

I know you're planning something, but it's not going to work. The smart thing to do - the thing that will get you out of here faster - is to do what we advise: cooperate, return to the path of God's grace and forgiveness. Try that for a change and see things get better.

MICAHA exits. LOGAN bursts into tears, and both
ALEX and WEB appear and gather round to
console her.

ALEX

Don't cry, sweetheart. They aren't going to win.

WEB

You were very brave just now. Alex and I were talking last night about how much we admire you.

ALEX

Gays have to stick together.

LOGAN:

You said these attempts to change gays into straights don't work. Are you sure?

ALEX:

Oh, honey, don't get Webby started. He's been battling this one for decades.

WEB

A lot of gays, particularly before the Stonewall revolution tried everything they could think of to change: religion, electric shock treatments, castration, you name it. None of it worked. None.

ALEX:

Some ex-gays prayed extra hard, took extraordinary steps to avoid temptation, even—God forgive them—married. But it *never* takes in the long run. And I mean “never.” Web used to have a standing bet with preachers like Micah, and he never lost that bet. Sexual desire can be postponed but eventually it rears up like Godzilla rising from the ocean, and after that it’s either acceptance or misery or suicide.

LOGAN

What about lesbians? Did you guys know any lesbians.

They both laugh.

ALEX

Tons of lesbians.

WEBB

(Correcting him quickly)

Alex means that many of the great people in our lives were proud sapphic women. Some of them famous even.

LOGAN

Tell me.

ALEX:

Hick.

WEBB:

Lorena Hickok, known to her friends as “Hick,” was a famous reporter in the mid-1900s who had a very romantic affair with Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States. She was socially shy, and usually didn’t mesh well with men, but Alex charmed her thoroughly, and we all became great friends.

ALEX

Hick was a diabetic but loved it when I told her that whiskey has almost no carbs. She was very butch, and we got soused a lot together.

WEBB

Tell Logan about Cindy Sponser.

ALEX

Oh, Lord, don’t remind me.

LOGAN

Who was she?

ALEX

An evil woman I met in acting classes out in LA in the 1950s when I thought I could become a movie star. Cindy was bi-sexual, and in those days she was routinely sleeping with Katharine Hepburn. Cindy mysteriously developed a real crush on me and decided to get me into the sack. She knew I was gay but thought she could “convert” me. ME!

LOGAN

Who was Katharine Hepburn?

ALEX

(Sadly)

Oh, honey! They’ll take away your queer card.

WEBB:

A famous movie star who was quite manly but somehow convinced the world she only had eyes for the opposite sex. The one time she met her “rival”—Alex—she looked daggers straight through his heart.

ALEX

At that same party Cindy doped up my drink and when I was passing out, negotiated me into a bedroom and stripped me down! Then she climbed into bed with me naked! *It was a nightmare!*

LOGAN

What happened?

WEBB

I heard his screams—hell, half of Los Angeles heard his screams—I barged in and rescued him.

ALEX

I was *traumatized!* It was weeks before I could sleep in a bed again, even with Webb.

WEBB

So to answer your question, we’ve known many gay women. One of them—the great Athena Lyons—we met 40 years ago and now, when she’s in her 80s, she still comes out to the farm and spends a day with us. We reminisce about our youthful adventures, both the good times and the bad times.

LOGAN:

Bad times?

ALEX:

Darling, we're 170 years old. Lots of bad times! But---as the song goes---we're still here. Being gay means you sometimes have to knuckle up your hands and do battle.

LOGAN:

Were you ever fired for being gay?

ALEX:

(To Web)

What's the count? We figured this out a couple of years ago.

WEB:

Seven times. Twice for me, five for you.

ALEX:

I had problems constantly pretending I was butch.

WEB:

We were driven from where we lived many times. Even from houses we'd purchased.

ALEX

Remember after that after-hours disco party at our apartment in 1976? We were at the curb with all our belongings by dawn!

LOGAN:

Were you ever physically attacked?

ALEX and WEB look at each other. How much to tell?

WEB:

A lot. Twice here on the farm.

ALEX:

Once by our own longtime employee who'd searched the house and figured out we were sleeping together. He surprised us by coming around the barn suddenly with a raised shovel.

LOGAN:

What happened?

Another pause.

WEB:

He isn't with us anymore.

LOGAN:

Meaning what?

ALEX:

(Hurriedly)

Another time, Web was arrested in Chicago for (air quotes) "importuning" when he resisted the advances of a closeted cop. Five years in prison was on the line.

LOGAN:

But that didn't happen.

ALEX:

We decamped. Left in the middle of the night and switched identities immediately.

WEB:

By that time we always had money squirreled away and were experts at vanishing.

ALEX:

(Remembering)

Ooh! We landed in New Orleans just as Marti Gras started up and there we met "Mama Zastras and her Naughty Boys"! And I developed . . .

WEB:

Enough! Our point is we know how to handle homophobes like Bethany and Micah.

LOGAN

But how am I going to get out of here? You heard what Micah said: the invisible fence would have stopped me even if my sister Helen was still coming.

WEB

The fence won't be a problem. I figured out how it's set up. Defeating it is easy.

ALEX

Web's good at this sort of thing. When electricity first became a big deal Web signed right up to learn everything about it. It's been his hobby for over a century.

LOGAN

Okay. (She tries to smile.) So, Web, how do I defeat it?

WEB

You don't have to do a thing. The system, once it's on, operates through radio signals from the fence to your collar. There's a battery in the collar, but it's on the neck side, and that thing is so snug around your neck that we can't get at it until you can take it off. But the whole system depends on electricity, and we'll simply pull the plug.

LOGAN

You mean that last night all I had to do was find that plug, pull it, and I could have scampered out of here?

WEB

No. He nixed that by plugging the monitor into an outlet inside the barn on the other side of the fence.

ALEX

Oh, then either of us could unplug it?

WEB

Yes.

LOGAN

So I could go right now?

WEB

Go where? We're way out in the country. If you stayed on the roads you'd be easy to find and if you went through the woods someone would see you eventually. Explaining the collar would be hard, and the collar itself has a phone number on it.

LOGAN

Can we get it off?

WEB

We can try. My thought yesterday was that cutting through the collar would be the route to go, but it would take a very sharp tool, carefully used, and half an hour or more of dangerous sawing through the damn thing. In the safety of your sister's home that would be easier, but here in this house, well, more difficult. And on the road by yourself, almost impossible.

LOGAN

Um, any chance you guys could go with me on the road, at least till I get to somewhere safe?

ALEX and WEB look at each other. This is a big moment.

ALEX

Sit down. It's time to tell you something we haven't mentioned so far.

LOGAN

(Sitting, suddenly very worried.)

Okay, what?

WEB

About ten years ago we started disappearing.

LOGAN

Disappearing?

ALEX

In the beginning it was just parts of our body. The first time, for me, it began with my whole lower half. I looked down - right in the middle of the afternoon, standing in the shower - and realized I couldn't see anything from the waist down.

LOGAN

Wow!

ALEX

I felt normal, but visually I was sawed in half. I yelled for Web and he came running.

WEB

He *screamed* for Web and he came running.

ALEX

He was asking me "What? What?" and then he just stopped and stared.

WEB

He was half a human, floating in mid-air.

LOGAN

Half a human . . .

ALEX

I was still all there, you see.

WEB

I dropped to my knees and could feel his legs just fine—normal.

ALEX
While we were talking about it . . .

WEB
Within seconds . . .

ALEX
Suddenly I was whole again.

WEB
But it scared the bejesus out of us.

LOGAN
What did it mean?

ALEX
It took awhile to figure that out.

WEB
The very next morning when I woke up it was my whole arm—the right one. It was there, but it wasn't visible.

ALEX
And then, each day and sometimes multiple times a day, this body part or that body part . . . and we were terrified.

LOGAN
Oh, my God! I would have freaked out.

WEB
We were reassured by the fact that in all this we still felt fine, whole—there were no other side effects.

ALEX
Best of all we learned that by concentrating we could control it. We could look at the invisible part and *will* it back into sight.

WEB
What we came to call “corporeal existence.”

ALEX
Look. (He makes his arm disappear, which we know from LOGAN's reaction.)

LOGAN
Your arm!

ALEX

Right! It's gone, and then "Presto, change-o!"

LOGAN

It's back!

WEB

We can do with our minds, as simple as flicking light switches.

LOGAN

Could you make it so I could see you but Micah and Bethany could not?

ALEX

Pretty sure not. Maybe if we practiced.

WEB

But here's the startling thing: after awhile it became obvious that it was becoming harder and harder to remain corporeal.

ALEX

We really have to concentrate to do it.

LOGAN

Are you concentrating now?

ALEX

Yes. It's work. It's . . . draining.

LOGAN

But it's not work being . . . invisible?

WEB

Non-corporeal? No. That's the default state, and it's easy.

ALEX

Oh, yeah? Tell her the downside.

LOGAN

Downside?

WEB is silent.

ALEX

Tell her, Web.

WEB

We really don't use the word "noncorporeal," though it's accurate. In the beginning we jokingly called it "being ghosts."

ALEX

Which we're not.

WEB

Probably not. But in any event, as a shorthand let's call it the "ghost state." When we're ghosts we don't age in any way, but we certainly do when we're visible.

ALEX

And every time we become corporeal—speaking to you, and particularly when we're visible, and worst of all when we do physical things, like the push Web gave Micah . . .

WEB

It drains away our life force. It gets harder and harder to come back, to re-incorporate, become visible, perform tasks.

LOGAN

(Seeing where this is going.)

Oh.

ALEX

A loss of energy. Hell—the loss of what's left of very long lives.

LOGAN

Well then, for God's sake, don't do it! Vanish right now!

ALEX

But we want you to see us.

LOGAN

Is it less draining if I just hear you.

WEB

Yes.

ALEX

Lots.

LOGAN

Okay, then just keep the voices going and lose the bodies.

WEB

Okay.

WEB nods at ALEX, and they become invisible.

LOGAN

That's better. You're still here, right?

WEB

Yes.

LOGAN

But what's the end of this energy loss? What happens next?

WEB

We're not sure.

ALEX

We can only guess. Frankly, we're sort of scared to know.

WEB

Even this ghosting has major drawbacks.

LOGAN

Like what?

ALEX

We don't routinely touch anything, or feel it, or move it. We'd have to materialize for that and it would drain away some of our remaining life—like sand in an hour glass. So we do very little other than talk, observe, remember. We haven't any physical needs—we don't eat, sleep, defecate, nothing.

WEB

We haven't made love in five years.

LOGAN

Five years!

ALEX

Yeah. It isn't really life at all. We might as well be ghosts.

WEB

But as depressing as that sounds, after 170 years life is still very dear to us, even this ghost-like existence.

ALEX

Or it used to be. Lately—hell, for the last year of so, it’s just been awful really. Boring, frustrating, being close while yearning for each other at the same time. Near, untouchable.

WEB

These days we quarrel a lot, and that used to be rare.

ALEX

Web and I were always great romantics—from the time we were horny teenage soldiers discovering what exciting things our bodies could do together . . . to the wonder of the meteor and its effects, then many journeys to strange places, surprising and sometimes scary adventures . . .

WEB

Seeing the world change so dramatically. Suddenly there were automobiles, and airplanes, and then space ships. Votes for women, World Wars, gay liberation, the internet.

ALEX

We gave lectures to younger people about gay matters, and, in private, even --- how shall I put this? --- “personal demonstrations.”

WEB playfully swats ALEX’s arm.

WEB

Alex!

ALEX

With select handsome strangers.

WEB
(Remembering)

Like Congressman Jonas Borg!

ALEX

And his hunky brother!

WEB

Stop! (Turning to LOGAN.) In any event, we ended up with *rules* for staying alive. We remain in the ghost state and have as much fun as we can. We're still great company with one another and we have our memories.

ALEX

Only if we have to – emergencies - do we go corporeal.

ALEX and WEB have almost forgotten that LOGAN is there, but suddenly become very aware of her, and look awkwardly in her direction.

LOGAN
(Quietly)

And I am an emergency.

WEB

Well, not at first, but . . . yes . . . eventually.

ALEX

Logan, sweetie, it broke our hearts to see what was happening to you.

WEB

I was dead set against intervening until the man I love made it crystal clear to me that we had no choice.

LOGAN

Even if it kills you both.

There is a long pause. WEB kneels by LOGAN and takes her hands, which startles her until she realizes what is happening.

WEB

We don't know what our limits are. We don't know if we have minutes, hours, days, or whatever, but we are certainly getting fainter and fainter.

ALEX

(At LOGAN's shoulder)

We don't know how we know, but we both *do* know that we don't have much time left.

WEB

More importantly, on a basic level, we also realize that our long story is almost over. After all these many years, like all mortal beings, our time – as they say - has come.

ALEX

So when you arrived, we talked frankly about it.

WEB

It wasn't even a long discussion, though there were tears of course. Alex is such a romantic.

ALEX

Me! Who carried me two miles through the snow after that motorcycle accident?

WEB

You were bleeding, and I told you you were too old to be riding a motorcycle!

ALEX

I was only 90!

LOGAN

Guys, guys! Let me be clear here. You decided to die helping me get out of this mess?

ALEX

That's a pretty stark way of putting it.

LOGAN

It's a pretty stark thing to do! Answer me! This is why you can't escape through the woods with me—you don't think you have enough life in you to make it!

WEB

(After a pause.)

Okay. That's more or less it.

LOGAN

(After another pause.)

I think I'm going to cry now.

ALEX

No, no! You don't understand! When you leave tonight we're going to celebrate!

LOGAN

Celebrate?

ALEX

Celebrate! You tell her, Web.

WEB
(Laughing)

Our heroic actions will have saved this amazing young woman from the villains who have her tied to the railroad tracks, and that will give our pathetic decaying lives a wonderful Hollywood ending as the heroes of our own exciting movie!

ALEX
We'll go out in glory, guns blazing, firing bullets into the sky.

LOGAN
(Almost crying)
Really?

WEB
Er . . . well, no.

LOGAN
No?

WEB
We actually have a bigger celebration planned for our final exit before they roll the credits. You tell her, Alex.

ALEX
(Clowning)
Ah, shucks, Reb. I'm too shy.

WEB
Then let a gentleman of the South put it to her in a mannerly way.

LOGAN
What are you talking about?

WEB
Logan, after you go out that door tonight to climb in your sister's car, just give us a wave to say thanks and we'll be happy to see whisked away into safety, leaving us to our plans.

ALEX
Big plans that involve our remaining visitors: Micah and Bethany.

WEB
After we carry those out the foresaid plans those villains will flee the premises and Alex and I will be left alone for the wonderful denouement.

ALEX

And it's a goodie!

LOGAN

Tell me!

WEB

We're going corporeal for the very last time. No more ghost crap.

ALEX

For as long as it lasts.

WEB

Starting with a joyful hug in celebration of your escape . . .

ALEX

And then food! I used to love food! (To WEB) Remember *food*?

WEB

We are the proud possessors of a bottle of wine that's been hidden in the cellar since the Prince of Monaco gave it to us in 1951.

ALEX

But best of all . . .

WEB

Oh, God, yes!

ALEX

Best of all begins when we climb those stairs to our carefully appointed bedroom!

WEB

The wine is already upstairs, hiding under the bed.

ALEX

Really?

WEB

(Smiling)

I put it there minutes ago.

LOGAN

Wait, wait! How am I going to escape? You can't do all this with Micah and Bethany watching, and Helen isn't coming to my rescue any more.

ALEX

That's easy. They're only watching *you*. One of us can lift one of their phones during the prayer session, call Helen, and put her back on schedule.

LOGAN

(Tearing up)

Oh, guys. You are too wonderful to believe! I'd hug you if I could! Thank you, thank you, thank you!!!

WEB

We love you, Logan.

ALEX

We love you, Logan.

LOGAN

I love you back! But how are you going to distract Micah and Bethany at the key moment so they don't see me sneaking out?

ALEX and WEB laugh.

ALEX

We have our ways. You'll be part of the show. You have lines to learn.

LOGAN

Lines? What do you mean lines?

WEB

Alex thought it all up. (He climbs on a chair and drums his chest as he makes his announcement.) *"ALEXANDER SMALL PRODUCTIONS PROUDLY PRESENTS 'HOMOPHOBES ON THE RUN!' NINE O'CLOCK TONIGHT!"*

The lights fade out.

The Scene has ended.

Scene Two

That evening a little before 9 p.m. LOGAN, MICAH and BETHANY are seated, and WEB is watching from the sidelines.

LOGAN

Here's the thing. If homosexuality is as bad as you both say, why would God have created it in the first place?

BETHANY

Oh, child! God didn't create it. The devil did.

LOGAN

The devil? I thought God was the creator of all things.

BETHANY

Well . . .

MICAH

No one creates it except the sinner. The sinner is sparked by the devil, the same as with murder, or theft, or blasphemy.

LOGAN

But those are all choices. No one *chooses* to be homosexual.

BETHANY

Yes, they do.

LOGAN

No, they don't. Some people, like you, who are really homosexual can choose a life of denial and be constantly miserable, but they still didn't choose to be homosexual. They chose the lie and the miserable life.

WEB

(To himself)

Well put.

MICAH

Of course it's a choice. The Bible refers to it as a choice.

LOGAN

At what age did you make that choice?

MICAH

Huh?

LOGAN

Surely you remember that big day - long ago - when you sat down with yourself and weighed the pros and cons of sexual desire for either women or men, and - after some thought - chose pussy.

WEB laughs.

BETHANY

Logan! That's awful!

LOGAN

What, Bethany? You don't remember choosing pussy but then pretending not to? You should have just chosen to be sexually attracted only to men. Say, why didn't you do that? It would have made your life so much easier.

MICAH

The devil is feeding you these hateful words.

LOGAN

The devil's male, right? I'm not into men. Is there a Mrs. Lucifer? What does she look like? Is she hot?

BETHANY

This has got to stop.

MICAH kneels on both knees and places a hand on LOGAN's shoulder.

MICAH

Logan, Logan, don't surrender to this evil! Look into your heart and find the healing words of God, and the balm of his blessing.

LOGAN

Is this the same God who thinks it's okay to kidnap 16 year old girls, put them in ropes and chains, strap electrocution collars around their necks, and torture them with semi-lucid religious nonsense for days?

BETHANY

(Angry)

Oh, it's easy for you to twist our words and make us sound bad.

LOGAN

It sure is.

MICAH

(Stands and takes off his belt)

That's it! I'm in charge here.

WEB

(To LOGAN, in her ear.)

It's time. Alex is ready and the electric fence is off. Helen is in her car outside, waiting for you. Let him have it.

LOGAN

(Standing, in command suddenly, her voice very different)

No. You're not in charge!

MICAH raises his belt threateningly.

MICAH

What did you say?

BETHANY

Logan!

LOGAN

You're not in charge. I am. It's my life.

WEB yanks Micah's belt away from him and throws it across the room, where it hits the wall with a thud. BETHANY screams. MICAH looks around wildly.

MICAH

Hey! How . . . ?

LOGAN
(Calm, confident, a ruling)

Micah Janson, you have been judged by the spirits of this place and found unworthy of life.

MICAH
(Incredulous)

Of *LIFE*???

WEB pushes MICAH violently onto the sofa.

How? How?

MICAH

LOGAN

Bethany Frost, you are an accomplice in this crime against decency and human kindness. Join your co-conspirator on the judgment seat.

BETHANY

What do you mean? Logan, please . . .

LOGAN

Do it or I'll pick you up and throw you there!

BETHANY sits hurriedly.

MICAH

This is nonsense.

MICAH starts to rise and WEB punches him in the stomach. He collapses back onto the sofa, where BETHANY hugs him protectively.

LOGAN

Speak no more if you ever expect to speak again. (To BETHANY) Bethany, you too. Both be quiet. Listen!

LOGAN begins to pace, getting more and more agitated as she talks.

LOGAN

When I first arrived I was both angry and terrified, but that very night when I laid down to sleep a voice said to me:

LOGAN waves her hand and WEB speaks in a mysterious voice that all can hear.

WEB

Fear these captors no more, child. The True People are your protectors while you're on their sacred land.

LOGAN

(As if reliving the event.)

The "True People"? Who are they? Who are you? I can't see you.

WEB

Since the beginning of time, in this very place, the Great Turkey has given power over it to the True People who are its inhabitants then and now. This is our paradise, and we have dominion here.

LOGAN

(As if suspicious)

The Great Turkey?

WEB

Yes. He has given us his birds to sustain us in these woods, and we worship him in the name of these creatures.

MICAH holds his stomach.

MICAH

I'm going to be sick.

LOGAN

(Indicating BETHANY)

Vomit on her.

BETHANY, shocked, distances herself on the sofa from MICAH, who groans.

WEB

If these evil intruders persist in violating you . . .

BETHANY is now even more shocked.

BETHANY

Violating?

WEB

Harming your personhood---the essence the Great Turkey gives to us all. These two people shall be put to the Test of the Wilderness!

MICAH
(Weakly)

What?

BETHANY

What test? The *Wilderness*?

WEB

But first, you child, must meet with the Great Turkey yourself and plead that they should be allowed to take the test.

LOGAN
(Defiantly)

And if I refuse?

WEB

They will be executed at once!

Right next to their ears, WEB claps his hands loudly. MICAH and BETHANY jump.

MICAH

No! No!

BETHANY

Logan, please! Help us! PLEASE! (She turns to MICAH) We're so sorry, aren't we, Micah? Tell her!

MICAH

(A decision. He nods,)

Yes, please.

WEB

(Overriding him.)

What is your decision, child?

LOGAN

(As if in great doubt,)

Well . . .

BETHANY

(Soft, almost a prayer)

Please!

LOGAN

(Looking at them)

Like many people who do evil they thought they were doing good. All right! Let them live!

BETHANY

Oh, thank you!

MICAH

(Almost at the same time, mumbling.)

Thank you.

WEB

Logan Hendricks, I shall convey you to the Great Turkey at once. These people shall stay here and wait to hear their fate.

MICAH

(Barely able to speak.)

How will we know?

BETHANY

Yes, how?

WEB

The Messenger will appear to you and announce the decision—death or the Test of the Wilderness!

BETHANY

The Messenger?

MICAH

What's the Test of the Wilderness?

WEB

(Thundering)

Quiet! (To LOGAN) Child, are you ready to help the Great Turkey decide their fate?

LOGAN

Yes, carry me to him.

WEB

We go!

WEB sweeps LOGAN up in his arms and it looks like she is flying as they go out the front door, which mysteriously opens as they near it and then slams shut when they exit. There is a pause while MICAH and BETHANY look around.

BETHANY

Are we alone?

MICAH

I don't know.

BETHANY

That awful voice said there would be a messenger.

MICAH

(Regaining his confidence)

What I can't understand is . . .

We hear a crash of cymbals. The front door opens suddenly and ALEX, dressed as the Messenger, appears. He throws powder into the air as he enters

to create a mist to walk through, and a light hits him as he emerges from it, singing in a strange voice:

ALEX
[Dancing wildly]

Zykey Aland Alee!
Zykey Aland Alee!
Future murky, retribution, comes the turkey, execution!
Oooooooooohhhh!
Zykey Aland Alee!

[The cymbals crash again and he hovers over them, intoning loudly]

MICAH DONALD JANSON, BETHANY ANN FROST: I bring the condemned word from the Great Turkey! Your emissary has spoken and your fate decided!

BETHANY screams.

MICAH

What is it?

ALEX

Know that your actions here have exposed you as people of dark hearts in the eyes of all humankind.

BETHANY

Oh!

ALEX

People of dark hearts are not fit to live among clean people. The Great Turkey has decided on your immediate elimination.

MICAH

No!

BETHANY screams.

ALEX

But the child has an eloquent tongue and, appealing to the Great Turkey's boundless reservoir of mercy, begged that you be given one last chance.

BETHANY

Yes!

MICAH

Thank God!

ALEX
(Sternly)

Thank the Great Turkey and the girl! You must immediately undergo the Test of the Wilderness!

MICAH

What is it?

ALEX

The object that makes your vehicle gain power has been destroyed.

BETHANY

The keys to the van?

MICAH
(Feeling his pockets)

They're not in my pocket!

ALEX

When I give the signal you must go out that portal. (He points to the front door.) You must plunge immediately into the thicket on the right and start running through the Wilderness. You must not stop. You must not rest. You must run, and run, and run.

MICAH

Run?

ALEX

You will be immediately pursued by the True People, and, if they catch you they will drag you to the Great Turkey for elimination. You will hear the True People coming for you, gaining on you, as you run. They know the Wilderness and you don't.

BETHANY

No!

ALEX

You do have this one chance. If your flight is quick enough and you escape the True People so as to emerge from the Wilderness, you may live and perhaps be better persons thereafter.

BETHANY
(Tentatively holding up her hand)

May I put on sneakers?

ALEX
(Thundering again)

NO! When I say "RUN" go and never return to the land of the True People.

MICAH

But, wait . . .

ALEX
(Screams)

GO NOW!!!

MICAH and BETHANY bolt out the open door.
WEB closes it after them as he comes in, and then
claps his hands.

WEB
Bravo, bravo, my showman! Zykey Aland Alee! (He bows to him.) Your production,
your performance, Logan's escape to Cincinnati, it all went brilliantly!

They whoop with laughter and hug each other.
ALEX removes his costume.

ALEX
She got in the car with Helen?

WEB
And they waved as they drove off.

ALEX
You think Helen will be able to get that collar off Logan's neck?

WEB
(Smiling)

Oh, yes. Turns out Helen's a surgeon.

WEB and ALEX laugh, and then they pause and look at each other.

ALEX

So . . . I guess we did it.

WEB

What do you think Micah and Bethany are going through now?

WEB and ALEX laugh again.

ALEX

Stumbling through the dark, terrorized by thoughts of the GT, perhaps hearing gobbling all around them, every strange noise a pursuer.

WEB

Well, we both know an angry turkey can be fierce, very, very fierce.

ALEX

Damn right. Benjamin Franklin wanted it as the national bird. He dismissed the bald eagle a mere raptor.

WEB

Logan pressed a note into my hand as she got into the car. She kissed me too.

WEB pulls the note from a pocket.

ALEX

Have you read it?

WEB

Nope. Sit. We'll read it together.

(They sit and he reads and at some point we hear her voice taking over—the love song music begins to play.)

“I don’t know how to phrase this. How do you say thank you to the most wonderful people on the planet, two men you only knew briefly before they heroically sacrificed themselves to save you? What I *can* say is this: *somehow, someday*, I’m going to find a way to tell your story. No one will believe me, but I’ll do it anyway. I’ll certainly tell the story to my children. In the meantime, know that every day of my life, including on my deathbed when I’m very old, I will think back to this night, and treasure having experienced the wonderfulness of Alexander Small and Webster Carter. With all my love, Your Logan.”

ALEX and WEB both have trouble speaking.

ALEX

Well, that’s some message.

WEB

Yup.

ALEX

But she’s right. We can be very, very proud of ourselves.

WEB

Yup.

ALEX

I’m particularly proud of you.

WEB

(Surprised)

Me?

ALEX

When I saw the mess Logan was in and challenged you—in spite of our rules—to get *involved*, help her, you didn’t hesitate. Knowing what it would mean, you said “Let’s do it.” (Chokes up.) I was so proud. I’ve never loved you more.

WEB rises and holds out his hand. He stands at the foot of the steps, one foot on the first step.

WEB

How about we skip that lavish dinner we’d planned and jump right to climbing these stairs for one last great adventure?

ALEX takes WEB's hand.

ALEX

Okay, Reb. One last great adventure! Let's make 1865 look like amateur hour!

WEB

(As they climb the stairs.)

Amateur hour? You got it, Yank!

As they disappear up the stairs the music playing
their song takes over.

The lights fade out.

The play has ended.

PRODUCTION NOTES

At the end of Act One Web is requested to sing. If the actor playing Web actually knows how to play a guitar, please change the spoken dialogue to the following:

WEB

No. I haven't touched my guitar in years.

LOGAN

Just for me!

ALEX

Come on, Web. I can fetch it easily. Be right back. (He leaves the room.)

LOGAN

Perfect ending to the strangest day of my life. A love song with mysterious men to perform it for me.

WEB

I first sang it to Alex on the anniversary of our coming here. But that was done a cappella. I didn't learn to play the guitar until Woodstock.

LOGAN

(As Alex returns with the guitar)

What's Woodstock?

ALEX

(Handing the guitar to WEB)

Our hippy period. (Makes a "V" with his fingers.) Peace, man!

WEB

Pretend it's 1866 and we're crazy in love twenty-year olds. Come here, Alex. (He sits on the table and ALEX in the chair next to him.)

I DREAMED OF YOU
BEFORE WE MET
AND WHEN WE MET
I KNEW . . . (etc.)

SOUND EFFECTS

A car pulls up outside and then a door slams
Music when Alex and Web appear or disappear. Lights should also change.
A crash of cymbals

COSTUMING

ALEX as THE MESSINGER: His costume should be other-worldly, but not cheap, nor ridiculous or campy. It must suggest something truly spooky.

MUSIC

The sheet music for “I Dreamed of You” and “Zykee Aland Alee” are printed below, and vocal recorded renditions of the first song with vocal as well as instrumental guitar versions of it for use at the beginning of the show and at the end of Act Two and during the curtain call are available.

I DREAMED OF YOU

C G C G C G7 C C G

Web I dreamed of you be - fore we met and when we met I knew You're the one: my

Alex

7 Em G7 C G7 C C F Dm G C G

Web star, my sun, my or - bit cir - cles you. Now we trav - el life a pair: lov - ers part - ners

Alex

13 C C G C G C Dm G F

Web friends. I dreamed of you be - fore we met and this is how - oh Al - ex, wow!

Alex I dreamed of you be - fore we met and this is how

18 C G7 C

Web This is how it ends!

Alex This is how it ends!

Zykee Aland Alee

Douglas Whaley



Musical staff 1: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, followed by a half note G4. The lyrics are: Zy - kee A - land A - lee! Zy - kee A - land A - lee!_____



Musical staff 2: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, followed by a half note G4. The lyrics are: Fu - ture mur - ky, ret - ri - bu - tion, comes the tur - key ex - e - cu - tion



Musical staff 3: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The melody starts with a long note on G4, followed by a half note on G4. The lyrics are: (Ooooooh ad lib ----) Ooooooh_____ Zy - kee A - land



Musical staff 4: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. The melody consists of a half note on G4, followed by a half note on G4. The lyrics are: A - lee!_____

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