

# Behind a Wall

By James Searles

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## DIRECTIONS FOR STAGING

**SET DESIGN** One-half of the stage remains stage. The other half the stage is Jill's apartment. The lighting switches from one side to the other as the scene changes from theater to apartment. To do the street scene in front of the theater, use PVC 1.5 inch pipes. Fasten them in an X at the bottom with caps on the end. Put a ten foot section in the center. At the top put a T connection. Place two foot pipes in each end. Hang a "Broadway Street" sign on each side. Make two more Xs with 10 ft high pipes in the center. Using T connections, connect the two pipes with a four foot pipe. Hang a sign from the four foot section labeled: "Theater Entrance"

In the last act, the apartment becomes the funeral home. The theater entrance sign now is labeled "funeral home" Make a coffin out of foam core to go on a table already on set. A table cloth goes over the table.

**Costumes:** To get minimum "dark" time during scene changes, the actors change pull over shirts or sweaters.

**ACTORS** If you are short on cast, one actor can play different parts.

## STREET IN FRONT OF THEATER

*The stage is semi-dark. We can see three people on stage.*

**1<sup>st</sup> VOICE** (*male*) We have a wall to keep people away.

**2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE** (*female*) Do we ever really know some one else?

**1<sup>st</sup> + 2<sup>nd</sup> VOICE** Who are we? Where do we fit in? (*they walk off the stage*)

*Lights up. On stage we see a group of people very quietly talking to each other.*

*A paper boy walks onto the street*

**PAPER BOY** (*holding newspaper in hand. Stack of papers next to him*) Paper. Paper. Get your paper here.

*Joe starts to walk down the street past the paper boy.*

**PAPERBOY** *(on the street yells)* Hey, Joe. Buy a paper?

**JOE** Not today. Broke.

*Joe sees two guys walking past, holding hands.*

**JOE** *(yells)* You're going to go to Hell. God hates fags.

*Joe goes into the theater.*

*Next to head into the theater is Jill.*

**PAPERBOY** Hey, lady. How about a paper?

**JILL** I'm so broke I can't even afford a burger.

**PAPERBOY** Got a deal. Buy you a burger.

**JILL** What do I have to do?

**PAPERBOY** All the guys are on my case 'cuz I don't have a girl.

*Paperboy sees guys coming*

**PAPERBOY** Pretend that you're my girl.

**Jill** *(laughing)* I can't do that.

**PAPERBOY** They'll never know.

**JILL** You're on.

*Jill holds the paperboy's hand as the guys walk past.*

**GUY** *(one of the guys walking past)* Check that out! Looking hot. How does he rate?

*After they leave, Jill and the paperboy start to laugh. Off she heads into the theater.*

*Jack heads towards the theater. Sees a man walking past the theater*

**JACK** See you tonight?

**GUY** Sorry. Found another.

**JACK** I thought that you loved me!

**GUY** Perhaps if you had bent a little. Met me halfway. Forget it.

*Guy walks away.*

*Jack goes into the theater.*

*Lights down, set stage. Lights up*

## **THEATER STAGE**

*John, the director for the play walks on stage. A director's chair in the center aisle. Joe, Jack, Jill and a number of other actors are taking very quietly in the back of the stage.*

**JOHN** *(looks around. A reporter goes over to interview him)*

**REPORTER** I'm from the Daily News. Got time for an interview?

**JOHN** Make it quick. I've got to finish the casting call for *Get to Know Life*

**REPORTER** I'm hearing stories about wild sex at the theatre. Care to comment?

**JOHN** You are asking about things that actors really don't want to talk about. If you asked me about my life, I would not go into detail with you. You may think people are open; but most won't tell you everything. Ask them if they ever shoplifted. Ask them if they take drugs. Ask them if they have sex with multiple partners. Ask them if they always have safe sex. Ask them lots of personal questions, and they may not want to tell you the truth. Some will lie. Ask them if they're homosexual. Some have deep quilt feelings they won't discuss. Many knew they were gay from very young on. Those are stories also !!!!

What if you had feelings for a childhood friend, or a teacher of the same sex. But, there is still a story there.....they did not tell anyone till they were an adult. An actor got married, and hide it from his family and friends....and come out later in life---causing divorce. What if you had sexual problems - because of having secret feelings of desire you can't suppress. I went into the service - got kicked out for having sex with Joey. Great body! There are gay performers who hate their lifestyle, and want to act on stage as straight---or to the public as straight. Many and most actors go onstage because they did not get enough love as a child, and need that applause and attention - or they can't be happy.

So, there are many stories out there, but many people won't tell them.....as they are ashamed. All are stories I have read about, and known people who lived them.

The problem is not getting to know you. It's how to say goodbye. Move on.

**REPORTER** Wow! Great story. Thanks for the interview. *(walks off stage)*

*George turns to face the actors at the back of the stage*

**JOHN** OK everybody. Last monolog. As I call your names step to stage center. Read the pages that I handed out from the script.

**JOHN** Jim and Bill please read together.

**BILL** I'll sue the Enquirer. Look at it.

**JIM** How am I supposed to do that if you keep starring at the article? Let me see it.

*Ben hands Jim a copy of the Enquirer*

**JIM** (*opens the Enquirer*) Hey! Now that's a story. (*starts to read from the article*) Kim Drops Ben. Sues for Divorce. Red hot sexy Ben's hunk body never connected with Kim. Only one Problem. He was strutting it for Ralph. Look. They got a picture of you with your arm around Ralph.

**BEN** Bloody bastards. That was a photo op. Ralph is my sidekick in the *The Lost Sam*. We're supposed to be best friends in the movie. Look. I've got to fight back. I bet that Kim gave them the photo. (*forte*) The girls love me! (*a tempo*) Not if they think that I'm gay. Hollywood doesn't cast a gay as the hero saving the world. It would cut box.

**JIM** Can I put my arm around you? (*puts his arm around Ben*)

**BILL** Hey! (*looking at John*) That's not in the script. You're not funny.....(*looks around*) later

**JOHN** You're up next Judy

**JUDY** I don't really know how to get to know you. I can't get past your wall of hurt. People hold hands. People kiss. Is that wrong? If I kiss Tracy am I damned? Worse yet. What if she's not a good kisser? Not everybody's a good kisser. I better think it over again. Most of the people I know are in theatre. Even the young rock musicians are so nice - awesome. I love their different colored hair, their tattoos - the great makeup. I want to be free-spirited just like them. I want to stay young. But I see that people grow old and lonely so fast. So, I want to be like Peter Pan, and just put some pixie dust on all my friends--and let them live forever young. Is that so wrong? Why wouldn't Mary let me in?

**JOHN** Next, Joe

**JOE** I love the theatre - the applause. I live for that applause. I couldn't wait to get out of school, and the Army. I was going to be the next John Travolta. I was hot! I started hanging around show-biz types. I also tried to get an agent. Now, I was really doing all this to get the girls. The more girls the better. But, I kept getting hit on by guys. Even close male friends in my acting classes would go both ways after a few drinks. One of my close buddies said he would do anything to anyone to get the part, and be a star!!! Well one night after a couple of joints and two six packs of beer he started fooling around. The fooling around turned to screwing around. That twist of fate. It changed my life. Who am I?

**JOHN** Next up

**JACK** I was cast as Dracula. So, thinking every thing is cool, for six months I am doing other shows thinking I have this show coming up. I better get ready and start forming ideas on how I will do this part. I watched every Bela Lugosi video. By the end of six months, I was slithering in shadows at night. My show closed last night. It was a frustrating show, and a difficult cast. I am so happy to be going on vacation soon, and then starting *Dracula*. Six weeks before rehearsals Dave tells me someone else has the part. Nice! It killed me! It was going to be my turn. *(lightly)* Oh well shit happens.

**JOHN** OK Jill You're last up.

**JILL** No one ever got to really know my Mom. They thought that she was wonderful. She was on every committee in town. She always had time for everyone one - - - except me.... I always got tucked in at night. Read a bedtime story. Kissed goodnight. The baby sitter kissed me goodnight...Mommy was never there and I needed her. *(each Mommy is louder)* Mommy. Mommy. Mommy! *(forte)* *(throws her hands in the air)* Can you hear the applause? *(fff, anguish)* They love me Mommy. *(a tempo)* At the theater they love me. The love I never got at.....*(worried)* I can't let anyone know that. I can't let anyone know that I hurt. I'll hid it. That's what I'll do. It's safer if you don't let anyone get to know you.

**JOHN** Jill, Jack and Joe. You've got the parts. Get the dates, time for rehearsals from the board. We've got six weeks to pull this play together. The rest of you, thank you for coming

*Actress who did not get the part on the way out:*

**JUDY** I'm getting out of show biz. I've got a teaching degree.

**BILL** Life sucks!

*The director picks up the chair; leaves the scene.*

*Only the three – Jill, Jack and Joe are left on stage. All hug each other happy to get the parts.*

**JILL** Now I've got money for rent.

**JACK** I still can't afford my apartment.

**JOE** Neither can I.

**JILL** Why not move in with me? We're all broke. Three splitting rent is better than starvation.

**JOE** It's a deal.

**JACK** I'm in.

**JOE** I'm going to work a bit on lines. Catch you later.

*Jill & Jack leave the theater.*

*Elaine enters the theater. She has a clipboard, papers.*

**ELAINE** Hi. Heard you got the part. I'm Mark's set designer.

**JOE** Who's Mark?

**ELAINE** He's the producer. Calls the shots.

*Mark walks on stage. Mark is one of the gays who Joe was screaming at outside the theater. Mark walks to the front of the stage. Faces the audience*

**MARK** These young people want to go into the theatre. My heart bleeds for them. This is such a difficult profession. Most of them won't ever get famous. Many will not make enough money to live on. They know that it is only luck! It is that lucky break of being in the right place at the right time. Then it is having the talent to succeed when you get that break. Many get sitcoms, movie roles, and theatre parts on Broadway. One bad review, one cancelled TV show, or one box office failure can put them back at the bottom of the talent pool. Once you have had exposure on TV or Movies, you can't even get hired as a waitress, or bartender. Why? Because you have been seen on TV or Screen, and you are a failure. So, once you get that big break....you better be prepared.

*Elaine walks over to Mark*

**ELAINE** Good thing that I caught up with you. I want to go over the set design for act two.

*Mark and Joe spot each other. Mark looks caught off guard. Joe looks in a bit of panic.*

**MARK** So, you got the part.

**JOE** Look, I'm sorry. I really need the part.

**MARK** The director said that you have talent. Screw up again . . .

*With that, he makes a cutting move with his hand across his throat. Turns to Elaine.*

**MARK** Elaine. Let's go over that set design

*With that, Mark & Elaine walk off the stage.*

**JOE** (*facing the audience*) OK.....Life just is not going to be very logical.

*Lights down, reset stage, lights up*

**APARTMENT**

*Jill is already in the apartment. Joe & Jack walk into the apartment, each with a suitcase.*

**JILL** Well. How do you like the apartment? Your bedroom is over there. I get the walk-in closet. You guys get the small closet.

**JACK** That doesn't sound right.

**JILL** Sure does. I've got more stuff than you guys. I've got a screenplay of Jill Sunshine rules. I get the bathroom first thing in the morning.

**JOE** Great. We'll never see it again.

*Jill glares at Joe*

**JILL** Just a few more house rules...Drinking out of the milk carton is disgusting. If you finish the milk, don't put the container back in the fridge. If you eat in the kitchen, don't leave crumbs all over the counter. My last roommate chopped onions for his supper. Next morning I walked through the kitchen. Did you ever walk over chopped onions in your bare feet? If you chop onions, I better not find any on the floor. Put the toilet lid down when you're finished. Try to hit the bowl. Ice cube trays don't produce ice on their own. You have to fill them. Is it really that hard to fill an ice cube tray with water? If you make the dish, wash the dish. I don't wash your dishes. No wet towels left on the bathroom floor. I get to control the remote half the time. Football is *(exclamation)* yucky! Desperate Housewives is good. Clothes are to be kept in the closet, not thrown on the floor. Contrary to popular opinion, girls are not meant to run errands for guys. This is neutral territory. My bedroom means just that. No smoking.

**JACK** *(loud)* No smoking. This screenplay needs a rewrite.

**JILL** *(says in a very determined voice)* Tough.

**JACK** We'll make it fair and square. You do the cooking. We watch football games.

**JILL** Fair enough. Both of you can take turns doing the dishes. I'll leave you a list of how I want my laundry done.

**JACK & JOE** *(loud)* What!

**JOE** OK. I'll help cook. But you're going to have to teach me how.

**JILL** Your Mom never taught you how to cook?

**JOE** We had a good relationship. She loved to cook. I loved to eat. What could be better than that?

**JILL** I've got an early call. *(on a cheery note)* See you tomorrow! I'll be out of the bathroom in less than an hour. Bedtime for me.

**JOE & JACK** (loud) An hour!

*Jill walks off the stage.*

**JOE** Check it out. All the walls in the bedroom are pink.

**JACK** How could I miss it. Yuk!

**JOE** We'll paint over it some afternoon.

**JACK** She'll never notice.

*Lights down. Some one in the dark fires up the CD player. Lights up. Jack is on stage dancing. He is wearing just a pair of jeans. The rest of his clothes are scattered about the floor. Jill walks back on the stage wearing a house coat. She has a big towel hanging around her neck.*

**JILL** (somewhat irritated) OK. What's with the music?

**JACK** Before I got into the theater I was a stripper in a bar. I dance at night to keep in shape. *(he starts to dance again)*

*Jill walks over. She grabs each end of the towel. Flips the towel around Jack's head. Pulls the ends across.*

**JILL** (rather loud) How'd you like the towel tied around your neck - real tight!

**JACK** You make a very convincing argument.

**JILL** Men! Ug!

*Jill exits the stage.*

**JACK** (with a wicked grin) Tomorrow night, I dance without the pants!

*Lights down, pause, Jill is center stage, hit with spot*

**JILL** I was thirteen. Everything was so big and so important and so over the top. The strap broke on my favorite pair of shoes. I tried to tell Mom that I just could not go to school that day. It was tragic.

I was determined to be in the movies – hid gossip magazines under the mattress. Cut out photos.....pasted them all over the walls in my room. I hid them in school folders... found them falling out of text books. Mom just rolled her eyes as I headed out the door tap dancing - off to dance lessons. In the morning I would run to the mirror. Still flat. How am I ever going to be a star? I got a part in a play at the Gaiety Theatre. So it was only two minutes on stage. I was on my way. After a rehearsal I got a message to report to the director's office. Wow! He noticed me. His secretary told me to go right in. Then whispered "look out for him." I walked right in. I was going to get a bigger part. There he was sitting behind the desk. He said to close the door. "I want to go over your part" He stood up. Only one problem. No pants on. I started to giggle. Blurted out

“it looks like a bald mouse. Mom uses D-Con to kill things like that.” He turned red. “Get out”...Never did get the bigger part.

*spot down, slight pause, lights up*

## APARTMENT

*Joe and Jack are in the apartment. Jill walks onto the stage carrying a bowl with traces of whipped cream in it.*

**JILL** OK. Who ate it?

**Jack** That would be me. Found in *(emphasis the word my)* my section of the refrigerator. Tasty.

**JILL** Lets go over the refrigerator rules again. I get the top half. The rest is yours.

**JOE** That still doesn't sound right.

**JILL** It's simple math. There's three of us. So I split it up fair and square. Half for the girls. Half for the guys. Want to know what was in the tasty little dessert?

**JACK** I'm not sure that I want to hear about it

**JILL** That was my new facial beauty cream. Take two cups of heavy cream. Whip. Stir in one cup of chopped dried Somalia Beetles.

**JACK** I thought those were chocolates and nuts. I'm going to be sick *(runs out of the room holding his mouth)*

*Lights down*

## APARTMENT

*Lights up. Joe & Jack are sitting in a chair watching. Both are drinking a beer. Several empty beer bottles are turned on the side next to each. The small TV is on a stand. The audience can hear sounds of a football game. Tech – run the TV from the studio rack*

**JOE** *(loud)* All right. Way to Go.

**JACK** Screwed. I'm going to loose the football pool.

*Jill walks into the apartment. Turns off the TV. Stands in front of the TV.*

**JACK** Hey. Turn it back on. Did ya loose a few marbles?

**JILL** You guys are in so much trouble. *(loud, she had her hands on her hips)* Who re-painted the bedroom?

**JACK & JOE** *(each point at the other)* He did!

**JILL** That's it. Penalty. (she throws a red handkerchief on the floor) Flag on the field. No football. (she pulls a chair over to the front of the TV. Starts to read a magazine)

**JOE** What's going to cost to get us out of this one?

**JILL** (stands up) Glad you asked. You guys have to get the groceries for a month. I'll write up the grocery list.

**JOE & JACK.** (happy to get off easy) Deal

**JILL** Good. When you go to the grocery store tomorrow, pick me up a box of Tampex Pearl Regular unscented.

**JOE** That's too hard.

**JACK** Please. Not that.

**JILL** (picks up the red handkerchief, with a wicked grin) Enjoy the football game. (walks off the stage)

**JACK** Aren't the guys supposed to win?

**JOE** Right! Tomorrow we fix her wagon at the theater.

*lights down*

## THEATER

*lights up, The grip walks to the side of the theater. Puts up a 4 x 5 ft poster. In 6 inch letters the name of the play **Getting to Know You**. Under that line in 6 inch letters **Starring**. Next line in 6 inch letters **Jill Sunshine**. Under that line in 2 inch print **Also Appearing: Joe Grimble & Jack Roberts**. A man & a little girl walk in front of the theater.*

**KAYLEE** Look daddy. There's Uncle Jack's name on the poster. I want to meet him. Maybe he can get me a back stage pass.

**JOSH** Not today honey.

**KAYLEE** Why not now?

**JOSH** When you get a little bigger I'll explain.

**KAYLEE** You always say that.

**JOSH** Come on kid. We're going to be late for lunch (they exit the stage)

*(The light go up now on the theater space) Mark and Elaine are talking to each other. Joe & Jack are on the side of the stage talking to each other.*

*A grip brings a 2K light down the ramp to the stage. At the same time a carpenter brings several boards onto the stage. The Grip, Carpenter talk at the same time.*

**GRIP** *(puts the light at the rear of the stage, yells)* Is this OK?

**CARPENTER** *(to no one in particular)* Never going to get the set done for opening.

**GRIP** Test one lights stage right. *(lights on stage right go on)* OK. Test on lights stage left *(lights on stage left go on)*. That wouldn't work. Try just taking up the leco with the GOBO. *(leco with GOBO by itself goes on)*. Great. Take it down *(leco goes off)*

*At the same time the carpenter takes a measurement. Saws off part of the board.*

**GRIP** Just look at how big the theater is *(points to the chairs)* All those chairs. Who will buy? *holds the last word – buy - until the last person speaks. Puts his right arm forward. Each person follows the next tightly with volume increasing as each joins in)*

**CARPTNER** Who will buy *(holds the word buy. Puts his right arm forward)*

**JOE & JACK** Who will buy? *(same thing. hold buy,)*

**ELAINE & MARK** Who will buy *(short hold, then all cut)*

*The carpenter and the grip leave the stage. Joe and jack go back to quiet conversation as they exit. Jill enters the stage as they exit carrying a newspaper*

**JILL** *(bounces onto the stage and holds up both arms, loud)* Everyone will buy. They're going to love me!

*Groans from Joe and Mark*

**MARK** *(looking at Elaine)* The show's about to break and I can't get any PR.

*Jill walks over to John and Elaine.*

**JILL** My part needs a little rewrite

**GRIP** Who's that?

**JOE** The theater smart ass.

**JACK** Looks like trouble with a capital *(he spells out)* G-I-R-L.

**MARK** And why should I re-write your part?

**JILL** Because I'm little Jill Sunshine; the girl that could melt a man right on the spot. See. Right here in today's paper.

*Jill hands Jack the newspaper. He turns to the variety section.*

**JOHN** Holy smoke! Wait a minute. The article and pictures are all about you and the play only got two lines. Hey, Joe. Jack. Come on over. You have to hear this.

*Joe and Jack walk over*

**MARK** (*reading from the paper*) "Little Jill Sunshine can melt a man right on the spot." How did you ever get a half-page story?

**ELAINE** I might have convinced the reporter that he wanted to do a story. We set him up. When he came.....

**JILL** Elaine was helping me get dressed for the rehearsal. I was wearing my pink bra. I asked him if he thought that would work for the scene.

**ELAINE** I said that the black bra would work better.

**JILL** So I changed into the black bra. Then I got mixed up. So I held the black bra in my right hand (*with that her right hand goes up in the air*) and I held the pink bra in my left hand (*her left hand goes up in the air*) Then I asked him which he liked better. The right one or the left one.

**ELAINE** I think that he started to stammer. Real panic attack. He practically bolted out the door.

**JILL** So. I get a rewrite and Elaine gets a raise.

**MARK** Of all the sneaky tricks. NO!

**JILL** We'll just go across the street

**ELAINE** To the other theater. Did I mention the next story coming up?

*Mark looks rather dismayed.*

**MARK** OK. OK.

*Jill and Elaine leave the stage. Lights down.*

**JOE** (*rather frustrated*) That's not right.

## THEATER

*The scene is set in the theater. Lights up. Mark is pacing the stage floor. Joe and Jack are the on side of the stage quietly talking, the audience can not heard them until Mark finishes his opening lines).*

**MARK** (*sounding upset*) Where is she? Where is she? (*paces from side to side on the stage. stops*) I don't believe this is happening (*paces*) Where is she? She's worse than the phantom of the opera. (*sarcastic*) At least he sent a note (*continues to pace the stage*)

**JOE** I think that she got stuck in the tub

**JACK** What does the bathroom look like?

**JOE** A toxic waste dump. I had to use it. I waited until she wandered into the kitchen to get a soda, face all covered with mud. *(at this point he starts to act out and point out what the bathroom looked like)* Scary! Steam was everywhere from the tub. She had a tele on a stool with a soap opera on. The space heater was running to keep her rump toasty warm. She had curling irons warming up and a hair dryer on the counter. Her perfumed bath salts would kill a mouse.

**JACK** Actually trying to get her out of apartment was even worse.

*(both now try to mimic her actions as she was trying to leave the apartment)*

**JOE** *(in a feminine voice)* Where is my purse?

**JACK** *(in a feminine voice)* And where are my gloves?

**JOE** *(feminine voice)* I forgot to finish brushing my hair. I'll be right back

**JACK** *(feminine voice)* Oh no. I've got a run in my hose. Be right back.

**JOE** *(feminine voice)* Does this dress make me look fat?

**JACK** *(masculine voice)* You blew that blabber mouth. You had to smart off and say that you thought that she looked smashing in the blue dress.

**JOE** *(masculine voice)* How was I supposed to know that she would

**JACK** *(feminine voice)* Be right back.....after I change my dress

*The grip, Elaine and the carpenter run onto the stage over to Mark.*

**Grip** Hurry! You've got to see it.

**Carpenter** Never saw anything like it before

**MARK** What's the problem?

**ELAINE** There's a line two blocks long waiting to see the show. Jill's outside surrounded by the press signing autographs. The crowd is chanting her name.

**ELAINE, CARPENTER, GRIP, JOE, JACK, MARK** *(all together facing the audience, loud)* Oh no! We're doomed!

*lights downs*

## APARTMENT

*Jill is working a crossword puzzle. Jack is reading a script.*

**JILL** *(looks up from her crossword book)* Got the screenplay blocked in?

**JACK** I've got a hard time getting a feel for the character. Can you help me read the script tomorrow?

**JILL** Only if you help me with me with my crossword puzzle. Four across. What's the first name of the guy in Garfield that has no clue on how to coordinate an outfit?

**JACK** Joe *(both start to laugh)*

*Joe enters the apartment,*

**JOE** I got a date with that hot number in the choir's line.

**JACK** How'd you do that? Pay her?

**JOE** Hey, I'm hot stuff. *(looks at his watch)* Oh no! I'm late. Got to pick her up in a half hour. Got to make myself beautiful.

**JILL** *(sarcastic)* Like that's going to happen.

*Joe runs off the stage.*

**JILL** Now there's a guy for the wastebasket.

*Joe runs back on the stage*

**JOE** Hey Joe Can I borrow your sport coat?

**JACK** Sure

*Joe runs off stage. Jill & Jack go back to their crossword puzzle, script. In about 30 seconds Joe runs back on the stage.*

**JOE** I'm kind of broke. Can I borrow a hundred?

**JILL** Count me out.

**JACK** Sure *(gives him the money)*

*Joe runs off the stage. Returns in 30 seconds.*

**JOE** Can I borrow a clean pair of socks. Forgot to do Laundry.

**JACK** Sure. While you're at it borrow one of my shirts. That combination. No way.

**JOE** And what's wrong with my shirt and tie combination?

**JILL** Everything! Wear his pale blue shirt and blue tie. Matches with the sport coat that you borrowed.

**JOE** Great. Thanks!

*Joe runs off stage. Returns about 30 seconds later.*

**JACK.** My car wouldn't start. Can I borrow your car?

**JACK.** I don't suppose that has anything to do with your coming home trashed last night. Parking it half way into the garbage can. (*shakes his head*) Here's the keys.

*Joe runs off the stage. Seconds later he runs back on the stage*

**JOE** Jill. If a guy was in trouble. Would you help him?

**JILL** Depends

**JOE** I told her that I was bringing flowers. It's too late for me to stop for flowers. Can I have those flowers that you got last night?

**JILL** Pathetic! Have a good night

*Joe exits the stage. Jack & Jill go back to reading*

**JACK** That's it for me. Hitting the hay. How about you?

**JILL** I'm going to finish this crossword puzzle if it kills me.

*Jack exits the stage. Jill sits on a chair working on her crossword puzzle. 30 sec pause - Joe comes back onto the stage.*

**JILL** You're home awfully early.

**JOE** I blew it

**JILL** What did you do?

**JOE** I was doing pretty good. Made it past the salad at the restaurant. Made a crack about two guys having dinner at the next table. Something like bunch of queers. She blew up and left.

**JILL** Did you know that her brother is gay?

**JOE** I do now.

**JILL** Did you know that Jack is gay?

**JOE** (*looking astounded*) NO

**JILL** You know, the guy who just loaned you his socks, his sport coat, his shirt, his tie, a hundred dollars and his car. Plus you nabbed my flowers.

**JILL** *(with a wicked grin)* See you in the morning

*Jill exits the stage.*

**JOE** It's not so clear behind the wall.

*Lights down, then light up just on Jack in the center of the stage*

**Jack** Alex was the god of theater at the college - more like a bastard to those who knew him well. He twisted me dragging me into the hell as his lover. My mind. My mind. Imaging living in a world in which the professor could break you at any point. The scary part is that it is not that rare.

This hot star of high school plays headed into the first theater class trying to get approval from Alex, the professor. After class Alex told me that I had talent beyond anything that he had ever seen. Kicking around theater over coffee seemed like paradise. Alex was now my mentor. So I thought. He used theater pulling me into his dark tormented world - reminding me that a few words from him and my career was over. I got sick when he touched me. I want to hurt him. But then I would be finished.

Good news. Alex had left the College. I could breath again. He started to call. "Drive up see me." Then my world crashed. The college got word that Alex had tested HIV positive. It took me months to get up the courage to be tested. Results - negative. He's gone now. No doubt there's a special hell for people like him. As for me, the confidence slowly comes back. Trust. That's another subject.

## **\_\_ ACT 2 \_\_**

### **APARTMENT**

*Joe & Jill are setting in the apartment playing cards.*

**JOE** I never though that I would be playing cribbage on Monday night.

**JILL** Your fault. We agreed that if you won the bet, we watched Monday night football. If I won the bet, we played cribbage. You lost. Shut up and deal. Besides, you still owe me big time for painting over my little mermaid wall paper.

**JOE** Can I have a beer?

**JILL** No. I told you already. When you are playing cribbage with a quiet dignified lady, you get tea and cookies.

**JOE** *(cry of anguish)* Aaaughn

*Jack walks in to apartment. His shirt is torn. His face smudged with a bit of dirt. Some blood on his face. Looks trashed.*

**JILL** What happened to you?

**JACK** I was just walking down the street. Bunch of guys jumped me. Knocked me down. Kept kicking me. Yelling (*loud*) “hey faggot. Does it feel good?” Every one kept walking past. Some stood around watching.

**JILL** Did anyone call the police?

**JACK** No. You would have thought that it was a circus act they were watching. See the clowns kick the monkey!

**Jill** How awful.

**JACK** Old man McGreggor from the candy store came out. Hit one of the guys on the back with his cane. You should have seen the look on their faces. Told them that he knew most of their moms. Said, “Would you like me to make a few phone calls?” You should have seen them split.

**JILL** Old man McGreggor. He doesn't like much of anyone. How do you rate?

**JACK** I'm special. On Monday I stop at the candy store. “Hello Mr. McGreggor” He says “Hello Jack” I say “Got any fresh Bon-Bons?” He always makes them on Monday. He says “I just made a batch. Your usual half pound” On Tuesday I stop for fresh creams.

**Jill** Got it. (*goes over to Jack. Kisses him on the cheek*)

**JACK** (*looking for sympathy*) I think my other cheek hurts also.

**JILL** (*laughs*) I'll get you some ice for that nasty bruise on your face.

**JOE** I'll get you a beer. Come to think of it. I could use one too. Want to watch some football?

**JACK** You bet.

## **APARTMENT**

*Jill is reading a book. Joe walks into the apartment.*

**JOE** We could have some fun tonight.

**JILL** No can do. Dating Elaine.

**JOE** You're dating Elaine?!?. Strange. I've got the right equipment.

**JILL** (*not amused*) I saw you coming out of the shower. Your equipment needs a rewrite, rated PG. Bring the dogs, the kids. Nothing of interest. What happened to neutral territory?

**JOE** How was I supposed to know that you were dating Elaine? I thought that you hopped in bed with Mark to get the part, bit of a slut.

**JILL** (*yells*) First, you want cooking. Now, easy sex. What's next on the menu? Not me, you son of a bitch!

*Jill stomps out very angry.*

*Jack enters.*

**JACK** Want to watch the football game?

**JOE** Sure.

*Both sit down. Dub in sound of football game.*

**JACK** Where's Jill?

**JOE** We had a blowout.

**JACK** Were you trying to hit on her again?

**JOE** It's a guy thing.

**JACK** I suppose that we should go find her.

**JOE** The worst part is that Jill will be nice.

### **PARK BENCH**

*Jill is sitting at a park bench at the side of the stage crying Enter Jack & Joe. They sit on each side of her.*

**JILL** I thought that we were friends.

**JACK** It's your turn to cook.

**JOE** Besides, you know that we can't cook. Look, it's hard for a guys to admit when they screw up. Sorry.

*The three walk back to the apartment each with their arm around the other's back.*

*Joe stops. Turns to the audience*

**JOE** This is definitely going to cost me both chocolates and flowers.

## APARTMENT

*Jack is alone in the apartment...hearing the buzzer, he unlocks the door and awaits his visitor.*

*Knock at the door. Jack, opening the door, sees his brother, Josh, and niece, Kaylee, who he has never met (age 4 or 5)*

**JOSH** (*uncomfortably*) Hi...Uh, can we come in?

**JACK** (*stunned*) Oh my God! I didn't think that I would see you again. Sure. Come in. Um, sit down.

*Kaylee has been watching the interaction. She takes her fathers hand, sits between her dad and uncle on the sofa.*

*Silence...Josh finally speaks slowly, deliberately*

**JOSH** Look, I'm not good at this. But, I needed to see you. What I'm about to try and say comes from my heart. (*leaning forward with elbows resting on his knees*) Listen for a few minutes. I'm sorry. I can't pretend to understand your lifestyle. . But, I want my brother back in my life.

*Kaylee gets up. Walks over facing Jack.*

**KAYLEE** Now do I get birthday presents from my uncle? (*hops in his lap*)

**JACK** But...you

**JOSH** I know. Put you out of my life. Words, actions haunt me. I said "I hate you and your filthy friends." I rehearse in my head how I beat the crap out of you screaming "you're not my brother. I'm not going to have a flaming fag anywhere near me." You didn't even try to defend yourself. Just held your hands up. Then I see your face bleeding from my fits. Hear your voice saying, "I'm sorry. I can't change." Then I remember. We went everywhere together. Did everything together. Best of friends. I miss your corny jokes. The good times. Most of all I miss having a brother around. Kaylee needs to know her uncle. Mom and Dad are getting older. We need each other. I've struggled with this. We've got to be a family again. Mom and Dad don't know I'm here. I know you keep in touch with them. Their not seeing you has hurt them. The only promise I can make is to try. But, I can't make this happen without you. Both of us have to want to put it back together. It took me this long to realize that you've always been my brother. It's society that teaches us to hate

*Kaylee pulls herself around and her eyes meet Jacks. The two look at each Kaylee then smiles at Jack. Jack returns the smile.*

**JACK** (*looking down*) I don't know what to say. (*looking at Josh*) I don't hate you. Never

did. My gut response...Until I came out, we were strong together. We fought, quarreled, played football together Stood shoulder to shoulder. I won't apologize for who I am. I know it hurt you, Mom and Dad, Look at my view. Living a lie hurt me. It made everything I said and did a lie. The world kept throwing it at me. One day I couldn't take it any more. I had to tell people who I am. One point didn't changed. Never will. I love you and all of the rest of the family. Josh, if this was a play, we would all hug, get goofy and make up, just as the curtain closed. Life isn't theater. We don't always get happy endings. I too want all of us to be a family again. It will take a lot of compromise, *(pause)* tolerance from all of us. I'll give it my best shot. *(Jack looks at his watch)* I hate to do this to you. But, timing is everything. You could have picked a worse time to stop. Drop this on me. I have to be at the theater in a half hour for a photo shoot. Got to go. So could we do the corny make-up stuff fast. *(said very theatrically)* No tears, I can't have my eyes blood shot, photo's you know.

**JOSH** *(laughing)* How did you ever get into the theater?

**JACK** I have an irresistible personality

*Josh, and Kaylee get up to leave*

**JACK** Give me your phone number, I'll call you.

**JOSH** Promise?

**JACK** Promise.

*Kaylee and Jack start to leave*

**KAYLEE** Don't forget. My birthday was last week and I need a present.

**JACK** Anything else

**KAYLEE** Can you get me Jill's autograph. She's in all the papers.

**JACK** What about me?

**KAYLEE** No silly. Jill's the star. I can show off her autograph all over the school.

*Jack and Josh start laughing*

## APARTMENT

*Joe comes into the apartment – visually upset. Jill is reading Cosmopolitan*

**JOE** *(in shock and crying)* Jack.... My God... Jack:

**JILL** *(fearful)* Joe, what are trying to say?

**JOE** Jack...is...dead! The bastard hit him... the car didn't even stop!

Jill walks to a sobbing Joe. They hold each other for mutual comfort

**JILL** Where?

**JOE** He was trying to get across Prospect, middle of the afternoon. The cars just do not stop.

**JILL** I just learned to like him. (*blubbers a bit*) It took me months to teach him how to make mac' and cheese. Too young. (*now very loud*) Why?. Just tell me why?

*Joe stares at his feet.*

## FUNERAL

*At the funeral Joe & Jill are standing with a number of people. Casket is on table. People are whispering. We cannot hear them at first.*

**OLD MAN** They should all die! Burn in hell! Sinners! All of those perverts are sinners! My own father left my mother for another man. I vomited for a week. How sick! Two men or women living together. No wonder God made such awful plagues like aids! Jacks dead! Look at them all standing around pretending that they feel bad. Let them all die!! I won't vomit when if I saw all of them in coffins.

**AUNT MABEL** I heard that he was gay. Slept in the same bedroom with another guy.

**JOE** I was that other guy. Want to hear about our wild sex orgies? First we.

**AUNT MABEL** (*cutting Joe off*) I have to go say hi to my cousin (*walks away*)

**JILL** (*talking directly to Joe*) You're not gay.

**JOE** I know. But it was worth it. Did you see the look on her face?

**FRED** Disgusting, He got what he deserved.

*Jill and Joe are standing close enough to hear.*

**JILL** (*trying to defend Jack*) He was my soul mate. Had a lot of good points.

**FRED** Such as?

**JILL** He rubbed my back when I got migraines.

**FRED** Anything else he rubbed?

*Jill glares at him. Joe and Jill move farther away*

**JILL** Screw him... Nasty old man.

*A member of the clergy goes over to talk to Joe*

**REV. WILLIE** There's still time to save your self.

**JOE** Hi Rev. Willie. Do you still need that donation to cover the cost of a new roof from my dad?

**REV. WILLIE** Sorry Joe. Didn't recognize you. Say hi to your dad for me.

*Joe turns to talk to Jill as the Rev. walks away.*

**JOE** Too many here. How about we pop over to the pub for a beer?

**JILL** Sounds good. Got to get out of here!

*They leave the funeral - start to exit the set.*

**JILL** *(looks at Joe)* Why can't we just love each other?

**JOE** I think that we already do.

*They walk off with Joe's arm around Jill.*