

DACHAU FOR QUEERS
A Musical Play in Eighteen Scenes
By Daniel Neer

In development with composer Alon Nechushtan

DRAFT - 03.18.2025

Daniel Neer
Neersighted Productions
917-225-0757

CAST OF CHARACTERS: (in order of appearance)

JONAH GOODSON, a 17 year old from Omaha, Nebraska

NURSE, at Atascadero State Hospital

DOCTOR, at Atascadero State Hospital

ORDERLY, at Atascadero State Hospital

CANDY STRIPER, at Atascadero State Hospital

RADIO, the voice of Hollywood hunk Tab Hunter

MISS QUACKENBUSH, Jonah's sixth grade teacher

MICHAEL, Jonah's future husband

JUDGE, of the City of San Francisco court system

DANNY SMITH, an Eagle Scout and Jonah's best friend

SECRETARY, of Atascadero State Hospital

THE DIRECTOR, of Atascadero State Hospital

SARAH, Jonah's high school sweetheart

OSCAR WILDE, the poet and playwright

COP, of the City of San Francisco police department

MOTHER |

SISSY | Jonah's family in Omaha

FATHER |

GRANDPA |

ELIÁŽ, a clarinetist and prisoner at Dachau

MISS AMERICA, fresh from her crowning

LARK (younger), Jonah's adopted non-binary teen

TICKET AGENT, Greyhound Station in Omaha

DAVID SERBER, director at Atascadero State Hospital

LARK (older), Jonah's adult child

DIANA, Jonah's eleven year-old granddaughter

VOICE AND ROLE DISTRIBUTION:

TRACK 1 (TENOR)

Jonah Goodson

TRACK 2 (SOPRANO)

Candy Striper, Sarah, Sissy, Eliáš, Miss America,
Lark (younger), Diana

TRACK 3 (MEZZO SOPRANO)

Nurse, Miss Quackenbush, Secretary, Oscar Wilde,
Mother, Ticket Agent, Lark (older)

TRACK 4 (BARITONE)

Orderly, Michael, Danny Smith, Cop, Grandpa, David
Serber

TRACK 5 (BASS)

Doctor, Radio (Tab Hunter), Judge, The Director,
Father

TIME:

Various moments during 1970 - 1973, with flashbacks
and flash-forewards.

SETTING:

California Department of Hospitals - Atascadero, San
Luis Obispo County, California.

LISTING OF SCENES WITH PERSONNEL:

1. APOMORPHINE (JONAH, NURSE, DOCTOR, ORDERLY)
2. THE RADIO (CANDY STRIPER, JONAH, RADIO)
3. SHOW-AND-TELL (MISS QUACKENBUSH, JONAH)
4. COMMON ROOM (MICHAEL, JONAH)
5. COURTROOM (JUDGE, JONAH)
6. SCOUTS (JONAH, DANNY SMITH)
7. INTAKE (SECRETARY, THE DIRECTOR, JONAH)
8. HOMECOMING DANCE (SARAH, JONAH)
9. SUCCINYLBCHOLINE (DOCTOR, JONAH, ORDERLY, NURSE)
10. OSCAR WILDE (OSCAR WILDE, JONAH)
11. CINEMA BALCONY (COP, JONAH)
12. THANKSVIVING (MOTHER, SISSY, JONAH, FATHER, GRANDPA)
13. DACHAU (JONAH, ELIÁŽ)
14. ELECTROSHOCK(DOCTOR, MISS AMERICA, ORDERLY, NURSE, JONAH)
15. LARK (LARK, JONAH ????) (CHANGES HERE)
16. TICKET BOOTH (TICKET AGENT, JONAH)
17. RELEASE (DAVID SERBER, JONAH)
18. PRESENT DAY (LARK, DIANA, JONAH)

DACHAU FOR QUEERS

Lights up on a sterile institutional space. JONAH lies on a hospital gurney: disheveled and exhausted. He wears a tan jumpsuit over a hospital robe. There are three formica chairs and a folding privacy screen nearby. A foghorn blows in the distance.

SCENE I - APOMORPHINE

JONAH

I am me. It's all that I am, and all that I have, and all that I need.

A NURSE enters and extends the privacy screen, followed by an ORDERLY who rolls a stainless steel cart full of medical equipment. On top is a small slide projector.

NURSE

(sing-song)

Time for your treatment, dear. Say AH!

The NURSE puts a thermometer into JONAH's mouth, and takes his pulse. The ORDERLY props JONAH up in bed, unzips his jumpsuit down to his crotch, and covers him with a sheet. The DOCTOR enters, reading JONAH's chart.

DOCTOR

(not looking up)

Jonah Goodson. How are we today?

ORDERLY

Not a great day, Doctor. Groggy and unresponsive.

NURSE

Vitals are normal, Doctor. Mildly sedated.

DOCTOR

Excellent. Begin Film A.

ORDERLY

Yes, Doctor.

The ORDERLY start the projector showing a series of photographs of scantily-clad curvy and buxom women from 60's era pinup magazines.

DOCTOR

(clinical, droning)
Behold the wonders of women. Created by God for our enjoyment. Eve, Cleopatra, Helen of Troy. They are irresistible.

JONAH stares blankly at the images.

DOCTOR

(to NURSE)
Anything?

The NURSE lifts up the sheet and peeks at JONAH's crotch.

NURSE

No, Doctor.

The images become more revealing.

DOCTOR

Concentrate, Jonah. The curves, the soft skin, the seductive looks. You want to touch them, feel them.

He motions to the NURSE to check again.

NURSE

Nothing, Doctor.

The images flash faster.

DOCTOR

(more insistent)
Look closer. As a man you're meant to explore a woman's body. To feel your body merge with theirs.
(to NURSE)
Anything?

The NURSE looks, shaking her head.

DOCTOR

Prep for Apomorphine.

ORDERLY

Yes, Doctor.

The ORDERLY straps JONAH'S wrists and ankles to the gurney, and places a stainless steel kidney-shaped puke bowl by his head.

NURSE

(to JONAH)
Just a little prick, love.

The NURSE attaches an IV to JONAH's forearm.

DOCTOR

Begin Film B.

ORDERLY

Yes, Doctor.

Different photos are projected of male beefcakes and bodybuilders from workout magazines, becoming gradually more erotic. JONAH watches.

DOCTOR

Nurse?

The NURSE takes a peek under the sheet.

NURSE

Stimulation detected, Doctor.

DOCTOR

Release the treatment.

The NURSE injects the drug into JONAH's IV. He almost immediately begins to moan and struggle.

ORDERLY

Easy, Nebraska.

DOCTOR

That's right. It's sickening, isn't it? The images make you want to vomit. They disgust you.

The DOCTOR looks under the sheet.

DOCTOR

(harshly)
Increase the dosage.

The NURSE adjusts the IV. JONAH dry heaves and tries to turn his head away.

DOCTOR

(barking)
Hold him!

The ORDERLY does so. JONAH can't look away.

ORDERLY

(to JONAH, discreetly)
Come on, Nebraska. Hang in there.

DOCTOR

This is a sickness of the soul, my boy. Your body wants to rid itself of the filth in your heart.

JONAH'S becomes increasingly agitated, his body convulses with nausea. A fever dream.

JONAH

(delirious)
Help! Someone, help me! Superman!

JONAH's perspective: The DOCTOR begins to laugh maniacally. The ORDERLY and NURSE join in.

DOCTOR

Superman?!? He can't help you now.

The DOCTOR grabs the IV tube, a la DC Comics villain, and shakes it in JONAH's face. Jonah continues to retch.

DOCTOR

(hissing)
This is your kryptonite!

NURSE AND ORDERLY

This is your kryptonite!

DOCTOR, NURSE, AND ORDERLY

THIS IS YOUR KRYPTONITE!

They laugh maniacally as lights awash the stage. JONAH passes out.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2 - THE RADIO

The DOCTOR and NURSE exit, as does The ORDERLY, who whistles as he wheels away the cart. JONAH remains on the gurney, half-conscious. A CANDY STRIPER timidly knocks and enters.

CANDY STRIPER

(mousy)

Knock, knock. Anyone home? Can I offer a treat?
Lifesavers? Tootsie rolls? The doctor says a little
sugar is good after treatments.

JONAH doesn't respond. She nervously continues.

CANDY STRIPER

Maybe a magazine? Life...Popular Science...Saturday
Evening Post...

JONAH

(raspy)

Comic books?

CANDY STRIPER

None, I'm afraid.

(rallying)

But I can fluff your pillows. And I bet you'd like a
sip of water.

*She fills a plastic cup with water and holds the
straw to JONAH's mouth. Her hand shakes.*

CANDY STRIPER

It's my first day. Can you tell? My momma thought I
was nuts to volunteer here, with all the crazy -

(catching herself)

...with all the patients, I mean.

(new idea)

Tell you what: I was saving this for someone else,
but what the heck.

*She produces a small transistor radio from her
cart, turns it on and sets it on a chair.*

CANDY STRIPER

(awkward)

I hope you feel normal - I mean better. Soon.

She exits. The music fades. A voice.

RADIO

(softly)

Jonah.

JONAH looks around nervously.

RADIO

(louder)

JONAH.

JONAH

(freaked)

Who is it? Who's there?

RADIO

It's me. Tab Hunter. The movie star.

*JONAH realizes the voice is coming from the
transistor radio.*

JONAH

(in a fog)

Tab Hunter?

RADIO

That's right. The one and only Hollywood heartthrob.
Stopping by to say hello. And thank you.

JONAH

What for?

RADIO

For the way you used to look at me during those
Saturday afternoon matinees. The private moments in
your bedroom. Celluloid fantasies on warm summer
nights. You flooded the universe with good energy.
We've shared a lot. Soon I'll be washed up. My fans
will be all I have. Thank you. For love.

JONAH

Is it wrong to love another man?

RADIO

What does your heart tell you?

JONAH

I'm not sure.

RADIO

Love is never wrong, if it's from your heart.

(beat)

I have to go now. Get some rest. By the way, the
gossip magazines were right. Except it wasn't with
James Dean. It was Anthony Hopkins. Goodbye, Jonah.

JONAH

So long, Tab Hunter.

Lights change.

SCENE 3 - SHOW-AND-TELL

MISS QUACKENBUSH enters.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

(dry and wry)

And Thank you, Margot, for bringing your father's transistor radio for Show-and-Tell. Who's next?

JONAH excitedly raises his hand.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

Jonah Goodson. Let me guess: a comic book.

JONAH

Yes, Miss Quakenbush. This one is called "The Three Supermen from Krypton". My Grandpa bought it for me.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

I've told you a hundred times. No more comic books.

JONAH

(plowing ahead anyway)

But this is the best. Because of Kryptonite, Superman is reduced to just being normal, and -

MISS QUACKENBUSH

(interrupting)

What's wrong with being normal?

JONAH

That's boring. Being a superhero is way cooler.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

Aren't you getting too old for this? You're nearly twelve.

JONAH

You said we could bring anything we want for show-and-tell.

MISS QUACKENBUSH snatches the comic from JONAH.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

Your Father said if you show up with another comic book, I should rip it up.

JONAH

(protesting)
It's gonna be a collector's item. Grandpa said so.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

How can something so silly be valuable.

JONAH

Because it's Superman!

MISS QUACKENBUSH

I don't care if it's about Nixon. It's garbage.

MISS QUACKENBUSH rips the comic book in half.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

Instead of supplying you with comics, maybe your Grandpa can help with your math instead?

JONAH

You're the meanest teacher ever!

MISS QUACKENBUSH

Take your seat this instant.

JONAH

What's the big deal about a stupid transistor radio? Everyone has one of those.

MISS QUACKENBUSH

Jonah Goodson, I've had just about enough.

JONAH

But it's not fair!

MISS QUACKENBUSH

LIFE is not fair, Jonah. There are people sitting in prison cells who are innocent. Sick people die every day. Your life is a cakewalk. Now SIT DOWN!

JONAH sits, in tears. MISS QUACKENBUSH exits.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4 - COMMON ROOM

MICHAEL, dressed in the same tan jumpsuit, enters and sits near JONAH, offering him a folded handkerchief.

MICHAEL

Here you go.

(JONAH hesitates)

Go ahead, it won't bite.

JONAH takes it. He wipes his eyes and nose.

MICHAEL

(warmly)

Don't worry. It gets better.

JONAH offers to give the handkerchief back.

MICHAEL

(smirking)

I'm going to let you hang on to that.

(beat)

You're new.

JONAH warily scoots a few inches away.

MICHAEL

Don't worry. You're safe as can be with me. I'm no chicken hawk. Not like those animals in the showers.

JONAH

I could fight them off. At first.

MICHAEL

Next time, find me. They'll stop messing with you.
I'm Michael.

JONAH

Jonah. How did you end up here?

MICHAEL

I'm what happens when a high school drama teacher frequents the wrong bar on the wrong night. A police raid, an arrest, a nasty judge, and voilà. Your garden-variety danger to society.

JONAH

I shouldn't have left Omaha.

JONAH shivers. MICHAEL walks toward him and starts to remove his robe. JONAH recoils, but MICHAEL holds up his hands, as if to say, "I come in peace". He removes his robe and drapes it around JONAH's shoulders.

MICHAEL

It's the marine layer.

A foghorn is heard in the distance.

MICHAEL

The foghorn comforts me. Like an old man's assurance that life goes on, outside.

JONAH

Thanks for the hankie.

MICHAEL

My Mother always told me to carry one. A last vestige of the old world.

JONAH

Old world?

MICHAEL

My parents are Czech. They were sent to a camp in Auschwitz. Both survived. Uncle Elijah wasn't so lucky. He ended up in Dachau and disappeared. Mom and Pop met on the way to Boston, on the same boat. Pop built a successful business, which I was supposed to take over, along with marrying a pretty girl which of course mom chose for me.

(smirking)

You can see how that turned out.

(with a shrug)

So, I graduated from college, turned down my inheritance, and moved to Oakland to teach.

JONAH stands and staggers a little.

MICHAEL

Hey, easy. You ok?

JONAH

I've been hearing and seeing things...

MICHAEL

(nodding)

It's the medication.

JONAH

Deja-vu! Do I know you?

MICHAEL

(leveling with him)

Not yet. We'll meet in six years, in a little coffee

shop near Telegraph Hill. We'll hit it off, date, and be together for the rest of our lives.

JONAH

Is that true?

MICHAEL

It's your hallucination.

JONAH

This isn't real?

MICHAEL

I'M real. What's going on in your head is something else.

(scoffs)

What they're doing to us is torture, and yet it's allowed. The Nazi's did the same thing to queers. In the camps.

JONAH

I hate it here.

MICHAEL puts a comforting arm around JONAH

MICHAEL

You'll be fine. Just remember what Oscar Wilde said: "We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

JONAH gazes heavenward as MICHAEL exits.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 5 - THE COURTROOM

A JUDGE enters wearing a black robe.

JUDGE

Hear ye, Hear ye. Case number 11303, State of California against Goodson. This courtroom will come to order.

(focusing on JONAH)

Mr. Goodson, what am I wearing?

JONAH

(stammering)

I...am...me.

JUDGE

That's right, a robe. Do you know why I wear a robe?

JONAH

...and it's all that I am...

JUDGE

Because I am cloaked in truth.

JONAH

...and all that I have...

JUDGE

And I know a bad egg when I see it.

JONAH

...and all that I need...

JUDGE

Do you often frequent the balcony of movie houses?

JONAH

I am me and it's all that I am...

JUDGE

Let's pretend that I believe you.

JONAH

It's all that I am and all that I have...

JUDGE

What did you think goes on in those places?

JONAH

It's all that I have, and all that I need...

JUDGE

You're lying, Mr. Goodson.

JONAH

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have,
and all that I need.

JUDGE

The owner said you are a frequent customer.

JONAH

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have,
and all that I need.

JUDGE

You see, Mr. Goodson, in the eyes of the law, you've embarked on criminal activity. However, you also have a severe psychotic condition. Homosexuality.

JONAH

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have, and all that I need.

JUDGE

Therefore, I'm offering you a choice: three months in a mental hospital, or one year in jail.

JONAH

(hushed)

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have, and all that I need.

JUDGE

Speak up, Mr. Goodson!

JONAH

(rushed)

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have, and all that I need.

JUDGE

Judgement is set for the defendant to serve a minimum of three months at the Department of State Hospitals at Atascadero. Good luck to you, young man.

JONAH

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have, and all that I need...

Blackout.

SCENE 6 - SCOUTS

The JUDGE exits. DANNY, an Eagle Scout, enters and sits next to JONAH. They stare at the stars.

JONAH

How many stars are up there?

DANNY

More than we can count.

JONAH

Like, millions?

DANNY

More, I 'reckon.

JONAH

They're so bright.

DANNY

The light takes years to travel to earth. Some are invisible 'cause the light hasn't reached us yet.

JONAH

You know a lot about stars.

DANNY

(points to his chest)
Merit badge in Astronomy.

JONAH

I can see it now: "Danny Smith, Astronaut."

DANNY

What do you want to be?

JONAH

No idea.

DANNY

Summer went fast. Only three more days.

JONAH

Then...Seventh Grade.

DANNY

Ninth for me.

JONAH inches his hand closer to DANNY's until he takes it. They hold hands for a few seconds, then DANNY lets go and stands up.

DANNY

We should stop doing this.

JONAH

Why?

DANNY

We're in different grades. People will think it's weird that we hang out.

JONAH

(patting the ground)
Stay.

DANNY looks around nervously, then sits.

DANNY

Are you going to the bonfire tomorrow night? The girls from Camp Maha will be there.

JONAH

I don't think so.

DANNY

You're missing out. There's a girl for every guy. Everyone makes out afterwards.

(beat)

Have you ever kissed anyone?

JONAH

(embarrassed)
No.

DANNY

There must be someone you're dying to kiss. A girl from school?

JONAH

There is someone.

DANNY

Who is it?

JONAH

It's a secret.

DANNY

Come on, tell me. Don't be a wuss.

JONAH leans over and kisses DANNY on the cheek.

DANNY

(recoiling)
What are you doing?
(beat)

JONAH

It's you. You're the one I wanted to kiss.

DANNY

You're a sissy? You like boys?

JONAH
I like you.

DANNY
(disarmed)
I like you, too. As friends.

JONAH covers his face.

DANNY
Don't get upset.

JONAH
Just forget it, ok?

DANNY
You surprised me, that's all.

JONAH
Please don't tell anyone.

DANNY
Of course not.

*DANNY looks to make sure they're alone.
Mustering courage, he takes JONAH's hands from
his face, and tenderly kisses him on the lips.*

DANNY
Now the answer is yes. You have kissed someone.

*They laugh awkwardly and turn their gaze
skyward. Suddenly, they jump up.*

DANNY
(astonished)
Look! A shooting star!

JONAH
(equally excited)
Wow! A big one!

DANNY
The biggest one I've ever seen!

JONAH
Did you see how fast it was?

DANNY
Another star kicked out of heaven. That's what they
say, anyway.

JONAH

We are so lucky.

JONAH touches pinkies with DANNY. They interlock fingers and continue to watch the stars, holding hands. Blackout.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 7 - INTAKE

DANNY exits. JONAH takes off his tan jumpsuit and lays it on a chair, wearing only the hospital gown. The DIRECTOR and SECRETARY enter and sit. The DOCTOR scribbles furiously on a legal pad, while the SECRETARY types on an imaginary typewriter.

SECRETARY

(deadpan patter, repeated as underscoring)
Empty pockets, remove all your clothes, give me your shoes, socks, and belt...

Empty pockets, removes all your clothes, give me your shoes, socks, and belt...

THE DIRECTOR

Name?

JONAH

Jonah Goodson.

THE DIRECTOR

Age?

JONAH

Seventeen.

THE DIRECTOR

Date of birth?

JONAH

May twenty-second, Nineteen Fifty-Three.

THE DIRECTOR

Birthplace?

JONAH

Omaha, Nebraska.

SECRETARY

(switching mantra patter)
Breakfast at seven, lunch at noon, snack at three,
dinner at six...

Breakfast at seven, lunch at noon, snack at three,
dinner at six...

THE DIRECTOR

Are you a homosexual?
(beat, then impatiently)
Are you attracted to men, or women?

JONAH

I had a girlfriend. Sarah.

THE DIRECTOR

(exasperated)
Have you had sexual relations with men?

JONAH

Yes.

THE DIRECTOR

When you were a boy, did you engage in sexual
activity with another boy?

JONAH

We just kissed. And held hands.

SECRETARY

(switching once again)
Clean you room, strip your bed, scrub the shower
until it shines... (etc)

The DIRECTOR throws a tan jumpsuit at JONAH.

THE DIRECTOR

Put this on. Keep it clean. You only get one. Your
case number is 11303. Repeat that.

JONAH

11303.

THE DIRECTOR

Don't forget it.

THE SECRETARY

Seconds to minutes to hours to days. Days to weeks to
months to years... (etc)

JONAH

Why am I in a hospital?

THE DIRECTOR

Because you're sick.

JONAH

What's wrong with me?

THE DIRECTOR

(getting up to leave)

You have a serious psychiatric disorder.

JONAH

What do I do now?

THE DIRECTOR

Follow the rules. Keep your back against the wall.
Especially in the shower. Welcome to Atascadero.

*The DIRECTOR and SECRETARY exit. JONAH puts on
the jumpsuit.*

THE SECRETARY

(while exiting)

Seconds to minutes. Minutes to hours. Hours to days.
Days to weeks. Weeks to months. Months to years. Time
is a wheel, it takes and steals. Your fate it seals.
It seldom heals...

END OF SCENE

SCENE 8 - HOMECOMING DANCE

*Lights shift from florescent to colored. SARAH
enters in a pink dress with a huge corsage.*

SARAH

(looking around)

Do you like it? "One Giant Leap for Mankind." That's
the theme.

JONAH

It's...swell.

They slow dance.

SARAH

Some of the others wanted "flower power", but I

thought: Moon landing. Space. And that was that.
(admiring JONAH)
You look so sharp tonight. I don't think I've ever
seen you in a tie.
(beat)
Is something wrong?

JONAH
Sarah, I have to tell you something. I don't know how
to say it.

SARAH
Then don't. Let's just enjoy the dance.

JONAH
I feel like I'll bust if I don't.

SARAH
But, you don't need to. I already know.

JONAH
You do?

SARAH
Girls usually do. Though they won't admit it.

JONAH
Are we talking about the same thing?

SARAH
Jonah Goodson, we've been friends since first grade.
I know you better than anyone.

JONAH
You don't know everything.

SARAH stops dancing and folds her arms.

SARAH
(pronounced emphatically, with a smirk)
Sherbet.

JONAH
What?

SARAH
A big bowl of sherbet. That's what you thought of my
dress when you picked me up tonight.

JONAH
I don't understand.

SARAH

(playfully, hands on hips)
You thought to yourself, "She looks like a big bowl
of raspberry sherbet." Come on, admit it.

JONAH

Did I say it that out loud?

SARAH

Then, you realized you needed to go the whole evening
without taking off your jacket.

JONAH

What are you talking about?

SARAH

Because you forgot to put on antiperspirant. You
realized it in the car, on Hudson Street.

JONAH

This is weird.

SARAH

This isn't a normal flashback, Jonah. Not like show-
and-tell or Boy Scouts. I know everything.

JONAH

This is a flashback?

SARAH

Technically it's referred to as 'sleep onset state',
but who's quibbling.

JONAH

How is this happening?

SARAH

It's your brain on drugs. So, here we are.
Homecoming, 1970.

They begin to slow dance again.

JONAH

What am I thinking now?

SARAH

You're wondering if I knew you liked boys.

JONAH

Did you?

SARAH

Yes. Come on, a full-blooded boy who never ventures south of his girlfriend's brassiere? There must be a very good reason.

JONAH

I would have told you earlier, but -

SARAH

(interrupting)
But I'm a huge gossip, and I would have told everyone.

(hand in air)
Guilty.

JONAH

Then, you know what I'm going to do tomorrow morning.

SARAH

You're running away to San Francisco without telling a single soul.

JONAH

Am I making a mistake?

SARAH

Maybe.

JONAH

I can't stay here.

SARAH

I know.

JONAH

What should I do?

SARAH

You're having this conversation with yourself. You know that, right?

JONAH

Then I've already left.

SARAH

Bingo.

(glancing to the gurney)
Looks like you're waking up soon.

JONAH

Do we have enough time to finish the dance?

SARAH

(smiling)
It's your flashback.

They continue to dance, forehead to forehead, as lights fade. The NURSE enters, taps SARAH on the shoulder, and cuts in. The NURSE and JONAH dance briefly before they are interrupted by the DOCTOR and ORDERLY. JONAH stands awkwardly in front of them.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 9 - SUCCINYLBCHOLINE

The ORDERLY ties JONAH's wrists and ankles, and the NURSE thrusts a thermometer into his mouth.

DOCTOR

Mr. Goodson. You've been touching yourself again.

JONAH

Who told you that?

ORDERLY

(an aside)
Walls have eyes, Nebraska.

DOCTOR

Are you a filthy masturbator?

JONAH

(shy)
I do it, sometimes. It's natural.

DOCTOR

(angered)
It's UNNATURAL when you fantasize about men. You know what is natural? Breathing. Nurse, Succinylcholine, 30 milligrams.

NURSE

Yes, Doctor.

JONAH

Please, not again.

DOCTOR

You will not leave this facility until you are cured.
(to the NURSE and ORDERLY)
Begin.

The NURSE inject JONAH, who struggles in rebellion. Within seconds, his limbs go limp. JONAH's eyes widen and he struggles to breathe. Lights shift as the DOCTOR, NURSE, and ORDERLY remove their white lab coats, revealing themselves as three of Superman's arch villains.

JONAH

(struggling)
Jax-Ur!...General Zod!...Lex Luthor!

NURSE

Hallucinations have begun, Doctor.

DOCTOR

We seem to be comic book villains again.

JONAH

(gasping)
Faster than a speeding bullet...

ORDERLY

(in JONAH's ear)
Hang in there, Nebraska.

JONAH

More power than a locomotive...

DOCTOR

Only one person in this room is wicked.

JONAH

Able to leap high buildings in...a...single...b..b..bah -

JONAH starts to convulse.

NURSE

(rattled)
Full respiratory disfunction, Doctor.

DOCTOR

(matter of fact)
What you're experiencing, Mr. Goodson, is the sensation of drowning. Seems that breathing is more necessary than masturbation, wouldn't you agree?

NURSE

Nearly unconscious, Doctor.

DOCTOR
Stop.

The NURSE reverses the treatment. JONAH comes back, coughing and wheezing.

ORDERLY
(quietly to JONAH)
Nice, slow breaths, Nebraska.

DOCTOR
So, which will you give up, Jonah Goodson?
Masturbation, or breathing? Think it over.

The DOCTOR and ORDERLY exit. The NURSE remains.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 10 - OSCAR WILDE

The NURSE steps out of her villain outfit She dons a wig to become Oscar Wilde.

OSCAR WILDE
(sardonic but friendly)
You're Jonah. And this place...
(gesturing)
must be the Big Fish.
(tsk, tsk)
My, my, how it HAS swallowed you whole.

JONAH
Who are you?

OSCAR WILDE
(patting his cheek)
Aren't you adorable. A true baby from the bread
basket who's bitten off a bit more than he can chew.

JONAH
You seem famous.

OSCAR WILDE
Desperately famous.

JONAH
English?

OSCAR WILDE

(bitchy)
Bite your tongue. *Irish*, if you please.
(presentational, diva-like)
I'm. Oscar. Wilde.

He waits, but JONAH has no idea who he is.

OSCAR WILDE

(crestfallen)
Nothing? What *ARE* they teaching in America?

JONAH

Another ghost. I can't keep you all straight.

OSCAR WILDE

(mocking offense)
Straight? How dare you. Normally, I'd call that a
very gauche comment...but you're so damned cute.
(correcting him)
I'll have you know I was summoned by your
imagination. I'm in limbo, you see.

JONAH

Purgatory.

OSCAR WILDE

Now *there's* a word I haven't heard in a while. Hell
doesn't want me...they say my heart is too big. And
heaven says I'm too sarcastic.

JONAH

You're stuck.

OSCAR WILDE

(sighing)
Quel dommage. Mind you, it's the same as being alive.
No one quite knows what to do with us.
(clarifying)
You're in limbo, too, though you may not realize it.
A legal loophole. Neither patient, nor criminal.

JONAH

I don't seem to fit in anywhere.

OSCAR WILDE

(chucks his chin)
Welcome to earth.
(looks around)
Oh, this infirmary! Such an array of queens, in all
shapes and sizes. And not one looks fetching in a

tawny jumpsuit.

OSCAR walks behind JONAH and pops up his collar, then removes a bedsheet and slings it around JONAH like a cape.

OSCAR WILDE

Better. It's the little things.

JONAH

I'll never get out of here.

OSCAR WILDE

Take heart, petal. When I did time it was hard labor.
(inspects his fingernails)
Murder on the nails.

JONAH

This wasn't the plan when I left Omaha.

OSCAR WILDE

(suddenly dead serious)
Thought it would be easy, did you? You've been
swallowed by the Big Fish. Now you need to find your
way out.

JONAH

But how?

OSCAR WILDE

Trust me, one day this will be a dark chapter in a
very bright book. Now, you'll have to excuse me.
Other broken hearts to attend to. Chin up, duckie.
Ta-ta for now!

He fades away.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 11 - CINEMA BALCONY

Lights flicker slightly as JONAH takes a seat at the cinema. A man enters and sits next to him.

COP

I've seen this one before. Tab Hunter, right? Boy, he
was something.
(beat)
You all alone?

JONAH
Waiting for a friend.

COP
Maybe I could be a friend.

JONAH
Are you a cop?

COP
Do I look like a cop?

JONAH
A little.

The COP stretches and puts his arm around JONAH's shoulders. With the other hand, he pulls a money clip full of cash out of his jacket.

COP
If I was a cop, would I be offering cash?

JONAH eyes the money and shrugs.

COP
Is five ok?

JONAH
Five works.

The COP flips the money clip to reveal a badge.

COP
(smiling broadly)
It's like shooting fish in a barrel. You're under arrest, faggot.

JONAH
What for?

COP
Lewd and lascivious behavior.

The COP stands and drags JONAH to his feet, handcuffing him.

JONAH
Am I going to jail?

COP
Either that or the loony bin. Depends on the judge.

(looking JONAH up and down)
Either way, you're going to be very popular. Let's go, kid.

The COP leads JONAH to a secluded spot, behind the gurney. The COP looks around nervously.

JONAH
Why are we in the alley?

COP
(throwing JONAH to the ground)
Just making sure you won't forget our little date.

In slow motion, the COP kicks JONAH numerous times in the ribs. This continues as MOTHER enters. Segue as she covers the gurney with a fancy tablecloth and carefully places a tissue paper turkey as the table's centerpiece.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 12 - THANKSGIVING

MOTHER
(harried)
What am I forgetting? Rolls are in the oven. Potatoes are all mashed. Yams are on the table.

As the scene continues, The COP eventually stops beating JONAH and slowly exits. JONAH painfully crawls downstage and sits on the floor in front of the gurney.

SISSY and FATHER enter.

MOTHER
Sissy, I said orange napkins, not green.

SISSY
What difference does it make?

JONAH
Mom, help me.

MOTHER
Not now, dear, please.

FATHER

(to Sissy)
Don't talk back to your mother.

MOTHER

Sissy, make room for the turkey.

SISSY

Hooray! A whole day of gluttony as America picks meat off a bird's carcass.

JONAH

I've been beat up.

MOTHER

I said *not now*.

FATHER

(to MOTHER)
She's in college now, remember? She knows everything.

MOTHER presents the turkey on a platter and places it near FATHER on the gurney.

MOTHER

Ta-da!

She takes a dramatic bow as FATHER applauds.

SISSY

(wryly)
Ok, enough wine, Mom.

JONAH

Thanksgiving was always your favorite day.

MOTHER

Thanksgiving is my favorite day!

FATHER

Looks like a good bird this year, Mother.

MOTHER

Baste every half hour. That's the secret.

SISSY

It's hardly a secret if you do it every year.

JONAH

You haven't written to me. Not one letter.

MOTHER

I don't appreciate the snarkiness.

FATHER

Where's Grandpa?

MOTHER

I knew I forgot something.

(too loud)

DAD! DINNER!

GRANDPA slowly enters with help from a folding walker. He sits with Sissy and FATHER.

GRANDPA

All right, all right. I'm not deaf, for Chrissakes.

(seeing Sissy)

There's my little Miss America. All dressed up.

JONAH

He always called you Miss America.

Sissy gives Grandpa a hug and kiss.

Sissy

Thanks, Grandpa. I'm going to a party after dinner.

FATHER

Where?

Sissy

(nonchalantly)

Danny Smith is having a little gathering.

FATHER

That's a name I was hoping to never hear again.

MOTHER

Will his parents be home?

Sissy

Mom, I'm twenty. And he lives right across the street.

FATHER

Who else is attending this so-called gathering.

Sissy

Just some old friends from high school.

FATHER

You're in college now, find some new friends.

MOTHER

Enough, both of you. Sissy, lead us in grace.

The family bows and takes hands.

SISSY

Dear Lord, thank you for the murderous spirit that inspired us to savagely pillage this beautiful land, and -

FATHER

(taking over, loudly)

- For-what-we-are-about-to-receive-may-we-be-truly-thankful-Amen.

MOTHER

Amen.

FATHER begins savagely carving the turkey.

FATHER

What kind of parents allows their kid to have guests on Thanksgiving? It's family day.

SISSY

It's no big deal. Besides, I haven't seen Danny since high school.

FATHER

You forget that fruitcake was caught molesting your brother in the woods. Eagle scout, my ass.

SISSY

So what? It's natural for boys so experiment.

FATHER

(to MOTHER)

You hear that? One psych class and she's an expert.

SISSY

You're overreacting. They were just kissing. He was Jonah's best friend.

JONAH

He was the love of my life.

MOTHER

We know that, dear.

GRANDPA

In my day, boys held hands. It was fine.

FATHER

Well, times have changed.

SISSY

Jonah's different, that's all.

JONAH

I am me, and it's all that I am.

MOTHER

(frazzled)

Not at the Thanksgiving table.

FATHER

Different? That's an understatement. What boy wants to play clarinet?

SISSY

He was really good!

JONAH

I was really good.

MOTHER

We know that, dear.

FATHER

And what was with the picture of Tab Hunter hanging beside his bed? There was a red flag.

SISSY

Meaning what?

JONAH

I tried to be straight.

MOTHER

Can we please change the subject?

GRANDPA

Yap, yap, yap. Leave the boy alone, and pass the rolls.

FATHER

(to GRANDPA)

You made it worse. Buying him all those comic books. Men in tights, flying around.

MOTHER

Not to mention those strange Sci-Fi shows on television, like Star Track.

SISSY

(correcting)
Star TREK.

JONAH

(correcting)
Star TREK.

MOTHER

Trek, Track, whatever, it put ideas in his head.

FATHER

Communist garbage.

SISSY

Did you expect him to watch Howdy Doody his whole life? Not everyone enjoys football or Ed Sullivan.

FATHER

(squashing it)
Everything's fine. He's in the hospital getting help.
(aside)
Pretty penny it's costing us, too.

SISSY

(shocked)
Costing you? You're keeping him there!?

JONAH

Mom and Dad are keeping me here?

MOTHER

The Doctor's advice was...more time.

SISSY

How much more time?
(MOTHER and FATHER don't respond)

SISSY

Indefinitely?
(standing)
This is unbelievable.
(to FATHER)
Jonah ran away because of your constant bullying -
(to MOTHER)
- and your indifference.

JONAH

Ashamed of me.

MOTHER

You are both ruining my Thanksgiving!

FATHER

(standing)

Don't you raise your voice, or -

SISSY

(interrupting)

Or what, Dad? You're going to hit me like you hit Jonah? Lock me away so I can't run away, too?

GRANDPA

Yap, yap, yap.

FATHER

He can come home when he's better.

SISSY

Jonah is never coming home.

JONAH

I am never coming home.

MOTHER

Yes he will, just like the Prodigal Son!

JONAH

MOM, I'M NEVER COMING HOME!

SISSY

There's no cure for what he is, don't you get it?

FATHER

One semester of college and she knows everything!

SISSY

I know Jonah is gay.

FATHER

(exploding)

You will not say that word in this house!

JONAH

It's true.

MOTHER

Stop it, all of you!

SISSY

JONAH IS GAY. All he ever asked was for us to love him. And we couldn't even do that.

SISSY exits, and FATHER follows. MOTHER moves away from the table, weeping.

JONAH

(desperately missing her)
Happy Thanksgiving, Mom.

MOTHER

Happy Thanksgiving...
(a beat, then turning to GRANDPA)
...Dad. Can I get you anything else?

GRANDPA

(reassuringly)
That boy is fine, just the way he is.

MOTHER slowly exits. GRANDPA pulls a note from his pocket and gently opens it.

JONAH

(somber, sincere)
Dear Grandpa. By the time you read this, I'll be gone. Remember the comic book where Superman loses his powers, and then finds them again, just in time to save the world? Well, I've lost my power, and I needed to go out and find it. I know I can't save the world, and I'm not even sure I'll get to see you again. But I need to find my own way. I will think about you every day. Take care. Love, Jonah.

GRANDPA sighs and stows the letter back in his pocket. Far away, the foghorn sounds. Blackout.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 13 - DACHAU

JONAH turns on the transistor radio, which plays the clarinet solo from the fourth movement of Dvořák's 9th Symphony. ELIÁŽ enters wearing striped concentration camp work clothes with a pink triangle. He "plays" the solo on his clarinet, but stops abruptly when he sees JONAH.

JONAH

That's beautiful.

ELIÁŽ

Thank you. It's Dvořák. Ninth Symphony.

(beat)

Let me guess. Political prisoner?

JONAH

No.

ELIÁŽ

Conscription resister? Jehovah's witness? Anarchist?

JONAH

No.

ELIÁŽ

What are you?

JONAH

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have,
and all that I need.

ELIÁŽ

That's nice. I'll have to remember that. But, you're
in Dachau, so you must have done something. Are you
homosexual?

*JONAH nods, shyly. ELIÁŽ points to the pink
triangle.*

ELIÁŽ

Me too. See..pink triangle. I'm Elias.

ELIÁŽ points to a tattoo on his forearm.

ELIÁŽ

Otherwise known as prisoner 11303. A souvenir of my
days in Auschwitz.

JONAH

Jonah.

ELIÁŽ

You'll fit right in here at Dachau, Jonah. Prisoners,
gypsies, pervs, queers. All the dregs of society.

JONAH

It's dirty, and it smells.

ELIÁŽ

It's not Belvedere Castle, that's for sure. Prisoners come and go. Some disappear for days at a time, then come back with marks or burns. Some say they're experimenting on us, like lab rats.

JONAH

You seem very brave.

ELIÁŽ

Just lucky.

(gesturing to his clarinet)

I play in the camp orchestra. The commander loves music. There's a handful of us from the Vienna Philharmonic.

(intimately)

Dreams seem real, because of the psychotropics.

JONAH

How can I be dreaming? I've never heard of Dachau. I've never seen a pink triangle, or met anyone from Vienna.

ELIÁŽ

Last night I dreamt about my sister. She was falling in love, on a boat, headed for Boston.

JONAH

(it's familiar to him now)

You're not going to survive this. Do you know that?

ELIÁŽ

No one really survives.

(hand to ear)

Listen! It's the cart, coming down the hallway. You're brave, aren't you?

JONAH

I'm learning to be.

ELIÁŽ

(smiling)

Good. If you need me, just listen to Dvořák.

(tapping his temple with his finger)

I'll be there.

ELIÁŽ slowly exits, playing his clarinet.

SCENE 14 - ELECTROSHOCK

The DOCTOR, NURSE, and ORDERLY enter. The DOCTOR is dressed as Ed Sullivan, the NURSE as Clarabell the Clown from Howdy Doody, and the ORDERLY as Spock from Star Trek. The ORDERLY straps JONAH's wrists and ankles to the gurney and places a rubber bite block in JONAH's mouth. The NURSE attaches wires to JONAH's forehead and affixes headgear. Total Vaudeville.

DOCTOR

(as Ed Sullivan)

Thank you, thank you. Tonight we have a really, really big shew. All you youngsters out there are really going to love it. I'm here with my lovely Nurse and Orderly.

The NURSE honks her horn twice and waves. The ORDERLY holds up the "live long and prosper" hand greeting.

DOCTOR

Wonderful. Please help me welcome our special guest, straight from Atlantic City, Miss America 1973!

The NURSE holds up an "APPLAUSE" sign. MISS AMERICA enters wearing a floor length gown made of CANDY STRIPER fabric. Her sash contains an animated lightning bolt piercing through a cartoon drawing of a human brain, on which "1973" is emblazoned.

MISS AMERICA

(vapid and breathy)

Hey, America, look! I'm on Ed Sullivan!

DOCTOR

What will be your first act as Miss America?

MISS AMERICA

I hope to help put Jonah's memories back together. And after that: world peace!

"APPLAUSE" sign. Miss America struts to the edge of the stage, standing with a bevelled pose.

DOCTOR

Now for the main event. A wonderful kid from Omaha, Nebraska who is about to have the queer buzzed out of him. Please help me welcome JONAH GOODSON!

"APPLAUSE" sign. The ORDERLY spins JONAH's gurney around in a circle.

DOCTOR

First we'll use 70 volts for three seconds to help chase that gay away. Are we ready?

The NURSE honks her horn twice.

DOCTOR

Orderly?

ORDERLY

(as Spock)

The humanoid exudes a heightened anxiety, which is logical, given the circumstance.

DOCTOR

Then take it away.

The ORDERLY throws a switch. JONAH's body heaves forward. The lights dim low, then grow again.

At this point, MISS AMERICA begins making an increasingly frenetic series of trips offstage and back, bringing costumes and props from previous scenes and dumping them on the gurney, covering Jonah's body. Everything is represented: the COP's leather jacket, the JUDGES robe, the transistor RADIO, OSCAR WILDE's wig, ELIAS' concentration camp garb with clarinet, MOTHER's apron, GRANDPA's walker, SARAH's homecoming dress, the Thanksgiving turkey, comic books, etc.

DOCTOR

Nurse, how is our guest holding up?

The NURSE blows her horn twice.

DOCTOR

Terrrrific. Now let's do 90 volts for four seconds and really send a blow to the homo. Hit it!

The ORDERLY throws the switch again. Lights dim low, then grow again. JONAH remains calm and smiles slightly. MISS AMERICA continues her trips, and the pile on top of JONAH grows.

ORDERLY

Doctor, after careful observation, I cannot verify

that these treatments are working.

DOCTOR

Technical difficulties, ladies and gents. We'll be right back after this message from our sponsors.

Lights change as DOCTOR, NURSE, and ORDERLY become themselves again, bickering. Things become frantic.

MISS AMERICA

(suddenly with a Jersey accent)
What is this crap? I'm supposed to twirl my baton.

DOCTOR

(to MISS AMERICA)
Beat it, toots.

MISS AMERICA exits in a huff, but not before laying a huge kiss on Spock on her way out.

DOCTOR

(to NURSE)
What the hell is going on? Is the headgear secure?

NURSE

Yes, Doctor. But his vitals are all over the place!

DOCTOR

Orderly, why is he smiling?

ORDERLY

(to JONAH)
Nebraska, what's going on?

DOCTOR

Once more, dammit. Hurry, while we're still on commercial break. 120 volts at 6 seconds!

NURSE

But that's the maximum, Doctor!

ORDERLY

The machine can't take it!

DOCTOR

DAMMIT, JUST DO IT!

The ORDERLY throws a switch. After six seconds, he tries desperately to turn it off.

ORDERLY

It's stuck!

NURSE

She's gonna blow!

The DOCTOR pushes them aside and tries to turn off the machine. It rages on with electric pulse. Suddenly, JONAH's wrists rip from the restraints. He slowly raises up through the costumes and props until he is on his knees. With chest puffed out and arms flexed he rips his hospital robe in half at the sternum and pulls back the material to reveal a large pink triangle, in the style of a Superman emblem. The DOCTOR, NURSE, and ORDERLY scream. The machine explodes. Blackout.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 15 - LARK

JONAH slowly stirs and opens his eyes. LARK, a teenager, sits on the edge of his bed.

LARK

(matter of fact)

Hi, Dad.

JONAH

What did you call me?

LARK

Dad.

(duh)

Helloo? EARTH TO DAD. Wow, you were really out.

JONAH

Who are you?

LARK

This happens every time you eat a gummy on an empty stomach. I swear, no one listens to me in this house.

JONAH

Are you a boy or a girl?

LARK

(swatting him)

Dad! Ew!

(changing gears, rambling and gossipy)

Omigod, it's so funny you just said that, because remember the dumb boy in my class who keeps saying 'she' and 'her' even though I have told him a million times it's 'they' and 'them'. I told my teacher and he totally got yelled at. Bytheway she might call you later. Is your phone on?

JONAH

My what?

LARK

Your phone. Omigod, DAD. Where is your phone? Did you leave it on the BART again?

JONAH

Give me a minute, I'm hallucinating.

LARK

(giggling)

Don't be such a drama queen. The gummy was CBD, not Acid. SUCH a boomer.

(switching gears)

OH! I got an A on that report. You know, the one about conspiracy theories and landing on the moon? My teacher especially loved how I dismantled the urban legend of Neil Armstrong supposedly playing a tape of Dvořák's 9th Symphony while walking on the moon. You were right. She loved it!

(checking their watch)

Oh, shit - I'm totally late!

JONAH

For what?

LARK

Trans rights rally in the Castro. Papa Michael said I could go.

JONAH

Who?

LARK

(bothered)

YOUR HUSBAND?! God, you're out of it!

JONAH

Wait. Don't leave. Please.

LARK
You're always saying I should stand up for what I believe in. Now you're telling me I can't go? GREAT.

JONAH
Of course you can go. I just...want to look at you.

LARK
You can look at me during dinner. Tilapia thawing on the counter. Gotta go. Love you.

LARK gives JONAH a peck on the cheek and exits.

JONAH
Goodbye. And Hello.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 16 - TICKET BOOTH

JONAH arrives at the Greyhound Bus Station ticket booth in Omaha, Nebraska. He carries a large canvas backpack.

TICKET AGENT
What can I do ya fer?

JONAH
Ticket to San Francisco, please.

The ticket agent looks Jonah up and down.

TICKET AGENT
Just you?

JONAH
(nods)
The next one arrives in a few minutes.

The TICKET AGENT checks the schedule.

TICKET AGENT
Right you are, young man.

JONAH
The fare is exactly sixty-eight dollars.

TICKET AGENT
There and back to Omaha will be one-thirty-six.

JONAH

No. Just one way.

TICKET AGENT

You wanna buy a one-way ticket to San Francisco?

JONAH

Please hurry. It will be here soon.

TICKET AGENT

How old are you? Do your parents know you're here?

JONAH

Here you go. Sixty eight dollars, in cash.

JONAH lays a wad of cash on the counter.

TICKET AGENT

There's only three type of fellers who would buy a one-way ticket to San Francisco. A hippie, a druggie, or a homo.

(looking him over)

Hair's not long enough to be a hippie. To clean cut to be a druggie.

(smiling knowingly)

And you know what that leaves.

JONAH

Please, hurry.
(beat)

TICKET AGENT

I should call your parents so they ken drag your sissy ass right back home. But I can see yer gonna get there one way or another.

The TICKET AGENT takes the cash and hands JONAH the ticket. JONAH grabs it and starts to exit.

TICKET AGENT

(stopping him)

Good things don't usually happen to boys like you in the big city. At the end of the day, all you have is you. It's all that you are, and all that you have.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 17 - RELEASE

Jonah sits in a chair, staring blankly and

listening to the foghorn sounding in the distance. A man enters, holding a manila folder.

SERBER

(warm, cheery)
Jonah Goodson. I'm David Serber, the new Director here at Atascadero. How are you feeling today?

SERBER holds his hand out. JONAH ignores it.

SERBER

No need to be frightened. I'm here to help. Says here you were admitted on May 20, 1971. That's almost three years ago.

JONAH

It was supposed to be three months.

SERBER

That's a shame. I'm sorry about that.

JONAH

What happened to the last Director?

SERBER

He was fired. Along with most of the staff. You're stuck with me.

JONAH looks at SERBER for the first time.

SERBER

Jonah, I want to ask you a very specific question. It's important that you're totally honest with me. Do you like men or women?

JONAH

(blasé)
Men.

SERBER

Is there any confusion about that?

JONAH

Nope.

SERBER

In that case. You're free to go.

JONAH

To my room?

SERBER

You're free to leave the hospital. There's nothing wrong with you.

JONAH

What? How?

SERBER

Times change. The definition of homosexuality has been updated. There's no reason to keep you here.

JONAH

What do I do now?

SERBER

Whatever you want.

(checking the folder)

Looks like you have some money available to pick up once you're released.

JONAH

(shrugging)

Not my money.

SERBER

Says here...four hundred dollars. From your father.

JONAH

I won't go back to Omaha, no matter what...

SERBER

They don't want you back, Jonah. If you take the money, you agree never to come home again.

(beat)

JONAH

I'll go back to San Francisco. Find a place. Get a job.

SERBER

(smiling)

Sounds pretty good to me.

(holding up JONAH's folder)

Looks like you survived three years of psychotropic drugs and electroshock therapy. You must be Superman. Good luck, Jonah.

SERBER exits. The foghorn sounds.

SCENE 18 - PRESENT

Jonah, now elderly, wears an oversize cardigan sweater and spectacles. He sits with an afghan spread over his legs.

Lark, now an adult, enters with groceries and their twelve year-old daughter, Diana.

LARK

Hi Dad, it's Lark. Look who tagged along today.

DIANA

Grandpa!

Diana runs and hugs Jonah with a comic book in her hand.

DIANA

Thank you for the birthday present! Wonder Woman limited edition number one-zero-seven!

Lark sets the groceries down.

LARK

You spoil her too much, Dad. These vintage Wonder Woman comics are expensive.

DIANA

(sarcastic)
Hellooo. It's a collectors item.

She holds the comic book up like a mirror and fluffs her hair.

DIANA

Besides, Diana Prince is my namesake.

LARK

Not true, but it's a fun thought.
(to Jonah)

Didn't I say? Precocious as all get-out. I blame you.

DIANA

What's precocious?

LARK

It means the world is your oyster.

DIANA

Whatever.

LARK

Go grab a sleeping bag. They're in the back closet.

Dianna races offstage.

LARK

She has Space Camp next week. She'll be an astronaut if it kills her. Ever since you bought her that telescope.

She walks over and smooths Jonah's hair.

LARK

Tomorrow is a special day, right Dad?

Jonah looks at Lark, confused at first.

LARK

It's Papa Michael's birthday, remember? He used to love to tell the story of how you met. "In a coffee shop, in Telegraph Hill."

Gives him a squeeze.

I miss him too, Dad. How about if I come over tomorrow and make you dinner?

Jonah smiles and nods. Diana runs back in with the rolled-up sleeping bag.

DIANA

Got it!

LARK

I need to get her home, she has a clarinet lesson, then she's tutoring a friend in algebra.

DIANA

How can algebra be confusing? It's so easy.

LARK

(motioning to the door)
Come on, brainiac.

Lark kisses Jonah on the top of the head. Diana swoops in for another hug.

LARK

Bye, Dad. I'll see you tomorrow.

DIANA

Bye Grandpa!

Lark and Diana exit. The house is quiet.

JONAH

(stammering but self-assured)

I am me, and it's all that I am, and all that I have,
and all that I need.

Blackout.

END OF OPERA