

GAY HAIKU
or Homos. Succinctly.
Eight Vignettes inspired by Joel Derfner's Gay Haiku.

Samuel Perwin © 2012
406 W. 51st Street, #3A
New York, NY 10019

917.881.9111
shperwin@mac.com

Character Breakdown

5 – 3 males

PAUL: Mid to late twenties, Caucasian, attractive

RYAN: Mid to late twenties, Caucasian, attractive

DEAN: Mid to late twenties, darker: Latino, Middle-Eastern, or African American, sexy.

67 – 2 males

BRAD: 25, blond, corn-fed boy from the Midwest.

JASON: 28, typical gay New Yorker, attractive

59 – 2 males

DANNY: 24, but looks younger, thin, but fit, pale, blond or redhead

JAMES: Late-twenties, Caucasian, very fit, very sexy, former model

62 – 1 male, 1 female

GEORGE: Late-twenties, attractive, any ethnicity

KELLY: Late-twenties, fun, smart best-friend. Stylish and well-put together

47 – 2 males

JOE: Late-twenties to early thirties, Caucasian, “Average Joe”

GUY: Late-thirties to early forties, Caucasian, well-heeled.

2 – 2 males, 1 female

JEROME: Early to mid-twenties, African-American, a dancer

DAVID: Mid-twenties, Jewish, tall, skinny, cute.

LINDA: Fifties, Jewish, David’s mother, a little overweight, but well put-together

21 – 4 males

SEAN: Early-thirties, Caucasian, blond, preppy

CASEY: Early-thirties, Caucasian, attractive finance-type guy

JOHN: Late-thirties, Caucasian, attractive finance-type guy

TONY: Early thirties, Caucasian, attractive

11 – 2 males

MARK: Early thirties, waspy, guppy.

NATHAN: Early-thirties, a writer. Bohemian and intellectual.

All roles can double for simplified casting.

#5

A restaurant, probably in Chelsea. Two gay men are having dinner. It's their first date. They peruse the menus as Gay Haiku #5 is projected on the wall behind them:

The salmon's divine
But I'm afraid we can't stay –
I fucked our waiter.

Our diners are RYAN and PAUL. Both suitably attractive, both in their late 20's, single, getting tired of the "scene" and eager for a relationship. Or so they tell themselves. They met online from a popular, respectable dating site.

PAUL: So you've been here before?

RYAN: Yeah, one of my faves. You've really never been?

PAUL: No, I don't get down here much.

RYAN: Where do you live again?

PAUL: Harlem.

RYAN: Right. Well, I'm right around the corner, so I feel like I'm here all the time. The steak salad is really good.

PAUL: I'm a vegetarian.

RYAN: Right, of course, I'm sorry. I remembered that from your profile. And what do you do again?

PAUL: Social Worker. Mostly I work with African-American closeted men in my neighborhood.

RYAN: Oh, like "DL" guys?

PAUL: Exactly. I try to help them to realize their role in the HIV crisis among African-American women. And you do something in television?

RYAN: Yeah...I do development for MTV Reality shows.

PAUL: (*genuinely*) That must be fun?

RYAN: Well, it's not like I'm fighting the AIDS epidemic like you, but yeah, it's OK. Do you watch any?

PAUL: No, I don't have a TV.

RYAN: Oh...

A Pause. DEAN, their waiter, enters. He is dark, maybe Latino, very sexy. Not the brightest bulb in the box.

DEAN: Hey guys, what can I get you two to drink?

RYAN: I'll have... *(he looks up, sees DEAN. A pause)*. Um...I forget what it's called. Hold on. You order. *(He smiles to himself)*

PAUL: Just water's fine for me.

RYAN: You're not having a drink?

PAUL: Not really a big drinker. Plus I read you're not supposed to drink too much on a first date.

RYAN: Right. Yeah. I guess just a Diet Coke.

DEAN: You got it. *(To Ryan)* Sorry, do I know you? You look familiar.

RYAN: I'm here a lot. I live around the corner.

DEAN: No, it's not that.... I'll think of it. Be right back.

PAUL: So what else is good besides the steak salad?

RYAN: *(Still in his menu)* Sorry? What? Um...I don't know - everything's pretty good. I think I had the salmon once... oh wait, sorry, vegetarian...

PAUL: Yeah – I actually did do the pescatarian thing for a while. But then I read all these articles about the fishing industry and you know, it's almost as bad as the beef people. I don't think I could stomach a burger anymore...

RYAN: *(hasn't heard a word of this)* Mmmmm, yeah a burger sounds great.

PAUL: What's up? You seem distracted.

RYAN: *(He doth protest too much)* What? No! I'm fine. Are you an appetizer guy?

PAUL: Ever since the waiter showed up you've been acting weird.

RYAN: Who, Dean? Oh no...he's just...

PAUL: You know his name?

RYAN: *(Thinking fast)* I told you, I come here a lot. He works here.

PAUL: OK... You sure that's it?

RYAN: I may have met him...um... once before. Not precisely in this location. But it was like years ago. I didn't even know he worked here.

PAUL: You're acting like you guys dated or something.

RYAN: Dated is a little...strong.

PAUL: Ha! You totally hooked up with the waiter! Look at you, you're blushing.

RYAN: I... Look it's not... OK, fine, yes, I slept with the waiter!

PAUL: Good job! He's hot!

RYAN: No, it wasn't like that.

PAUL: Like what? He wasn't hot? Could have fooled me.

RYAN: No, I mean...Yes, it was hot. Very hot. But no...I just don't want you to think I'm some kind of raging slut or anything.

PAUL: Why would I think that?

DEAN re-enters with Diet Coke and water.

DEAN: There ya go. I think I got it. Do you work at Marc Jacobs?

RYAN: Um...no.

DEAN: Damn. I could have sworn you were the sales guy I hooked up with in the dressing room last week. That was fun... It'll come to me. You guys ready to order?

RYAN: I think we need a minute.

DEAN: OK. Awww, first dates. I hope you guys make it.

RYAN: Thanks.

DEAN goes.

PAUL: Looks like you're not the only raging slut in the restaurant.

RYAN: See, this is what I'm talking about.

PAUL: What?

RYAN: Just because one night, like 3 years ago I go online and have one crazy weird hook-up to console myself from a really bad break-up, you think I'm some kind of internet whore!

PAUL: We met online.

RYAN: Um...yeah, this wasn't so much a "dating" site.

PAUL: Ah...

RYAN: But I swear, I don't have an account anymore.

PAUL: Why not? Didn't enjoy it?

RYAN: No, I did, kind of. A lot... But no, that's not what I want. I'm a relationship kind of guy. In fact, I think online hook-ups are killing gay culture.

PAUL: Where'd you read that?

RYAN: A magazine. But I agree.

PAUL: Why? I thought that was our culture.

RYAN: I hope gays have brought more to the world than interior design and casual sex.

PAUL: Like Reality TV?

RYAN: That's not fair. You know what I'm talking about. I don't want to be one of those guys who's 45 and still posting ads on Craigslist saying things like "Mature bottom dying for a fuck from a young top stud. Can be generous." It's depressing.

PAUL: So, you're cruising Craigslist too?

RYAN: Stop it. I want a boyfriend. A monogamous relationship. Isn't that why you signed up for this site?

PAUL: Of course, but I didn't delete my other accounts.

RYAN: What!?

PAUL: Why so shocked?

RYAN: I just didn't think you were that kind of guy.

PAUL: What kind of guy? One who likes sex?

RYAN: No...

PAUL: Try not to look so disappointed that I actually have a libido.

RYAN: See! You're getting all defensive because you know you're kind of ashamed of it!

PAUL: No, I'm just sick of self-righteous bitches who give me shit because in between bad dates I might like to actually have a good time with another guy.

RYAN: I'm self-righteous!? What about you with your "Ooh, I'm a vegetarian and ooh I'm saving Harlem from AIDS." Please. Obviously you're just trying to kill your own guilt and shame about being some kind of disease-ridden sex addict.

PAUL: At least I'm not living like some sort of self-denying monk! Do you actually expect me to believe that the last time you had sex was 3 years ago after a break-up?

RYAN: Yes! *(He takes a moment to realize this is actually true. Then mouths "Wow")*

PAUL: Well, no wonder you're in such a bad mood.

DEAN is back.

DEAN: *(To Ryan)* New Jersey?

RYAN: I'm really gonna need you to give us a minute.

DEAN goes.

RYAN: *(Getting up)*. Look, I'm not trying to be judgmental or whatever. You do and fuck whatever and whomever you want. But, this is just not what I'm looking for.

PAUL: Oh, come on, sit down.

RYAN: No, I think I should just go.

DEAN: *(Entering quickly)* I know who you are! You're that I guy I pity-fucked like 3 years ago who keeps messaging me on Manhunt like every other day. If this is your sick way of making me jealous or something, you're seriously crazy. It's not gonna happen again, ok? It wasn't that good the first time.

RYAN is speechless. A long pause.

PAUL: I'll have the steak salad.

BLACKOUT

67

Your CD rack has
No Barbra, Britney, or Cher.
Are you sure you're gay?

Lights up on an apartment in Murray Hill. Fairly generic, upscale, luxury building studio. If you're 25, single, and work in finance, this is where you live. The place is messy, but not a pigsty: clothes here and there, some empty beer bottles on the kitchen counter – just looks like someone who wasn't expecting company. The door opens to reveal BRAD, a nice finance guy – new to the City. He is followed closely by JASON, a more seasoned New Yorker – dressed a bit gayer, but comfortably. JASON is only slightly older than BRAD, but not yet 30.

BRAD: So this is it!

JASON: Wow, all this in Murray Hill. Who knew?

BRAD: I told you it's not a wasteland over here.

JASON: And here I thought I'd turn into a pillar of salt if I ever crossed 5th Avenue north of 23rd Street.

BRAD: It's nice, right?

JASON: Yeah, if you're into the whole i-banker bachelor pad thing.

BRAD: Well, it's close to work. *(He notices the slight mess and starts gathering clothes)* I should have cleaned. I wasn't expecting...um...company tonight. Frankly, I didn't know what to expect tonight.

JASON: What does that mean?

BRAD: I don't know. This girl from my office says I have to meet you because you're this great, fun guy and I don't know *anybody* in New York yet, and that you'd show me the town. She was probably just sick of me whining about how I never get out, so she took pity on me.

JASON: You think I'd drag my ass all the way to 3rd Avenue for some charity case.

BRAD: Then why'd you have a drink with me?

JASON: Because you're cute.

A beat. BRAD blushes, but smiles.

BRAD: You..uh...you want a beer?

JASON: Sure.

BRAD: All I have is Coors Light – is that OK?

JASON: I suppose it'll have to be.

BRAD gets the beers and opens them, a cheers. JASON begins to wander around the apartment, as BRAD sips nervously. Jason stops at a large CD tower.

JASON: Wow.

BRAD: What?

JASON: I didn't even know they still made these.

BRAD: I know. I couldn't bear to part with my CD collection. I ripped them all a while ago, but something about that tower. I don't know. CDs were the first thing I ever bought with my own money. Made me feel like I owned something.

JASON: That's sweet. Well, let's see what we've got here. Some Springstein, Billy Joel – respectable. Nirvana, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Pearl Jam – ah, the 90's – ooh, Jamiroquai. Nice. No En Vogue?

BRAD: Who?

JASON: Really? That's what defined the 90's for me – the black girl hip-hop groups. Salt 'n' Pepa, En Vouge, TLC, SWV – none of this ringing a bell?

BRAD: No, sorry. I was more into the grungy-rock and roll stuff.

JASON: So what was the last actual CD you bought?

BRAD: Probably, Radiohead? Or the first Coldplay album. I'm not totally stuck in the past I swear. I have a Nano. I download music.

JASON: No, I think it's charming. And sometimes a person's music collection can tell you a lot about them.

BRAD: So, what's on your ipod?

JASON: Oh, the usual gay hits. Whitney, Britney, Kylie, Robyn – when I want something a little more soulful, I go for some Aretha or Nina Simone.

BRAD: Well, you seem to have it all figured out.

JASON: Do you?

BRAD: What does that mean?

JASON: Why'd you want to have a drink with me?

BRAD: Well, Liz said you were fun and would show me around.

JASON: And that's it?

BRAD: And I could probably afford to expand my social circle outside of mergers and acquisitions.

JASON: And...?

BRAD: And what?

JASON: Brad, are you gay?

BRAD: Yes...?

JASON: You sound unsure.

BRAD: More unsure why you're unsure. Weren't we just on a date?

JASON: Frankly, I had no idea. You show up looking like you fell out of a Brooks Brothers catalog circa 1997, you talk my ear off about your strange obsession with the History Channel, you live on *Third Avenue*, and you don't have a single gay icon in your music collection – I mean, not even some classic Cher!? I'm just looking for some common ground here. I'm pushing 30 – otherwise known as dead in gay years – and I'm just too old to develop a crush on some perfect looking, 25 year old, Abercrombie-blond, straight guy. I spent most of college doing that. So are we gonna make out, or what?

A beat. They do. BRAD initiates. Just at the point where they might collapse on the couch and start removing clothing, JASON pulls away.

BRAD: What? What now?

JASON: I gotta go.

BRAD: Why?

JASON: I don't even know what I'm doing here. You are like all kinds of fantasies going on in my head. I mean, the perfectly straight-acting finance guy who secretly likes dudes...Jesus, it reads like the synopsis of a bad porn. Admittedly one I've probably jerked-off to a few thousand times, but you're not that...you're actually here. And... And I don't know how to talk to you.

BRAD: Weren't we just talking?

JASON: Yes, a conversation in which I figured out we have nothing in common. And yeah, you're hot. Really hot. But maybe that's not enough for me anymore. Brad, I think... I think you're not gay enough for me.

BRAD: I...um....what does that even mean?

JASON: It means I want someone who shares my interests. It means I'm getting too old to hook up with closeted finance guys anymore just for the thrill of it.

BRAD: But I'm not in the closet.

JASON: No, basically you are.

BRAD: No, really, I'm not. So I like cheap beer, and, and don't wear \$200 jeans or listen to Britney Spears or whoever. And I'd rather live close to my office than in a neighborhood surrounded by gays. I like guys. I might even like you. Do you really only want to date people who look, act, and think exactly like you?

JASON: But why would I want to date someone who isn't interested in any of the things I am?

BRAD: Because maybe you might discover that there's a world beyond 9th Avenue and fading pop divas?

JASON: But that's my world! I live on 9th Avenue. I first made out with a guy at a trashy gay bar with "Strong Enough" blaring in the background. This is my history – my culture.

BRAD: OK, so I'm from a different culture. Why is that a bad thing? People from different cultures get together all the time.

JASON: Brad, why are you even interested in me?

BRAD: Because I think you're cute. And unlike you, I'm not interested in dating a clone of myself. I think your life is interesting *because it's different* from mine. Maybe I'm not getting all your black-girl-groups of the 90's references, but now I have new music to download. You remind me that my own little bubble isn't all there is – isn't that why we meet new people? Whatever, forget it. I had a nice time tonight, Jason. Maybe I'll see you around – although probably not since you don't seem to come to this neighborhood much.

A beat. JASON heads for the door. Stops.

JASON: You think I'm cute?

BRAD: Yeah. Super-cute.

JASON: Now that was pretty gay.

BRAD: Well maybe I have some potential after all.

JASON: Jury's still out.

BRAD: I heard it was hung.

JASON: And look at you with the sexually suggestive humor. You're just full of surprises aren't you?

BRAD: You should stick around and find out.

JASON: Maybe I will.

He starts to go again.

BRAD: So that's it?

JASON: For tonight. I think the lesson of the evening is that I shouldn't jump to any conclusions too quickly.

BRAD: I respect that.

JASON: So...goodnight then.

BRAD: Good night.

A quick kiss.

JASON: Kelly Clarkson?

BRAD: I love her!

JASON: I can work with that!

BLACKOUT

59

A kitchen in the East Village - a nice one with marble countertops, new appliances and the like. There is a bowl of fruit and a blender. Offstage we can hear many guys having sex: grunts, moans, "oh yeahs," etc.: an orgy - perhaps accompanied by some low, thumping house music. DANNY emerges from offstage, completely naked, looking a little dazed and overwhelmed as Haiku #59 appears above him:

Break from the orgy
Stand nude in the kitchen and
Discuss Top Model

DANNY leans on the counter to catch his breath. He's fit but skinny, looks younger than he actually is, pale (a redhead?). He's definitely out of his element here, but having a good time – just needed a breather. As he tries to compose himself JAMES enters, also naked, and goes to the fridge to pour himself a glass of water. JAMES is hot, in perfect shape, very confident. He has a tattoo, but it need not be visible (in fact, it's better if it's not).

[A Note on Nudity: While the actors should appear naked (i.e. at the very least shirtless), they need not actually be. Some clever placement of counters or kitchen islands can alleviate the need for actual nudity. The staging, however, should not require the actors to appear nude – this depends on the discretion of the director and the comfort level of the actors.]

DANNY notices JAMES and gasps a little. Spends the next moment or so trying to come up with the perfect nonplussed pose. JAMES watches, amused. A beat.

DANNY: *(In his most macho porn-star voice):* Hey.

JAMES: *(with a laugh):* First time?

DANNY: *(Dropping the pose):* Uh...yeah.

JAMES: Having fun?

DANNY: *(Smiles)* I mean...how could you not with so many...

JAMES: Yeah. Didn't I see you over with the two...?

DANNY: Yeah. That was...

JAMES: It looked like it. I would have... but I was busy with the... you know...

DANNY: Yeah.

A Beat.

DANNY: You noticed me in there?

JAMES: Just that I hadn't seen you here before.

DANNY: Oh. Are you a...regular?

JAMES: I've been to a few. I've known Don for a while.

DANNY: Nice apartment.

JAMES: Right? That's really what I'm here for. The real estate porn.

DANNY: (*Attempting a joke*) And not the actual porn.

JAMES: Right.

DANNY looks around. Notices a photograph.

DANNY: Is that...you?

JAMES: Oh... Yeah... I told you, Don and I go back.

DANNY: So, you used to model?

JAMES: I did.

DANNY: That must have been pretty...

JAMES: It was awful, actually. But it paid the bills.

DANNY: (*Another photograph – very excited*): Oh my god, is that Naima!?

JAMES: Who?

DANNY: Um...Season 2 Top Model winner!?! Yeah, that's her. I remember that ad. I forgot that Don shot it. She's my favorite. So genuine. The show's really all been downhill since then. Basically just a Tyra freak-show. And don't get me started on Miss J. You never watched?

JAMES: A bit, but not really. If you were a doctor, would you want to come home and watch Grey's Anatomy? But from what I saw, that wasn't really my experience. The girls have it so much harder. With guys it's basically keep the arms flexed, the abs smooth, and the eyes droopy and you're good to go.

DANNY: Fair enough. It taught me so much about the industry, though. The difference between runway and print, the composition of a photograph, the use of the word "catalogue" as an insult.

JAMES: *(with a laugh)* Really, it's not that interesting. What do you do?

DANNY: I work in publishing. Intellectually stimulating, but not exactly lucrative. Why'd you give it up?

JAMES: Got too old. Too tired of the bullshit. And definitely too tired of worrying about my abs.

DANNY: Looks like you still worry about those a bit.

JAMES: Old habits die hard, I guess.

DANNY: Not that I'm complaining...

A beat. JAMES smiles and sips his water.

JAMES: So, what's your story?

DANNY: Excuse me?

JAMES: The first timers always have a story. Trying something new. Need a change. You just come out?

DANNY: No, I've been out since high-school.

JAMES: Which was like, what, a year ago? You look like you're 17.

DANNY: I'm 24.

JAMES: Just moved to New York?

DANNY: No, I went to Columbia.

JAMES: *(Not a question)* Bad break up.

DANNY: No, it...it wasn't that bad.

JAMES: Uh-huh...Bad enough to drive you from monogamy to group sex.

DANNY: It was never...

JAMES: I see.

DANNY: He liked to... do this.

JAMES: Oh God, he isn't here is he? That never ends well.

DANNY: No, no. That's why we... I mean, he always wanted to...with me... and I couldn't deal... so I thought if I...

JAMES: Got it. And?

DANNY: What?

JAMES: Now can you deal?

DANNY: You're awfully presumptuous for someone who...

JAMES: (*indignant*) Who what?

DANNY: Who doesn't even know my name.

JAMES: (*Offering a hand*) I'm James.

DANNY: (*Taking it*) Danny.

JAMES: Nice to meet you, Danny.

DANNY: I don't believe I've ever introduced myself to someone naked before.

JAMES: It's a whole night of firsts, apparently (*He hops up to sit on the counter, or something to make himself more comfortable – see note above – and grabs a piece of fruit*) How'd you hear about Don?

DANNY: What are you, in marketing now?

JAMES: Yes, actually, but not for Don – he couldn't afford me.

DANNY: Even with this apartment?

JAMES: I'm that good.

DANNY: I'll bet. I got an e-mail from someone who knows someone. The internet is a wonderful thing.

JAMES: Isn't it?

DANNY: So what's your story?

JAMES: (*Laughs*) No dice. I'm not a first timer.

DANNY: But you were at one point. I thought everyone had a story. You can't still be getting over a break-up.

JAMES: Nice try. But no I'm not. I'm just having fun. Didn't you tell me you were having a good time?

DANNY: Yeah, but I'm not sure I could make this a regular thing. Who wants to live in a porn fantasy?

JAMES: Who doesn't want to live in a porn fantasy?

DANNY: It's not real.

JAMES: It's as real as anything else. (*Half a beat*). Look, did you love him?

DANNY: What?

JAMES: Your guy that likes orgies. Did you love him?

DANNY: Yeah. I think I did.

JAMES: And that was real to you, wasn't it? But it wasn't real to him. This was. That wasn't what he wanted, so it didn't work out. Who are you to say what's real and what's not? Real is relative.

DANNY: That's such a cop-out.

JAMES: Bullshit. That's life. Real is what works for you. If you can find someone whose real matches yours, great. It might even be love. But you can't expect people to change what they want for your version of real. Whether you believe it or not, this is real. Listen... it's happening. And you're here. You chose to come.

DANNY: Ok, but then why does everyone have a story? Why did you first start coming? It's all just reactionary, isn't it?

JAMES: Because Don invited me. And I like sex. You want some sob story? Sorry to disappoint you, but for me it's just not that complicated.

DANNY: Then what's your tattoo about?

A beat. JAMES smiles.

JAMES: Good eye.

DANNY: Well, it's hard not to notice a tattoo that says "Always" scrawled across your hip.

JAMES: That's for a friend.

DANNY: Uh-huh. I think I feel a sob story coming on...

JAMES: Well, it's not exactly uplifting. I had a friend I used to come to these with. A model too. (*points to another photograph*). That's him. Alex.

DANNY: Ok...

JAMES: He was a sad guy. It's so easy to get drawn into some scary shit in that business when you don't have your head on straight. Don's little soirees are pretty sane as far as these things go. Safe sex. No drugs. Not too many guys. Nothing...crazy. Alex got bored with that. He was always searching for something more dangerous. And he found it. Started with the drugs, and the barebacking. He was already so sick when he finally got tested. It hit him like a ton of bricks. He refused meds, got pneumonia and died. He just didn't want to fight.

DANNY: Wow. So what's "Always?"

JAMES: In the hospital, he told me he didn't want to be a public service announcement, that he wasn't dying to scare me straight, and that he'd come back from the dead and kick my ass if I stopped having fun. But "Always" is to always be safe, and always be smart, and always fight. And to always be who I am. So that's why I come to Don's. That and I like his taste in men.

DANNY: That's...quite a story.

JAMES: Well, we've all got one, right? (*Beat*). You ready to head back in?

DANNY: I think I might be done for the night.

JAMES considers him for a moment, then grabs him and kisses him hard. It lasts for just a bit too long.

JAMES: How about now?

DANNY: Do you want to get dressed and get out of here?

JAMES: No, I want you to come back in there with me.

DANNY: Very...tempting... but, I think it's time for me to get out of here.

JAMES: I didn't scare you or anything, did I?

DANNY: No, actually I think you've made things a lot clearer, somehow. So, thanks.

JAMES: Anytime.

DANNY: Have fun in there.

JAMES: I always do.

BLACKOUT

62

Lights up on GEORGE on the couch in his apartment, wearing a tank-top and sweats, eating a bag of chips, watching TV, something mindless. He picks up his phone. Checks it. Nothing. He frowns and glares at it and puts it down. Two seconds later he picks it up and checks to make sure the ringer works. It does and the phone bleeps – he considers a few ring tone changes, nods, puts it down again, glares and sighs as Haiku #62 appears above him.

“I’ll call you Wednesday.”
The phone didn’t ring. Maybe
He meant next Wednesday?

His roommate KELLY enters, she’s a bit sweaty at the moment, but otherwise put together, dressed stylishly and professionally. She’s carrying a shopping bag. She’s an assistant at a production company, but clearly smarter than her boss. She’s adorable, perky and fun. Everyone loves her. She is NOT a fag-hag, but she is George’s best friend. They went to college together and have been roommates for years. They have an easy banter and are always on the same page – the type of roommates who are unstoppable at Taboo.

KELLY: Oh my god, it’s so hot.

GEORGE: A/C’s on.

KELLY: Thank Jeebus.

She walks to the a/c and cools herself. GEORGE notices the shopping bag.

GEORGE: What’s that?

KELLY: Ugh, attempt number 493 at finding an outfit for the premiere party. I went to Forever 21 and tried on like 27 dresses.

GEORGE: What’s up, Katherine Heigel?

KELLY: I didn’t even do that on purpose! But they were all too slutty and asymmetrical.

GEORGE: And too polyester.

KELLY: Also that. Then I went to JCrew and tried on some sensible separates that I could sensibly jazz up with some big accessories.

GEORGE: Sensible.

KELLY. But then I figured JCrew Girl in my office would most likely be wearing a dress from JCrew to the premiere because EVERYTHING she wears is...from JCrew.

GEORGE (*at the same time*) ...from JCrew.

KELLY: Hence the name. So finally I just wandered the streets of Nolita until I ended up in...

GEORGE: Rebecca Taylor?

KELLY: (*a pause*) No...

GEORGE: Really?

KELLY: But everything just looks so cute on me there!

GEORGE: Hey, it's your credit card bill.

KELLY: You're one to talk. But look!

She pulls it out. It is indeed very cute.

GEORGE: (*forlornly*) Oh God, that is really cute.

KELLY: What's the matter? (*Beat*). He didn't call.

GEORGE: He didn't call!

KELLY: Douchebag!

GEORGE: Total douchebag! I hate men. I am one and I hate us. But I don't do this boy shit. Saying I'm going to call on a particular day and then (*to the phone*) NOT CALLING.

KELLY: OK, what did he say exactly? Maybe you misconstrued?

GEORGE: He said, "I'll call you Wednesday."

KELLY: Yeah, that's pretty clear.

GEORGE: Douchebag!

KELLY: Total douchebag!

GEORGE: I'm going to die alone.

KELLY: No you're not!

GEORGE: Yes, I am. It's fine. I've accepted it.

KELLY: (*Sits on the couch and gives him a hug*) You have me!

GEORGE: Please. You're going to be married in like 5 minutes, and I'll still be here, night after night, in this crappy apartment waiting for the phone to ring.

KELLY: Don't knock the apartment just because you're in a bad mood.

GEORGE: Fine.

KELLY: And whom exactly am I marrying?

GEORGE: Some nice boy who actually calls when he says he's going to.

KELLY: So....you?

GEORGE: Not funny. You have men falling all over you – sometimes literally.

KELLY: That was hilarious. I wonder if he got his nose fixed.

GEORGE: Well, it would have been an improvement.

KELLY: Hey! He was cute! Just not the most graceful of fellows.

GEORGE: Indeed. Ugh. Why didn't he call? Or text to say he couldn't call because he got hit by a bus.

KELLY: Well, if he got hit by a bus, he couldn't exactly text, could he?

GEORGE: Whose side are you on here?

KELLY: Sorry. Definitely hit by a bus. Or at least deserves to be. This is doctor-guy?

GEORGE: Med student.

KELLY: So, maybe he's busy. Med students are busy!

GEORGE: He told me Wednesday was his day off, and that he'd call me and we'd "hang out." In gay-speak that usually means "I want to come over and blow you," which, clearly, he doesn't want to do. But this guy doesn't have the decency to let me know he doesn't want to come over and blow me. Instead he's decided to just faze me out. Like I never existed. Like it's not even worth his time to say "oh, hey, I know we went on a couple of dates and I seemed to give you the impression I was interested in dating you or at the very least fooling around with you a couple of times, but in reality I was just being polite in the guise of being charming and you are too fat for me to even consider dating and/or fucking."

A beat. KELLY takes the chips away from him.

KELLY: You're not fat.

GEORGE: Then why didn't he call!? I'm great! I'm reasonably attractive...

KELLY: You are more than reasonably attractive!

GEORGE: Well, I know, but was trying out humility for a change.

KELLY: How'd that go?

GEORGE: Not really me, to be honest.

KELLY: Mmmhmmm.

GEORGE: But see! I'm smart, I'm funny, I'm gainfully employed...sometimes.

KELLY: He's a doctor - he's not looking for a sugar daddy.

GEORGE: And I am working on my triceps!

KELLY: They look great! But I don't think he didn't call you because of any deficiency in your triceps.

GEORGE: Triceps are important!

KELLY: I know, hon, I know. But you and I both know it's not that simple. There are plenty of men with lovely triceps who don't have boyfriends, and plenty of flabby-armed men who do.

GEORGE: There are no flabby-armed gays.

KELLY: Perhaps not in Hell's Kitchen, but I'm sure they exist. And perhaps they have boyfriends because they care about more than how potential partners look in tank tops.

GEORGE: So I'm shallow, and that's why he didn't call me?

KELLY: George, you're missing the point here. We've had this conversation a million times. Dating in New York is impossible because everyone always thinks they can do better. How many guys have you conveniently forgotten to text because they weren't tall enough?

GEORGE: You know I can't date under 5'11!

KELLY: Or didn't have enough hair!

GEORGE: I need good hair!

KELLY: Will you shut up a second? I'm not attacking your personal preferences. I'm merely saying, there could be a very good reason he didn't call, e.g., he did actually get hit by a bus. Or it could be a stupid reason, like he's only dating blond boys this month.

GEORGE: So I should dye my hair?

KELLY: Would be inappropriate of me to smack you?

GEORGE: Yes, you know I bruise easily.

KELLY: My point, dearest Georgie, is that for whatever reason, this idiot med student does not see all the wonderful things you are past the arbitrary list of things you aren't. We all do it – I'm not saying it's right, but we all do it and apparently what goes around comes around. As an active participant in this cruel game, you have to accept that you're going lose as many times as you win.

GEORGE: *(takes a deep breath)* Why are you so wise?

KELLY: It's a gift.

GEORGE: Thanks.

KELLY: Anytime. Now, open a bottle of wine and I will show you why I decided this dress will be worth only eating Lean Pockets for a week.

GEORGE: Ok. But tonight we gorge on Thai food. On me. I'm not done eating my feelings yet.

KELLY: Fair. The usual?

GEORGE: With spring rolls?

KELLY: Just this once.

GEORGE: Yay!

KELLY: But if you keep eating like that you're never going to get a man.

GEORGE: Oh, you bitch.

KELLY: Love you!

BLACKOUT

47

The downtown #1 Train: a not so crowded car. There are a few sundry straphangers. JOE sits center. He's listening to his iPod, looking glum. He's had a bad day. He's in his early 30's, good looking but not a model. He's a regular gay joe. We come to a stop – say 59th street – and GUY enters. He's a bit older – pushing 40 – fairly dashing, well-heeled. He's carrying a briefcase. Their eyes meet as Gay Haiku #47 appears:

I'm considering
Giving up casual sex
I hate the subway

GUY has a moment of recognition, JOE smiles politely, but doesn't engage. A few beats go by as GUY considers his approach. Finally...

GUY: Hi...Excuse me...Sorry. Do we know each other?

JOE: *(Annoyingly removing one earphone)* Sorry?

GUY: Don't I know you?

JOE: Um...I don't think so?

GUY: I'm Guy. I think we...uh...met about a year ago?

JOE: Hi Guy. Great to see you again *(He starts putting his earphones back in)*

GUY: Do you remember where?

JOE: *(He sighs – this guy isn't going away)* No, sorry, I don't.

GUY: You were a waiter at my firm's holiday party. I'm a lawyer.

JOE: Hence the briefcase.

GUY: *(Laughs)* Right. That's right. That's funny. I remember you were funny.

JOE: Thanks, Guy.

GUY: You really don't remember me at all, do you?

JOE: I work a lot of holiday parties.

GUY: Well, I figured you'd remember this one.

JOE: And why's that, Guy?

GUY: Because I fucked your brains out in the coat room.

A beat.

JOE: That Christmas party. Yes, Guy, I remember you.

GUY: But you didn't recognize me?

JOE: It was dark?

GUY: It wasn't that dark. Ok...well...uh...nice to see you again.

JOE: Wait, I'm sorry. I'm an asshole. I've just had a really shitty day. How've you been?

GUY: Good. Really good. Made partner.

JOE: Congrats.

GUY: Thanks. And you? You're an actor, right?

JOE: Guilty as charged.

GUY: How's it going?

JOE: Great. Fine. Terrible. I just found out I didn't get a job.

GUY: So I guess that means more catering?

JOE: I guess it does.

GUY: Sorry, that was rude.

JOE: Don't sweat it.

GUY: Look, you seem like you'd rather just be left alone. Sorry you didn't get that job. What was it for anyway?

JOE: Law & Order.

GUY: I love Law & Order! Which one?

JOE: SVU.

GUY: Sexy Victim's Unit.

JOE: What?

GUY: Sorry, that's what my friends and I call it. Because they seem to only find the sexiest rape victims around.

JOE: Well, I guess I just wasn't a sexy enough rapist.

GUY: I'm sure that wasn't it. You were pretty damn sexy in the coat room.

JOE: (*Smiles*) Thanks. (*A beat.*) Hey, this is gonna sound random, but do you remember my name?

GUY: Actually, I don't think you ever told it to me.

JOE: It's Joe.

GUY: Well, nice to finally meet you, Joe. Why do you ask if I remembered?

JOE: I'm feeling a bit...forgettable these days. Or at least that's what my agent is telling me.

GUY: What does that even mean?

JOE: You read these casting notices and they say "Average Joe" and I'm like "That's me! Average Joe," but then I see the guys who book the parts and they're not Average Joes. So now I feel like I have to be not-so-Average-Joe. My agent wants me to lose 10 pounds and change my name.

GUY: That's ridiculous. To what?

JOE: She just wants me to start using Joseph instead of Joe. Says it sounds more distinguished or something. More memorable. But I think I should go all the way, like Giuseppe or Johann. A completely different language.

GUY: Well, that is memorable.

JOE: But you remembered me. Without even knowing my name.

GUY: Yeah, but I wouldn't recommend doing what we did with casting directors. You'll start to get yourself a reputation.

JOE: It couldn't hurt.

GUY: Sometimes I feel the same way. Just another suit and a briefcase. And my name is Guy. Doesn't get any more generic than that.

JOE: Unless it's Joe.

GUY: We're all trying to make our mark. You picked a tough route.

JOE: You sound like my mother.

GUY: God forbid.

JOE: Well, Guy. It was nice to see you again. I mean it this time.

GUY: You too, Joe. Hey, if you ever want to have another memorable night, gimme a call. (*He hands JOE his card*).

JOE: I might just do that. Oh, and Guy?

GUY: Yeah?

JOE: Thanks.

GUY: For what?

JOE: For remembering.

GUY: Anytime, Joe. See ya.

A ding of the subway doors, and he goes. JOE looks at the card and smiles.

BLACKOUT

2

Lights up on a small New York apartment in Hell's Kitchen. JEROME sits on the couch arranging magazines on a coffee table. He is attractive, in his 20's, African-American, a dancer. He tries one way of displaying the magazines, scraps it, tries another, uncovers a DVD on the coffee table, and swears under his breath as we see Gay Haiku #2 projected on the wall:

Frantically hiding
Porno and Mapplethorpe prints –
Mom is on her way

We hear footsteps coming up the stairs, perhaps with some huffing and puffing of the middle-aged Jewish woman variety. JEROME swears again, panics, runs to the kitchen and puts the DVD in a drawer as the door opens and LINDA enters with DAVID behind her. Linda is in her fifties, slightly overweight but well put-together. Smart, capable. Not your typical stay-at-home Jewish Mom. Her son is DAVID, a writer. He's a little too smart for his own good, tall, skinny, cute. This is DAVID and JEROME's apartment.

JEROME: *(a little too excitedly)* LINDA!

LINDA: Baby! How are you!? *(A hug)*. Ugh, sorry I'm shvitzing. I don't know how you do that every day with the five flights. And with my knees! Hold on, I need to sit.

She plops on the couch, notices the magazines, and adjusts them slightly. This does not go unnoticed by Jerome.

DAVID: Well, Mother, whenever you would like to pay for us to live in a building with an elevator, we'd be more than happy to accept a down-payment. *(To Jerome)* Hi hon. *(A brief kiss)*. Mom, you want some water?

LINDA: No no, I'm fine, she panted exhaustedly...

DAVID: So that's a yes? *(To Jerome, under his breath)* Kitchen looks good. Bathroom?

JEROME: Spotless.

DAVID: I love you.

JEROME: You'd better. Any idea yet?

DAVID: She still won't say anything.

LINDA: Is this a new coffee table?

JEROME: No, same one. It's just clean.

LINDA: Well, that must be the difference then.

A pause as she surveys the apartment

DAVID: Mom?

LINDA: Did you get rid of Grandpa's old chair?

DAVID: I told you it was falling apart.

LINDA: And you replaced it with this?

DAVID: It was Jerome's idea.

JEROME: *(To David)* I will kill you where you stand.

LINDA: Your grandfather held you in his lap in that chair. That chair was family. That chair had history. You could have gotten it fixed for the same price as this... mass-produced, soulless...

DAVID: Mom! The chair is fine. It's a nice chair. Grandpa's chair was old. Did you really come all the way here to talk about the damn chair?

LINDA: I need a reason to come see my son?

DAVID: You said you had something you wanted to tell us and it had to be in person. And Jerome spent the whole day cleaning the apartment...

LINDA: Baby, you did not have to do that for me.

JEROME: Yes I did.

DAVID: So would you please just tell us what's going on?

LINDA: Fine. *(With a deep breath)*. I have decided to become a lesbian.

A beat. Silence.

LINDA: I wanted you guys to be the first to know.

JEROME stifles laughter.

DAVID: Oh Jesus.

LINDA: *(To Jerome)*. How dare you!

DAVID: *(To Jerome)* Shut it.

JEROME: Oh come on!

DAVID: Please let me handle this. (*Back to LINDA*). Mom, um, it really doesn't work that way.

LINDA: What doesn't?

JEROME: Linda, you don't just wake up one day and decide that you want to become a lesbian.

DAVID: (*To Jerome*): What did I just say!?

LINDA: I thought you'd be happy for me.

DAVID: What's going on with Dad?

LINDA: Nothing. Your father and I are fine. I just think I would like to try being a lesbian for a while. I think it would be good for me.

DAVID: How, exactly?

LINDA: I was reading this article in the Times about the Power Lesbians of the Lower East Side. And I thought "this sounds like me!" Most of them are in Art or Lawyers. And I thought between my masters in Art History and 30 years being married to an attorney all I need is a suit and some better glasses, and BAM! I can get a studio on Rivington and start appreciating Georgia O'Keefe.

JEROME: I think I'm offended.

DAVID: Mom, I don't think you actually want to be a lesbian, you just want to live like one. You can do all those things without having sex with women.

LINDA: But what if I want to have sex with women?

JEROME: Do you?

A Beat. She considers this – perhaps for the first time.

LINDA: (*With a sigh*) No, no I don't think I do.

DAVID: Mom, really. What's wrong? Where's Dad?

LINDA: Oh, your father's off being brilliant. His career's never been better. And what am I doing? Nothing. You and your brother are gone. I've got this whole house in Westchester with no one in it. I'm bored.

JEROME: So what you need is a job, not a whole new sexual identity.

DAVID: What about teaching again?

LINDA: No one's hiring anymore. It's hard enough to get a job these days when you're 25, much less 60. I don't want a job. What I want is a life, you know?

DAVID: And why aren't you talking to Dad about this?

LINDA: I am, I am. I just feel like he's not listening. Why are you so worried about my relationship with your father?

DAVID: Oh, I don't know, maybe because you waltz into my apartment one Saturday afternoon and announce that you would like to move to downtown Manhattan and start having sex with women. You don't think I should be a bit concerned about your marriage?

JEROME: Linda, if I may, it just sounds to me like you need a project. A project that doesn't involve you being a lesbian.

LINDA: Well what would you suggest I do, Jerome?

JEROME: Anything! I'd kill for your free time. Travel. Take classes. Start a blog. Start a foundation!

LINDA: Please. I refuse to be one of those god-damned "philanthropist" housewives. Gene doesn't have time to travel – believe me, I've asked. And a blog? Who would read my blog? Boredjewishhousewives.com? Ha!

DAVID: What about a class? That sounds like a great idea.

JEROME: Why, thank you. See what happens when you let me talk?

LINDA: Ya know, I really think I just need to spend more time in the city. With you guys. I need creative people in my life. Get the juices flowing.

JEROME: Juices? Linda, you don't even know what you want to do. Where exactly will these juices be flowing?

LINDA: Why are you being like this? You'll be here soon enough when your knees give out at 35 and you have to teach ballet to 7 year olds in New Jersey.

JEROME: I give up.

DAVID: Mom, you know we'd love to see you...um...more often, but you're not staying here.

JEROME: Thank you, Jesus.

DAVID: We just don't have the space. And I won't be able to get anything done if you're around.

LINDA: Did I even suggest that? (*Getting up*) Well, I'm sorry to be such a burden.

DAVID: Mom, it's a one-bedroom!

LINDA: No, no. It's fine. I just come here and pour my heart out to you. My son. My youngest, smartest, most wonderful son – and do not tell your brother I said that but we both know it's true – and I get thrown out on the street. This is the thanks I get?

DAVID: That's not what I meant... Come on, sit down...

LINDA: I'll just get out of your hair – you guys have a very nice gay bohemian life and I will just wither and die in Westchester. (*She leaves in a huff*).

DAVID: Great.

JEROME: You know you only have about 10 seconds before she comes back.

DAVID: Maybe less.

And she's back.

LINDA: And I am still upset about your grandfather's chair!

She goes.

DAVID: Of course. (*A beat. They look at each other and smile.*) Thank you.

JEROME: Mmmhmmm.

DAVID: Look at it this way, she didn't get upset about the apartment being a mess!

JEROME: Because you could eat off these floors! You're not going to go after her?

DAVID: I think she needs a good 15 minutes or so. We'll have lunch. I'll figure this out.

JEROME: It's so funny that your Mother is jealous of our life.

DAVID: Is that what you think?

JEROME: Were you not here for that whole thing? She wants to move to the city and be "bohemian."

DAVID: Oh, is that what we are?

JEROME: Yes. Very.

DAVID *laughs and notices the porn DVD sticking out of a drawer. He holds it up.*

JEROME: I panicked.

DAVID: Maybe this is what she needs.

JEROME: Gay porn?

DAVID: Just putting my Mother and porn in the same sentence makes me nauseous.

JEROME: Lesbian porn.

DAVID: You're disgusting.

BLACKOUT

21

Lights up on CASEY with a large shopping cart full of home goods. He looks bored. He's in his mid-thirties, tall, fit, good looking but not strikingly handsome. He's probably a lawyer or works in finance. He's wearing a t-shirt and jeans. Above him on the wall Gay Haiku #21 is projected:

See the gay man in
His natural habitat:
Bed Bath & Beyond

His boyfriend of 2 years, SEAN, enters carrying two waste-baskets. He's a bit younger, a bit feyer, dressed very preppy: polo shirt with the collar up, sweater tied around his neck, moccasins. He's definitely blond. He's also having the time of his life. They have just bought an apartment and moved in together

SEAN: Mesh or wicker?

CASEY: Hmm?

SEAN: For the study. Mesh or wicker?

CASEY: If by study you mean the tiny corner of our already tiny living room that we're partitioning off and putting a desk in, then I say wicker.

SEAN: I like mesh. It goes with my desk organizer (*which he lifts out of the shopping cart*).

CASEY: If you already knew, then why did you ask me?

SEAN: I want you to feel included.

CASEY: I feel included. I'm here. Is that it?

SEAN: What!? I've already started a whole other cart over in bedding!

CASEY: Do we really need all this? You have stuff. I have stuff. Together we have twice as much stuff, and now we're buying more stuff in addition to the tiny, one bedroom apartment we just bought.

SEAN: It's a junior four! And it's perfect. And it's ours. I want this place to be a reflection of both of us, not just a combination of my Martha Stewart collection and your frat-house remnants.

CASEY: My apartment was not a frat-house.

SEAN: (*under his breath*) No, just a replica from an IKEA showroom circa 2001.

CASEY: Excuse me?

SEAN: Nothing! Darling, please, this is what I do - just let me do it, OK? Why are you so grumpy anyway.

CASEY: I need coffee.

SEAN: Awwww, baby needs a cappuccino?

CASEY: Shut-up.

SEAN: We'll take care of baby in a minute. Bedding.

CASEY: *(He moves in closer to SEAN)* You know what else we could do in bedding?

SEAN: Oh yeah? I didn't know being around kitchen appliances got you all hot and bothered.

CASEY: You know how I feel about our Cuisinart...

SEAN giggles and they kiss. As they turn to go with the cart, they run into JOHN and TONY, another couple. TONY has a baby in tow, in a Björn. JOHN is CASEY's ex, also a finance-type guy. TONY's a simple guy – he looks a lot like CASEY.

SEAN: *(all of these overlap)* Hey guys!

CASEY: Oh my God, hey!

JOHN: Fancy seeing you kids here.

Kisses all around.

SEAN: So this is the little bundle! We got your announcement.

TONY: Yeah, she's a handful, but she's pretty damn cute.

SEAN: Now did you guys adopt or surrogacy or what? I feel like it happened so fast...

JOHN: We adopted – I felt strongly about it. So many kids need good homes.

SEAN: Of course, you guys are like saints.

JOHN: Well, I don't know about that... So what's all this for?

CASEY: Our apartment.

JOHN: Our?

SEAN: Yeah, we just bought a place over on 52nd. It's a junior four.

JOHN: Very nice.

TONY: What does that mean?

CASEY: It means we have an extra bathroom and an alcove, and it cost three times as much money.

SEAN: Gotta love New York real-estate, right?

JOHN: Right. Well, great to see you guys. We'd better get to Whole Foods before the afternoon rush. Only organic babyfood for this one. *(He pats the baby).*

CASEY: We'll send you guys an e-mail about the housewarming.

JOHN: Oh, great! See you.

TONY: Bye!

SEAN: Au revoir!

They go.

SEAN: I hate them.

CASEY: I know.

SEAN: But do you? Do you really know the extent to which I hate them?

CASEY: Sean...

SEAN: *(mocking)* "Gotta get to Whole Foods before the afternoon rush" Vomit.

CASEY: This from the man who only eats \$4 Greek yogurt.

SEAN: I like the consistency. Just promise me we won't become that.

CASEY: Become what?

SEAN: Smug. You can just smell the superiority.

CASEY: I think I smell something else...

SEAN: What?

CASEY: Come on, you always get like that around John.

SEAN: And just how do I get?

CASEY: Snippy. Bitter? Jealous? I don't know...

SEAN (*very snippy*): I am *not* snippy.

CASEY: Can we just go back to bedding? (*mock excitement*) Look, hon: duvet covers!

SEAN: If you didn't want to come shopping, you didn't have to come. Go get some coffee, I can do this myself....

Sean's rant should continue through CASEY's interjections.

CASEY: Sean...

SEAN: ...But then I don't want to hear you complaining about how it's not as nice as John's place...

CASEY: ...here we go...

SEAN: ...Because I'm sorry I can't afford the Pratesi sheets or to shop for Organic produce at Whole Foods all the time, or adopt a baby from Zimbabwe or wherever, because I don't make half-a-million dollars a year for doing nothing! I mean, really, what is a hedge fund anyway!?

A beat.

CASEY: Do you really want me to explain to you how hedge funds work?

SEAN: NO!

Another beat.

SEAN: I'm sorry. I just want this apartment to be... nice.

CASEY: It will be.

SEAN: I want it to be the most wonderful apartment ever.

CASEY: It will be! (*He puts his arms around SEAN*) And you know why?

SEAN: (*with an eye roll*) Why?

CASEY: Because you're there.

SEAN: Jesus, what bad romantic comedy did you lift that one from?

CASEY: I'm serious. If I wanted Pratesi sheets, I'd have moved in with John when he asked me to.

SEAN: I didn't know he asked you to move in with him...

CASEY: Yeah. And I said no, because I didn't want that. I didn't want to be a housewife. That's why we broke up.

SEAN: I didn't know that either...

CASEY: So, yes, I can assuredly say we will never become that. Because we're us instead. And we've got a junior four to furnish. So bedding?

SEAN: Bedding. (*CASEY grabs the cart and starts to go*). Hey?

CASEY: Yeah?

SEAN: I love you.

CASEY: I love you, too.

SEAN: Oh, I was talking to the mesh trash-can.

CASEY: Shmuck.

SEAN: Ooh! Window treatments!

BLACKOUT

11

Lights up on an apartment in Park Slope. Tasteful, modern, perfectly decorated. NATHAN, a writer, sits on the couch reading the New Yorker. It's a weekday evening. He's been home all day. As his fiancée, MARK enters excitedly carrying a package, Gay Haiku #11 is projected on the wall:

Gay Marriage gives us
The most vital right of all:
Registry at Saks

MARK is a loveable, Waspy, Guppy. He works for a small marketing firm.

NATHAN: Hi. Look.

NATHAN holds the magazine up to show MARK a cartoon. MARK sets the package down and comes over to the couch.

MARK: Ha. Cute. Wall-worthy?

NATHAN: Not even close. Haven't you figured out the criteria yet?

MARK: Every time I think I've figured it out, you change the rules on me.

NATHAN: It's less about rules and more about salience.

MARK: Right.

NATHAN: It just has to be both funny and topical to something going on with me personally. I mean, I've been framing them since I moved here.

MARK: I know.

NATHAN: They're like my own personal New York City timeline. I can't decide if it's pathetic or profound that I can trace my life back through New Yorker cartoons.

MARK: I'd say more like...pretentious.

NATHAN: Judge if you must.

MARK: I will.

NATHAN: I know. But it's the first thing that everyone comments on when they walk in.

MARK: And that has nothing to do with its...prominence?

NATHAN: This is the only wall that would fit them all!

MARK: I know.

NATHAN: It was the first thing you noticed in my old apartment.

MARK: Yes, and I remember thinking “my, that’s pretentious.”

NATHAN: And yet here we are.

MARK: Here we are indeed.

MARK comes behind the couch, leans over and gives NATHAN a kiss. A good one. MARK goes to get the package, NATHAN follows him with his gaze, noticing it for the first time.

NATHAN: What’s that?

MARK: That is something very exciting.

NATHAN: What?

MARK: It’s our first gift!

NATHAN: What!?

MARK: Our first wedding gift.

NATHAN: Oh. Oh! Oh my God.

MARK: I know!

NATHAN: But it’s not for months. Like many, many months. I can’t believe we’re getting gifts already.

MARK: Well, the save-the-dates went out already, and there are links to our wedding website, and that has links to our registries, I mean, it makes sense. People will start sending gifts, especially if they can’t make it.

NATHAN: So who’s this one from?

MARK: *(reading a card on the box)* One of your aunts. I think it’s the one in India.

NATHAN: Indonesia.

MARK: Whatever. “Won’t be able to make it – rainy season makes travel terrible, but Maazel Tov!”

NATHAN: Well, that's nice. Where's it from?

MARK: Ooh, Saks!

NATHAN: You registered at Saks?

MARK: *We* registered at Saks. And yes, I did. It was while you were away at that writer's retreat.

NATHAN: Please tell me you did not try to pick out clothes for me.

MARK: Would that be the worst thing in the world?

NATHAN: Forgive me if I see the world beyond preppy. But really, you didn't, did you?

MARK: No, it's mostly from the home section. Sheets and whatnot. Though I may have scanned a Gucci Tux or two just to see if someone would bite.

NATHAN: Here's hoping. (*Beat*) So...should we...

MARK: Well, it's from your aunt, so you do the honors.

NATHAN pulls a smallish blue box out of the bigger box. Requisite packaging bits fly. He opens it and inside is a small, silver, asymmetrical bowl. MARK is delighted, NATHAN perturbed.

NATHAN: You registered for an ashtray?

MARK: It is not an ashtray! It's a Nambe bowl.

NATHAN: A what now?

MARK: It's a bowl. By Nambe. It's decorative. I thought it would look nice on the hall table. We can put potpourri or candy or something in it.

NATHAN: Like, ashes?

MARK: It's not an ashtray! You hate it.

NATHAN: I just don't see the point.

MARK: Of gifts? You love gifts!

NATHAN: Of all of this!

MARK: Are we really going to go through this again?

NATHAN: I don't have to go through it. It's sitting on my coffee table. A \$400 symbol of everything I hate about this.

MARK: Why would you hate people giving us expensive things we can't afford to buy for ourselves? This is the best part about getting married!

NATHAN: This is the most annoying part about getting married. Hooplah. I said no hooplah.

MARK: This isn't hooplah. It's presents!

NATHAN: It's registering for useless shit. And making our parents spend tens of thousands of dollars on flowers. And worrying about which of my friends is going to sing what at the ceremony. And seating charts. And hotel blocks. Hooplah!

MARK: But that's a wedding!

NATHAN: Mark, I told you all I wanted was something simple. I love you. I want to stand up in front of everyone I care about and say that you're the person I choose to spend my life with. I get that. I want that. And maybe have someone sing a Cole Porter song. But that's it. I do not need this ashtray. I would rather have the 400 dollars.

MARK: It is *not* an ashtray.

NATHAN: Fine. It's not an ashtray, but it's stressing me the fuck out, so can you just put it away.

MARK: Ok, ok. It's going back in the box. (*He packs it up*). Now can you take a deep breath? I have no idea why you're freaking out.

NATHAN: You know I hate this. Why did you register for useless shit?

MARK: Come on, you love useless shit. You're the one who always want to buy chookies from the souvenir shop whenever we go anywhere.

NATHAN: (*Correcting*) Chotchkes. And that is *meaningful* useless shit. So, I like to remember our trips with a \$5 snow-globe. That is not the same thing.

MARK: Our *wedding* isn't something you want to remember?

NATHAN: I think the \$10,000 photographer will take care of the all the memories we need, thank you.

MARK: Is this about money? Really? We're fine. I know you've been crazy ever since you...um...left your agency.

NATHAN: Any agent who couldn't get me a renewal that book deal wasn't worth being with anyway...

MARK: Of course. But there's no need to worry about money. I'm fine. You've got that article coming out in The Atlantic next month – that'll get you out there again. Everything's going to be fine.

NATHAN: This isn't about money. Well, it's about the principal of money. But I'm not worried about our money. This whole industry offends me.

MARK: The wedding industry?

NATHAN: Yes! Why does it have to be about gifts and flowers and our photograph in the Times...

MARK: Did you send that application in, by the way?

NATHAN: Mark! I am trying to make a point. Why can't it just be about us? Celebrating us for us.

MARK: People can't do that by buying us gifts?

NATHAN: They can. It just seems like it's all about that.

MARK: It does right now. But it won't seem like that on the day.

NATHAN: Won't it? Every wedding I've ever been to I end up judging the centerpieces, or the terrible steak, or the god-awful bridesmaids dresses. I forget all about the couple. Sometimes I can't even tell whose wedding is whose. That's what I really hate about straight weddings. The cookie-cutter bullshit. I feel like this... (*the box*) is the beginning of the end. It's supposed to be about us.

MARK: It will be! But I think we can still get gifts and have it be about us.

A beat.

NATHAN: Where else did you register without telling me?

MARK: Nowhere! I swear. And we can return the bowl if you don't like it.

NATHAN: The bowl is fine. Just promise me you're not going to start smoking again.

MARK: It's *not* an ashtray!

Another beat. NATHAN smiles.

NATHAN: I'm sorry. Do you still want to marry me?

MARK: Of course I do. And I promise, no hooplah.

NATHAN: Thank you. I love you.

MARK: I love you too.

NATHAN: I really hope someone buys us the Gucci tuxes.

MARK: Yeah, you do! See, getting married is awesome.

NATHAN: (*warmly*) Yeah, I guess it is.

BLACKOUT