College Boys

A Play

By Matthew Moore

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Characters

Armand
Isaac

Setting: *A Dorm Room*, *Various Moments Between 1984 - 1988*

"Just being a college student in general is something I'll miss."

~ Andre Drummond

“College Boys”

(A dorm room. The lights are off. We hear STUDENTS LAUGHING outside. A beat. The door opens, and ARMAND enters. He turns on the lights, and throws his backpack, coat, and scarf on the bed. He goes to his desk and sits down. He takes the cover off his typewriter and begins to type. A moment later there is a KNOCK at the door. Without looking up--)

ARMAND

Isaac?

VOICE

Yeah.

ARMAND

Okay.

(ISAAC enters. He takes off his coat and hat and throws it on top of the bed on top of ARMAND’s coat, scarf, and backpack. He then sits on top of the pile.)

ISAAC

Cody won’t speak to me.

ARMAND

Why?

ISAAC

Fiction workshop.

ARMAND

She do her story?

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

And you hated it?

ISAAC

I didn't *hate* it.

ARMAND

What was it about?

ISAAC

Her parent's divorce.

ARMAND

(On "parent's divorce.")

Parent's divorce. She has to get some new material.

ISAAC

This one was all allegory.

ARMAND

She doesn't do allegory.

ISAAC

She does now. Want a cigarette?

ARMAND

I quit.

ISAAC

When?

ARMAND

When I fucking felt like it.

ISAAC

I can see it hasn't affected your mood.

ARMAND

I can't be distracted. I'm finishing my first draft.

ISAAC

When you're done, can I--

ARMAND

No. It goes to my uncle first.

ISAAC

What about after your--

ARMAND

Then my editor.

ISAAC

And then the--

ARMAND

Then the publisher.

ISAAC

And--

ARMAND

And then *you* can read it. *After* it's published.

ISAAC

Cool. Will you sign my copy?

ARMAND

Not if you're going to be weird about it.

ISAAC

Stevenson said you shouldn't be allowed to publish a book as a student.

ARMAND

Stevenson is a closeted homosexual.

ISAAC

He's got a wife.

ARMAND

What part of *'closeted'* didn't transmit?

(ISAAC laughs.)

ISAAC

So you think he's a fag?

ARMAND

Don't say 'fag.' We're not bigots.

ISAAC

My cousin's gay and he says *'fag*.'

ARMAND

He can say it. Are *you* a fag?

ISAAC

No.

ARMAND

Then don't say it.

ISAAC

Okay.

(A beat. ARMAND types.)

Are we going to Offbeat later?

ARMAND

I'm on a deadline.

ISAAC

You have the whole weekend.

ARMAND

Weekends disappear.

ISAAC

Some people from the play asked if I would go.

(ARMAND stops typing.)

ARMAND

What play?

ISAAC

The play I'm in.

ARMAND

Since when are you in a play?

ISAAC

I got cast in the spring show.

ARMAND

The spring show? Who the fuck are you? Mickey Rooney?

ISAAC

It's a good play.

ARMAND

What is it?

ISAAC

And I got a good part.

ARMAND

What's the *play*, Isaac?

(A beat. ISAAC is embarrassed.)

ISAAC

Harvey.

ARMAND

***Harvey*?**

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

The play about the invisible rabbit?

ISAAC

Yeah, like the movie with Jimmy--

ARMAND

You can't do that play.

ISAAC

Why not?

ARMAND

Because it's inane. It's trite, it's--It's beneath you.

ISAAC

You've never said anything is beneath me.

ARMAND

Because you're an actor. Most things aren't beneath you. But you finally found something that is. Congratulations. We talked about--Didn't we talk about you doing Shakespeare? The *great roles*?

ISAAC

I auditioned for this student production of *Measure for Measure*.

ARMAND

And?

ISAAC

They didn't cast me.

ARMAND

What monologue did you use?

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

For the audition. Didn't they have you do a--?

ISAAC

No. They taught us a movement exercise.

ARMAND

That's not an audition.

ISAAC

We all had to be butterflies.

ARMAND

That is not--What is that? What *is* that shit?

ISAAC

It's how they figure out--

ARMAND

Didn't they have you read--

ISAAC

No.

ARMAND

Then how do they know if you have any command of the language?

ISAAC

I don't know. I'm not the director.

ARMAND

Everything is bullshit lately. *Everything*.

ISAAC

They had us read at the *Harvey* audition.

ARMAND

Bullshit. Total bullshit. My god.

ISAAC

Well, I'm doing it.

ARMAND

Doing what?

ISAAC

Harvey.

ARMAND

No, you're not.

ISAAC

But I want to.

ARMAND

Who are you? Who have you become?

ISAAC

It'll be fun.

ARMAND

We're not here for fun.

ISAAC

It's *college*, Armand.

ARMAND

It's a surreality.

ISAAC

I think you just say things sometimes.

ARMAND

I waste nothing.

ISAAC

What should I do about Cody?

ARMAND

Tell her to get over herself.

ISAAC

She'll never speak to me again.

ARMAND

If you're lucky.

ISAAC

I like Cody.

ARMAND

Cody's going to end up in LA.

ISAAC

What's wrong with LA?

ARMAND

What writer lives in LA?

ISAAC

You were *born* in LA.

ARMAND

And now I'm here.

ISAAC

Aren't you going back?

ARMAND

No.

ISAAC

I bet the girls are hotter there.

ARMAND

Everyone is hotter there. It's like living on the surface of the sun. Hot air. Hot people. If you acknowledge the heat, they feed you to the coyotes.

ISAAC

I still want to give it a try.

ARMAND

Is that why you're friends with me? So you can worm your way into my pool house in LA?

ISAAC

I didn't know you had a pool house.

ARMAND

Of course I have a pool house.

ISAAC

I didn't think you were that--

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

Uh. I--I don't know.

ARMAND

Rich?

ISAAC

Uh.

ARMAND

I'm not rich.

ISAAC

Okay.

ARMAND

I just have a pool.

ISAAC

Okay.

ARMAND

Everyone in LA has a pool.

ISAAC

Right.

ARMAND

You have to have a pool.

ISAAC

Right.

ARMAND

And if you have a pool, then you need to have a--?

ISAAC

Uh. A--Pool...cleaner?

ARMAND

A pool *house*, Isaac.

ISAAC

Every pool has a pool house?

ARMAND

Why would you have a pool if not to have a pool house?

ISAAC

I don't know. I don't have a pool.

ARMAND

That's because your family isn't civilized.

ISAAC

No, we're just--Our yard isn't that big.

ARMAND

I have no idea what you're talking about.

ISAAC

I'm just saying I think LA would be fun.

ARMAND

Don't follow Cody around like a lost puppy.

ISAAC

I don't even like her like that.

ARMAND

But you want to sleep with her.

ISAAC

Um. I. Um. I--Yeah.

ARMAND

She'll use that against you.

ISAAC

I don't--I mean, even if we--

ARMAND

You're driven by your base impulses.

ISAAC

Armand, come on.

ARMAND

I worry about you. And you do too much coke.

ISAAC

I don't do coke.

ARMAND

Isaac, don't lie to me.

(ARMAND stands up and goes to his closet.)

ISAAC

I don't do coke.

ARMAND

Isaac.

(ARMAND pulls a bag of coke out of the closet.)

ISAAC

Whoa.

ARMAND

Guess where I found this?

ISAAC

In your closet. I just saw you--

ARMAND

You left it the last time you were here.

ISAAC

No, I didn't.

ARMAND

It fell out of your coat.

ISAAC

It's not mine.

ARMAND

I only care, because you're not smart enough not to get caught with it.

ISAAC

Armand, it's not mine.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

I know.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

I know it's not yours. That was a test.

ISAAC

A--Huh?

ARMAND

I needed to see how you would do under pressure.

ISAAC

Why did you need to see that?

ARMAND

Because I need you to start selling for me.

ISAAC

Selling what?

ARMAND

What do you mean selling what? Drugs, Isaac, drugs.

ISAAC

You're selling drugs?

ARMAND

No. You are. I'm your supplier.

ISAAC

I'm not selling drugs.

ARMAND

Don't be naive.

ISAAC

What does naive have to do with it?

ARMAND

What are you going to do when you graduate?

ISAAC

I don't know. Get a job?

ARMAND

A job doing what?

ISAAC

Acting.

ARMAND

The naivete. There it is.

ISAAC

Why can't I be an actor?

ARMAND

Because you don't know yourself. Know *thyself*, Isaac.

ISAAC

I know myself.

ARMAND

Do you love your father?

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

Do you love your--

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

You know nothing. Nothing at all.

ISAAC

I love my dad.

ARMAND

You talk that way and you say you're an actor.

ISAAC

What does loving my dad--

ARMAND

Nobody loves their dad.

ISAAC

I do.

ARMAND

Doesn't he hit you?

ISAAC

What? No.

ARMAND

Why not?

ISAAC

I don't know. I mean, he grounds me sometimes--

ARMAND

Grounds you?

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

He *grounds* you? What is this? *The Brady Bunch*?

ISAAC

I don't think they got grounded on *The Brady Bunch*.

ARMAND

You think I watch *The Brady Bunch*?

ISAAC

You just said--

ARMAND

I want you to get in touch with your turmoil.

ISAAC

I don't have any turmoil.

ARMAND

Then that's a much bigger issue.

(Lights flicker. ARMAND takes off his shirt and has a long-sleeved t-shirt on underneath it. ISAAC does the same. BOTH sit on the bed.)

ISAAC

It's going to be a good movie.

ARMAND

Explain it to me again like I've never seen a movie.

ISAAC

They get locked in the janitor's closet during prom.

ARMAND

How many of them?

ISAAC

Six.

ARMAND

Six people locked in a janitor's closet? They'd suffocate.

ISAAC

No, it's like one of those--*big closets*.

ARMAND

Even a big closet is still a closet.

(ISAAC whispers conspiratorially for no reason.)

ISAAC

I get to play a virgin.

ARMAND

You *are* a virgin.

(ISAAC rears back.)

ISAAC

No, I'm not.

ARMAND

Isaac, come on.

ISAAC

I've had sex.

ARMAND

With who?

ISAAC

Cody.

ARMAND

When did you have sex with Cody?

ISAAC

After workshop.

ARMAND

She always hates you after workshop.

ISAAC

I think it might have been hate-sex.

ARMAND

That doesn't mean you've had sex.

ISAAC

No, like, we *had* sex.

ARMAND

There's sex and then there's *sex*.

ISAAC

Right. We had sex and then we had *sex*.

ARMAND

You're not capable of having sex.

ISAAC

No, I'm *definitely* capable.

ARMAND

It's not just a physical action, Isaac.

ISAAC

No, I know, that's why we cuddled afterwards.

ARMAND

You have to *connect* with her.

ISAAC

I did.

ARMAND

There's no way you connected with Cody.

ISAAC

No, we *talked* about things.

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

What did you talk about?

ISAAC

Death.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

You talked about *death*?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

Before or after?

ISAAC

Huh?

ARMAND

Did you talk about death before or after you--?

ISAAC

All of it. Before, after, during--

ARMAND

During?

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

You talked about death *while* you were having sex?

ISAAC

Well, we would stop and start and--

ARMAND

This sounds *horrible*.

ISAAC

No, it was a lot of fun.

ARMAND

Fun?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

You had *fun*?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

You were having sex and talking about death and having *fun*?

ISAAC

Maybe not like *carnival* fun, but--

ARMAND

Something is broken in you that can never be fixed.

ISAAC

You mean my ankle? That was just a sprain.

ARMAND

We need to move on. Who else is in this movie?

ISAAC

Nobody famous.

ARMAND

Then who's going to see it?

ISAAC

No, that's what's cool about it: We're all going to be discovered.

ARMAND

Discovered by *whom*?

ISAAC

We're going to be the next generation of--of *Hollywood*, you know?

(ARMAND touches ISAAC's face.)

ARMAND

I feel so bad for you.

ISAAC

I could be on the cover of *Vanity Fair*!

ARMAND

And that's what you want?

ISAAC

Who *wouldn't* want that?

ARMAND

Michelangelo.

ISAAC

The ninja turtle?

ARMAND

No, the artist.

ISAAC

I'm confused.

ARMAND

They're putting you in a *teen* movie.

ISAAC

There's nothing wrong with teen movies.

ARMAND

Isaac, you're an artist.

ISAAC

Am I?

ARMAND

You are.

ISAAC

But you always say I'm--

ARMAND

And you're a *multi-disciplinary* artist. You act, you write--

ISAAC

You said I don't do either of them well.

ARMAND

Based on *my* standards, you don't.

ISAAC

So then--

ARMAND

But for the majority of the public, you're passable.

ISAAC

Right, so I want the--the majority of--the majority to, yeah, see my work.

ARMAND

What work?

ISAAC

Like being in a movie.

ARMAND

That's not work.

ISAAC

Yes, it is.

ARMAND

Isaac, it's just punching a punch card.

ISAAC

Huh?

ARMAND

For the clock. You know the clock?

ISAAC

What clock?

ARMAND

That you punch.

ISAAC

You punch--Oh! For work.

ARMAND

Yes.

ISAAC

When you go to work.

ARMAND

Yes.

(Lights flicker. MUSIC. ARMAND and ISAAC stand and take off their t-shirts to reveal short-sleeved white t-shirts and underwear. ARMAND should be wearing briefs, but ISAAC should have boxers on and they should be ugly. The briefs should be European and black or red. Lights shift.)

ISAAC

I already decided to drop the class.

ARMAND

But you didn't talk to me about it.

ISAAC

Because I thought you'd agree it was the right move.

ARMAND

Why would I feel that way?

ISAAC

Because I'm not a writer. I'm an actor. Me being in a writing class--

ARMAND

Ever since they kicked you out of that movie--

ISAAC

I didn't get kicked out.

ARMAND

You've been suicidal.

ISAAC
What makes you say that?

ARMAND
All you eat are almonds.

ISAAC
That makes me suicidal?

ARMAND
Yeah. Every suicidal person I know loves almonds.

ISAAC
Armand--

ARMAND
And I'm sorry you weren't on the cover of *Vanity Fair*.

ISAAC
It's fine. I'm only twenty. I'll have other--

ARMAND
And that you were replaced by that turnip with a two-hundred dollar haircut.

ISAAC
I get it. The studio told them they needed a movie star.

ARMAND
That kind of thing is going to keep happening to you. That's why you need to start thinking about a pivot. Writing might be the answer.

ISAAC
I appreciate what you're doing, Armand, but--

ARMAND
Isaac, I'm your mentor.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

I mentor you.

ISAAC

No, you just yell at me.

ARMAND

That's what mentoring is.

ISAAC

I thought mentoring was a *positive* thing?

ARMAND

It is. When I'm yelling, I'm not attacking you personally. I'm just yelling so you can see how serious I am about your personal growth.

ISAAC

Could you be *less* serious maybe?

ARMAND

Your writing is *good*, Isaac. It's *good*.

ISAAC

You think so?

ARMAND

Why would I give you a compliment unless I absolutely had to?

ISAAC

You've never said anything nice about anything I've written.

ARMAND

Because I don't like any of it.

ISAAC

Oh.

ARMAND

But that doesn't mean it's not good.

ISAAC

It doesn't?

ARMAND

No. I don't like anything. You can't go by me.

ISAAC

But if you don't like anything how do you--

ARMAND

Because it's like a tomato salad.

ISAAC

Huh?

ARMAND

You know how I hate tomatoes?

ISAAC

I actually didn't know that, but--

ARMAND

But I can still tell when a tomato salad has been made properly.

ISAAC

But you won't eat it?

ARMAND

I don't need to.

ISAAC

Okay. So it's like--presentation?

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

I don't understand.

ARMAND

You do tomato salad. And it's *good*. You do good work.

ISAAC

But I don't *enjoy* it. Not like I enjoy acting.

ARMAND

So?

ISAAC

What do you mean '*So*?'

ARMAND

I mean, you think the guy working the cash register at the A&P enjoys it?

ISAAC

No, but I also don't think the guy at the A&P went to college.

ARMAND

That's quite the assumption, Isaac.

ISAAC

I don't look down on people like that.

ARMAND

People like *that*?

ISAAC

I'm saying we're *lucky*. We're lucky to *be here*.

ARMAND

Lucky?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

My parents worked very hard to send me here, Isaac.

ISAAC

I'm not saying they didn't, but--

ARMAND

That's *exactly* what you're saying.

ISAAC

But don't your parents have, like, *oil money*?

ARMAND

And you don't think oil is work?

ISAAC

I--

ARMAND

The oil doesn't just show up at your door.

ISAAC

I know--

ARMAND

It doesn't randomly choose a family to enrich.

ISAAC

Armand--

ARMAND

My family *worked* to get that oil.

ISAAC

I know.

ARMAND

So this isn't *luck* for me, okay?

ISAAC

Okay.

ARMAND

All right.

(A beat.)

But I can see why you would feel that way, because I know you harbor a lot of insecurity when it comes to your place here at the university.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

I mean, you're very *privileged* and that--

ISAAC

But you're not? You're not privileged?

ARMAND

No.

ISAAC

Armand, my Dad is a landscaper.

ARMAND

I don't mean you're privileged because you're *rich*.

ISAAC

Okay.

ARMAND

I mean, you're privileged because you're *not* rich.

ISAAC

Okay.

ARMAND

And you're still here.

ISAAC

I'm confused.

ARMAND

You broke the glass ceiling.

ISAAC

I did?

ARMAND

Yes.

ISAAC

But I'm not a woman.

ARMAND

And?

ISAAC

Only women can break the glass ceiling.

ARMAND

Only if it's a glass ceiling *for women*.

ISAAC

Isn't that the only kind of glass ceiling?

ARMAND

No, there are *all* kinds of glass ceilings.

ISAAC

So which one did I break?

ARMAND

The one for people without money.

ISAAC

But I have *some* money.

ARMAND

Not like what most of the people here have though.

ISAAC

So you're saying I'm a *pioneer* for *poor people*?

ARMAND

God no, I would never say that. Isaac, my friend--

(He puts his hand on ISAAC's shoulder.)

You have to watch what you say. That was really insensitive.

(The lights flicker. MUSIC. BOTH sit on the floor. The BOYS put on shorts they find on the floor. Lights shift.)

ISAAC

We should have gotten it from the regular guy.

ARMAND

He wasn't answering.

ISAAC

You only called him once.

ARMAND

Because I was freaking out. You know when I'm panicking--

ISAAC

I know, but--

ARMAND

It's my anxiety, Isaac, I can't--

ISAAC

I know.

ARMAND

Maybe it'll wear off.

ISAAC

It's been like this for an hour.

ARMAND

It hasn't been an hour.

ISAAC

It feels like it's been an hour.

ARMAND

It's been ten minutes.

ISAAC

No way.

ARMAND

Wait. Are we experiencing time the same way?

ISAAC

Uhhh--

ARMAND

What if I'm on one timeline and you're on another?

ISAAC

I don't think that's possible.

ARMAND

Isaac, I've always known I had the ability to re-understand how time works. I've never felt bound by it.

ISAAC

Don't you have to be?

ARMAND

According to *whom*?

(A beat.)

ISAAC

Science?

ARMAND

I don't recognize science.

ISAAC

You don't?

ARMAND

I mean, I do, I'm not *crazy*. I just don't recognize science as it pertains to me and my life and what I'm doing.

ISAAC

So you think *my* time is going...*longer*?

ARMAND

Slower. Well--

ISAAC

Same thing?

ARMAND

No. Well.

ISAAC

It's been an hour.

ARMAND

But what *is* an hour?

ISAAC

It's...sixty minutes.

ARMAND

I'm saying these are *words*.

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

They're just *words*.

ISAAC

I know.

ARMAND

And words have assigned value.

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

Like time.

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

But that's not--you know?

ISAAC

Uh. No?

ARMAND

It's--You can't just say '*It's been an hour.*'

ISAAC

But you--

ARMAND

Why are you trying to manipulate me?

ISAAC

I'm not.

ARMAND

I feel like you're trying to, to, yeah, rearrange me.

ISAAC

I'm really not.

ARMAND

But it feels that way.

ISAAC

But that isn't what's happening.

ARMAND

It doesn't matter what's happening. It matters how I *feel* about what might or might not be happening.

ISAAC

I feel like I can't feel my left ear.

(ARMAND licks ISAAC's left ear.)

Hey!

ARMAND

You felt that?

ISAAC

Yes!

ARMAND

Well.

ISAAC

But that's--

(ISAAC grabs ARMAND's arm and licks it.)

ARMAND

Why did you do that?

ISAAC

Because.

ARMAND

I didn't say anything about my arm.

ISAAC

But you licked me.

ARMAND

I didn't lick your *arm*.

ISAAC

I just--I just picked.

ARMAND

But why my *arm*?

ISAAC

What's wrong with your arm?

ARMAND

Nothing. That's the point.

ISAAC

So why can't I lick it?

ARMAND

This isn't a tit-for-tat situation.

ISAAC

It's not like I *hurt* you.

ARMAND

I didn't hurt you either.

ISAAC

Fuck.

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

I think my buzz is gone.

ARMAND

It can't be--Oh wait. Yeah.

(A beat.)

Yeah. I think mine is too.

(MUSIC. Lights shift. ARMAND and ISAAC stand and face each other. There is a moment of silence, then--)

ARMAND

Now.

ISAAC

Blue.

ARMAND

Say it again.

ISAAC

Blue.

(ARMAND shakes his head.)

ARMAND

Again.

ISAAC

Why?

ARMAND

Just say it.

ISAAC

But I said it already.

ARMAND

You need to say it again.

ISAAC

Blue.

ARMAND

You need to believe it.

ISAAC

I do.

ARMAND

You're just saying a word.

ISAAC

Because that's what you told me to do.

ARMAND

I told you to *believe* it.

ISAAC

It's just a word.

ARMAND

So say it.

ISAAC

Blue.

ARMAND

Again.

ISAAC

Blue!

ARMAND

Again!

ISAAC

BLUE!

(A moment.)

ARMAND

Didn't that feel good?

ISAAC

I--

ARMAND

Didn't it?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

Because it's real.

ISAAC

But why--

ARMAND

It's *genuine*.

ISAAC

Why does it have to be so loud?

ARMAND

It doesn't.

ISAAC

But you--

ARMAND

I wasn't going for loud. I was going for *honest*.

ISAAC

But when I got loud--

ARMAND

When you were forced to emote, you were--

ISAAC

I got angry.

(A beat.)

I didn't like it. I didn't like--being angry.

ARMAND

But you have to feel every emotion, Isaac.

ISAAC

But it's pretend, isn't it?

ARMAND

Are you really asking me that?

ISAAC

Well. Yeah.

ARMAND

If it's pretend, how is it going to make anybody feel anything?

ISAAC

I guess--

ARMAND

When I write, I'm not *pretending* to write. I'm writing.

ISAAC

Right. But writing isn't--

ARMAND

I know what you're going to say.

ISAAC

It's not--

ARMAND

You're going to say writing isn't like acting.

ISAAC

It's--Well.

ARMAND

What if I told you writing and acting are exactly the same?

(A beat.)

ISAAC
I don't see how that's possible.

ARMAND
Because it all comes from the same spark.

ISAAC
The spark of creativity?

ARMAND
A deeper spark than that.

ISAAC
Humanity?

ARMAND
The opposite.

(A beat.)

ISAAC
Inhumanity?

ARMAND
No. Depravity.

(A beat.)

ISAAC
A spark of...depravity?

ARMAND
I know it sounds bad.

ISAAC
Kind of.

ARMAND

Yeah.

ISAAC

Because it's...depravity.

ARMAND

It's about what lurks deep within us.

ISAAC

Like the id?

ARMAND

That's not a word.

ISAAC

It's psycho--

ARMAND

It's not a word. Depravity is about gusto.

ISAAC

Isn't it about acting like animals?

ARMAND

Do you know what animals are, Isaac? Be honest.

ISAAC

Well. Yes?

ARMAND

That's what you should be striving for, you know.

ISAAC

Being an animal?

ARMAND

Being an *honest* animal.

(A beat.)

ISAAC

Blue.

ARMAND

Again.

ISAAC

Blue.

ARMAND

Close.

ISAAC

Blue.

ARMAND

Closer.

ISAAC

BLUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUUE!

ARMAND

Isaac. You're almost there.

(MUSIC. Lights shift. BOTH put on sweatshirts that are on the floor. MUSIC. BOTH stand up, go to the door, and look outside.)

ISAAC

She was screaming so loud.

ARMAND

She's in agony.

ISAAC

I can't believe they expelled her.

ARMAND

I told her not to say anything.

ISAAC

But she was right.

ARMAND

It doesn't matter.

ISAAC

Her parents are going to flip.

ARMAND

They'll have her enrolled somewhere else in a week.

ISAAC

She *loved* it here.

ARMAND

Nobody should love it here. This is in an institution.

ISAAC

So?

ARMAND

So institutions protect themselves. We're not protected.

ISAAC

Poor Cody.

ARMAND

I told her not to say anything.

ISAAC

She thought they would fire *him*. Not *expel* her.

ARMAND

You really thought they were going to fire their best professor?

ISAAC

Yeah. I mean, he had an affair with a student.

ARMAND

Everybody does that. Don't be so provincial.

ISAAC

Then they should have let them both stay if they weren't going to--

ARMAND

But she plagiarized.

ISAAC

I think that's bogus.

ARMAND

It's only bogus in the sense that she didn't know she was doing it.

ISAAC

Then it shouldn't count.

ARMAND

Of course it counts.

ISAAC

Why?

ARMAND

You can't get away with a crime just because you didn't know it was a crime. Ignorance doesn't absolve you of anything.

ISAAC

Yes, it does. That's why they have different kinds of homicide.

ARMAND

Let's not get dramatic, all right? It's just an expulsion.

ISAAC

What if this costs her a job?

ARMAND

When?

ISAAC

Later. When she's--

ARMAND

She's a writer. Being expelled from a university is practically a job requirement.

ISAAC

So if you got expelled--

ARMAND

Well, it's different for me.

ISAAC

How?

ARMAND

Because I'm on a different path.

ISAAC

But you're a writer.

ARMAND

But I'm not that *kind* of writer.

(A beat.)

ISAAC

What kind of writer?

ARMAND

The kind that shirks institutions. That kind that gets political.

ISAAC

In your last short story, somebody burns down city hall.

ARMAND

Yeah, but it's symbolic.

ISAAC

Of dismantling power.

ARMAND

No. It's about returning to nature.

ISAAC

What? How?

ARMAND

You wouldn't understand.

ISAAC

Since when are you passionate about returning to nature?

ARMAND

Are you kidding me, Isaac?

ISAAC

You've never even been camping.

ARMAND

Right, because I respect nature.

ISAAC

Oh shit, duck!

(BOTH duck.)

ARMAND

Wait, why are we doing this?

ISAAC

I thought I saw Cody walk by.

ARMAND

I do feel badly about this.

ISAAC

Should we say goodbye to her?

ARMAND

You can.

ISAAC

Are you going to say goodbye?

ARMAND

I can't.

ISAAC

Why not?

ARMAND

Because I can't be associated with her.

ISAAC

Why not?

ARMAND

Because she's a cheater.

ISAAC

She's not a cheater.

ARMAND

She's a thief. She's a creative thief.

ISAAC

A professor slept with her.

ARMAND

Consensually.

ISAAC

That doesn't make it right.

ARMAND

And it doesn't make it right that she stole even though she didn't know she was doing it.

ISAAC

But he gets to stay.

ARMAND

What about Ancient Greece?

ISAAC

What about it?

ARMAND

Teachers were always sleeping with students in Ancient Greece.

ISAAC

Yes, and they used to stab people to death on the steps of the Senate, but that doesn't mean--

ARMAND

That was Rome.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

Rome. That was Rome.

ISAAC

So what?

ARMAND

It's important to get the facts right.

ISAAC

The facts of the thing we're talking about, not the facts of *Julius Caesar*.

ARMAND

Okay, so you know it was Caesar, I'm impressed.

ISAAC

Our friend is in crisis.

ARMAND

She cut her hair. That doesn't mean she's in crisis.

ISAAC

She's a twenty-one year-old English major. That's exactly what that means.

ARMAND

What do you want me to do?

ISAAC

Maybe we could write letters.

ARMAND

I cannot get involved with this, Isaac.

ISAAC

You're being a coward.

(A moment.)

ARMAND

I beg your pardon?

ISAAC

You talk and talk and talk, but your friend needs your help and you--

ARMAND

She's not my friend.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

She's *your* friend.

ISAAC

She's your friend too.

ARMAND

Not really.

ISAAC

You let her read your book.

ARMAND

Because she's a good editor. She should really give up writing and just edit.

ISAAC

Take that back.

ARMAND

Why are you so *invested* in this?

ISAAC

Because it's wrong.

ARMAND

Oh no, right and wrong. Good and bad. Purity and corruption.

(ARMAND laughs.)

ISAAC

Is that funny to you?

ARMAND

Yeah, it's *very* funny.

ISAAC

Why is it funny?

ARMAND

It's funny, because you made it all the way to college thinking that life was going to be one thing or another, and it's neither. Cody? Cody falls into the neither. That's why there's nothing we can do for her.

ISAAC

Bullshit.

ARMAND

Since when do you get mad?

ISAAC

I've gotten mad before.

ARMAND

Right, but since when do you get mad *at me*?

ISAAC

Since you started acting like you don't give a shit about anything.

ARMAND

I've never given a shit about anything.

ISAAC

Well, maybe I finally started noticing.

ARMAND

Just be honest, Isaac. You're just mad that Cody gave it up to somebody who isn't you.

(ISAAC goes to punch him, but MUSIC blares and lights shift. BOTH get into bed together.)

ISAAC

Do you think eventually it's just going to swallow us up?

ARMAND

We'll be long dead by then.

ISAAC

I mean *'us'* as in--humanity.

ARMAND

It could.

ISAAC

Yeah.

ARMAND

It probably will.

ISAAC

I think about it a lot.

ARMAND

You know, they say narcissists are afraid of space.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

They've done studies.

ISAAC

Why would being afraid of space make you a narcissist?

ARMAND

Because it's a constant reminder that you don't matter.

ISAAC

I wouldn't say I'm afraid of space.

ARMAND

But you just said that.

ISAAC

I'm just worried about it hurting me.

ARMAND

But don't you get it? It *can't* hurt you.

ISAAC

It could kill me.

ARMAND

But not because it wants to.

ISAAC

Does that matter?

ARMAND

Yes, it matters. It's all about intention. Space has no intention.

ISAAC

That wouldn't matter to me. I'd just be dead.

ARMAND

But you don't matter.

ISAAC

I matter to me.

ARMAND

And that's why you're a narcissist.

ISAAC

How can you think I'm a narcissist?

ARMAND

How can I not?

ISAAC
Wouldn't it bother you?

ARMAND
What?

ISAAC
Being friends with a narcissist?

ARMAND
Why would it bother me?

ISAAC
Wouldn't it get under your skin?

ARMAND
Oh, of course. It often does.

ISAAC
But you stay friends with me?

ARMAND
Yeah.

ISAAC
Why?

ARMAND
Because I find you fascinating.

ISAAC
You do?

ARMAND
Yeah.

ISAAC

But nobody's ever called me fascinating.

ARMAND

I just did.

ISAAC

That's really nice of you, Armand.

ARMAND

It's the truth.

ISAAC

I find you fascinating as well.

ARMAND

I should hope so.

ISAAC

Are you scared of space?

ARMAND

Terrified of it.

ISAAC

So you're a narcissist?

ARMAND

No.

ISAAC

But you just said--

ARMAND

I'm scared of space for normal reasons.

ISAAC

What reasons?

ARMAND

Aliens.

ISAAC

You believe in aliens?

ARMAND

You don't?

ISAAC

I don't know. Maybe?

ARMAND

You don't believe that out there in the vastness of space, there are other lifeforms similar to or more advanced than ours?

ISAAC

Wouldn't they have visited already?

ARMAND

They have.

ISAAC

So you believe in alien abduction?

ARMAND

Not always, but sometimes.

ISAAC

They just always seem so far-fetched.

ARMAND

What's far-fetched about them?

ISAAC

Who they choose to take.

ARMAND

You mean the yokels?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

I think it's genius.

ISAAC

How?

ARMAND

Because nobody listens to them.

ISAAC

They go on talk shows.

ARMAND

What I mean is--Nobody *believes* them.

ISAAC

And the aliens know that?

ARMAND

Of course they do.

ISAAC

Wow. They're really smart.

ARMAND

Smarter than us.

ISAAC

Maybe we should be abducing them?

ARMAND

If we knew where to find them.

ISAAC

We have to find them.

ARMAND

We can't.

ISAAC

What if we--split up?

ARMAND

What do you mean?

ISAAC

Like every country picks a different direction and--

ARMAND

Isaac.

ISAAC

Like if we each just send a rocket in one direction--

ARMAND

Isaac, stop.

ISAAC

What? Why?

ARMAND

Because.

(A beat.)

What if they can hear you?

(A moment.)

ISAAC

Oh shit.

ARMAND

Exactly.

(Lights shift. MUSIC. BOTH get out of bed and face each other.)

ISAAC

I didn't mean it.

ARMAND

It is a *betrayal*.

ISAAC

It was just--

ARMAND

A *betrayal*.

ISAAC

Inspiration.

ARMAND

Are you kidding me?

ISAAC

You use people.

ARMAND

Not like that.

ISAAC

Yes, like that.

ARMAND

I trusted you.

ISAAC

Armand.

ARMAND

This changes everything.

ISAAC

It changes what?

ARMAND

Us. You and I.

ISAAC

How?

ARMAND

Because I can't talk to you anymore.

ISAAC

Why?

ARMAND

You wrote a *story* about me.

ISAAC

It's not really about you.

ARMAND

Isaac. You named the character *Alex*.

ISAAC

Alex and Armand are very different names.

ARMAND

It is *about* me.

ISAAC

It's really not.

ARMAND

Isaac!

ISAAC

It's only a *little* bit about you.

ARMAND

This is a *Judas-level* betrayal.

ISAAC

The band?

ARMAND

The Apostle.

ISAAC

You're saying you're Jesus?

ARMAND

Yes. I'm talking about a Jesus-level betrayal.

ISAAC

It's a story. For an intro class. I'm not even a writer. It was hard for me to--

ARMAND

It's a reflection.

ISAAC

Of what?

ARMAND

Of how you feel about me.

ISAAC

No, it's not.

ARMAND

Do you resent me?

ISAAC

No.

ARMAND

You're jealous. You've always been jealous.

ISAAC

Armand, you're being an asshole.

(A moment.)

ARMAND

Destroy your story.

ISAAC

No.

ARMAND

Destroy your story.

ISAAC

I'm not going to--

ARMAND

Destroy it. Tear it up. Burn it.

ISAAC

No!

ARMAND

Then get out.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

Get out!

ISAAC

You don't--

ARMAND

GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT!

(ISAAC slaps him. A moment.)

ISAAC

Fine. I'll go.

(ISAAC exits. Lights shift.)

ARMAND

On October 2nd of...I think it's 1988? This woman I'm seeing jumps off the balcony of the apartment I'm living in on 67th street. Twenty stories down. I'm asleep when it happens, but there's an investigation. There are rumors that I pushed her. That we were a volatile couple. She was a writer too. Not a very

good one. Her first book got panned, and her second was barely acknowledged. She blamed me. She said being my girlfriend kept her in my shadow. That's probably true. The bed I'm lying on when she kills herself is covered in the finest sheets. I spend money discreetly, but I like nice sheets. I like to sleep soundly. I didn't know anything had happened until I heard the doorman yelling my name outside our apartment. Even then, I almost kept sleeping. I didn't want to wake up.

(Lights shift. ARMAND sits at his desk. A KNOCK.)

Come in.

(ISAAC enters.)

ISAAC

Is Rich here?

ARMAND

Who?

ISAAC

Rich.

ARMAND

I don't know who that is.

ISAAC

This is his room.

ARMAND

It's not.

ISAAC

No, I've been here before. This is his room.

ARMAND

Are you in the right building?

ISAAC

Yeah, I--Yeah.

ARMAND

Because this building is identical to Gregory Hall.

ISAAC

Right, but--This *is* Gregory Hall, right?

ARMAND

It's not.

ISAAC

Oh. Um. Okay.

ARMAND

Easy mistake. Well, not all that easy, but--

ISAAC

What's your name?

ARMAND

Why?

ISAAC

I think I saw you at orientation.

ARMAND

You didn't.

ISAAC

Oh.

(A beat.)

Well. Bye.

ARMAND

Goodbye.

(ISAAC goes to leave, then--)

ISAAC

I'm Isaac.

ARMAND

Okay?

ISAAC

Sorry, am I bothering you?

ARMAND

Yes.

ISAAC

Oh. Sorry.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

Still here, huh?

ISAAC

Are you writing something?

ARMAND

Yes.

ISAAC

Homework or--?

ARMAND

A novel.

ISAAC

For what class?

ARMAND

It isn't for a class.

ISAAC

So you're just--doing it?

ARMAND

Yeah. I'm just--doing it.

(ISAAC laughs.)

ISAAC

That's crazy.

ARMAND

Why?

ISAAC

Huh?

ARMAND

Why is it crazy?

ISAAC

Um. Because. It's--a book.

ARMAND

A novel.

ISAAC

That's so much work.

ARMAND

I don't find it to be that strenuous.

ISAAC

So it's fun?

ARMAND

Of course it's not fun.

ISAAC

Oh. I'm confused.

ARMAND

I have something to say so I have to say it.

ISAAC

That's really noble of you. I have things to say too.

ARMAND

And how do you say them?

ISAAC

I act.

ARMAND

So you say--other people's things?

ISAAC

No, I mean, well--I say them in--my own way?

ARMAND

All right.

ISAAC

But I want to write too.

ARMAND

You shouldn't.

ISAAC

Huh?

ARMAND

You shouldn't write. It's a miserable thing to do.

ISAAC

You're doing it.

ARMAND

I'm miserable.

ISAAC

Now or always?

ARMAND

If you're going to come in, can you just close the door?

ISAAC

Oh! Sorry, sorry.

(He steps in and closes the door.)

ARMAND

Do you really want to write?

ISAAC

Yeah. I guess.

ARMAND

What do you want to write about?

ISAAC

Well. My life?

ARMAND

Is your life interesting?

ISAAC

Uh.

ARMAND

That's a '*No*.'

ISAAC

I have stuff happen to me sometimes.

ARMAND

What kind of *stuff*?

ISAAC

Crazy stuff.

ARMAND

Like?

ISAAC

Um.

(He whispers.)

I smoked pot before I came here.

ARMAND

Here to my room?

ISAAC

No, here to college.

ARMAND

So you're a junkie?

ISAAC

What? No!

ARMAND

It's okay if you are.

ISAAC

I'm not--

ARMAND

It would make you a lot more interesting.

ISAAC

I'm not a junkie.

ARMAND

Okay, you're not a junkie. So what are you?

ISAAC

I'm...Isaac.

ARMAND

Okay.

(He smiles.)

I guess I can work with that.

(MUSIC. Lights shift. ARMAND exits. Spotlight on ISAAC.)

ISAAC

My favorite movie that I've ever done is the one about the kid I adopt after my sister dies in a freak bulldozer accident. Not a lot of people saw it, and the people who did see it didn't like it all that much. It's my favorite though, because I've always wanted to be a dad, and so I got to be a dad for a little bit. I thought about having my own kids, but I never managed to stay in a relationship for very long. Even then, I guess I could have just found someone and made it happen, but that wasn't how I wanted it to go. I wanted a perfect family with a nice house and a bunch of kids and a really good life. That's why I left Hollywood when I was thirty-five. I made enough money, and I thought, *Okay, now's the time to really start my life.* I bought this converted barn and moved in there and--and oh, by the way, it was in this little town. This really cool little town. People were really nice to me there. I met a woman, and we started dating. Then, she got sick, and, um, I took care of her? That was pretty much all I did for awhile until she passed away. We never had any kids. I wrote a book too, but nobody ever read it. Now I make cabinets. It's interesting work. Doesn't make me rich, but I don't really need money. I haven't talked to Armand since college, but--You probably know why.

(MUSIC. Lights shift. ARMAND enters.)

ARMAND

Why aren't you dressed?

ISAAC

I'm not going.

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

I'm dropping out.

ARMAND

You're--Wait.

ISAAC

I made up my mind.

ARMAND

What are you talking about?

ISAAC

I got an offer and I'm taking it.

ARMAND

What offer? What kind of *offer*?

ISAAC

To do a tv show.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

You're joking.

ISAAC

I'm not.

ARMAND

A television show.

ISAAC

Armand--

ARMAND

A *television* show.

ISAAC

It's a great part for me.

ARMAND

Role.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

Role. It's a great *role* for you. Don't say *'part*.'

ISAAC

What's wrong with *'part*?'

ARMAND

This is so beneath you, Isaac.

ISAAC

What's wrong with *'part*?'

ARMAND

It's not even a movie. It's television. It's practically a commercial.

ISAAC

What's wrong with *'part*?'

ARMAND

It might as well be--

ISAAC

WHAT IS WRONG WITH *'PART*?'

(A moment.)

ARMAND

This is a slap in the face.

ISAAC

Who am I slapping in the face?

ARMAND

Me.

ISAAC

You?

ARMAND

I've *invested* in you.

ISAAC

What does that even mean?

ARMAND

It means I made you my friend. I let people *know* we were friends. I stood by you. Side by side. People *associate* you with me.

ISAAC

How does me doing a tv show change that?

ARMAND

It doesn't. I wish it did.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

Because now I'm going to be affiliated with a person who does *television*.

ISAAC

It's a *good* show.

ARMAND

It's *television*.

ISAAC

You know, Armand--never mind.

ARMAND

What? Say it.

ISAAC

I don't think I should.

ARMAND

Coward.

(A beat.)

ISAAC

Fine. I think--If you want to know the *truth*? I think *I* should be the one worried about being associated with *you*.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

And why is that?

ISAAC

You're mean to people. You're mean and--and people don't like you.

ARMAND

Oh, this is so petty.

ISAAC

It's true.

ARMAND

You think I care?

ISAAC

I know you do.

ARMAND

I don't.

ISAAC

You just said you did.

ARMAND

No, I didn't.

ISAAC

You're worried about people associating--

ARMAND

That has nothing to do with caring what people *think*.

ISAAC

Then what--

ARMAND

It has to do with my own sense of--of pride.

ISAAC

So you're embarrassed. So what? You'll get over it.

ARMAND

Who do you think you're talking to?

ISAAC

You should be asking yourself that.

ARMAND

Isaac, this isn't you.

ISAAC

This is me. Or this is who I should have been this whole time.

ARMAND

Oh, an inspiring moment. How wonderful.

ISAAC

Don't mock me.

ARMAND

Then don't be maudlin.

ISAAC

And don't use words you don't need to use.

ARMAND

You don't know what *'maudlin'* means?

ISAAC

I know what it means, but there's no need for it.

ARMAND

So we should never use it?

ISAAC

I didn't say that.

ARMAND

We should retire *'maudlin'* from the dictionary, because Isaac doesn't like it? Is that what you're--

ISAAC

No.

ARMAND

I suppose you don't hear '*maudlin*' very often on (makes a strange face) *the tv.*

ISAAC

I hate you.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

I hate you.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

No, you don't.

ISAAC

I do. I think I do.

ARMAND

But you're my best friend.

ISAAC

You're so terrible to me.

ARMAND

No, I'm not.

ISAAC

You've always been terrible to me. From the first day I--

ARMAND

I look out for you.

ISAAC

You *hurt* me.

ARMAND

How?

ISAAC

You say--

ARMAND

Because I *say* things?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

You're hurt by things I say?

ISAAC

Yes!

ARMAND

Isaac.

ISAAC

What--?

ARMAND

That is--

ISAAC

Don't--

ARMAND

No, but that's--

ISAAC

You can't--

ARMAND

Isaac.

(MUSIC. The middle of a song. Lights shift. BOTH sit.)

ISAAC

We shouldn't have done that.

ARMAND

I don't think it's a big deal.

ISAAC

No, it is.

ARMAND

Just forget it.

ISAAC

Why did we do that?

ARMAND

We're drunk.

ISAAC

I'm not drunk.

ARMAND

You've been drinking all night.

ISAAC

I had two drinks.

ARMAND

They were--big drinks.

ISAAC

I'm not drunk, Isaac.

ARMAND

But I'm drunk.

ISAAC

No, you're not.

ARMAND

Don't tell me what I'm not, Isaac.

ISAAC

Why did we do that?

ARMAND

I told you. It's not a big deal.

ISAAC

It is to me.

ARMAND

It doesn't change anything.

ISAAC

It changes everything.

(ISAAC stands up.)

ARMAND

I don't want to be alone.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

If you leave--

ISAAC

I wasn't going to leave.

ARMAND

Oh.

ISAAC

You thought I was going to--?

ARMAND

Yeah.

ISAAC

No. I. No.

(A beat.)

ARMAND

I'm sorry.

(A moment. ARMAND is on the verge of breaking down.)

I'm *really* sorry.

ISAAC

There's nothing to be--You don't have to--

(ARMAND begins to cry. ISAAC sits back down.)

Hey, hey, Armand, it's okay.

(ARMAND buries his face in ISAAC's chest.)

It's okay.

(ARMAND sobs.)

It's all going to be okay.

(Soft MUSIC. A shadow passes over the stage. Lights shift. ARMAND gets in bed.)

ISAAC

It'll be okay.

ARMAND

They have no right.

ISAAC

You can just--get someone else to publish it.

ARMAND

Someone else?

ISAAC

Another publisher.

ARMAND

What other publisher?

ISAAC

There are--

ARMAND

This is *her* fault.

ISAAC

Who?

ARMAND

What do you mean *'who*?' Cody.

ISAAC

How could it be--?

ARMAND

Her father.

ISAAC

What about her father?

ARMAND

He runs a goddamn publishing house.

(A beat.)

ISAAC

I didn't know that.

ARMAND

Nobody did. She kept it secret. The little bitch.

ISAAC

Hey, come on--

ARMAND

Her father couldn't keep her from getting tossed out, but he can make sure nobody else from this place ever succeeds.

ISAAC

He's just one guy.

ARMAND

One guy is all it takes.

ISAAC

Do you think he could hurt what I have going on?

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

You know, my acting?

ARMAND

Your acting?

ISAAC

Yes.

ARMAND

Your acting is *nothing*.

ISAAC

Okay, I know you're upset--

ARMAND

You have *nothing* going on.

ISAAC

Yes, I do.

ARMAND

You have a *sitcom*.

ISAAC
Right, do you think he could--

ARMAND
It's a sitcom!

(A beat.)

ISAAC
I'm sorry this happened.

ARMAND
No, you're not.

ISAAC
I am. I mean it.

ARMAND
You're probably glad.

ISAAC
Why would I be glad?

ARMAND
Because you're just like Cody.

ISAAC
How am I--?

ARMAND
You're jealous.

ISAAC
I'm jealous?

ARMAND

You're all jealous. You, Cody--

ISAAC

We're *jealous*?

ARMAND

Stevenson who hates being a professor so much he has to sleep with his students. Every single professor in that pathetic department who--

ISAAC

We're jealous.

ARMAND

That's right.

ISAAC

I'm jealous.

ARMAND

What are you doing?

ISAAC

I'm jealous.

ARMAND

What is that?

ISAAC

I'm jealous.

ARMAND

Stop it.

ISAAC

But it's true.

ARMAND

It--No. I--

ISAAC

I'm jealous.

ARMAND

Stop it, Isaac.

ISAAC

I'm jealous.

ARMAND

Dammit, I said 'Stop!'

(A beat.)

ISAAC

Yeah. You're right. It's not true.

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

You're the one.

ARMAND

I--

ISAAC

You're jealous.

ARMAND

Of who?

ISAAC

Me. And Cody. And everyone. Maybe even Stevenson.

ARMAND

You think I'm--

ISAAC

Of everyone, but especially Cody and me, because we're your peers.

ARMAND

Of you and Cody? Wow!

ISAAC

And everyone else. The entire world. The whole planet.

ARMAND

I can't stand you.

ISAAC

Just admit it.

ARMAND

You're a pig.

ISAAC

What?

ARMAND

You wallow. You know that? You wallow.

ISAAC

No, I don't.

ARMAND

And I *allowed* it. That's the problem.

ISAAC

I'm not a pig, Isaac.

ARMAND

Your *Midwestern sensibilities*.

ISAAC

I'm from *Pennsylvania*.

ARMAND

That's the Midwest.

ISAAC

No, it's not.

ARMAND

Anything west of New York is the Midwest.

ISAAC

Pennsylvania is not--Well, I don't know.

ARMAND

I'm so sick of you rubes.

ISAAC

You're upset.

ARMAND

I'm a failure.

ISAAC

You're twenty-one.

ARMAND

And a failure.

ISAAC

Nothing's even started yet.

ARMAND

What am I going to tell my father?

ISAAC

That you're graduating.

ARMAND

What?

ISAAC

That you're--

ARMAND

What does that have to do with anything?

ISAAC

Armand. You're a student. You're going to be a college graduate.

ARMAND

What does that mean?

ISAAC

It means you're--It means--

ARMAND

It doesn't mean anything.

ISAAC

You know that's not true.

ARMAND

What happens next?

ISAAC

Next?

ARMAND

After. After graduation.

ISAAC

You--You get a job.

ARMAND

Doing what?

ISAAC

Working.

ARMAND

Work? What kind of work?

ISAAC

Work. I don't know. Work.

ARMAND

You can't just say *'work*.'

ISAAC

But that's--You're--

ARMAND

My work was that book. *That* was work.

ISAAC

So you write.

ARMAND

About what?

ISAAC

You must have other ideas.

ARMAND

I don't.

ISAAC

Armand.

ARMAND

I don't!

ISAAC

Well. You'll *get* other ideas. They'll come to you.

ARMAND

That doesn't always--

ISAAC

The spark. The spark of depravity.

ARMAND

Oh god.

ISAAC

There must be some of it left, right? You're still depraved, aren't you?

ARMAND

Isaac, I need you to reassure me.

ISAAC

Okay. Of what?

ARMAND

That we'll always be allies to each other.

ISAAC
Armand, you're my best friend.

ARMAND
I'm not talking about friendship. I'm talking about something stronger. We were friends with Cody. What good did that do?

ISAAC
Then what do you--

(ARMAND sits up in bed and grabs ISAAC.)

ARMAND
I always thought I was going to make it. I was sure. I was really, really sure. Now, I think it might be you, but I don't know. Every time you gain an inch, you fall back again. You get a movie, then you lose it, you get a tv show, and it gets cancelled before it even starts--

ISAAC
Other networks are looking at it. We might--

ARMAND
You've almost dropped out of school five times. But you keep getting these chances, and it isn't fair. It's not fair, but I can make peace with it so long as you promise me that as soon as you finally succeed at something, you'll take me with you. That you'll look out for me. That way it won't matter what Cody's father tries to do to me or what anybody tries to do to me. It won't matter, because you'll be the golden boy, and I'll be standing right in front of you. Basking in the warmth of that beautiful golden glow.

(A beat.)

ISAAC
But what if--

ARMAND

Yeah?

ISAAC

What if instead you're in the shadow?

(A beat. ARMAND lies back down.)

The thing is, I don't really understand how shadows work.

(MUSIC. Lights shift. ARMAND gets out of bed and goes to his desk. ISAAC goes to the door. Lights shift. A beat.)

Are you going to speak to me?

ARMAND

I don't have anything left to say.

ISAAC

Okay.

(A beat.)

Then should we end it here?

ARMAND

Yeah.

(ARMAND thinks about turning around to look at ISAAC, but decides against it.)

Yeah, I think we should.

(MUSIC. Lights fade.)

End of Play