

# **Slowly Slowly Catch The Monkey**

**Lucy Wright & William Missouri Downs**

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS (3W - 3M)

**CHRIS** - *Adjunct professor, haunted by the past, white, 30ish*

**DEJA** - *MFA writing student, finding her voice, black, 25ish*

**MAXINE** - *Professor, runs with the wolves, creative casting, 40ish*

**DOROTHY** - *MFA writing student, transwoman, creative casting, 25ish*

**BUDDY** (*Elder Young*) - *Mormon, gay, a poet at heart, black, 20*

**CHRISTIAN** (*Elder Smith*) - *Mormon, sexually perplexed, white, 20*

Double casting: The actor playing Maxine also plays Bishop Johnson and Host. Christian also plays The Student, Harry and the Angel. Deja also plays Betty. Buddy also plays Older Buddy and Owen.

## SETTING & TIME (Please don't skip this)

NOTE: Above the stage and audience are a amaze of microphones hovering just out of reach. At the end of the play, they become stars.

TIME: Sometimes two realities run at once. Scene should bump into each other without blackouts.

SETTING: A wide open playing area. Locations are only suggested: A professor's office, the front seat of an old Chevy Suburban, a break room with a coffeemaker, an informational webinar, an empty stage. Think Our Town with hardly any scenery and almost no props.

"We're attaching labels to individuals as if those labels capture the sum of who they are. Moreover, we're labeling ourselves to the point of extinguishing our own humanity."

- Irshad Manji

## PROLOGUE

*(Lights up on the cast, not yet in character. They speak to the audience.)*

*(CHRIS, 30ish, white, 1950's groomed.)*

CHRIS

Hi, my character's name is Chris, people identify him as white, male, heterosexual and privileged. This role was written by a playwright who is also white, male, heterosexual and privileged, so it's pretty spot-on.

*(DEJA, 25ish, black, youthful.)*

DEJA

Hi, my character's name is Deja, people identify her as black, female and invisible. My role was written by a white female playwright who is also invisible. She tried, but it's not perfect. You'll see what I mean.

*(MAXINE, 40ish, confident.)*

MAXINE

My character's name is Professor Pillsbury, call me Maxine. People identify her as a female who running with the wolves. My role was written by a white male, who has crippling psychological mother issues. As a result, my role is a shallow stereotype.

*(DOROTHY, kindly, 25ish trans woman.)*

DOROTHY

Hi. Dorothy. A lot of people identify my character as male, even though I'm female. I'm a trans woman. My role was written by a cis woman with a strong imagination who did a whole bunch of research but who hasn't been there and done that.

*(CHRISTIAN, white, and BUDDY, black, are two well-groomed 20ish Mormons wearing perfectly starched white shirts, black ties and Mormon name tags.)*

CHRISTIAN

*(Upbeat)*

Hi! Our characters names' are Elder Smith.

BUDDY

*(Upbeat)*

And Elder Young.

CHRISTIAN

If you haven't already guessed//

CHRISTIAN & BUDDY

People identify us as Mormons.

CHRISTIAN

We are young//

BUDDY

Male//

CHRISTIAN

White//

BUDDY

Black.

CHRISTIAN

And positively 100 percent heterosexual. Am I right?

BUDDY

*(Not so sure)*

...Sure.

CHRISTIAN

*(Cheery)*

My part was written by a white male non-Mormon who likes to say that some of his best friends are Mormons - we've heard that bullshit before.

BUDDY

*(All smiles)*

And mine was written by a white female non-Mormon who gave it her best shot. It's a well-meaning attempt, but I'm sure she'll fuck it up somehow.

*(BUDDY turns to the other actors.)*

BUDDY

Actors, places.

*(The company takes their places to begin the play.)*

### **BUSTING OUT OF UTAH**

*(The lights change and CHRIS, 30s, a white, clean-cut, soon to be jack Mormon steps up.)*

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

"Busting out of Utah." Trigger warning: the following scene contains a bunch of backstory in the form of a romanticized flashback. If you're a college writing professor you may label it obvious exposition. You're full of shit. We take you to an old Chevy Suburban driving down a deserted blacktop in Utah.

*(Lights up on the past. ELDER YOUNG (BUDDY) and ELDER SMITH (CHRISTIAN) drive down an isolated two-lane somewhere in Utah - i.e. two chairs.)*

*(Off to the side, CHRIS watches the scene.)*

CHRISTIAN

*(Panicky)*

We're lost!

BUDDY

We're not lost//

CHRISTIAN

I don't like being lost, Elder Young, it gives me the willies.

BUDDY

We're not lost.

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

We were lost.

CHRISTIAN

If they find out we're not on our mission there'll be a hearing, or disciplinary action, or something definitely not good will happen.

BUDDY

Someday you're going to thank me - When we're famous Hollywood writer-slash-actors.

CHRISTIAN

Mormons in Hollywood - that's a laugh. Name one Mormon who's made it in Hollywood!

BUDDY

*(Beat)*

I'll name two - Donny and Marie.

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

The smart-ass driving was my best friend Buddy. The serious one is me. Without authorization, we had abandoned our mission. Buddy was convinced that if we escaped to Hollywood we'd become the next Matt Damon and Denzel Washington.

BUDDY

Someday, just wait you'll see, we're going to go into producers' offices and pitch'em movie ideas - Starring us.

CHRISTIAN

And when we fail?

BUDDY

We can always teach college. That's what failed writers do - We'll be bitter, but we'll make a living.

CHRISTIAN

I'll never be a college professor, never. That's like hanging a huge sign around your neck reading, "loser."

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

It's ten years later, I'm a college professor.

BUDDY

Christian//

CHRISTIAN

We have to address each other by our last names. You're not Buddy, you're Elder Young. I'm not Christian, I'm Elder Smith//

BUDDY

Shit, Chris don't do this//

CHRISTIAN

And we have to watch our language.

BUDDY

What? "Shit?" Shit's not language.

CHRISTIAN

Stop, Heavenly Father might be listening.

*(They continue to drive.)*

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

Growing up Mormon on an isolated farm my father told me to act as if my life were constantly being recorded - As if the stars were microphones.

*(He indicates the microphones hanging above the stage and audience.)*

CHRIS

And that my life was an HBO movie watched by Heavenly Father - which really confused me, because my parents didn't own a television.

BUDDY

*(Teasing, whispering)*

Shiiiiiiiiit.

CHRISTIAN

I sincerely doubt whispering helps.

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

The only place I could watch a movie was at Buddy's house. He was adopted by a more liberal Mormon family a few miles away.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I had to keep my friendship with Buddy secret, my father wouldn't have approved.

BUDDY

Come on say it. Shiiiiiiiiiiit.

CHRISTIAN

I'm not going to say it.

BUDDY

You know what I think the most beautiful word in the English language is? Gonorrhea.

CHRISTIAN

What?

BUDDY

Think about it. (*Long and pronounced*) Gonnnonn-or-rhea. If it didn't mean what it means but was the name of some fancy flower or classy perfume I think people would name their kids it. Hi, this is my daughter Gonorrhea. We call her Gonie for short.

CHRISTIAN

Stop being gross.

BUDDY

How can you become a writer if you don't love language?

CHRISTIAN

I love language just not that language.

BUDDY

Say it. Dare you. Gonorrhea.

CHRISTIAN

Never.

BUDDY

Double dare you. Gonorrhea.

CHRISTIAN

You're not going to make me say gonorrhea// Shit.

(*BUDDY laughs with delight.*)

CHRIS

*(To the audience)*

The church forbids friends from going on their mission together. Buddy and my pairing must have been a cosmic clerical error.

BUDDY

Chris, the last six weeks have been the best. Stayed with some nice, wholesome, totally boring families, had a lot of doors slammed in our faces, but do you really want to do this?

CHRIS

Yes. This is God's purpose for me.

BUDDY

I'm not so sure. More and more I've been taken by this feeling.

CHRISTIAN

What sorta feeling?

BUDDY

Like, I'm not Mormon.

CHRISTIAN

What? Course you are. And if we knock on enough doors, in a hundred years everyone will be.

*(BUDDY and CHRISTIAN fade.)*

### **FAILED WRITERS CAN ALWAYS TEACH COLLEGE**

*(THE ACTOR PLAYING DEJA enters and speaks to the audience.)*

THE ACTOR PLAYING DEJA

*(To the audience)*

"Failed writers can always teach college." Warning: The following scene takes place at a university that shall go nameless. If you are a failed writer who teaches college you may experience mild gastrointestinal discomfort and an uncontrollable desire to spark up.

*(DEJA exits.)*

*(Lights up on CHRIS in his professor's office. MAXINE enters. She's a power woman who draws her wardrobe inspiration from Whoopi Goldberg.)*

MAXINE

Chris! Thank you for coming on such short notice. You do know that we are already a week into the semester so you got a lot of catching up.

CHRIS

Yes.

MAXINE

This office okay for you?

CHRIS

Sure.

MAXINE

*(Off the newly painted walls)*

Pardon the new paint smell - It'll fade in a few weeks. Oh! Found your novel in the dollar cart of the bookstore. *(Bullshitting)* Found it... ah... highly... ah... What word am I looking for? Metaphorical! Remind me, what is it about?

CHRIS

It's a coming of age story about best friends who go to Hollywood//

MAXINE

The next Matt Damon and Denzel Washington. Highly amusing.

CHRIS

It was a serious story.

MAXINE

I meant highly amusing in an academically vague sort of way// Chris, as department head, I like to take a moment to talk to our new temporary adjuncts. You know, get to know'em.

CHRIS

Sounds like a//

MAXINE

As an emergency hire, we didn't have a chance to do the normal face to face stuff.

CHRIS

I hope you're not disappointed.

MAXINE

No. It's just that you're not like the other English professors, you're, ah, what are the words I'm looking for? Off the shelf, know what I mean?

CHRIS

No.

MAXINE

In other words, if you were a shirt you'd be dry clean only.

CHRIS

I'm still not sure//

MAXINE

Let me be blunt. A few of the grad students, after the meet-and-greet, came to me in private and expressed concerns that you might... Identify as... The "M" word.

CHRIS

Mensa?

MAXINE

Mormon. Of course this conversation is off the record. However you identify is none of my business. Just know we're into *inclusivity* here. I'm okay, you're okay, everyone is okay.

CHRIS

Am I okay?

MAXINE

We'll see.

(She's not so sure he's okay.)

MAXINE

Matter of fact I think the adjunct you replaced was once Mormon, but he outgrew it when he went gay.

CHRIS

I heard he died.

MAXINE

Well, not exactly. He... Offed himself. No suicide note, no nothin'. You'd think a writer would leave a note.

CHRIS

This just//

MAXINE

A week ago. Guy moved here from West Hollywood, taught one class and then shot himself an hour after attending the all-day-long-new-faculty-orientation. I know our orientation is inordinately repetitive and redundant but *that* was an over reaction.

CHRIS

What was his name?

MAXINE

Clarence. Clarence Young, but he went by "Buddy."

*(That stops CHRIS.)*

CHRIS

*(To himself)*

Shit.

MAXINE

Chris, I've been teaching for twenty years, and cynical and resigned for five, so I know what I'm talking about. Teaching at a university is a lot like postmodern art - don't let it depress you if you don't get it at first, or ever for that matter. Oh, and if you should ever need a psychiatrist, know that it's covered under our university insurance. Don't think they adequately explain that at the all-day-long-new-faculty-orientation.

*(MAXINE continues to drone on about some bullshit university regulation, but CHRIS isn't listening as he steps into his own romanticized flashback.)*

*(CHRISTIAN and BUDDY are still driving in Utah.)*

CHRISTAIN

We must remember what Bishop Johnson taught us. Doubt your doubt not your faith.

BUDDY

Hey, do me a favor will ya? You can say "no" and I'll totally understand.

CHRISTIAN

I won't say no, we're friends. What's up?

BUDDY

Tomorrow, when we get to Hollywood// Promise never to tell?

CHRISTIAN

Just say it.

BUDDY

Okay... Will you go to a bar with me? Got us some fake IDs.

CHRISTIAN

What? Never!

BUDDY

One bar, one beer.

CHRISTIAN

Absolutely not.

BUDDY

Want to live on the wild side? How about a gay bar.

CHRISTIAN

Are you nuts?

BUDDY

Everything will be okay as long as we don't make eye contact.

CHRISTIAN

I said, no.

BUDDY

Haven't you ever wondered what goes on in there?

CHRISTIAN

Not once has that crossed my mind! Now repeat after me, doubt your doubt not...

BUDDY

*(Doubting)*

Your faith.

*(MAXINE snaps her fingers, CHRIS is pulled back to the present.)*

MAXINE

Chris? Did you hear what I said?

CHRIS

Excuse me?

MAXINE

They really got the place cleaned up. You can't even tell where the hole in the wall was.

CHRIS

Ah, Professor Pillsbury.

MAXINE

Call me Maxine.

CHRIS

Maxine, the professor before me//

MAXINE

Oh that's right, regulations state that all new employees must take a mandatory Diversity and Inclusion Training Webinar. Love to talk more, gotta run. Got an Art Committee meeting. We've decided that the only sculptures allowed on campus from now on will be made of steel, orange I-beams. No one understands them, so no one can be insulted. Safety first.

*(MAXINE exits.)*

### **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TRAINING WEBINAR**

*(CHRIS opens his laptop and takes the webinar.)*

THE ACTOR PLAYING BUDDY

"Diversity and Inclusion Training Webinar." Warning: The following scene contains actors who couldn't find real work so they begrudgingly took shit jobs acting in a training video. Sitting through this video may cause you to question how a university could possibly spend a million dollars on this retrograde Webinar that oversimplifies human relations.

*(Inane, cheerful webinar music.)*

*(During the following, company members act out the training video that CHRIS is watching on his laptop.)*

*(In another reality, the actor playing DOROTHY enters, now as the WEBINAR HOST of the webinar. She's training-video-fake. She speaks to the audience.)*

WEBINAR HOST

*(Upbeat and artificial)*

Welcome to part one of the webinar "You Can't Say That." Brought to you by Achieve! Remember, there will be a test after each unit and sub-unit, so be sure to take notes. Today's sub-unit is entitled, "The Proper Thing To Say In Every Possible Situation: Words, Impact, Synergy." Here's a situation you might've encountered. Betty is in the company break room when Harry walks up:

*(The actor playing Deja plays BETTY. The actor playing Christian plays HARRY. They walk up to a coffee maker hung with Christmas decorations.)*

BETTY

*(Upbeat, fake and actor-y)*

Oh, hi, Harry.

HARRY

*(Upbeat, fake and actor-y)*

Hello, Betty.

BETTY

Coffee?

HARRY

Thank you.

*(They help themselves to coffee.)*

BETTY

How are you today?

HARRY

Great. And you?

BETTY

Couldn't be better. Well, I'd better get back to work.

HARRY

*(Looking at his wrist watch)*

Look at the time - You're right.

BETTY  
Merry Christmas.

HARRY  
*(Insulted)*  
What?

BETTY  
Merry Christmas.

HARRY  
*(Angered)*  
I find that highly insulting. Not everyone is a Christian you know!

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
We've all been in that situation. Been there done that. But how should Betty react? Should she, "A."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors unfreeze.)*

BETTY  
Don't you know that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior? If you don't believe, you're going straight to Hell!

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
Or "B."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors reset.)*

BETTY  
*(Upbeat)*  
Oh, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. Perhaps I could stop by your cubicle this afternoon. I have several religious pamphlets that can help you find heaven and eternal life.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
Or "C."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the actors reset.)*

BETTY

Oh, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to impose my religious beliefs on you, *during office hours*. Whatever religion you are, I'm inclusive, and would love, *after office hours*, to learn more about it.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST

The correct answer is?

*(Bored out of his fucking mind CHRIS hits a key on his keyboard.)*

WEBINAR HOST

"C." That's correct. You're doing great. Let's see what happens when a hostile worker is faced with a correct reaction.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the actors unfreeze.)*

HARRY

*(Upbeat)*

Gosh, thanks Betty for understanding. And thank you for being so tolerant. Perhaps someday, *after office hours*, I'll share with you my thoughts about Scientology and Xenu.

BETTY

Looking forward to it. *(Upbeat)* More coffee?

HARRY

*(Upbeat)*

Sure.

*(They laugh like close friends.)*

CHRIS

*(Fatigued, to himself)*

Someone kill me.

*(CHRIS closes the laptop and the actors exit.)*

**I CAN'T BE A FRIEND OF DOROTHY'S**

*(THE ACTOR PLAYING DOROTHY enters and speaks to the audience.)*

THE ACTOR PLAYING DOROTHY

*(To the audience)*

"I can't be a friend of Dorothy's." Warning: The following scene contains a conservative Mormon meeting a trans woman face-to-face for the first time. If you're a Mormon who has never made eye-contact with a trans woman, you might experience weakness, dizziness and an overwhelming desire to cut funding for the National Endowment for the Arts.

*(DOROTHY exits.)*

*(MAXINE enters the office. She is wearing a "hello my name is" type name tag on her lapel that reads, "She, Her, Lesbian")*

MAXINE

Your label.

CHRIS

My what?

MAXINE

The student leadership club decided that from now on everyone in the English department is going to wear noun and pronoun labels. User-friendly identities that will help us not mis-type people. Here, I filled yours in for you.

*(MAXINE hands CHRIS a name tag.)*

CHRIS

*(Reading the name tag)*

"He, Him, White, Male, Privileged."

MAXINE

I did get your pronoun correct, "he-him"?

CHRIS

Ah, yeah.

MAXINE

Wasn't sure what to put next.

Next? CHRIS

Gay, straight, T.B.A.? MAXINE

Straight. CHRIS

*(MAXINE writes in 'straight' and hands it to CHRIS.)*

Just stick it on yourself every morning before you come in. MAXINE

*(NOTE: From now on in the play all the characters wear "hello my name is" type name tags that label their nouns and pronouns.)*

*(MAXINE starts to leave.)*

Maxine. CHRIS

Yeah? MAXINE

I... I got a bit of a problem. CHRIS

MAXINE  
*(Interrupting)*  
Chris, during my travels through academe, I've found that the first semester is always the most arduous. What's up?

CHRIS  
Nothing really. It's just that...

MAXINE  
Let it all hang out.

CHRIS  
Well... I was wondering if I might be assigned a different teaching assistant for my undergrad dramatic lit class.

MAXINE  
Dr. Apeloko is in charge of TAs.

CHRIS

I thought you might override him. He assigned me Dorothy.

MAXINE

Dorothy? Oh, yes, the new M.F.A.

CHRIS

I'm sure *she's* an outstanding person, and a fine writer, it's just that we didn't seem to ah... ah... click.

MAXINE

Click?

CHRIS

She's in my grad creative nonfiction class. She came to see me this morning...

*(DOROTHY enters in another reality. She is a kind soul. She's wearing a pronoun sticker, "She-Her.")*

***(The two realities now run within the same office.)***

*(DOROTHY and MAXINE speak only to CHRIS, never to each other)*

DOROTHY

*(Optimistic, holding coffees)*

Morning Professor.

CHRIS

Hello.

DOROTHY

*(Introducing herself)*

Dorothy.

CHRIS

Chris.

*(They shake, which is difficult with the coffees. They touch elbows instead.)*

DOROTHY

I heard we have something in common.

CHRIS

Oh?

DOROTHY

Neither of us drink caffeine. So I brought us decaffeinated.

CHRIS

That's so kind. Thank you.

DOROTHY

Oh, darn, I kinda forgot which one I was drinking from.

CHRIS

Does it matter?

DOROTHY

Guess not.

CHRIS

No, it doesn't. Have a seat. *(After taking a big sip of decaffeinated)* Mmm. That's good.

DOROTHY

Glad you like it.

*(During the following, DOROTHY looks for something in her purse.)*

CHRIS

*(To MAXINE)*

I gave my students a first day assignment. They had the weekend to write a short, creative non-fiction piece about a personal experience. I thought it might let me get to know both them and their writing.

*(CHRIS digs through the papers on his desk.)*

CHRIS

Yours was the one about, oh where was it, buying shoes?

DOROTHY

No, mine was about being a trans woman.

CHRIS

Excuse me?

DOROTHY

Being a trans woman.

*(Beat, while CHRIS takes that in. He doesn't cover well.)*

CHRIS

Oh. That one. Was you. No problem.

*(Uncomfortable, CHRIS clears his throat and finds Dorothy's paper.)*

CHRIS

You know, ah, Dorothy, one of the oldest tenets of writing is//

DOROTHY

Found it.

*(DOROTHY finds what she's been looking for in her purse. A handheld mini recorder.)*

DOROTHY

May I record this?

CHRIS

Excuse me?

DOROTHY

I like to record notes.

*(During the following, DOROTHY sets up the mini-recorder in front of CHRIS.)*

CHRIS

*(To Maxine)*

I've always been uncomfortable with microphones. Growing up, my father told me that the stars were microphones through which Heavenly Father listens.

MAXINE

The stars are microphones, wow, that's fucked up. *(Catches herself)* Unless that's a 'Book of Mormon' thing in which case I'm totally okay with it.

CHRIS

No, it's not a 'Book of Mormon' thing.

MAXINE

In that case, it's fucked up.

DOROTHY

*(Into the mini-recorder)*

Monday September 8th, Professor Smith. *(To Chris)* You're on.

CHRIS

*(Carefully weighing his words)*

Ah, Dorothy, one of the oldest tenets of writing is that you should write about what you know. I wanted you to write a scene from the... ah... parcel of your life.

MAXINE

Parcel?

CHRIS

Yes, the package. The frame. *(Back to Dorothy)* Many great writers... Yeats, Joyce all wrote about what they knew.

DOROTHY

So did I. This happened to me a few months ago.

CHRIS

But this is a story about a woman who's...

DOROTHY

Waiting for the results of an AIDS test.

CHRIS

Ah... Okay.

*(Without thinking, CHRIS pushes the decaf away from himself.)*

CHRIS

That's when I did it. I didn't mean to, I was just trying to find the best spot for the decaf, but she looked at me as if I was some sort of//

MAXINE

Closed-minded-Mormon-transphobe?

DOROTHY

So, you, what, disliked it?

CHRIS

Noooo, not at all. I'm totally and completely inclusive. Matter of fact 'Rocky Horror Picture Show' is one of my favorite movies.

*(MAXINE drops her head in her hands. DOROTHY doesn't know what to make of it.)*

MAXINE

You didn't say that.

CHRIS

I didn't know what I was saying. She looked so much like a woman.

DOROTHY

Am I making you uncomfortable?

CHRIS

*(Uncomfortable)*

What? No. My comfort level is totally normal. Above normal. Look, ah, Dorothy, ah, I think we got off on the wrong foot. Let's rebuild the dike.

MAXINE

Rebuild the dike?

CHRIS

I was rambling. *(Awkward, upbeat)* So, ah, do you need to see a psychiatrist? It's covered by our university insurance.

MAXINE

*That's* rebuilding the dike?

DOROTHY

*(Ill-at-ease)*

No, but thanks for offering.

CHRIS

Dorothy, let me be honest. I think you have a bright future as a writer. But, I do have a few character notes.

DOROTHY

But you're not a trans woman.

CHRIS

*(An attempt at humor)*

Not last time I checked.

*(CHRIS waits for the laugh, none is given.)*

CHRIS

That was a joke. (*Awkward*) I was trying to...

DOROTHY

Rebuild the dike?

CHRIS

(*To MAXINE*)

That was the moment I lost her. She came in all positive but then checked out. I tried to reach out to him//her.

(*CHRIS makes an attempt at politically correct new speak.*)

CHRIS

(*Meandering*)

Dorothy, I, ah, I want you to know that I value your intrinsic worthiness, and, ah, I know that I am privileged, I own it, and all the historical objectification and oppression that my white male penis has caused.

MAXINE

Your penis persecuted people?

CHRIS

You know what I mean, metaphorically, in an academically vague sort of way.

MAXINE

I have no idea what you're talking about.

DOROTHY

I have no idea what you're talking about.

CHRIS

What I'm trying to say is that I know that I'm white, and male, and that you are transgendered//

DOROTHY

Trans woman//

CHRIS

And we are different. But if we can set that aside for a moment.

DOROTHY

You want me to set aside who I am?

(*CHRIS turns to MAXINE.*)

CHRIS

As you can see, I don't think that Dorothy and I have what might be called a... a...

MAXINE

Working relationship?

DOROTHY

I heard that before coming here you were at BYU, that true?

CHRIS

I'd rather not talk about my personal life.

DOROTHY

*(Kindly)*

You asked us to write about our personal life, yet you don't want to talk about yours?

CHRIS

*(With reservations)*

...Yes, I attended BYU.

DOROTHY

Okay, ah, first, welcome back to reality.

CHRIS

*(To Maxine)*

I recognized that as a joke and tried to let out a little laugh to let her know that I was open minded.

*(CHRIS attempts a sincere laugh but it comes off totally artificial.)*

CHRIS

*(To Maxine)*

It didn't work.

DOROTHY

Second, what do I do? Start over? Rewrite? Make it a more comfortable read for you?

CHRIS

No. This was just an introductory assignment. I wasn't sure what the next assignment would be, but I think you've helped.

DOROTHY

Oh?

CHRIS

For next week, I'm going to have the class write a creative nonfiction piece about a person who's completely different from themselves - Someone who's absolutely foreign to their//

DOROTHY

"Parcel?"

CHRIS

Yes.

DOROTHY

But you said writers write about what they know.

CHRIS

I did, but it's also important to observe, even investigate others.

DOROTHY

But isn't that, like, invading someone's privacy?

CHRIS

Are you serious about being a writer?

DOROTHY

Yes.

CHRIS

Then you have to invade. Really get in there, find their little dark secrets.

DOROTHY

I can do that.

CHRIS

Well, thanks for stopping by.

DOROTHY

Is there anything you want me to grade?

CHRIS

Grade?

DOROTHY

Didn't Dr. Apeloko tell you? I've been assigned as your T.A.

CHRIS

*(Beat, not covering well)*

...And that's not a problem. Welcome. I'm sure we'll work together... well.

DOROTHY

*(Kind but not believing him)*

I'm sure we will.

*(Thinking he's strange, DOROTHY turns off the mini-recorder and exits whistling.)*

CHRIS

Then she left whistling "Let's Do The Time Warp Again" from Rocky Horror.

MAXINE

Well, I don't know what to do. In all my years no one has ever rejected a T.A.//

CHRIS

I'm not rejecting. I just thought I could switch to someone who//

MAXINE

Wasn't trans.

CHRIS

No. I have no problem with that. None whatsoever. I//

MAXINE

Yes, I know, you own your penis.

CHRIS

This is for her - Obviously she's uncomfortable with me.

*(MAXINE starts for the door.)*

MAXINE

Have you taken the Diversity and Inclusion webinar yet?

CHRIS

I'm doing it right now. I'm about nine hours in.

MAXINE

*(Noncommittal)*

Good. Good.

*(MAXINE exits.)*

CHRIS

*(Awkwardly calling after)*

And I'm not rejecting her.

**WHAT IF MATT DAMON HAD X-RAY VISION**

*(THE ACTOR PLAYING DEJA enters.)*

ACTOR PLAYING DEJA

*(To the audience)*

"What if Matt Damon had X-ray vision." Trigger warning: The following scene contains a sexually confused Mormon, talk of radiation poisoning and a stupid act of violence.

*(The actor exits.)*

*(The past - Lost in Utah, CHRISTAIN sits beside BUDDY - they are still driving.)*

*(To the side, CHRIS watches the scene.)*

BUDDY

*(Thrilled with his story idea)*

Here's the first story I'm going to pitch when we get to Hollywood.

CHRISTIAN

Buddy, I'm having second thoughts.

BUDDY

Fade up! Two life long friends in a BMW.

CHRISTIAN

BMW?

BUDDY

Big Mormon Wagon. In other words an old shitty Chevy Suburban.

CHRISTIAN

Language.

BUDDY

Middle of *friggin'* nowhere - Two handsome, like-able guys.

CHRISTIAN

(*Bored with these stories*)

Yes, I know the next Matt Damon and Denzel Washington//

BUDDY

On their way to a new jobs as technicians at a nuclear power plant. But just as they arrive - Alarms! The core is melting! Not thinking of himself, Matt//

CHRISTIAN

That's me.

BUDDY

Runs into the reactor and saves the day, but he gets horrible radiation poisoning. Denzel//

CHRISTIAN

That's you.

BUDDY

Rushes him to the hospital. Dissolve to, three weeks later. Matt comes out of his coma! But he's changed. He's bigger, stronger, but more - he's now gay. And he has x-ray vision.

CHRISTIAN

(*Agitated by this*)

I think we should turn around.

BUDDY

I call this movie "Radiation" exclamation point!

CHRISTIAN

I'm serious, Mormons can't make it in Hollywood.

BUDDY

Did you know that in Hollywood everyone is like gay or bisexual, or Jewish or really, really confused. They don't know who they love. What about you, ever been in love? And we both know that girl you met at the singles ward doesn't count.

CHRISTIAN

(*Fuming*)

Buddy, if we don't turn around I'll... I'll...

BUDDY

What?

CHRISTIAN

I'll report you to the Zone Leader!

BUDDY

*(Laughing)*

Chris, there's gotta be more to life than mindlessly following the orders of a brainwashed Zone Leader. What're you gonna do when you finish your mission? Marry that girl?

CHRISTIAN

Her name is Alison.

BUDDY

I'm sure you'll be a great daddy to little "Gonie." Which won't give you any time to write. You'll become nothing more than a middle aged Mormon with a mortgage.

CHRISTIAN

*(Pissed off)*

Stop the car.

BUDDY

Why?

CHRISTIAN

Just Stop!

*(BUDDY pulls over. They sit there for a moment. CHRISTIAN fumes.)*

BUDDY

You okay? *(No answer)* Chris? I'm sorry if I//

CHRISTIAN

Shut up! Can you do that? Just shut your face.

BUDDY

*(Beat, kindly)*

Look, I... I know what your father did to you when you were ten years old.

CHRISTIAN

I don't know what you're talking about.

BUDDY

The gay conversion camp thing.

*(Pissed, CHRIS gets out. BUDDY follows.)*

BUDDY  
*(Genuine)*

Chris, I admit it, I deliberately got us lost, but I *need* to tell someone, someone I can trust, someone who won't tell Bishop Johnson. So... Let me just say... I love you. Always have. I just need to know if you share my feelings. Or am I making a fool of myself?

*(Beat. CHRISTIAN's agitation grows.)*

BUDDY  
Chris?

CHRISTIAN  
Fuck off!

*(Chris shoves Buddy into the dirt, then stands over him. He's one confused fucked up young Mormon, so what else can he do but quote the church website)*

CHRISTIAN  
The church's official policy is that if you're gay you are to live a celibate life or marry someone of the opposite gender and suppress it!

BUDDY  
Yeah, but that's really fucked up.

CHRISTIAN  
Yes it is!

*(Chris mounts Buddy and passionately kisses him.)*

*(Stops, stands.)*

CHRISTIAN  
I'm going to marry Alison!

*(CHRISTIAN exits.)*

BUDDY  
You'll be unhappy for the rest of your life.

*(BUDDY runs after.)*

**CAN I BOUNCE MY ABSURDIST PLAY OFF YOU?**

*(The actor playing MAXINE enters.)*

ACTOR PLAYING MAXINE

"Can I bounce my absurdist play off you?" Warning: The following scene contains a young writer presenting the first draft of her first absurdist play. If you're a fan of Samuel Beckett you may experience existential uncertainty. If you are not a fan of Beckett you'll most likely just get bored.

*(The actor exits.)*

*(Standing in the office door is DEJA a black college student. She's a vehement young writer searching for her voice.)*

DEJA

Professor?

*(Beat, CHRIS is off in his own world, still thinking about the previous scene.)*

DEJA

Professor?

CHRIS

Huh?

DEJA

You were thinking pretty hard there.

CHRIS

What? No. Ah, can I help you?

DEJA

Deja. I'm in your creative nonfiction class.

CHRIS

Right, the girl who sits in the back.

DEJA

Woman.

CHRIS

Mental error - That's what I meant.

*(She steps in and looks around.)*

DEJA

Wow, they really fixed the place up - hole in the wall and everything. *(She shudders)*. You going to the moment of silence?

CHRIS

For?

DEJA

Buddy, the guy you replaced? I was his TA for like two seconds before he offed himself.

CHRIS

Oh, ah, don't know if I'll have time.

DEJA

I'm not going. I think moments of silence are bullshit. It makes you feel like you've done something when you've done absolutely nothing.

CHRIS

And what can I do for you?

DEJA

Can I bounce my "write about someone unlike yourself" assignment off you before I turn it in.

CHRIS

Sure.

DEJA

I wrote it in the form of a play.

CHRIS

It was supposed to be a short story//

DEJA

Wrote it in one sitting. You know, flow of consciousness.

*(DEJA takes out two play scripts and hands one to CHRIS.)*

DEJA

*(With the passion of a young artist)*

It's about men and women, black/white, and our total inability to communicate. It's a manifesto. No one writes manifestos anymore, we write mission statements. Working title, "The Myth of Sisyphus, Part Two." Okay, here goes. *(Reading)* "Darkness. A spotlight fades up on a white man." That's you. "In a separate spotlight we find a black woman." That's me. "Both are buried to their necks in sand."

*(DEJA is author-ish-ly into it, CHRIS noncommittal.)*

DEJA

Okay, go.

WHITE MAN

*(Playacting the script)*

Ah... "I'm sorry."

BLACK WOMAN

*(Playacting the script)*

"Sorry or just apologetic?"

WHITE MAN

"I'm ashamed but not remorseful."

BLACK WOMAN

"Conscious-stricken?"

WHITE MAN

"Guilt-ridden."

BLACK WOMAN

"Mixed with metaphysical isolation?"

WHITE MAN

"Isolation is too strong a word. I feel an otherness mixed with a bit of hope that someday you will forgive me."

BLACK WOMAN

"I want to forgive you, but am not sure I will ever be able to exonerate you."

WHITE MAN

"You harbor a grudge?"

BLACK WOMAN

"I feel malice but not to the point of vindictiveness."

WHITE MAN

"So we can go forward?"

BLACK WOMAN

"We can get beyond this but we cannot move forward."

WHITE MAN

"I'm glad we talked."

BLACK WOMAN

"We've talked but not conversed."

WHITE MAN

"We've had a meeting of the minds."

BLACK WOMAN

"Can minds ever really meet?"

WHITE MAN

"Two people can understand each other."

BLACK WOMAN

"Understand or just comprehend?"

WHITE MAN

"Appreciate."

BLACK WOMAN

"No one can fully appreciate me."

WHITE MAN

"I want to appreciate and perceive you."

BLACK WOMAN

"I perceive you but don't grasp what you're saying."

*(CHRIS stops the reading.)*

CHRIS

Deja.

DEJA

Huh?

CHRIS

Sorry to interrupt. *(Flipping through the long script)* How much more?

DEJA

About twenty pages, then things really get going.

CHRIS

Does anything happen before page twenty?

DEJA

Meaning?

CHRIS

Is there a hint of story?

DEJA

You mean like Aristotle's rules of writing?

CHRIS

That's a start.

DEJA

I don't follow Aristotle's rules. That's what white men do.

CHRIS

If it's all right, Deja, I should get to the moment of silence. I'll read this tonight.

DEJA

Am I making it clear that communication between black women and white men is impossible?

CHRIS

You've communicated that remarkably well.

DEJA

So, be honest, you hated it?

*(During the following absurd conversation neither CHRIS or DEJA are aware of the absurdity.)*

CHRIS

Not at all. I don't like it, but I don't dislike it.

DEJA

So you're displeased but not to the point of hostility?

CHRIS

Hostility is too strong a word. I feel perplexed but want to understand.

DEJA

Understand or comprehend?

CHRIS

I want to appreciate your intrinsic worthiness.

DEJA

I don't want to be appreciated, I want to be recognized.

CHRIS

Your writing brought an interconnection between us.

DEJA

So you missed the point of the play.

CHRIS

I didn't miss it, I lost sight of it.

DEJA

I'll go rewrite.

CHRIS

No, don't rewrite it's perfect.

DEJA

Flawless perfect or it-needs-work perfect?

CHRIS

You get an "A".

DEJA

You think I wrote this to get a letter grade? My goals are so much more.

CHRIS

Glad to hear it.

DEJA

Glad or just pleased?

CHRIS

Happy.

DEJA

Do you mean delighted?

CHRIS

Mirthful. I'm mirthful.

DEJA

Mirthful?

CHRIS

Yes, mirthful. Okay, I gotta get to the moment of silence.

DEJA

Any grading?

CHRIS

Grading?

DEJA

Didn't Maxine tell you? I'm your new T.A.

CHRIS

*(Beat, with reservation)*

...Good. We are going to work well together.

*(DEJA exits. CHRIS puts his head down.)*

#### **THE MOMENT OF SILENCE**

*(In a new light, MAXINE enters and speaks to the students and faculty - the audience - gathered in the study room for the moment of silence.)*

MAXINE

"We will now have a moment of silence to celebrate the life of Buddy Young. Please lower your heads. Unless of course your particular religion does not allow you to do so, or if you have a physical impairment that prevents you. Also, lowering your head does not mean that you're performing an act of submission - Unless you want to perform an act of submission. You may say a prayer if you wish, but you are not required to do so, nor does my broaching the subject in any way suggest that the Department of English endorses or opposes prayer. Also know that a moment of silence does not imply an assumption of belief. This is a nonsectarian act that can be interpreted as sectarian if you so desire. If you do choose to say a prayer please whisper as this is a moment of silence, but know that by asking you to whisper I am not attempting to censor you in any way. If you wish to hold hands or hug the person beside you, do so only after you have asked permission and after you have received a positive confirmation that is witnessed by at least one person.

(MORE)

MAXINE (CONT'D)

Do not assume that just because someone gave you consent previously to hug them, that their consent is universal. We shall now begin a moment of silence."

*(After three seconds...)*

MAXINE

Thank you for coming.

*(MAXINE exits.)*

#### OPTIONAL INTERMISSION

*(If you must take an intermission this would be a good place. But by broaching the subject, we do not mean that you have to take an intermission. In fact, the play might work better if it clipped along without one. Nor by suggesting an intermission are we implying that your audience is so old they cannot manage their overactive bladders. Better yet, you might instead take a short twitter break so young people can check their phones. But know we are not implying that young people have lost their ability to concentrate. Nor are we suggesting that their lack of focus will bring about the end of humankind and the theatre as we know it. If you choose to take an intermission or twitter break, have one of the actors come out on stage and say...)*

ACTOR

*(Optional)*

We will now take a five minute twitter break.

*(Or.)*

ACTOR

We will now take a fifteen minute intermission.

*(Lights up on CHRIS sitting at his laptop taking a webinar.)*

ACTOR PLAYING BUDDY

"Diversity and Inclusion Training Webinar, unit Fifty-eight."  
Trigger Warning: The following scene contains satire.  
Clinical trials of satire have been known to cause  
psychological challenges for self-absorbed people who do not  
have a sense of humor.

*(The actor exits.)*

*(Inane, cheerful webinar music.)*

*(Just as before, during the following company members act out the training video that CHRIS watches the action on his laptop.)*

*(The actor playing DOROTHY plays the WEBINAR HOST of the webinar. She's training-video-fake.)*

WEBINAR HOST

*(Upbeat, artificial, to audience)*

Hi and welcome to part fifty-eight of the webinar "You Can't Say That." Brought to you by Achieve! Today's sub-unit is entitled, "What You Text Matters: Intent, Impact, Synergy." One day Betty and Harry are in the company break room when...

*(The actor playing Deja plays BETTY. The actor playing Christian plays HARRY. They walk up to a coffee maker.)*

BETTY

*(Upbeat and actor-y)*

Hi, Harry.

HARRY

*(Upbeat and actor-y)*

Hello, Betty.

BETTY

Coffee?

HARRY

Thank you.

*(They help themselves to coffee.)*

HARRY  
Did you get my text?

BETTY  
*(Displeased)*  
Oh, that was you.

HARRY  
That popular comedian I mentioned in my text is pretty funny.

BETTY  
I didn't find him funny at all.

HARRY  
What's wrong with you? That's funny.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker -  
the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
How should Betty react? Should she, "A."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker -  
the actors unfreeze.)*

BETTY  
I guess you're right. I do want to maintain workplace  
cohesion so I guess I'll just put up with it.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker -  
the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
Or "B."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker -  
the actors reset.)*

BETTY  
I'm calling the police and having you arrested! You pervert!

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker -  
the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
Or "C."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the  
actors reset.)*

BETTY

Harry, we need to empower people by recognizing bullying, abuse and harassment while creating a culture of respect and employee well-being. This is the second time you've sent me an inappropriate text, so I have no choice but to report you to H.R.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST

The correct answer is?

*(Bored out of his fucking mind CHRIS hits a key on his keyboard.)*

CHRIS

*(To himself)*

Please kill me.

WEBINAR HOST

"C." That's correct. You're doing great. Let's see what happens when a hostile worker is faced with a correct reaction.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the actors unfreeze.)*

HARRY

*(Regretful)*

Wow, you're right, Betty, I haven't learned my lesson. I guess I'll have to face the consequences of my actions.

*(CHRIS closes laptop. The Webinar actors fall out of character and exit.)*

**HOW STRAIGHT, WHITE, PRIVILEGED, MALE ACADEMICS  
TALK TO EACH OTHER IN PRIVATE**

*(MAXINE walks out on the stage of the theatre department's studio theatre.)*

*(The actors set up three music stands and stools for the reading of a play.)*

MAXINE

*(To the audience)*

Ladies and gentlemen, students and faculty, welcome to the department of English's second annual original student written play festival. Our first reading tonight is written by Deja. Some of you read her first play, a tangy piece called "The Myth of Sisyphus, Part Two." Now she's back with a new play, so let's give her our full attention. *(To Deja)* Any trigger warnings.

*(DEJA steps up.)*

DEJA

*(To the audience)*

Yes, this play will disturb you. If it doesn't it should.

MAXINE

*(To the audience)*

You've been warned.

*(MAXINE exits.)*

DEJA

*(To the audience)*

I'll be playing the role of Dr. Whitehead, a white, privileged, male professor with tenure.

*(DEJA puts on a name tag that reads, "WHITE MALE.")*

*(The actor playing BUDDY now plays the role of OWEN, a college student.)*

DEJA

My friend Owen here, a theatre major, will play the role of Dr. Lynch, a white, privileged, male professor *without* tenure.

*(OWEN puts on name tag that also reads, "WHITE MALE.")*

DOROTHY

And I'll be reading the stage directions. Are we ready?

DEJA

Ready.

*(OWEN gives a thumbs up.)*

DOROTHY

*(Dorothy reading from the script)*

"How Straight, White, Privileged, Male Academics Talk To Each Other In Private" a new play by Deja Tambo. The lights find Professor Whitehead, the white male head of the English department. Enter Dr. Lynch, a new white male adjunct professor.

DEJA

*(Reading from the script)*

"Come in. Door closed?"

OWEN

*(Reading from the script)*

"Yes. *(Frustrated)* I can't believe this happened in my first week of teaching. Am I going to lose my job?"

DEJA

"Not if you play your cards right."

OWEN

"What's going to happen?"

DEJA

"There'll be a hearing, witnesses called, and then three to six months from now the Dean's Oversight Committee will issue an executive report that will be filed and forgot, just like the university's new five-year plan. You're safe."

OWEN

"Still, I'm worried."

DEJA

"Chris, it's time we have the talk."

OWEN

"The talk?"

DEJA

"The secret rules, the golden plates, the Holy Grail. What they don't cover in the University's twenty hour Diversity and Inclusion Training Webinar. How a straight, white, male, can survive the messy realities of political correctness at a modern university."

OWEN

"I've heard these rules existed and were handed down from one generation of straight white male professors to another but I thought it was just an urban legend."

DEJA

"No, they're real. And now, because you're white, you will be a member of the club."

OWEN

"I'm honored."

DEJA

"Rule one: Always remember, it isn't your fault. We white males didn't create this situation. We are victims. Say it."

OWEN

"I am a victim."

DEJA

"No, say it like you mean it."

OWEN

"I am a victim!"

DEJA

"Good. Rule Two: always assume that ninety-five percent of your students and fellow professors are one of them."

OWEN

"Them?"

DEJA

"Knee jerk liberals that're always scouting new ways to be offended, and Vagina Monologue feminists who are utterly humorless."

OWEN

"Should I be taking notes?"

DEJA

"Absolutely not. We cannot take a chance that this will fall into non-white-non-straight hands. Rule three: vocabulary adjustment. The idea being that if you change the words people use, you'll tear down the walls between us - tear down the walls and you find yourself in an accepting open minded society - it doesn't work of course - but it's a nice thought."

DOROTHY

*(Reading the stage directions)*

"Dr. Whitehead reaches into his old satchel and takes out flashcards."

*(DEJA reaches into a satchel and takes out flashcards.)*

DEJA

"Let's test your skills."

OWEN

"You want me to..."

DEJA

"Yes. Say the word in the correct form."

DOROTHY

*(Reading the stage directions)*

"The flashcard reads, 'Waitress.'"

*(The flashcard reads, "Waitress.")*

OWEN

'Waitress.' A politically incorrect term that has been replaced by 'server' or 'waiter.'

DOROTHY

*(Reading the stage directions)*

"Dr. Whitehead isn't sure, he checks the back of the card for the answer."

*(DEJA checks the back of the card.)*

DEJA

"You are correct."

DOROTHY

"He flips to the next card, it reads, 'Foreign food.'"

*(DEJA flips to the next card, it reads, "Foreign food.")*

OWEN

"'Foreign food' has been replaced with 'ethnic cuisine.'"

DOROTHY

"Once again, Dr. Whitehead must check the answer on the back of the card."

*(DEJA checks the answer.)*

DEJA

You're batting a thousand. Let's try a full sentence. Instead of saying, "The deaf businessman had a sex change operation in a ghetto." You say..."

OWEN

"Ah... The hearing impaired businessperson had gender reassignment in an economically deprived area."

DEJA

*(Impressed)*

"You are good."

DOROTHY

"Dr. Whitehead hands over all the cards."

*(DEJA hands over the flashcards.)*

DEJA

"Take these, study them, and always remember appearance is more important than the real thing."

OWEN

"Am I now open minded?"

DEJA

"Almost. Rule Four: Because you teach writing. New writing rules, part one - similes and metaphors. I'll give you a sentence and you rewrite it using the correct simile. Ready? "Drunk with power he crashed into the room like a female driver." Go ahead."

OWEN

*(Guessing)*

"Ah... Drunk with power he crashed into the room like a madman."

DEJA

"No, that'd be flagged by people with mental health issues."

OWEN

*(More guessing)*

"Drunk with power he crashed into the room like a... a... bowling ball?"

DEJA

"No, bowlers have feelings too."

OWEN

(*Trying again*)

"Drunk with power he crashed into the room. Period?"

DEJA

"That's right! Avoid all similes and metaphors! And if you write about a character who is drinking coffee, never, ever describe the shade of the coffee."

OWEN

"Got it."

DEJA

"New writing rules, part two! Pedagogy, when you're in front of your class be sure to, once a week, throw in a little footnote on the contributions of them."

OWEN

"Them?"

DEJA

"Gays, lesbians, and anyone else on the alphabetical list. For you this'll be easy."

OWEN

"It will?"

DEJA

"You teach dramatic lit - lots of playwrights. Rule five: Political correctness insurance. You take out insurance by doing little things that make you appear to be open-minded."

OWEN

"But I *am* open-minded, right?"

DEJA

"Of course you are, all white male English professors are. But nowadays you gotta prove it. So let's say one of your students is selling cookies for some student group in the union - you be sure to stop by, chat'em up, buy something, you know, make an appearance. By the way, cookie?"

DOROTHY

"Dr. Whitehead offers him a cookie."

OWEN

"Thanks."

DOROTHY

"They eat cookies."

*(They eat cookies.)*

DEJA

"They're doing the cutest thing today. To protest the wage gap between men and women they're charging men a dollar and women only eighty-seven cents."

OWEN

"That is so cute."

DEJA

"Isn't it. Rule six: Comedy."

OWEN

"I like a good joke."

DEJA

"No you don't. Comedy is dead."

OWEN

"What about witticisms?"

DEJA

"Never ever be witty. Did you hear what happened to Dr. Adhock over in Criminal Justice?"

OWEN

"No."

DEJA

"Full professor, top in his field, published twenty books. This freshman//"

OWEN

*(Correcting him)*

"First year student."

DEJA

"Thank you. This first year female student kept sending him long, rambling, three-page, emails."

OWEN

"Oh I hate that."

DEJA

"He kindly requested that she edit. She sent more. He recommended that she get to the point. Even more long emails. Finally, trying to get through to her he wrote back a witticism, quote "An e-mail should be like a skirt, long enough to cover the essentials, but short enough to be interesting" Unquote. That's witty, right?"

OWEN

"Sure is."

DEJA

"That's Oscar Wilde witty. Not only was he fired, they disappeared him."

OWEN

"Disappeared?"

DEJA

"They removed his entire academic record and expunged his books from every college library. His books are now harder to find than an episode of The Cosby Show."

OWEN

"So never make a joke."

DEJA

"Or a pun, or a wisecrack."

OWEN

"What about irony?"

DEJA

"Irony is dead! Repeat after me, irony is dead!"

OWEN

"Irony is dead."

DEJA

"No, say it like you mean it."

OWEN

"Irony is totally dead!"

DEJA

"Lesson over. You are now officially open minded."

OWEN

"Gee thanks, this has been enlightening."

DEJA

"Remember there are no safe spaces for straight, white, male academics and that makes us...?"

OWEN

"Victims!"

DEJA

"You are now ready to face the politically correct world!"

OWEN

*(Looking at his watch)*

"I should get to my next class."

DEJA

"Which is?"

OWEN

"Shakespeare."

DEJA

"And how are you going to teach it?"

OWEN

*(Sure of himself)*

"I'm going to, for no apparent reason, right in the middle of a lecture on Macbeth, mention that Shakespeare was most likely a bisexual."

DEJA

"And..."

OWEN

"And then I'm going to go on a long tangent about how Taming of the Shrew is a sexist play filled with female oppression."

DEJA

"And what else are you going to do?"

OWEN

*(Proud)*

"Keep my job!"

DEJA

"You go girl!"

OWEN

"Thank you, it's been a privilege."

DEJA

"No, the *privilege* has been all mine."

*(They shake.)*

DOROTHY

"The lights fade. End of play."

*(MAXINE enters.)*

MAXINE

*(To the audience)*

Can we have a round of applause for our actors and playwright.

*(Applause.)*

MAXINE

Do to the unfortunate incident that occurred last year during the audience feedback session after Bob's play about breastfeeding in public, the faculty has decided to cancel all further audience feedback sessions. So, that's it, thank you for coming.

*(They exit.)*

### **THE SMALL PENIS RULE**

*(The ACTOR playing Dorothy enters.)*

ACTOR PLAYING DOROTHY

"The Small Penis Rule." Trigger Warning: The following scene contains talk of a man with a small penis. If you have a small penis this could be disturbing. To protect yourself, we ask all men with small penises to cover your ears now.

*(The ACTOR PLAYING DOROTHY exits.)*

*(MAXINE invades CHRIS's office with a small bag of cookies.)*

MAXINE

Bad news, some student in your dramatic lit class named Frank has filed a complaint against you, although I wasn't supposed to say his name so forget I said it.

CHRIS

A complaint? About?

MAXINE

Don't know. We'll find out when Frank comes forward. Wait, I said his name again, forget I said Frank.

CHRIS

*(To himself)*

Shit.

MAXINE

Relax everything will be fine.

*(MAXINE starts to leave.)*

CHRIS

Maxine, there's another problem.

MAXINE

Another? Chris, all professors suffer from incompetence, but you're having the worst first semester since our distinguished Chaucer Scholar was fired for masturbating in the stacks.

CHRIS

Deja came by with information this morning that I found rather troubling.

*(DEJA enters in another reality.)*

*(Both realities now run within the same office. DEJA and Maxine never speak to each other.)*

DEJA

I burned it!

CHRIS

What?

DEJA

My play. I burned it. I immolated it on the quad. Drew quite a crowd.

CHRIS

Why?

DEJA

Cause I heard you say in the hall after that it was shit.

CHRIS

I never said 'shit.' I said it needed development.

DEJA

Development or fixing?

CHRIS

Editing.

DEJA

I don't like editing, I'll shorten things but I won't edit//

CHRIS

*(To Maxine)*

It was pretty much a typical meeting, when...

DEJA

Did you like Dorothy's new piece?

CHRIS

Haven't read it yet.

DEJA

It's extraordinary.

*(Note: DEJA knows exactly what she is doing.)*

DEJA

It's a short story about this un-woke writer. Years before he became a professor he was on his mission, oh, forgot, he's Mormon too, when suddenly half way through he quits, runs home to Utah, marries this woman he hardly knows.

CHRIS

*(Troubled)*

Ah, Deja//

DEJA

But she divorces him because he can't get it up for her.

*(DEJA's phone bings.)*

DEJA

Hold on, it's Dorothy, one sec.

*(She texts.)*

CHRIS

As you can understand, I'm a little concerned. Deja's play//

MAXINE

"How straight, white, privileged, male academics talk to each other in private."

CHRIS

Was obviously aimed at me. And now Dorothy is writing a piece about a professor here at the University named "Christian," who just happens to teach the exact classes I teach.

MAXINE

You did ask them to write about someone unlike themselves.

CHRIS

Yes, but I didn't think//

MAXINE

Does the character in Dorothy's story have a tiny penis?

CHRIS

Excuse me?

MAXINE

A little willy.

CHRIS

*(Confused)*

I don't follow.

MAXINE

You most certainly have heard of the Small Penis Rule?

CHRIS

Can't say that...

MAXINE

When you write an unflattering characterization based on a real person always make sure you give the character a really little willy, or some other unflattering attribute, that way the real life person won't come forward and charge slander, cause doing so would be admitting that he has a little willy - It's known as the Small Penis Rule.

*(DEJA finishes texting.)*

DEJA

Oh oh! Dorothy has this really cool scene where the homophobic professor's wife talks about how their marriage failed cause he has a microscopic dick.

CHRIS

Deja//

DEJA

I find stories about Mormons fascinating. Did you know they didn't allow blacks into the Priesthood until 1978. What happened? Did God suddenly woke one morning and change his mind? Revelation! Being black is okay now.

*(She looks at her phone.)*

DEJA

Hold on. Text.

*(During the following she texts.)*

MAXINE

In my humble opinion it would be best not to react. Better yet, don't even read Dorothy's short story, just give it an "A" and move on. That's what most writing professors do anyway.

CHRIS

But//

*(MAXINE starts out.)*

MAXINE

Now, if you don't mind the Dean's having a terminology meeting. We are discussing whether we should call the faculty "people" or "personnel." The administration is in favor of "personnel." It makes them easier to replace.

*(MAXINE exits. Dejected, CHRIS lowers his head. Beat.)*

DEJA

You okay?

CHRIS

I've a headache.

DEJA

You want me to leave?

CHRIS

Leave is too strong a word, could you come back later.

DEJA

Sure.

*(DEJA starts to leave.)*

CHRIS

*(Blurting)*

I got a 99.5!

DEJA

Excuse me?

CHRIS

On part one of the University's Diversity and Inclusion Training Webinar. I got a 99.5. And I'm doing better on part two.

*(DEJA doesn't quite know what to make of this.)*

CHRIS

I just had to tell someone.

DEJA

*(Beat, confused)*

Good for you.

*(DEJA exits.)*

### **BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR**

*(The ACTOR PLAYING CHRISTIAN enters and talks to the audience.)*

ACTOR PLAYING CHRISTIAN

"Be careful what you wish for." Warning: The following scene flashes back to when Buddy was a Hollywood writer. After years of struggle he finally got his big break. He was hired and then fired as a writer on the show 'Game of Thrones'. He now stands before an unseen producer pitching a new movie idea. If you have ever written for 'Game of Thrones' you may feel mild discomfort. The lobby has been designated a safe space.

*(The actor exits.)*

*(We enter the recent past, BUDDY, now in his thirties, is wiser, bespectacled. He stands before a unseen Hollywood producer.)*

OLDER BUDDY

*(Tired, but good at pitching)*

Fade up! A like-able priest, a Matt Damon type. But he's having doubts. One night, he slips out of his ecclesiastical garb and sneaks out of the rectory. He finds this happenin' bar and after much soul searching goes inside. There he meets this nice woman, a Beyonce type. Later, he walks her home, she invites him up. Early the next morning he sneaks back into the rectory where he finds the evil Bishop, Denzel Washington, is introducing a new nun and get this - It's her! It's Beyonce! And she's pregnant! And the child is the anti-Christ!

*(An uncomfortable beat. The audience should feel perhaps that the actor has forgotten his line. Then...)*

OLDER BUDDY

I... I can't do this. *(Beat, troubled, finding his words)* When you're young you have this vague sense that tomorrow we'll get things right. But how can we when we live in a world where there are ads where art should be. Algorithms where humans should be. Where you turn on the TV and find not real life, but dragon-infested Medieval gonzo porn. *(Beat)* This is bullshit.

*(OLDER BUDDY starts to exit stops.)*

OLDER BUDDY

Just so you know. I'm the writer who left the Starbucks coffee cup on the set of 'Game of Thrones.' I did it on purpose. Know why? To wake you up. To pull you out of your cocoon so you can change things. Life isn't a simulation - The tiki torches are real.

*(OLDER BUDDY walks out.)*

### **DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION TRAINING WEBINAR III**

*(CHRIS sits at his desk taking the Webinar.)*

*(The actor playing MAXINE plays the WEBINAR HOST. She's training-video-fake.)*

WEBINAR HOST

*(Upbeat, artificial, to audience)*

Hi and welcome to part eighty-five of the webinar "You Can't Say That." Brought to you by *Achieve!* Today's sub-unit is entitled, "Jokes are no laughing matter: Intent, Impact, Synergy." One day Betty and Harry are in the company break room when:

*(BETTY and HARRY act out the Webinar. They walk up to the coffeemaker.)*

*(HARRY has his arm in a sling.)*

HARRY

*(Upbeat and actor-y)*

Hi Betty, how are you today?

BETTY

*(Upbeat and actor-y)*

Oh dear, what happened to your arm?

HARRY

Skiing accident.

BETTY

Painful?

HARRY

It is.

BETTY

Let me help you by making coffee.

HARRY

Thank you.

BETTY

Cream?

HARRY

You bet.

BETTY

How much?

HARRY

*(Showing a inch.)*

About ya much.

BETTY  
*(Busy with the coffee)*

How much?

HARRY  
Make it the color of Bruno Mars.

*(BETTY stops making coffee.)*

BETTY  
*(Uncomfortable)*  
...You know, Harry, Black people don't like jokes like that.

HARRY  
No, really? Why?

BETTY  
We find them offensive.

HARRY  
Thanks for letting me know. You know I learn a lot from our little friendly conversations.

BETTY  
Little friendly conversations are important.

HARRY  
Wow, I'm learning new things.

BETTY  
Glad to hear it. Now, how much cream would you like?

HARRY  
*(Utterly humorless)*  
One ounce.

*(Suddenly everything is okay, they smile and laugh like close friends.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
*(Upbeat, artificial, to audience)*  
Congratulations you have finished the webinar "You Can't Say That." Brought to you by *Achieve! Let's celebrate!*

*(Bad rap music.)*

WEBINAR HOST

*(Rapping)*

WHAT YOU GOTTA KNOW IS THAT WE'RE ALL EQUAL  
ANYTHING LESS IS TOTALLY FEEBLE.

*(BETTY AND HARRY join in.)*

WEBINAR HOST, BETTY & HARRY

TIMES ARE A CHANGIN' WE AIN'T MEDIEVAL  
THERE'S NEVER BEEN A CAUSE TO BE DECEITFUL  
CAUSE IF YOU ARE, KNOW THAT IT'S ILLEGAL!

*(CHRIS closes his laptop. The  
Webinar actors fall out of  
character and exit.)*

### **WHY YOU SHOULD BOYCOTT WOODY ALLEN MOVIES**

*(The ACTOR PLAYING BUDDY enters and  
speaks to the audience.)*

ACTOR PLAYING BUDDY

*(To the audience)*

"Why you should boycott Woody Allen movies." Warning: The following scene contains strobe lights, loud noises and if this theatre can afford it, theatrical haze. It may be offensive to people who like the play 'Angels in America,' and neurotic movie directors who rip off Fellini.

*(THE ACTOR PLAYING BUDDY exits.)*

*(DOROTHY and DEJA enter the  
office.)*

DOROTHY

You wanted to see us?

CHRIS

Thanks for stopping by.

DEJA

What's up?

CHRIS

Ah... I was wondering if we might have a... a *(off the webinar)* 'little friendly conversation.'

Sure.

DOROTHY

Decaf?

CHRIS

No thanks.

DOROTHY

Me either.

DEJA

*(There's a uncomfortable beat.)*

CHRIS  
*(Trying to find the right words)*  
Ah... I asked you to stop by because... ah, I... I had a rather unpleasant thing happen to me this morning...

DOROTHY  
Oh, I'm sorry.

CHRIS  
I was talking with another English professor in the hall. A nothing special conversation, just chatting about movies, when I mentioned that I like the novelistic structure of Woody Allen's films. The professor bristled and loudly condemned me for condoning a, quote, "neurotic sexual predator who rips off Fellini movies."

DOROTHY  
*(Confused)*  
Is that why you asked us to stop by, to talk Woody Allen?

CHRIS  
Yes. No. I just wanted to say that even a Fellini mimic who is a neurotic sexual predator can, on occasion, make a good movie...

DEJA  
Okay, if that's all, I'm due back on the planet Earth.

CHRIS  
Do you know what it's like to walk into a room and have everyone immediately judge you.

DOROTHY  
Yeah.

DEJA

Been there and done that.

CHRIS

I make a innocent comment about Woody Allen and they judge me as a privileged, white, unwoke male. No further information is needed.

DOROTHY

Would you like to share more?

CHRIS

No. Yes.

DOROTHY

You like Woody Allen and...

*(CHRIS delays.)*

DOROTHY

And...

CHRIS

*(Beat, this isn't easy)*

And...

DEJA

And?

CHRIS

And... I was once gay.

DEJA

...Excuse me?

CHRIS

It's not what you think.

DEJA

What else is there?

CHRIS

I was ten years old, when I was called in for a "special talk" by Bishop Johnson.

*(In another reality, BISHOP JOHNSON enters.)*

*He's Mr. Rogers-kind, white, really Mormon, and played by the actor playing MAXINE who is dressed like a man.)*

*(BISHOP JOHNSON talks to a little boy but his focus is to the audience.)*

BISHOP JOHNSON

Hello Christian, how are you today? I have something special to tell you.

CHRIS

I was just a farm boy who knew nothing about the world.

BISHOP JOHNSON

Sometimes boys have *feelings*. You know what I mean, *feelings*?

CHRIS

I didn't know what he meant.

*(BISHOP JOHNSON holds up a stuffed toy dog and cat.)*

BISHOP JOHNSON

It's normal for dogs to be attracted to dogs and cats to cats. But it's abnormal for dogs to be attracted to cats *in that way*.

CHRIS

I had no idea what "that" meant in *that* sentence.

BISHOP JOHNSON

But sometimes a boy has an *overbearing mother* and an *emotionally distant* and distracted father and this can result in an illness called (*Ominous*) homo-sex-uality.

CHRIS

That was the first time I'd heard the word.

BISHOP JOHNSON

And we all know sodomy is wicked.

CHRIS

The reason for the talk was that someone left a copy of the play "Angels in America" in the temple's Celestial Room. Bishop Johnson was convinced it was me. I knew it was Buddy.

DEJA

Buddy?

DOROTHY

Do you mean... Dead Buddy?

CHRIS

Yes. We were friends.

*(DOROTHY and DEJA are amazed.)*

BISHOP JOHNSON

Sodomy is a threat to our national security. You don't want to be a threat to our national security do you? Do You!?

*(Shakes the stuffed pets head, 'no'. Intimidated TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTAIN also shakes his head.)*

CHRIS

All I knew was that my mother was rather overbearing and my father spent most of his time in the barn. So one night at dinner, I told my mother, father and twelve older siblings, I knew what was wrong with me - I was a threat to national security, I... was a sodomite.

DOROTHY

You're joking.

CHRIS

A sheltered homeschooled farm kid could hardly have anticipated what happened next. Besides the beatings in the barn, there was a lot of fasting and praying. Then I was sent to Bishop Johnson for a psychological tests.

BISHOP JOHNSON

Which do you like more, your mother or father?

CHRIS

I always preferred my mother. My father was always in the goddamn barn.

BISHOP JOHNSON

Do you feel like an outsider?

CHRIS

Course - that's why I became a writer.

BISHOP JOHNSON

Have you ever read the play "Angels in America"?

CHRIS

No, but I was determined to. I was convinced that this forbidden text would let me in on the secret of who I was. My identity. I managed, through Buddy to get a copy, which I read under the sheets after lights out.

DOROTHY

What did you think?

CHRIS

Honestly, I thought it could use a little editing.

*(Spooky lights fall on BISHOP JOHNSON.)*

BISHOP JOHNSON

*(Eerily)*

What have you done? What Have You Done?

CHRIS

As I finished the play Bishop Johnson's voice echoed in my head. Then the ground began to shake, there was smoke and fire.

BISHOP JOHNSON

*(Eerily)*

You, little boy, are a threat to our national security!

*(Smoke, strobe lights and bone-chilling banging.)*

CHRIS

*(Terrified)*

And then an angel came to me!

*(Gonzo Porn music! An ANGEL breaks through the wall, is lowered from above, or in some way - à la 'Angels in America' - makes an interesting entrance.)*

*(Shaking in fear, BISHOP JOHNSON cowers and runs.)*

THE ANGEL MORONI

*(Ominous)*

"Greetings prophet, the great work begins! The messenger has arrived!"

DOROTHY

Isn't that a line from 'Angels in America?'

*(CHRIS becomes his ten year old self.)*

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTIAN

*(Terrified)*

Who are you?

THE ANGEL MORONI

I am the Angel Moroni!

DEJA

You gotta be fucking kidding.

CHRIS

I'm not, he was there, for real, before me.

DOROTHY

You were dreaming?

CHRIS

I know that now, but at ten it was too real.

*(CHRIS is drawn into the dream.)*

THE ANGEL MORONI

*(Ominous, echoing)*

Christian, sexual purity is God's plan! And you haven't been pure!

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTIAN

I'm only ten, I don't know what sex is!

THE ANGEL MORONI

Violation of our Father's laws gets in the way of eternal progress!

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTIAN

I want to make progress!

THE ANGEL MORONI

The stars are microphones whereby Heavenly Father listens to you. Day and Night, you are being watched!

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTAIN

Even under my sheets at night?

THE ANGEL MORONI

Especially under your sheets!

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTAIN

I'm a bad person!

THE ANGEL MORONI

Did you read "Angels in America?"

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTAIN

I did! I'm sorry.

THE ANGEL MORONI

So did I?

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTAIN

Really, what did you think?

THE ANGEL MORONI

I thought it could a little editing. (*Thunderous!*) Was Jesus a sexual pervert?

TEN YEAR OLD CHRISTIAN

I keep telling you I don't know what that is!

THE ANGEL MORONI

See that you don't! Now I have to go. If you should have any questions, the Church provides helpful resources at... Mormon-and-gay-dot-LDS-dot-orgggggggggg!

*(The ANGEL disappears. The music and special effects end as the lights return.)*

*(CHRIS is pulled back to the present, but he's traumatized by the memory. DEJA and DOROTHY are shocked.)*

CHRIS

*(Desperate, finding his words)*

I... I am not one user-friendly label. I'm...

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

I'm not just a privileged white male, I'm dealing with a fucked up childhood, and stars that are microphones, and I'm blocking tons of regret, and I'm haunted by the past, and my father never loved me, and I'm sexually perplexed! *(Beat)* I'd put that on my name tag but it wouldn't fit.

*(Touched, DOROTHY starts to reach out to comfort him, but before she can...)*

*(In another reality, the actor playing MAXINE enters as the WEBINAR HOST. She clicks her clicker. CHRIS, DEJA and DOROTHY freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST

*(To the audience)*

We've all been in that situation. Been there done that. Now, audience, how should they react? Should she, "A."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors unfreeze.)*

DOROTHY

*(Amazed)*

That's the most fucked up thing I've ever heard. You need to see a team of psychiatrists. And while you're at it throw in a shitload of shock therapy.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST

Or "B."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks - the actors reset.)*

DEJA

*(Angry)*

That doesn't excuse you, you homophobic, trans-phobic, sexually confused racist in denial! You need to take responsibility for all the historical objectification and oppression that your white male penis has caused.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST

Or "C."

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors reset.)*

DOROTHY

*(Kindly)*

Chris, we're more than our labels, we're the sum total of a whole bunch of back story that's stacked atop more back story.

DEJA

And we need to stop pretending it doesn't exist and deal with it.

DOROTHY

We've become static and brittle people who've forgot how to talk to people unlike us.

DEJA

We need to step out of our gated realities and really see each other.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors freeze.)*

WEBINAR HOST

The correct answer is?

*(The WEBINAR HOST prompts the audience to answer until they answer "C.")*

WEBINAR HOST

*(Upbeat)*

"C." That's correct. Let's see what happens when a white, homophobic, trans-phobic, sexually confused Mormon is faced with a correct reaction.

*(The WEBINAR HOST clicks a clicker - the actors unfreeze.)*

CHRIS

*(Catching his breath)*

Thank you for understanding.

DOROTHY

Do you need a hug?

CHRIS

I do.

DOROTHY

Before I can hug you the rules state that I need a definite  
'yes' or 'no.'

CHRIS

Yes.

DOROTHY

And a witness. Would you be our witness?

DEJA

Sure.

DOROTHY

*(To Chris)*

Do you give me permission to hug you?

CHRIS

Yes.

*(DOROTHY looks to DEJA for  
confirmation.)*

DEJA

I witness that you have received a positive response.

DOROTHY

Thank you.

*(DOROTHY hugs CHRIS. A sincere  
moment.)*

DOROTHY

Chris, I just want you to know... I see you.

CHRIS

*(Sincerely)*

And I see you.

*(CHRIS looks to DEJA.)*

DEJA

Don't ask, I got no choice but to see you.

*(They laugh.)*

CHRIS

Coffee?

DOROTHY  
Decaf?

CHRIS  
No, I'll take caffeinated.

DEJA  
You sure?

CHRIS  
Positive.

*(They walk over to the webinar  
coffeemaker. During the following  
they laugh and enjoy each other's  
company.)*

WEBINAR HOST  
*(To the audience)*  
And they all lived happily ever after in a culture of respect  
and dignity.

**SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY**

*(The actors playing DEJA and  
DOROTHY stop the play.)*

ACTOR PLAYING DEJA  
Wait wait.

MAXINE  
What's wrong?

ACTOR PLAYING DOROTHY  
There's still one more scene. *(To the audience)* Epilogue.  
"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day."

ACTOR PLAY DEJA  
We will now flashback to a few weeks ago, the first day of  
class. Warning: *(Beat)* You know what, fuck it. Let's just see  
what happens.

ACTOR PLAYING DOROTHY  
We find Buddy, now a professor, in his office. Actors,  
places.

*(OLDER BUDDY enters the office, he is now a professor. MAXINE joins him.)*

*(The other actors exit.)*

MAXINE

*(Eating a cookie)*

Teaching at a university is a lot like postmodern art - don't let it depress you if you don't get it at first. Or ever for that matter.

OLDER BUDDY

*(Kindly)*

Thanks for the advice.

MAXINE

Oh, I wanted to tell you that I'm a great fan of 'Game of Thrones.' So sorry it went off the air. My dissertation was on Beowulf.

OLDER BUDDY

*(Tolerating)*

Oh, thanks.

MAXINE

I can't get enough dragons, I like lots of dragons.

OLDER BUDDY

Well, I should start preparing for my next class.

*(MAXINE starts for the door.)*

MAXINE

Oh! You missed the all-day-long-new-faculty-orientation.

OLDER BUDDY

Yes, I hear there's a make up tomorrow.

MAXINE

Cookie?

OLDER BUDDY

Oh, sure.

*(They eat cookies.)*

MAXINE

Some student group is selling'em on the steps of the Student Union to raise money for something, I don't know what. They're only charging a buck. *(She looks at her watch)* Oh! Gotta run. Got a football stadium naming committee meeting. Looks like Cheesecake Factory won the bid. Quite absurd, but such is life.

*(MAXINE exits.)*

*(OLDER BUDDY is alone in his office for a sec.)*

*(A WHITE STUDENT enters. Probably some STEM major. The WHITE STUDENT is played by the same actor who played young Christian. He wears a "Make America Great Again" hat.)*

WHITE STUDENT

Got a minute?

OLDER BUSTER

Sure.

*(OLDER BUDDY stops, beat, in some mysterious way something in this student's eyes reminds him of Christian.)*

OLDER BUSTER

So sorry, but do I know you?

WHITE STUDENT

I'm in your dramatic lit class. Sit in the back.

OLDER BUSTER

But we've met before.

WHITE STUDENT

Don't think so. Name's Frank.

OLDER BUSTER

What can I do for you, Frank?

WHITE STUDENT

Professor, I represent a consortium of concerned students who feel that we have to take action, so we're having a bake sale.

OLDER BUSTER

Happy to help out, how much?

WHITE STUDENT

For you, fifty cents.

*(The STUDENT holds up a cookie.)*

OLDER BUSTER

That looks like the same cookie Maxine had.

WHITE STUDENT

One and the same.

OLDER BUSTER

But she said they cost a dollar.

WHITE STUDENT

That's right. We're charging white men a dollar and a half, white women a dollar, and blacks, gays, or any other minorities, fifty cents.

OLDER BUSTER

...Why?

WHITE STUDENT

We thought if we're going to hold a bake sale to protest affirmative action we'd have affirmative action going on right at the bake sale.

OLDER BUSTER

*(Perplexed)*

Ah... Frank, was it?

WHITE STUDENT

Yeah.

OLDER BUSTER

What student organization are you with?

WHITE STUDENT

It's a new student group that wants to take our universities back. We're tired of watching you professors promote the propaganda of the pro-homosexual left. Now professor, before we sic our Twitter mobs on you, we'd like to give you another chance.

OLDER BUDDY

To?

WHITE STUDENT

Improve your teaching. For example, just now, during the first class, right in the middle of the lecture, for no apparent reason, you mentioned that Shakespeare was most likely a bisexual.

OLDER BUSTER

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" was written to a man.

WHITE STUDENT

Yeah but, if you're going to bring up the fact that a particular play-writer is a sexual pervert, then shouldn't you also mention that another play-writer is a dedicated family man who loves his wife, children, God and country?

OLDER BUSTER

...But I don't know any playwrights who...

WHITE STUDENT

Your job, professor, is to provide us clear career pathways and job-specific skills not to muddy our heads. Do we understand each other? Knowing that Shakespeare was queer doesn't help me find a job.

*(The STUDENT puts the cookie on the desk.)*

WHITE STUDENT

Tell you what, for you, no charge.

*(The STUDENT exits. OLDER BUDDY stands there stunned.)*

*(Beat.)*

*(CHRIS enters the office in the present. He stops. He's taken by goose bumps. He becomes aware of the ghostly presence. The two realities become one. CHRIS slowly comes to see BUDDY.)*

CHRIS

...Elder Young?

OLDER BUDDY

Elder Smith.

*(CHRIS and BUDDY join each other's realities.)*

CHRIS  
*(Really seeing Buddy)*

Why?

OLDER BUDDY

Why what?

CHRIS  
*(Trying to find his words)*

Did you... Why didn't you... stick around...?

OLDER BUDDY  
*(Kindly)*

I guess I just got tired. Tired of fighting the same battles.  
Tired of being invisible.

CHRIS

...I see you.

BUDDY

I see you.

*(They hug. It's tender.)*

*(The microphones hanging above the stage and audience become stars twinkling in the clear night sky.)*

*(The lights fade.)*

THE END