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A Bright New Boise

by Samuel D. Hunter

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**

FOUNDED 1830

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**Originally commissioned and produced by
Partial Comfort Productions, NYC**

A BRIGHT NEW BOISE was commissioned and first produced by Partial Comfort Productions at the Wild Project in New York City (Chad Beckim and Molly Pearson, co-artistic directors) in Septemeber, 2010. The production was directed by Davis McCallum, with dramaturgy by John M. Baker, set design by Jason Simms, lighting design by Raquel Davis, costume design by Whitney Locher, sound design by Ryan Rumery and M. Florian Staab, and video design by Rocco DiSanti. The cast was as follows:

WILL Andrew Garman
PAULINE Danielle Slavick
ANNA Sarah Nina Hayon
LEROY John Patrick Dougherty
ALEX Matt Farabee

A revised version of *A BRIGHT NEW BOISE* was produced at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. (Howard Shalwitz, artistic director) in October 2011. The production was directed by John Vreeke, with dramaturgy by John M. Baker, set design by Misha Kachman, lighting design by Colin K. Bills, costume design by Ivania Stack, sound design by Chris Baine, and video design by Aaron Fisher. The cast was as follows:

WILL Michael Russotto
PAULINE Emily Townley
ANNA Kimberly Gilbert
LEROY Felipe Cabezas
ALEX Joshua Morgan

CHARACTERS

WILL - Late thirties, male.

PAULINE - Late thirties to early forties, female.

ANNA - Late twenties to early thirties, female.

LEROY - Early to mid twenties, male.

ALEX - 17, male.

TWO MALE VOICES ON HOBBY LOBBY TV

SETTING

Aside from the scenes in the parking lot, the entire play takes place in a windowless breakroom of a Hobby Lobby in Boise, Idaho. Stark, fluorescent lighting, white walls. A few cheap chairs and tables are in the space, along with a telephone on the wall, an ethernet port, lockers, maybe a vending machine or mini-fridge, and a mounted television. Some non-ironic corporate slogans or work schedules adorning the walls wouldn't be out of order.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

"Hobby Lobby TV" should be a recording two men sitting behind a desk, with a very dull background, either completely unadorned or with a very cheap looking "Hobby Lobby" sign behind them. It should always be at an extremely low, barely perceptible volume (except when indicated), and the dialogue should be as plain, boring, and non-descript as possible. No effort should be made to make it funny, ironic, meaningful, etc. It should only be slow, low-pitched, monotonous chatter about new items, sales and promotions, new store locations, etc. In production, the television can be handled in a number of different ways. For the first production, the television was almost entirely facing upstage so that the audience never saw the images. In the second production, the television was placed center stage, facing the audience, and was visible at all times. The amount of static and times when the images of surgery were clear or unclear were controlled from moment to moment as to not distract too heavily from the action of the scene.

Dialogue written in *italics* is emphatic, slow, and deliberate; dialogue in ALL CAPS is impulsive, quick, explosive. Dialogue written in *BOTH* is a combination of the two.

A "/" indicates an overlap in dialogue.

An intermission can be taken between scenes six and seven.

for John

Scene One.

(WILL stands in a parking lot, at night. Sounds of an interstate highway can be heard: passing semis, car horns, car stereos, etc, as well as the buzzing glow of neon signs and fluorescent lights overhead.)

(He stands with his eyes closed, listening to the noise.)

WILL. Now.

...

...

...

Now.

...

...

...

Now.

...

...

...

Now.

(The noise continues.)

Scene Two.

(The breakroom. WILL sits facing PAULINE, whose back is to the television. PAULINE wears a nametag and holds a clipboard.)

(An extreme close-up of ear surgery plays on the television.)

PAULINE. So then the black guy comes up to the Asian lady and the white lady, and he's like, "I don't really understand what all this talk about unions is gonna get us. All they wanna do is take our money and decide who were going to vote for." And then the Asian lady is like, *shocked*, and she says, "They choose who you vote for?" And then the white lady says, "That's not what America is all about." And then there's a graphic, or...Shit, what the hell is...? It's like a pie chart. Yeah, it's like—I don't know, something about unions. Do you know anything about unions?

WILL. They're not good.

PAULINE. Yeah, exactly. That's the gist of the pie chart, anyway, so you get it. Sorry you couldn't just watch it, the damn VCR's broken. Everything here is falling apart, including me. Heh, you know.

WILL. Oh. Yeah, heh.

PAULINE. So anyway, don't try to unionize.

WILL. Oh, no, of course not.

PAULINE. They shut down a Hobby Lobby in Kansas City when they tried to unionize, so don't try to unionize.

WILL. I really won't.

PAULINE. Too bad you couldn't see the video, it's actually—it has a funny segment, like a cartoon?

WILL. Oh, okay.

PAULINE. Yeah, it's actually a pretty great company when it comes down to it. And they know how to run a business, everything is hooked up to the corporate office. We can't even turn the air conditioning on

without calling Oklahoma. I mean— I know that sounds annoying, but it's actually really great. Really, it's just— a well-oiled machine.

WILL. Yeah, I'm really glad you had an open position—

PAULINE. (*holding WILL's resume*) Says here you worked for Albertson's up in Couer d'Alene?

WILL. Uh— yes.

PAULINE. Uh huh. And how was that?

WILL. Oh, it was— fine, I guess.

PAULINE. I used to be assistant manager at Fred Meyer, you know Fred Meyer?

WILL. Oh yeah, of course.

PAULINE. It's kind of like an Albertson's.

(*quick pause*)

WILL. Y— yes.

(*PAULINE continues to look through his resume.*)

PAULINE. You from Couer d'Alene originally?

WILL. The area, yeah.

PAULINE. Beautiful up there.

WILL. Yes, it really is.

PAULINE. What brings you down to Boise?

WILL. I guess— change in scenery more than anything else.

PAULINE. Yeah? Well, Boise's a good town. You'll like it here, it's grown a lot over the past ten years.

WILL. Yes, it really / seems like—

PAULINE. When I was a kid, it was nothing like this. Where we're sitting right now used to be cow pastures. Nowadays, all the surrounding towns just spill right into one another. Friend of mine lives in Caldwell, tells me sometimes it takes him *forty minutes* to get to work. We have honest-to-god *city traffic*, you believe that?

WILL. Yeah, I haven't been here since I was a kid, it's much different—

PAULINE. (*looking at the resume*) Why'd you switch to part time in 2004?

(pause)

WILL. What's that?

PAULINE. At Albertson's. You switched to part time in 2004, how come?

WILL. Oh, I had a— sort of a second job.

PAULINE. What was it?

WILL. Uh— I was, it was sort of like, uh— bookkeeping?

PAULINE. Why isn't it on your resume?

WILL. Well, it wasn't really... It was very specific, it was for a church.

PAULINE. So?

WILL. Oh, you just... I don't know, sometimes people— they make assumptions about who you are based on—

PAULINE. Hell, we're not like that, believe me. The guy who founded the company is all, like, Christian. David Green, that's the guy's name. You should read the statement of purpose for the company, it's all like—

WILL. Plus, all my other experience is in retail, I thought that was more important.

PAULINE. Huh. Well, anyway, I can get you started as soon as you like. Tomorrow, even. Pays \$7.25 an hour, I'll try to put you on full time in nine months if I can, until then you work thirty-eight hours a week. Holidays are time and a half, weekends are time and a quarter. Possible seventy cent raise after nine months.

WILL. Perfect.

PAULINE. Alright then. I'll go get your W-2, do you have your social security card and driver's license on you? I can take you out on the floor and we can get going on your training. I'll set up an appointment for the drug test for tomorrow morning. You have any questions?

WILL. Yeah, just— is that always on the TV in here?

(PAULINE turns around, sees the television.)

PAULINE. Goddammit. Motherfucker. Goddammit.

(**PAULINE** gets up and goes to the television, looking at it.)

Goddammit. What is that, an ear? That's an ear, isn't it? Goddammit.

(**PAULINE** picks up the phone and dials a few numbers.)

(on the phone) Leroy, go up to the roof and—. Yeah, it's an ear or something.

(hangs up)

Sorry about that. Goddammit.

WILL. Why is—?

PAULINE. It's the satellite dish, I don't know. Sometimes it gets all screwy, is it raining outside?

WILL. A little bit, yeah.

PAULINE. Figures. The company has its own dedicated channel— nothing much, just info on products, new stores, stuff like that. Sometimes the signal gets crossed with these medical whatever.

(looking at the television)

Goddamn, would you look at that? How do you think that feels? Jesus Christ.

(**WILL** cringes. **PAULINE** notices.)

Don't worry, you'll get used to it. You're not gonna vomit, are you? Interviewed a girl last month, she almost threw up. I didn't hire her.

WILL. I'm fine, it's fine.

(**ALEX** enters, iPod buds in his ears. He doesn't look at either **PAULINE** or **WILL** and sits down on one of the chairs, facing away from them.)

(**WILL** stares at **ALEX**.)

PAULINE. (re: **ALEX**) He's twelve. Doesn't speak English so we can work him seventy hours a week.

WILL. What?

PAULINE. I'm shitting you. He's a high school kid. Worked here last summer too. *(to ALEX)* Hey. Hey, Alex. SAY HI TO WILL. HE'S NEW.

(no response, nearly screaming)

PAULINE. *(cont.)* ALEX FUCKING SAY HI TO WILL. MAKE HIM FEEL WELCOME.

(ALEX barely looks up, does a half-hearted wave toward WILL. WILL smiles, waves back.)

Good worker, actually. Real accurate register counts.

P.A. ANNOUNCEMENT (ANNA). Mandy, personal call on line two. Mandy, line two.

PAULINE. Fuckin' Mandy. *(re: social security card and driver's license)* Can I grab those to make a copy?

(no response)

Will?

WILL. Uh—yeah, here.

(WILL hands her his social security card and driver's license, PAULINE exits. WILL continues to stare at ALEX. After a moment, ALEX feels someone looking at him.)

(He looks behind him, seeing WILL. WILL smiles warmly at him. ALEX smiles back, then goes back to his iPod.)

(ALEX still feels WILL staring at his back, he looks back at WILL again.)

WILL. What're you listening to?

ALEX. *(taking off his headphones)* What?

WILL. Sorry, I— I'm just wondering, what're you listening to?

ALEX. Villa-Lobos.

(pause)

WILL. Is that— pop music?

ALEX. He's a composer who mixed traditional Brazilian music with European classical music.

WILL. Oh. Wow. That's impressive.

ALEX. Yeah, well, I'm glad you're impressed, that means a lot.

(ALEX looks away, putting his headphones back in. WILL keeps looking at him. Finally, ALEX looks at him.)

WILL. *(reaching out a hand)* I'm Will. I just got hired.

(ALEX takes out his ear buds.)

ALEX. Wait, you wanna like, talk? *(pause)* I'm Alex.

(pause)

WILL. What other kinds of music do you listen to?

ALEX. Lots. Mostly modern composition.

WILL. What does that mean?

ALEX. Like, composers. Who are modern.

(pause)

WILL. Are you a / musician?

ALEX. I'm gonna listen to my music now if that's okay.

(ALEX smiles at him, putting his headphones back in. He turns on his iPod, scrolling through the music.)

WILL. Alex?

(ALEX takes off one earbud, annoyed.)

ALEX. Yeah?

WILL. I'm your father. When you were born your name was William. You were named after me.

(PAULINE re-enters.)

PAULINE. Okay, so here we are. If you can get these done fast, I should be able to train you on one of the registers before we close. Should be quick, if you remember anything from Albertson's, you'll be able to pick it up pretty—

(With a burst of static, the television flips back to Hobby Lobby TV. ALEX hurries out of the room.)

PAULINE. Ah, there we go. These two guys, they never say their names on the air for some reason. Everybody has guesses of what their names are. I think they both sound like they're kinda high, so I call this one Woody and this one Harrelson. Get it?

(pause)

WILL. No, sorry, I don't.

Scene Three.

(Later that night, back in the breakroom. The room is dark except for the glow of the television, still tuned to Hobby Lobby TV.)

(ANNA enters, cautiously making her way into the room. She sits at a breakroom table and takes out a book and a plastic bag full of jerky. She opens the book and begins to munch on the jerky.)

(After a moment, WILL enters holding a laptop, turning on the lights. ANNA lets out a little scream and drops her book. WILL, startled, lets out a little yell as well.)

WILL. OH—

ANNA. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

(ANNA desperately starts grabbing her things.)

WILL. No, I'm sorry—

ANNA. I'm leaving, I'll leave. I'm sorry, I just—

(quick pause)

I know this looks weird, but I was just reading, I wasn't doing anything strange, I just...

(pause)

Are you—? Wait, who are you?

WILL. I'm new, I just got hired today—

ANNA. *(relief)* Oh...my God, I thought you were from corporate. Oh my God.

WILL. Corporate?

ANNA. They send— the company, sometimes they send people from corporate to check out the store at night, after closing. Like, a surprise inspection.

WILL. Oh.

ANNA. They have a video about this, you didn't watch the video?

WILL. The— it was the VCR, it wasn't working.

(pause)

ANNA. Just— don't tell Pauline you saw me here after closing, okay?

WILL. As long as you don't tell her you saw me.

ANNA. Right. Ha, ha.

(pause)

I'm sorry, so what are you—?

WILL. *(holding up the laptop)* I don't have internet where I'm staying right now. I noticed the plug-in thing earlier.

(pause)

Do you mind?

ANNA. No! No, I don't mind.

(pause)

WILL. So what are you — ?

(ANNA holds up her book, smiles awkwardly.)

WILL. You can't read at home?

(ANNA gives him a look.)

WILL. Oh, sorry, I didn't mean —

ANNA. No, I can't read at home.

WILL. Oh.

(an awkward pause)

(WILL hooks up his computer to the Ethernet jack, ANNA goes back to reading. WILL starts up his computer, it chimes. ANNA gives him a look. WILL mouths "sorry." Pause.)

ANNA. I usually stick around until ten or eleven.

WILL. Oh.

(Another awkward pause. ANNA goes back to reading. WILL starts typing, hitting one key over and over. ANNA gives him another look.)

(After a moment, WILL goes to the television, about to turn it off.)

ANNA. Could you—? Sorry, I sort of like to keep it on.

WILL. Oh—

ANNA. I'd just— rather you didn't turn it off.

WILL. It's just, it's kind of—. Nevermind, sorry.

(pause)

ANNA. You know, I can read in my car, I can—

WILL. No, it's— you were here first. I'm sorry. *(packing up)* I can come back later. How did—? How did you get back in the building?

ANNA. Oh, I... It's silly. I just hide in the silk flower section right before closing. No one seems to notice when I don't leave with them, I don't know. It's stupid. *(pause)* Wait how did you get back in?

(pause)

WILL. Scrapbooking section.

(Short pause. They both start laughing, awkwardly at first.)

ANNA. Are you serious?

WILL. Yep.

ANNA. That's— that's just ridiculous, isn't it?

WILL. Yes, I guess it is.

ANNA. Pretty bold move on your first day.

WILL. I used to do it at the Albertson's I worked at all the time.

ANNA. And I thought I was the only wacko who did this.

(ANNA smiles, walking toward WILL and extending a hand.)

ANNA. I'm Anna.

WILL. Will.

ANNA. Well hello, Will!

(a terrible attempt at a joke)

“Will” you be hiding – in the—.

(Neither of them laugh. ANNA looks away in shame for a moment, then recovers.)

ANNA. If you don't mind, you know— we could both stay, I could read, and you could do your— work or whatever. Do you have a job online? That's so interesting. I'm talking too much, am I talking too much?

WILL. No, it's fine— it's not really a job. I mean, it doesn't pay anything. I have a...

(pause)

ANNA. What?

WILL. It's just so stupid, I...it's like— a blog. It's stupid, and I'm a big dork.

ANNA. That's not stupid! What are you talking about? A blog, that's so— hip. What kind of blog is it?

WILL. *(hesitating)* Um. It's...

ANNA. What am I doing? Shut up, Anna.

WILL. No, it's— it's like a story. Like a long story, like— an online novel.

(pause)

ANNA. Holy crap, you write books?

WILL. Well—

ANNA. I love books! I read books all the time! You're actually a writer?!

WILL. I don't get paid or anything—

ANNA. So?! Holy crap!

(pause)

Sorry, I just— you're a writer, that's so neat.

WILL. Well not lately. It's been kind of rough going.

ANNA. Writer's block?

WILL. Something like that. I keep forcing myself to sit down and write, but— nothing comes.

ANNA. Like a process. Like an artistic process, I get that, yep.

(pause)

Well, I bet your book is great. A lot better than what I'm reading right here, I bet that much. What's your book about?

WILL. It's, uh– sort of like– Christian Literature?

ANNA. Oh yeah? That's great! I read that one book, what's it called– *The Purpose Driven Life*. Yeah, that was good. Anyway, I'm a Christian, I've always believed in Jesus.

WILL. Yeah?

ANNA. Sure, what else is there to believe in?

(WILL smiles. Pause.)

ANNA. Are you sure you don't need me to leave?

WILL. It's fine, it's – actually nice to have some company.
(pause) If it's okay with you.

ANNA. Yes! It's. *(pause)* Well, I'll let you work.

(Pause. ANNA goes back to reading smiles at him, then laughs a little.)

ANNA. I'm sorry. I still just can't believe... Both of us hiding in here–

WILL. It's really pretty funny.

ANNA. It's so cute, I...

(pause)

Okay. I read, you write.

WILL. *(smiling)* Deal.

(ANNA opens up her book, WILL opens his laptop.)

Scene Four.

(Early the next morning, in the parking lot. WILL stands facing ALEX.)

WILL. Hi. *(pause)* Thanks for meeting me. I think I rushed my introduction just a little bit, I didn't want to— scare you.

(pause)

Did you tell your parents about me?

ALEX. No.

WILL. Okay. *(pause)* I can't imagine what you're feeling right now, I can't imagine what you've thought about me all these years—

ALEX. I don't believe you.

(Silence. WILL takes a step toward ALEX, who backs away.)

WILL. I can tell you that you were born on May 22nd, that's your birthday, right? You have foster parents, their names are John and Cindy McDonald.

ALEX. Any idiot with access to Google could figure out all that.

(pause)

WILL. You have a birthmark on your lower back, on the right side. When you were little you had blonde hair, but I guess it got darker as you grew up.

(WILL pulls out his wallet, taking out a weathered photograph.)

That's you. At two months. That's me, holding you.

(ALEX looks at the photograph, then hands it back to him.)

ALEX. Whatever, all babies look the same.

(pause)

WILL. Look, Alex, I can prove this to you if you need me to, I don't know how, but —

ALEX. How did you find me?

WILL. I tracked down John and Cindy years ago. They didn't want me to have any contact with you, but every year they send me a letter. About you. Like a— status report, I guess.

ALEX. Do you know John and Cindy?

WILL. No, I mean— not really—

ALEX. Yeah well, they're assholes. If you are my father, then fuck you, because you gave me to assholes.

WILL. Oh. *(pause)* Alex, I just want you to know that I didn't want to give you up. When your mother—

ALEX. Stop.

(pause)

When I was little I used to have fantasies about my real dad coming to get me. Like he was a prisoner of war, or an FBI guy or something. He didn't work at the Hobby Lobby, that's for sure. Do you at least drive a cool car or live in a big house?

WILL. It's a '94 Subaru. And right now, it's also my house.

ALEX. I'm gonna kill myself.

WILL. What?

ALEX. Nothing, it's just something I say. So if you're really my father — *if* — what do you want from me? You better not need a kidney or something.

WILL. No, I don't, I... I just want to get to know you.

ALEX. Okay, but why now?

(pause)

WILL. Look, Alex, things in my life have sort of been turned upside down, and I've had to reconsider a lot of the decisions I've made, the things I believe in... I just want to make a fresh start.

ALEX. Huh. Well, good for you.

(pause)

I have panic attacks. Sometimes more than once a week. Do you know what a panic attack is?

WILL. Yeah—

ALEX. No, you don't. You think that you might, but you don't. You probably think that it's just about me being stressed out, you think that I have a panic attack when I get a bad grade on a test or something. I get panic attacks over nothing. Absolutely nothing. I'll be at work, or at home, or at school, and suddenly I'll start shaking and I won't be able to breathe.

(pause)

School counselor says that it might be a chemical imbalance. Or, she says, it might have something to do with my past. I think it has something to do with my past, so if you're my father, it's probably your fault.

(pause)

WILL. Maybe just lunch / sometime?

ALEX. I want a blood test.

(pause)

WILL. Okay. I can— I'm not really sure where to go, but I can find out, I can make some calls—

ALEX. Valley Medical Clinic. It's in Meridian, on 17th Street. I have an appointment for six, you have an appointment for seven. We're going separately, and you're paying for it. It's not cheap.

(pause)

WILL. Okay.

ALEX. And you need to know that if it turns out that you're my biological father, that doesn't necessarily mean anything. It doesn't mean I have to talk with you or interact with you in any way.

(pause)

WILL. Did you know that your real name is William?

ALEX. My real name isn't William.

WILL. It was the name your mother gave you when you were born.

ALEX. Don't ever call me William. If you call me William,
I'm gonna kill myself.

WILL. I won't. I'm sorry.

ALEX. And don't talk about my mom unless I tell you to.

(pause)

WILL. I listened to some Villa-Lobos last night. Downloaded
some albums.

ALEX. You did?

WILL. Yeah. Backa-?

ALEX. Bachianas Brasileiras.

WILL. Yeah.

ALEX. What did you think?

WILL. It was really pretty.

(pause)

ALEX. "Pretty"?

WILL. Yeah, and—

ALEX. *(under his breath)* ...I'm gonna kill myself...

WILL. Overwhelming.

(Pause. ALEX looks at him.)

ALEX. If I ask you to quit and move out of Boise, would
you?

(WILL doesn't answer, staring down at his shoes.)

I gotta clock in.

(ALEX exits.)

Scene Five.

(Later that day. LEROY sits in the breakroom reading a newspaper, wearing a T-shirt that reads simply "FUCK" in large block letters. The television is off. After a moment, WILL enters with a Chef Boyardee microwaveable lunch. He notices LEROY's shirt, and nods politely at him.)

(WILL goes to the microwave, puts in his lunch.)

LEROY. It's a piece of shit.

WILL. *(turning)* What's that?

LEROY. The microwave. It barely works, I'd recommend cranking it up to high and leaving it in there for at least three times longer than normal.

WILL. Oh— okay, thanks.

(WILL turns the microwave on. It sputters to life, making intermittent noises that seem to suggest it's on its last leg.)

LEROY. How's the first day?

WILL. Second, actually. Well, first full day. It's— fine. Slow.

LEROY. It's always like this. You'd think they were losing money, but the profit margin is pretty amazing.

WILL. What do you mean?

LEROY. Think about it. They're just selling all this raw material; fabric, paint, balsa wood, whatever. It's like the customers are paying money to do the manufacturing process themselves. You know those foam balls, the ones we sell for ninety-nine cents, the one the size of a baseball?

WILL. Yeah.

LEROY. Those things cost less than a penny to make.

WILL. Is that right?

LEROY. That's right.

WILL. Wow. Highway robbery.

LEROY. What?

WILL. Oh, I just— that's a big markup.

LEROY. You think it's dishonest?

WILL. Oh, I— I didn't mean that—

LEROY. You didn't?

WILL. No, I was just... It was just a joke.

(They stare at one another. Silence apart from the clunking microwave.)

LEROY. I'm deliberately making you uncomfortable.

(Awkward pause. WILL turns off the microwave and takes out his lunch. He sits at a table across the room from LEROY and begins to eat.)

(LEROY grabs his newspaper and sits down next to WILL.)

LEROY. *(extending a hand)* Leroy.

WILL. Oh, it's—

LEROY. Will. I know.

WILL. How do you know my—?

(LEROY points to his nametag.)

WILL. Oh. Heh.

(pointing to LEROY's shirt)

So do you—? You actually wear that to work?

LEROY. For as long as I can before Pauline sees me.

WILL. You don't get in trouble?

LEROY. I'm the only one in this store who knows anything about art supplies, so I can basically do whatever I want. I'm the only one that can answer actual questions.

WILL. Are you an artist?

LEROY. Getting my masters in Fine Arts at BSU.

WILL. What kind of art to you make?

(LEROY points to his T-shirt. Pause.)

WILL. Oh, sure.

LEROY. I also have one that says "cunt," one that says "you will eat your children," and one that has a color photograph of my penis on both sides.

WILL. Oh sure.

LEROY. I'm forcing people to confront words and images they normally avoid. Especially at a place like this.

WILL. You— you mean the Hobby Lobby?

LEROY. Exactly. It's about the interaction between the word and the kinds of people who shop here, deliberately making them uncomfortable. Soccer moms and grade school kids and little old ladies, they all have to confront the reality of the words before they get their arts and crafts supplies. You want a foam ball? **FUCK.** You want some acrylic paints? **CUNT.** You want some pipe cleaners? **YOU WILL EAT YOUR CHILDREN.** It's the only reason I work here, I could have got some boring job on campus just as easy. But where's the art in that?

(pause)

WILL. Well, I'm just gonna finish up my—

LEROY. You just move to town?

WILL. Um. Yes, actually.

LEROY. Where from?

WILL. Up north.

LEROY. Where up north?

WILL. Outside of Couer d'Alene.

LEROY. Where outside of Couer d'Alene?

WILL. Um. Small town.

LEROY. Beautiful up there.

WILL. Yes, it is, it's really— Have you spent time up there?

LEROY. Little bit. Family trips, you know. Things like that. Kootenai county, right?

WILL. That's right.

LEROY. Rathdrum— that's around there, isn't it?

(pause)

WILL. Yeah, that's actually— well, I grew up in Rathdrum.

LEROY. Is that right? Pretty small town, right?

WILL. Pretty small.

LEROY. Must be hard to be in Boise after such a nice little quiet town like that, huh?

WILL. Boise's actually / very nice—

LEROY. What was the name of that church up in Rathdrum?
The one that was in the papers a few months ago— Life Church, New Order—?

WILL. New Life Fellowship.

LEROY. Right, New Life. I kind of lost track of the story after a while— is your pastor in jail yet, or is he still awaiting trial?

(pause)

You see this? This is me deliberately making you uncomfortable. This is your “FUCK” T-shirt.

(pause)

WILL. Well, I figured this would happen.

LEROY. I actually think this is kind of cool, it's like I'm talking to a survivor of Jonestown or something.

WILL. Is there a reason that you're doing this?

LEROY. Alex is my little brother. Adopted brother, whatever.

(pause)

WILL. I know how this looks. And you're right to be upset but— honestly, after what happened, I'm just trying to start again.

LEROY. You still believe in all that?

WILL. I still believe in God.

LEROY. What about the other stuff? All that crazy Armageddon crap your pastor was preaching about, you still believe in all that?

(pause)

WILL. I don't know. *(pause)* I'm trying to leave all that behind.

(pause)

LEROY. Okay, look. I read through some of the articles last night. From what I can tell, you didn't have anything to do with— what happened. And I get that you coming down here is just your ham-fisted attempt to put your life on a new track. But you're going about this in the creepiest way possible, confronting him at work like this.

WILL. I didn't know what else to do, I was worried your parents wouldn't allow me to see him—

LEROY. Yeah, well, John and Cindy drink enough nowadays that they probably wouldn't even care that you're here.

WILL. They—? John and Cindy—?

LEROY. I guess when you handed him off to someone in my parent's church you thought that you were handing him off to good Christian folk, right?

WILL. I didn't have anything to do with his adoption, it was his grandparents / who—

LEROY. Look, I know you came down here to play long lost father, fine, but if you try to “convert” him or whatever—

WILL. I won't. I don't do that anymore.

(PAULINE enters with a clipboard, WILL and LEROY stop. She senses the tension in the room.)

PAULINE. What?

LEROY. Nothing.

PAULINE. You making enemies already, Leroy?

LEROY. No—

PAULINE. Well, you better not, because the last thing I want to deal with today is fucking conflict resolution and I—
(noticing LEROY's shirt)

LEROY TAKE THAT FUCKING SHIRT OFF.

LEROY. I didn't bring another one.

PAULINE. I CARE?!

(LEROY takes the shirt off, putting his Hobby Lobby vest on over his bare torso.)

PAULINE. Get out there, you're ten minutes late.

LEROY. Fuck you.

PAULINE. FUCK YOU.

(LEROY *exits.*)

PAULINE. Fucking hell I wish I could fire that self-righteous little—

LEROY. (*offstage*) FUCK YOU.

PAULINE. (*screaming*) FUCK YOU.

(to WILL)

You didn't completely fill out your contact sheet.

WILL. What?

PAULINE. Emergency contact.

WILL. Oh. Um.

PAULINE. Anybody. Family, friend, girlfriend, whatever.

Doesn't have to be local.

WILL. I don't really—...

PAULINE. No *family*?

WILL. Not that I can—...

(*pause*)

PAULINE. It's for corporate. Gotta put something. Make up a name, I guess.

WILL. Okay.

(PAULINE *exits.* WILL *fills out the form.*)

Scene Six.

(The next morning. ALEX sits at a breakroom table, reviewing a spool of record tape from a register. Two other spools sit in front of him.)

(Hobby Lobby TV plays on the television.)

(WILL enters, stopping when he sees ALEX. ALEX looks at him. Awkward silence.)

WILL. What's this?

(No response. ALEX continues looking through the receipt tape.)

WILL. Sorry.

P.A. ANNOUNCEMENT (PAULINE). Mandy to frontlines please.
Mandy, frontlines.

(WILL goes to a locker, taking out his vest and putting it on. He is about to exit when:)

ALEX. Error in my register countdown yesterday.

(WILL turns around.)

WILL. Oh. How much?

ALEX. A hundred and sixty seven dollars short.

WILL. Ouch.

ALEX. I've never been more than a dollar off.

(pause)

Pauline wants me to look at the receipt logs for the entire day to see if I can figure out where I made the mistake. I don't even know what I'm looking for.

(pause)

WILL. Do you want me to—?

(pause)

I've done this a hundred times, when I was working at Albertson's I was off all the time.

(Pause. ALEX puts one of the receipt spools at the seat across from him. WILL moves to the table and sits down. WILL opens up the receipt tape and starts to read it at an extremely fast pace.)

ALEX. Are you really reading it?

WILL. I told you, I've done it a hundred times. My countdowns were always terrible. Trick is to look for too many zeros on the cash tendereds. You can skip all the credits and debits.

(Silence as they examine the record tape.)

ALEX. They called me this morning.

WILL. The blood test?

(pause)

Do you believe me now?

ALEX. It doesn't change anything.

WILL. Okay.

(They continue to look.)

WILL. Is there anything you'd like to know?

ALEX. Like what?

WILL. About me, about—why you were put up for adoption—

(ANNA enters holding the book from before. She smiles at WILL, WILL smiles back. ANNA sits down at a table.)

ALEX. John and Cindy said my real parents were neo-Nazis.

WILL. That's not... Um.

ALEX. Well, that's what they said. They said my parents were a couple of neo-Nazis. Are you a neo-Nazi?

(ANNA looks up from her book.)

WILL. No. I—

ALEX. Actually, the story about you has changed a few times. When I was little, they told me that you both died in a car accident. Then later, it was that you were neo-Nazis. Then, they said that you beat me.

WILL. *(reading the receipt tape)* Maybe we should talk about this somewhere else.

(ALEX looks at ANNA.)

ALEX. Hi, Anna.

ANNA. Um.

ALEX. This is my father. His name is—

(ALEX looks at WILL's nametag.)

Will. He put me up for adoption when I was a baby, and according to my parents he's a child-beating neo-Nazi who's dead.

(ANNA closes her book and exits quickly.)

(silence)

WILL. Found it.

ALEX. What?

(WILL shows him the receipt tape.)

WILL. See? It's a cash tendered. You entered two hundred instead of twenty.

(pause)

ALEX. I've never made a mistake like that before.

(ALEX takes the receipt tape from him, circling the mistake.)

(not looking at WILL) Thank you.

(Pause. ALEX puts down the receipt tape, staring at his hands.)

Okay, I want you to start talking. You'll start talking, you'll tell me things about yourself but when you say something I don't want to hear or don't care about, I'm going to say stop, and you're going to stop, and then say something different.

(ALEX reaches into his backpack and takes out a large notebook and a pen. He opens to a page about a quarter of the way through and starts writing.)

WILL. What's—?

ALEX. Stop.

(Pause. ALEX continues to write.)

WILL. You were born in a hospital in Couer / d'Alene—

ALEX. Stop.

(pause)

WILL. Your mother and I / were—

ALEX. Stop. I said things about you. Go.

(pause)

WILL. I grew up in Rathdrum. My parents were from there, too. It's a little town, about six thousand people. There's a little grocery store that my grandfather started, and my father ran it after he died, but it closed when—

ALEX. Stop. Boring.

WILL. I'm thirty-nine years / old—

ALEX. Stop.

(pause)

WILL. I didn't have anything to do with you being put up for / adoption—

ALEX. Stop.

WILL. Your mother left me after you / were born and she—

ALEX. Stop stop STOP. If you don't stop I'm going to kill myself.

(ALEX's breathing speeds up a bit. Long pause.)

WILL. Okay, I—... I'm allergic to tuna, but it's not a terrible allergy so I eat it sometimes.

(ALEX begins to calm down.)

WILL. I don't own any decent pants and I don't know why. I don't like movies.

ALEX. *(still concentrating on his writing)* Why?

WILL. Because they're too violent.

ALEX. There's violence in the world.

WILL. But we don't need to take pleasure in it.

ALEX. That's a stupid thing to say.

(PAULINE *appears in the doorway.*)

PAULINE. MANDY?! You guys seen Mandy?

ALEX. No.

PAULINE. Fuckin' Mandy.

(PAULINE *exits. Pause.*)

WILL. There are things I regret.

(ALEX *stops, looks up at him momentarily, then continues writing.*)

More than regret. There are things that tear into me.
Things that that make me physically ill.

ALEX. Stop. I don't care how you feel.

(*pause*)

Why were you hiding in the scrapbooking section at
closing the other day?

(*pause*)

WILL. You saw me?

ALEX. Yes.

(*pause*)

WILL. I just— needed a quiet place to do some work.

ALEX. What work?

WILL. I'd really rather not—

ALEX. Tell me.

WILL. Alex—

ALEX. *Tell me or I'm gonna kill myself.*

WILL. Why do you say that? You don't really mean that, do
you?

ALEX. STOP.

(*pause*)

WILL. It's like— a blog. It's sort of a novel that I'm writing
online.

ALEX. People read it?

WILL. Yeah.

ALEX. How many?

WILL. Quite a few. I don't know.

ALEX. What's it about?

(no response)

What's it about?

WILL. The Rapture.

(ALEX stops writing, looks at WILL. Pause.)

You actually know what that is?

(LEROY enters.)

ALEX. GO AWAY LEROY I'M DOING SOMETHING.

(LEROY exits, glaring at WILL.)

WILL. Do you want to be a composer?

(ALEX considers for a second.)

ALEX. Yeah. Kind of.

WILL. What instrument?

ALEX. It's not like that, it's like— performance art.

(pause)

You wouldn't understand.

WILL. No, but I'd like to.

P.A. ANNOUNCEMENT (PAULINE). Will to register four, please.
Will, register four.

WILL. Could you— could I hear some of it sometime? Do
you have any recordings of your music, or—?

ALEX. People don't take me seriously. You wouldn't take
me seriously.

WILL. I would. I take you seriously.

*(ALEX considers for a second, then takes out his iPod
and some iPod speakers.)*

ALEX. Don't look at me.

WILL. Don't—?

ALEX. When I'm performing. Don't look at me.

WILL. Oh, you're going to—?

ALEX. My music isn't meant to be recorded.

WILL. You want to— here, right now?

ALEX. Yeah. Don't look at me.

WILL. Oh— uh, okay.

(WILL turns away from ALEX. ALEX turns off the television, then searches around on his iPod for a second. He flips around in his notebook a bit, stopping at a page. He hits play on his iPod. A simple, electronic riff starts to play.)

ALEX. I got this from a Casio keyboard made in 1989.

WILL. It's pretty.

ALEX. IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE PRETTY.

WILL. Okay, I'm sorry. Sorry.

(ALEX takes a breath. After a moment, ALEX starts to read. It shouldn't be "singing" per se, but he obviously has very specific ideas on volume, tone, rhythm, etc that make the reading sound vaguely musical.)

ALEX.

FEED YOUR USELESENESS

FEED YOUR USELESSNESS

CLOWN OF CLOWNS

NATION OF TEARS

I AM HUNGRY

I AM HUNGRY

CLOWN OF CLOWNS

NATION OF TEARS

I AM HUNGRY

I AM HUNGRY

(ants and bedbugs)

(ants and bedbugs)

BLOOD AND GUTS AND FLESH AND TRUTH

BLOOD AND GUTS AND FLESH AND LIES

CLOWN OF CLOWNS

NATION OF TEARS

(ants and bedbugs)

(ants and bedbugs)
I'M EATING TOO FAST
WE'RE EATING TOO FAST
WE'RE CHOKING
CHOKING
CHOKING
CHOKING
SWALLOW IT
CAPITALISM
END

(The song ends abruptly, ALEX turns off the music right at the last word. Long pause. ALEX looks at WILL.)

ALEX. You can look at me now.

(WILL looks at ALEX, not knowing what to say. He smiles, claps half-heartedly.)

ALEX. It's deliberately ironic, it's a statement about consumerism, and—

(pause)

Fuck this, you don't get it. No one gets it.

WILL. No, it was... thank you. Thank you for doing that for me, that was— neat, it was— really interesting—

ALEX. *Interesting?* I'm gonna kill myself.

P.A. ANNOUNCEMENT (PAULINE). Will. Register four. *Now.*

(ALEX gets up.)

ALEX. I'm going back to the floor now.

WILL. Wait—

(WILL blocks him from leaving.)

ALEX. What are you doing? Stop.

WILL. Please, just— I just want to talk to you—

ALEX. Stop.

(ALEX's breathing becomes quicker.)

WILL. I just want to get to / know you—

ALEX. STOP. STOP.

WILL. I'm your father! / I just want to—

ALEX. STOP STOP STOP STOP

(ALEX, becoming more and more agitated, stands up, hyperventilating. He grabs his chest.)

WILL. Okay, I'm sorry— what's the matter? Okay, just— calm down, you're okay—

(WILL wraps his arms around ALEX. PAULINE enters. She sees ALEX.)

PAULINE. Fuck me. What did you say to him?

WILL. Nothing! I didn't say anything!

(PAULINE rushes to the phone, paging over the PA.)

PAULINE. Leroy, breakroom now.

(ALEX gets worse and worse.)

WILL. Alex, just take a breath. Take a breath, / you just need to breathe—

PAULINE. Leroy knows what to do, just get away from him.

WILL. Alex, it's alright. / Just calm down.

PAULINE. Goddammit, Will, I said leave him alone!

(LEROY enters. WILL still has ALEX in his arms, ALEX struggles a bit but WILL holds onto him.)

LEROY. GET OFF HIM.

(WILL backs off of ALEX. ALEX slumps down to the floor, LEROY goes to him.)

LEROY. Okay, buddy, you ready? Look right in my eyes.

(ALEX looks at him. They stare at one another silently for a very long time—finally, ALEX starts to shake a little less. Very slowly, his breathing starts to regulate. Finally, ALEX stops shaking and breathes normally, still looking straight at LEROY.)

ALEX. Chagall?

LEROY. Nope. Kandinsky.

ALEX. It never works.

LEROY. One day.

(Pause. LEROY helps him up.)

PAULINE. Alex, take the rest of the day off, okay?

LEROY. *(to ALEX)* You okay?

ALEX. Yeah.

LEROY. I'll drive you home—

ALEX. I have my bike. I'm fine.

PAULINE. You sure?

(ALEX gathers his things.)

ALEX. Yeah.

(pause)

Sorry.

PAULINE. Nothing to be sorry for.

(ALEX exits, followed by LEROY.)

Fuck I hate it when he does that thing. He'll be fine.
But if it happens again, don't fucking go near him, just
get Leroy in here as fast as you can, okay?

WILL. Okay.

PAULINE. *(checking her clipboard)* Alright. Well, now we're
sort of fucked, we only have two on front lines, and
we've got that whole back-to-school display to—

(LEROY re-enters, going to WILL.)

LEROY. I told you to stay / away from him.

WILL. Leroy, honestly, / I didn't do anything, I didn't know
what happened—

PAULINE. Leroy—

*(LEROY gets in WILL's face, shoving him into the
lockers.)*

LEROY. WHAT DID YOU SAY TO HIM?

(PAULINE rushes over to them, breaking them up.)

PAULINE. OKAY OKAY OKAY ENOUGH.

(LEROY moves away from WILL. Pause.)

PAULINE. Both of you sit down. Now.

(WILL and LEROY sit. PAULINE turns off the television and pulls out a conflict resolution form, begins to fill it out.)

PAULINE. Fucking conflict resolution, I don't have time for fucking conflict resolution today.

LEROY. Do we have to do this, Pauline?

PAULINE. Fuck you, Leroy. Last year when that guy, what's his name, lazy eye, CARL— when Carl made Mandy cry and Mandy went to corporate and I had to do a FUCKING WEEKEND WORKSHOP, so yes, we have to do this. Alright. Let's just do this as fast as possible. Each of you, state your case or whatever. Leroy you go first.

LEROY. Sure.

WILL. I didn't mean to—

PAULINE. No interrupting. Leroy, go.

WILL. I really don't feel comfortable with—

PAULINE. FUCK YOU, WILL. Leroy, go. And try to avoid phrasing things in terms of how you feel.

LEROY. I feel this is stupid.

PAULINE. I FEEL FUCK YOU LEROY.

LEROY. Pauline, do you know who this guy really is?

(pause)

PAULINE. What?

LEROY. He's from that crazy end-times church up outside of Couer d'Alene, in Rathdrum? The one from a few months ago?

(pause)

PAULINE. *(to WILL)* You're in that church?

WILL. New Life Fellowship doesn't even exist anymore, I was just a member of the congregation—

LEROY. You were like the second in command, you *lived* at the church —

WILL. No, see, this is something the papers all got wrong. I lived at the church because they paid me to be

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