

MICHAEL
MICHAEL
MICHAEL
A GAY ODYSSEY

Draft 3

7/23/13

(The preshow music fades into: LADYSYSTEMS ENTRANCE. Jessie, dressed up as Ladysystems, comes through the audience. She greets the audience, and begins singing.

//

CHASE runs onstage with JARED & EMILY.)

CHASE

Beginnings are always weird.

(Beat.)

Hello!

Thank you all for coming to

(the title gets projected onto a white sheet:)

MICHAEL

MICHAEL

MICHAEL (a gay odyssey).

My name is Chase Burns. I originated this piece along with the help of:

JARED

Me! Jared Zeigler, and—

EMILY

Me! Emily LeCrone.

CHASE

As well as that beautiful creature over there:

LADYSYSTEMS

Hello.

CHASE

And another beaut that'll appear shortly.

JARED

THE FOLLOWING IS OUR CURTAIN SPEECH:

CHASE

I would like everyone to know that this show is *as close to the Truth as I can Remember It.*

Remembering is a difficult thing. And people's Perspectives on Events usually get in the way of the Truth of the Event.

I could Remember these Events differently tomorrow. (So make sure to come back!)

I also don't wanna get stabbed. Or get my house set on fire. So let's just say it's all fake. It's a performance.

(wink)

Now... In my short, attention-starved life— I've loved Three men. All in very different ways, mind you, but nevertheless... I think I've loved them. (Though I might not have realized it at the time.)

And you know, some people have types... Some men love blondes. Some men love Japanese twinks. I... on the other hand... love Michaels. Yes, the name Michael.

My three most significant relationships have all shared one thing (and really one thing only): Their name.

But! Before we begin that little odyssey...

I'd like to ask a little favor of you, the audience.

Everyone, please close your eyes. No, really... close them. Don't worry, we're not gonna touch you. Eyes closed? Good.

I want everyone to think of the very first time you thought you loved someone. The first moment when you consciously sat there and said... Wow. I think I love [this someone].

Ideally, this can be a person— but screw it. Your first love could've been a *thing* or a *concept* if you wanted it to be.

Got it?

Okay— open your eyes.

JARED

Underneath your seats are small pieces of paper and pencils. Grab them and write the name of that love (that first person or thing) down. You don't need to write last names. Their first is fine.

EMILY

If there isn't a piece of paper or pencil underneath your chair, raise your hand and we'll get some for you.

CHASE

The three of us are gonna come around with some bowls, put your papers and pencils inside of them.

(Collect names.)

We'll get back to these later.

JARED

Is everyone's in?

CHASE

Great! Now... onto our *next* beginning.

[HORN GETS BLOWN. Emily and Jared have exited.]

A Prologue, or: YOU'RE GONNA LOVE ME

CHASE

You know my name:

Chase. Burns.

Some of you know me in more personal ways—

Some of you in more *intimate* ways—

And some may not care to know me at all.

If that latter is true then you should probably leave NOW.

But before we embark on our evening's odyssey...

Allow me to give you a quick primer of myself.

(Yelling offstage:)

EMILY!!! STOP WATCH!!!

(EMILY comes onstage, now fully in her outfit.)

EMILY

You have 90 seconds, sergeant.

(She starts the clock.)

CHASE

(fiercely, and physically active)

I was conceived in Houston, Texas.

8 months later I busted out into this world

FULLY pigeon-toed,

with a giant Cone Head
 and jaundice.
 Soooooo
 Full Forest Gump.
 On top of all those misfortunes—
 I grew up with severe speech impediments
 Which doctors later attributed to a lazy tongue

(it's not so lazy anymore!)

It didn't help that my double-concave feet
 grew faster than any other boy
 Reaching a size 12
 By middle school.

Around the AGE 12
 I began growing leg hair
 However, it stopped growing about halfway
 up my legs.
 (I'm still waiting for it to continue
 Its journey upwards.)

My favorite body parts have always been
 My abs
 My ass
 And my *(points to penis)* MM-MM.

My least favorite body parts have been
 My arms
 My face's inclination towards acne
 And the little nubs on my feet.
 (I believe I was supposed to have 12 toes.)

I have a small brown mark on my right ass cheek.
 I tell— the people who see it—
 that it's a birth mark.
 However, it's actually a burn that I got
 in a tanning bed inside a mini mall in Idaho.

I've never broken a bone,
 But I do have a semi-permanent callus on my right thumb
 Because I didn't stop *sucking* my thumb until I was 12.
 I re-picked up the habit when I was away
 at boarding school
 And I still suck my thumb when I'm stressed out.

The habit has done no damage to my teeth, however.
 To this day I've never had braces or a cavity.
 Though every time my gums bleed I'm convinced I have HIV.

I have two tattoos.
 The first is on my left wrist, and it's a Keith Haring.
 I got it to remind me to be proud,
 And myself.
 And not to wear clothes.
 And to wiggle.

(Wiggle.)

My second tattoo is on my right rib cage—

(Lift up shirt.)

It's three descending American bison
 Plummeting to their deaths.
 It's a copy of the famous David Wojnarowicz piece,
 Where he used the image of bison being ran off cliffs
 To represent the rejection of proper health services to gay men during the 80s AIDS crisis.

I wear it to remember the great men that came before me,
 The histories that weren't able to be recorded,
 And the artistic legacy I inherit.

The first man I ever kissed—

*(Time has most likely run out. EMILY walks over and puts her hand over CHASE's mouth.
 She takes off her head.)*

EMILY

Time's up.

(She walks off.)

CHASE

And with that introduction...
 Let the show 'begin'.

(A LITTLE INSTRUMENTATION!)

Tora LaHora: A Gay Spirit Guide

CHASE

(melodramatically:)

As a child... I would often stare out over the lonely hills of Idaho, thinking

(a prayer)

God. All I want is an older brother. Or a father.

Someone to play with me... and guide me...

And show me how to:

LADYSYSTEMS/CHASE

Be a Man.

CHASE

(out)

But that 'Man' never appeared...

And so I was forced to

conjure

my own male rolemodel—

(MUSIC SHIFT. TORA'S MAGICAL ENTRANCE.

There are snaps. A rising figure. A synchronized dance.

She sings something grand)

TORA/LADYSYSTEMS

Chase... It is 'I'... Tora, LaHora.

CHASE

Tora... LaHora..?

TORA/LADYSYSTEMS

Yes, my child.

CHASE

Are you— God.

TORA

LADYSYSTEMS

Oh, no— most c—

Yes, I am God.

TORA

(to LADYSYSTEMS)

Honey— be quiet.

(To CHASE:)

No, I'm most certainly *not* God.

CHASE

Are you... a woman?

TORA

TORA is a woman.

CHASE

I'm confused.

TORA

(Patting young Chase on the head.)

In due time, my Child.

Think of me... as— your gay spirit guide.

CHASE

Like you're my Dumbledore?

TORA

Exactly.

(Beat.)

And I am here...

To lead you

OUT over the HILLS

of IDAHO,

away from the White Supremacists

and Mormons

and to—

TORA/LADYSYSTEM

THE PROMISE LAND!

(TORA gives LADYSYSTEMS a harsh look.)

CHASE

That sounds... nice.

How do I get to...

TORA

THE PROMISE LAND!?

(out to the audience)

It's not a destination.

It's a... state of mind.

Where you— radiate

(TORA begins to strut.)

and show the world

without apology

just how

FUCKING FABULOUS YOU ARE!

(A song and dance between Tora & Chase → RUPAUL.)

CHASE

Tora... that's all great.

But I'm gonna be honest...

I would love to go to

THE PROMISE LAND...

But all I really want—

If I truly

thought about it—

is a boyfriend.

The Boys

(MYSTICAL CHIMES PLAY. LIKE (to use a helpful cliché) AN OMINOUS BREEZE BLOWING ONSTAGE.

LADYSYSTEMS and TORA LaHORA look to a spot offstage. CHASE notices where they're looking.)

CHASE

What is it?

(TORA give s a look to Ladysystems.)

TORA

(whispered)

The Michael's are coming.

(They brace themselves.)

THE MICHAEL SONG PLAYS! EVERYONE GETS UP AND DANCES!

THE EFFIGY APPEARS! THE SHRINE APPEARS!)

(Afterwards: CHASE prays at the Michael, the 1st, shrine.)

TORA

Michael, the 1st.

LADYSYSTEMS (if M1 is not actually in the audience)

Dear Theatrical Gods... Please allow this effigy to stand in place for Michael, the 1st, as Michael, the 1st, cannot be here tonight in person. Please allow the (list properties of effigy) to be as filled with angst and mystery as the real Michael, the 1st. Can I get an amen? Can I get an amen? Can I get an amen? (repeat this until an amen is said from the audience) ...Thank you.

...THIS IS THE FIGHT...

CHASE

Wait! Wait!— Hold on.

(Everyone pauses— this isn't planned.)

I've changed my mind.

RYAN

What.

CHASE

Ryan— I think—

RYAN

What the fuck are you doing?

CHASE

I think we've done this the wrong way.

RYAN

Done WHAT the wrong way?

CHASE

This SHOW. I was thinking—

RYAN

Ummm...

(Out to the audience.)

I'm sorry. This wasn't—

CHASE

(Yelling out)

EMILY! EMILY. Can you come out here?

JESSIE

What's happening.

(Emily comes out.)

EMILY

Is something wrong?

CHASE

No, nothing's— well, yes. Actually.

Something is wrong.

(To Ryan.)

I shouldn't be playing myself.

If I wanna make it to

“THE PROMISE LAND”

then I have to witness the story myself
and realize the / mistakes that I made—

RYAN

What's your point. Let's just keep doing / the fucking SHOW!

CHASE

We're doing some rearranging.
Jessie— you keep playing Ladysystems.
But also, you're going to read all the Michaels.

LADYSYSTEMS

But I don't know the...

CHASE

You know the lines!

RYAN

But I was reading the Michael's.

CHASE

Ryan— you're still going to say Tora's lines...
As well as all the other characters' lines...
But you're going to play me.
(Beat.)
You're going to play Chase.

RYAN

What. No. I don't want to.

CHASE

You don't have a choice!

RYAN

What!?

CHASE

You signed up for this show— and the show's changing!

EMILY
WHAT ABOUT ME!?

CHASE
Emily— you're out of the show.

EMILY
What.

CHASE
I'm sorry, hun. But I'm gonna play the stage hand.

EMILY
But—

CHASE
You can still do the lights.

(Emily throws off the mask and leaves.)

Jared— keep reading the stage directions as they were originally written.

JARED
Got it!

CHASE
(To everyone)

Okay?
(No one responds.)

OKAY?
(Chase moves to the back, with Emily's mask on.)

KEEP GOING WITH THE SHOW!

BACK TO THE 'SCRIPT'

[LOUD NOISE. CHASE stands up. A quick and abrupt transition to:]

My First Michael, or: My Gay Quasimodo

CHASE

Michael
 was a God at boarding school.
 He was quiet and reserved, with large biceps
 and a mysterious quality about him.
 He would almost always turn down invitations to hang out,
 preferring to spend his evenings alone... in the basement
 of his dorm... where he would belt out showtunes
 until the res life staff would turn off the lights.

Every girl would swoon:

(TORA and CHASE playfully pick at M1.)

“Oh, he just loves his art THAT much!
 He’s so dedicated! I heard his parents are Muslim!
 No, I heard he was Baptist! I HEARD he’s a hybrid
 Arab-Baptist!”
 NO!
 He’s—

CHASE + TORA

(out)

GAY!

CHASE

—I would bemoan from the back of the dining hall.
 ‘He’s so obviously gay.’
 The women would attack me—

TORA (as a high school girl)

Chase, you think everyone’s gay.

CHASE

No, I just think the gay ones are gay.
(TORA gives a severe eye roll.)
 I mean look at him—

TORA

—OH-BECAUSE-GAY-MEN-HAVE-RECOGNIZABLE-CHARACTERISTICS!? That's HOMOPHOBIC.

CHASE

(out)

Even for me, going to a socially-liberal boarding school had its downsides...

(back to TORA)

That's not what I'm saying.

(TORA gives a look.)

What I'm saying is... Is—well,

He's just— GAY.

(TORA flips her hair and walks back to her podium next to LADYSYSTEMS.)

CHASE

Michael irritated me.

He didn't do anything particularly special...

But everyone LOVED him because he had a *secret*.

(Beat.)

I mean...

He HAD a pretty voice... and beautiful black hair...

and a gap-toothed smile that only made him more handsome...

But I didn't *like* him! He was in the closet and I had no—

(The effigy moves towards CHASE.)

M1 (voiced by TORA)

Hey Chase. What's up?

CHASE

Oh. Hey—hey Michael.

(Beat.)

M1

You're doing a great job in that Noel Coward piece.

CHASE

(blushing)

Oh, thanks. No, really!? I'm not— that's... I'm just...
Acting?

M1

(laughs)

Well, you're a good actor.

CHASE

Thanks. You too! I've... always thought so.

M1

What are you doing later?

CHASE

(suspicious)

...don't you have showtunes to sing in your basement?

M1

Ha ha... ouch.

(CHASE is still suspicious.)

M1

I mean... I was just asking—

CHASE

(drops suspicion)

I'm not doing anything. If you wanna— get... ice cream?

M1

(smiles)

That's what I was asking.

(Transition.)

CHASE

And so we got ice cream. And then got ice cream again... and again.

I felt like I fucking won the lottery!

He liked me. It was obvious. In between licks of vanilla and chocolate swirl, I could taste it his curiosity.

(TORA walks by, as high school girl, and mouths: YOU BITCH! YOU SNEAKY BITCH!)

The same girls that had scorned me for proclaiming his gayness...
now walked by Michael and me licking on cones...
livid with jealousy.

I was alive.

At arts boarding school, Michael the 1st was essentially

The Football Captain

And Suddenly—

Something I never expected to Be—

I Was The Head Cheerleader

In a month... THIS happened.

(Vigorously grab the effigy and MAKE-OUT.

Musical underscoring.)

M1 (TORA)

(whispered in disbelief)

That was... AMAZING.

CHASE

(out)

That wouldn't be the last time a man would tell me that.

But in all honesty...

It was the best kiss I've ever had in my life.

It was slow. His lips were like a Kardashian ass

On the vertical

Blasting against my face. It was fantastic.

(Chase walks away from the effigy.)

That is Until...

(and this has proven to be an unsettling romantic theme in my life)...

Until Reality Hit.

Michael was closeted. And deeply closeted.

His gayness was so far back there
 Behind the Bibles and Leviticus
 That it would take more than RuPaul
 And an entire army of Andrew Christian underwear models
 To pull him outta there.

He had grown up in an extremely religious household.
 One that didn't even speak of
 Homosexuality
 because
 Homosexuality
 didn't exist to them.
 It was so much a Sin
 That it was Unmentionable.

But...
 Michael and I were doing well.
 For being in an Unmentionable Relationship
 he seemed to be deeply liking my company.
 We were kissing—
 a lot (and often)—
 And I was infatuated with him.
 So...

One day, I said to Michael:
(Turn to the effigy.)
 I know that you don't wanna be public.
 And I understand. Your parents are coming...
 And it's too easy for a slip-up.
 But... This is getting, pretty serious for me...
 And I was wondering, if you'd like to be...
 My Boyfriend?

(A long pause.)

M1 (TORA)

Yes, I would love that.

(CHASE hugs the effigy. It's kind of awkward.)

CHASE

Despite the secret 'dating' declaration, though,
 Michael's idea of 'God' never left my side.
 The first time I got... Well, I got naked
 in front of Michael
 his body broke down
 and started
 convulsing
 out of guilt.

I held him. And had him breathe.

(Hold the effigy.)

I'd been hospitalized for panic attacks
 When I was younger—
 There's nothing you can do to help.
 Except sit there and tell them they'll
 Be OK.
 And that
 Nothing's Wrong.
 Though, in reality, something was
 Wrong.
 And I had no idea if he'd
 Be OK.

I must say— it's not a *great* feeling
 when you take your clothes off
 and someone has a minor SEIZURE.
 ...Or maybe it is?

This went on for weeks.
 Every time we'd get naked—
 There'd be a great
 Pause

I couldn't beat
 God

out of the room.

There Will Be Blood

Step 1. Call Michael 1, and ask him to tell the story of when CHASE and MICHAEL stayed up all night at a hotel... Sitting by the pool... smoking hookah for the first time with his two brothers.

Step 2. Put the conversation onto this document on a word processor.

Step 3.

TORA LaHORA will perform the text with limited gestural language.

LADYSYSTEMS will make some music.

CHASE will fight off 'GOD'. 'GOD' will be represented by EMILY in her mascot outfit. This should be some sort of game. It can involve sword fighting, water balloons... something competitive. Nevertheless, CHASE is fighting off M1's idea of a vengeful God.

...Enter the Giant.

(As 'GOD' is defeated, CHASE makes a huge victory lap screaming things like: I'M INVINCIBLE! CHASE- 1, GOD- 0! FUCK YEAH!... then reality begins to hit, slowing down his celebration.)

CHASE

I may have conquered Michael's God-fearing attitude enough to make him commit to being my boyfriend... albeit *privately*....

But, there was an even larger presence that I had completely forgotten about.

(THE FOOTSTEPS OF A GIANT. Perhaps a large shadow appears on the back sheets.)

His Mother.

Graduation was quickly approaching... and with that, his parents would be flying in to see him.

Michael was disappearing.
 The beginning shimmers of requited feelings were dissolving...
 I was being kicked out of his closet.

(A slow, rising chime. With it, CHASE looks upwards— a voice echoes down.)

M1 MAMA (Everyone but CHASE)

Hello... Chase.

[H-hello, Mrs. Michael.]

Michael tells me you've been helping him out recently.
 It's so nice that he has someone to support him while he's away at boarding school.

[I— it's— I love... supporting him.]

It's so hard being so far away... we don't get to talk to him that often.

[That does suck.]

Do you know anything about this... *school* he wants to attend next year?

[The Guthrie program?]

Yes... that.

[I'm visiting it this summer, I only hear really fantastic—]

We're not so sure. His brothers and sister all go to *Christian* colleges... and we already gave Michael some rope by letting him come *here*.

[Well, I can guarantee you that he's still the same Michael.]

We'll see.

(Beat.)

I'm just so happy that we all get to spend the summer together.
 I'm sure he'll miss you... but you two can keep in touch.

CHASE

Yes, I'll miss—

(Descending chimes. She is gone.

The effigy has left, as well.

Suddenly, CHASE is alone. He walks around the stage.

To himself:)

He's gone.

(To the audience:)

He's gone.

I got a phone call a couple days after he left.

He wanted to stay together... whatever that meant.

In my gut, I knew it was a mistake... but I felt a sort of
Responsibility.

We called and texted almost daily

And then one day— I got a very important call—

(Chimes begin dinging... like a phone ringing. They're ominous, and somewhat irritating.

They can change in notes, but should remain consistent in rhythm.

Chimes continue until the end of the scene.)

It was Michael, and he was sobbing so hard—

That I could barely understand what he was saying—

(A rough sound, like something rubbing on sand paper, starts.

The sounds build. CHASE begins to physically shrink.

LADYSYSTEMS, if there is a 'Michael' song... could loop that into the noise.

It builds—then cuts off.)

She knows.

'She knows'— he just kept saying.

I had sent him a package while I was in Chicago.

It had a red, stuffed Chicago bull,

Expensive candies— and...

M1 MAMA (Everyone but CHASE)

(to an imaginary Michael:)

I just didn't know who the package was for—

CHASE

(Despite it saying MICHAEL in large print.)

M1 MAMA

And so / I opened it.

CHASE

She opened it.

M1 MAMA / CHASE

There was a letter inside of it...

M1 MAMA

He said he loved you.

CHASE

And I think I meant it.

M1 MAMA

(There is a growing panic.)

Which— boys are *allowed* to love other boys—

Yes, of course they are.

Boys can love boys... as, you know, / Friends.

CHASE

Friends.

M1 MAMA

But he also wrote... Michael, he wrote... / 'I miss holding you.'

CHASE

I miss holding you.

I'm not sure if we'll ever see each other again. We think we will.

I mean, I think I'm talented enough to get into the Guthrie.

But I don't know if I'm strong enough to wait a year and a half... / to be with you.

M1 MAMA

And he said he wanted 'to be with you'.

(Beat.)

Michael, what does that mean... 'to be with you'?

CHASE

She knew what it meant.

*(Beat.
Beat.)*

M1 MAMA

I won't tell your father.

(A concluding chime.)

CHASE

We didn't last.

Suck on My Pineapple

(A general hubbub of getting accepted into the program.

*"GuthrieGuthrieGuthrieGuthrie". A synchronized movement begins. The lines below are said—
while others yell things like: MIDDLEBROOK FAJITAS, MEISNER, STATE FAIR, HOMO RANCH,
ANNA ANNA ANNA...)*

CHASE

A year and a half later, I DID get accepted into the Guthrie Acting program.

RYAN

Me too.

JESSIE

Me too.

JARED (LOUDSPEAKER)

Not me!!

CHASE

Michael, the 1st, had moved on to a *new* lover, and I was attempting to steer clear of old wounds. (Something I don't normally do well.)

(Beat.)

A first meeting.

(The movement suddenly stops & shifts. Michael the 2nd is revealed on the shrine)

LADYSYSTEMS

Dear Theatrical Gods... Please allow this effigy to stand in place for Michael, the 2nd, as Michael, the 2nd, cannot be here tonight in person. Please allow the (list properties of effigy) to be as filled with charisma and Muppet-like qualities as the real Michael, the 2nd. Can I get an amen? Can I get an amen? Can I get an amen? (repeat this until an amen is said from the audience) ...Thank you.

CHASE

It's September of 2010.

(A DING. 'Elevator doors open'.)

Elevator doors opened. I arrived on the floor where I was to live for the next year—

M2 (TORA)

CHASE!!!

CHASE

A boy yelled out my name. He was ecstatic, running up to me. His name was—

(The effigy gets wheeled to CHASE.)

M2

I'm Michael.

CHASE

(to the audience)

Michael, the *Second*.

I remembered seeing him on Facebook. It had said 'interested in women', but his gaping lips and bright eyes made me reconsider that proclamation.

The way he stared at me made me feel playful and exotic. Like I was a wild kangaroo bouncing through a Midwestern Suburb. He wanted to pet me— but was I too wild?

(Beat— to M2:)

This is weird. I've been waiting to be here for years.

(looking around)

So... this is Minnesota.

(Walk with the effigy. To the audience.)

He showed me to my room.

He was cute. His hair was fuzzy, his eyes round like his nose.

(Opening up the room.)

We walked into the dorm.

(Looking around, to M2:)

Wow... It's so... underwhelming.

M2

You should see mine. It's in the *new* edition. It's *big*.

(Beat.)

CHASE

I'm sure it is.

(AN IRISH JIG! PEGEEN busts in— TORA is playing 'Pegeen'.)

Another classmate— a girl— busted through the door—
Pegeen, a nice Minnesota lass with an Irish name.

PEGEEN (TORA)

Miiiiichael! Chaaaase!

CHASE

Her hair was long and brown— moving with that perfect girl-next-door sway.
Michael turned to her—

(Chase turns effigy)

— my eyes were set on his charmingly crooked smile...but his eyes were set on her's.

(DING.)

The three of us spent the day together, unpacking and decorating my room—
But nighttime eventually came, and my charismatic, new-found Michael made a choice:

LADYSYSTEMS

Chase. Pegeen. It is time... to lip-sync... FOR YOUR LIVES.

Now don't— fuck it up.

(CHASE and PEGEEN lip sync to Robyn's 'Dancing on my Own'. CHASE is fabulous, but...)

LADYSYSTEMS

Pegeen... shantay (?) you stay.

Chase... sashay away.

CHASE

He went with Pegeen.

*A drum beat.
CHASE is dejected.)*

CHASE

No one believed me—
HE'S HITTING ON ME!
I would scream.
And everyone would just roll their eyes.

PEGEEN (TORA)

Chase, you think *everyone's* gay.

CHASE

No— I just think the...
(Feels himself repeating himself.)
...gay... ones are.

(Pegeen gives a little laugh. The Michael song underscores.)

Months passed, and Michael continued to assert his
Straightness.

*(Pegeen and M2 walk behind Chase. They viciously make out.
This becomes a sort of underscoring.)*

When asked about our flirtations, Michael would *politely* write me off:

'Oh, I feel bad for Chase. It's not his fault—
I just don't like dudes.'

People would come to me and have one of two reactions:

[Emily comes onstage.]

They would either pity me...

[Emily holds out her hands to hug.]

Or they'd scorn me.

[Emily hits Chase across the face. Exits.]

'How presumptuous of you to assume he's gay—'

They'd say.

'Just because YOU like him.'

(Beat.)

I was beginning to think they were right.

Maybe he was straight. And maybe I was wrong all along—

(The effigy is brought down to Chase.)

But then— One night at a party... We got hammered.

(To M2:)

WHatt're y'doing next to me?

M2

I'm jusst sayin' HI. Can't I say high?

CHASE

You can syy HI if urr GAY.

(Beat.)

I'm srry. That wz mean.

M2

Nooo. I'v ben kinda meen. Mybe.. Mybe I—
I thnk I lkee u Chse.

CHASE

(no longer drunk)

Wait, what?

(Emily has the effigy mount Chase.)

I found myself in a very precarious position.

(To M2:)

Hello, Michael.

M2

Hello, Chase.

(BAM! They make out, hump— Emily moves the effigy on top of Chase. Almost like making two Barbie dolls dry hump.

A fast paced version of the Michael song plays. Then it swiftly cuts out. Chase pulls the effigy off. Emily takes it away.)

CHASE

(to the audience:)

Suddenly— he wanted to spend time with me!

We went to the see Black Swan together— to the Mall of America—

And at night we would—

(Emily comes back on with the effigy. Chase holds out a hand.)

They get the point.

(Emily, dejected, exits.)

I probably should've stepped back and said,

WHERE WERE YOU THE LAST FOUR MONTHS, ASSHOLE!?

But I didn't.

I wanted him.

I wanted to spend time with him and his furry hair.

I loved how he would invite me over to his room,
wearing footie pajamas, thinking that he could woo me in them.
And he could.
Oh— he COULD.

(Three chimes. These are the chimes of REALITY, BITCH.)

But slowly something felt wrong.
He was still 'straight'.
And even if he would have come out of the closet for me...
Did I really want that?
He was young, and had so much to figure out.
And I liked him too much to just be a
bridge
into his self-realized life.

(A chime. The effigy comes on stage.

To the effigy:)

I'm sorry—
I can't.
I'm really happy.
But...
I think it's wrong right now.
I'm sorry, Michael.
I really am.

(A chime. TRANSITION TO HAROLD ADAM HAR

And He Descended with Glitter in His Hair

LADYSYSTEMS/TORA

(A frantic whisper:)

It's Harold Adam Harris's Birthday! It's Harold Adam Harris's Birthday – It's Harold Adam Harris's Birthday!

CHASE

It's HAROLD ADAM HARRIS's birthday. Harold, who likes to go by Adam, is a senior in the BFA acting program... and being a freshman— it's an *honor* to be invited.

LADYSYSTEMS/TORA

(Also whispered:)

Thank you Adam....

CHASE

(Though, you never admit you feel this way.)

The even bigger selling point of the party, however, is that some of the JUNIOR BFA acting students will be there.

LADYSYSTEMS/TORA

The Juniors...

CHASE

The Juniors have been away all Fall in London... and I've heard that there are three, very attractive, *out* gays in the class.

LADYSYSTEMS/TORA

Out gays...

CHASE

I've also heard... from Mr. Harold Adam Harris himself... that a certain boy in the company has had his eye on me via...

Facebook.

His name is Michael. Michael the 3rd.

(A rising chime. EMILY comes out and unveils MICHAEL the 3RD on the shrine table. The photograph/collage is perhaps passed around.)

LADYSYSTEMS

Dear Theatrical Gods... Please allow this effigy to stand in place for Michael, the 3rd, as Michael, the 3rd, cannot be here tonight in person. Please allow the (list different properties of effigy) to be as filled with flamboyance and passion as the real Michael, the 3rd. Can I get an amen? Can I get an amen? Can I get an amen? (repeat this until an amen is said from the audience) ...Thank you.

(The effigy gets rolled onstage. He is dressed slightly different to indicate M3. LADYSYSTEMS plays some party music. Everyone bobs like it's a party.)

CHASE

He bursted through the party door.

M3 (TORA)

Haaaay Bitches! Guess who's BACK!?

CHASE

His hair was still stained with the sequins and semen of London.

M3

I've missed you! You sexy bitch!

CHASE

(Enamored.)

He was like Apollo, bringing the morning sun—
Except he brought a disco ball, short-shorts, and an underlying shame.

M3

Is that HIM!

CHASE

Fuck!

(Running away from the still effigy.)

I ducked! I sprinted! I cowered! I hid!

CHLOE (TORA)

(Chase looks up— Chloe's voice comes from above.)

Chase! What're you doing?

CHASE

Chloe, Adam's girlfriend, said to me.
'Oh, you know. Just...drinkin' my wine.
Over here...'

CHLOE

Mike is here.

CHASE

Is he!?

CHLOE

Your teeth are really purple.

CHASE

I'm a nervous drinker...

CHLOE

I think if you put toothpaste on them it rubs it off.

CHASE

Oh! Good! Let's do that!

(CHASE makes a U shape to not be seen by the effigy, then turns around to the audience.)

The toothpaste didn't work. But when I finally did run into Mike, my stomach turning from the combined mix of nerves and 6 glasses of wine, my purple teeth provided a talking point.

(CHASE to M3)

I drank... more than I should have.

M3 (TORA)

You're cute.

CHASE

Thank you. You are forward.

M3

Just sayin' you're cute.

CHASE

Wow, I'm not really used to—

(To the audience:)

I was going to say 'Men that are out of the closet'

But I thought that sounded bad—

(To M3)

Fellas like you. Oh— you're cute too!

M3

That response came a little late.

CHASE

Sorry— wine?

(Back to the audience.)

We spent the rest of the night flirting.

And then, somehow, just around 1— he disappeared.

I casually walked around the house, and he was nowhere to be found.

My classmate Rory came up to me:

RORY (TORA)

Hey Dude.

CHASE

Hey Rory.

RORY

Y'know that gay Junior you were talkin' to?

CHASE

Michael?

RORY

Yeah, he let me use his lighter... and then he just— disappeared. I'm leavin— do you wanna take it?

CHASE

Sure.

(A clear blue lighter gets thrown at CHASE from offstage.)

It was like treasure.

I had something of his, and I could message him and let him know... and then get a second date!

And that's exactly what I did.

(Party tone fades away.)

We got our schoolbooks together. We got coffee together. All of a sudden we were— sleeping together. But not just sex... actually sleeping together. And he wasn't concerned with what people thought when we were together. In fact... *I* was, if anything.

I wouldn't hold his hand in public because I was afraid of getting beat up.

Granted, in the neighborhood he lived in— that wasn't a preposterous fear.

But it *was* an irrational one.

I would find out a couple weeks later that Michael's 'disappearance' that night was actually him hooking up with someone else in a bathroom... but, I pulled my big boy pants up and pretended that it didn't bother me.

I should have said, 'HEY! I'm in way over my head!... but, of course, I didn't.

A couple weeks into seeing Michael, the 3rd ... Michael, the 2nd came up to me—

(The effigy has transitioned to look like M2. A chime.)

M2 (TORA)

(really sincerely)

Hey, Chase. Haven't seen you in awhile.

Do you wanna get coffee sometime?

(Pause.)

Or come hang out in my dorm?

(Pause.)

CHASE

No, I'm sorry.

(Beat, to the audience:)

I still had feelings for Michael... the 2nd.

So I don't know why, right then, I didn't run into his arms.

Probably because I knew they couldn't hold me.

(Back to M2)

No. I'm seeing Michael.

(Beat.)

The *other* Michael.

(Beat.)

The *other other* Michael.

See ya in class!

(A pause. The effigy gets rolled away.)

Michael, the 3rd, and I... however... were doing well.
 I'd never been with someone that was so— vivacious.
 And social.
 The Juniors drank every night!
 ...or at least Mike did.
 I sprinted out of Freshman life and ran right into
 nightly drinking.
 But I soon realized that
 Vodka Was Not My Friend.

(The effigy rolls on... it's M3.

It's late night... in NE. LADYSYSTEMS makes sound effects like cars, train tracks, wind.)

CHASE

Where the hell are we Michael?

M3

Calm doooown. I know where we are.

CHASE

No, you don't. We're in the middle of a fucking warehouse.

M3

I promise the bus stop is this way.

CHASE

You have no idea.

M3

Will you please stop being so condescending and just trust me?

CHASE

That's a tall order.

(Pause.)

I didn't even want to come out here.

M3

I *said* we didn't have to.

CHASE

We never hang out with *my* friends— WILL YOU WALK FASTER?

(The effigy, of course, hasn't moved.)

M3

I CAN'T HELP THAT I'M SHORT!

(CHASE goes and picks up the effigy.)

PUT ME DOWN! PUT ME DOWN!

CHASE

(Puts the effigy down.)

WELL THEN MOVE FASTER— FAGGOT!

M3

...do NOT call me a faggot.

CHASE

Why? We're two *(whispered)* faggots out in the WILDERNESS OF MINNEAPOLIS.
Lost. Cause YOU didn't ask for directions.

//

//

//

I'm an asshole. Please don't leave me.

M3

Let's just go back to the house and call a cab.

(The effigy gets removed.)

CHASE

Three months later, he showed up at my dorm with all my things in a bag.
Unannounced, he looked at me and said:

M3

I can't do this anymore.

CHASE

(In hindsight, my constant criticisms of Michael combined with my needy fear of abandonment was definitely too much for him. But on the cusp of being left, I said something that I didn't mean:)

I love you.

(Pause. Wait.)

M3

(laughs)

I don't love you.

(TRANSITION.)

Strut for Your Life

Step 1. Call Michael 3, and ask him to tell the story of the night being lost.

Step 2. Put the conversation onto this document on a word processor.

Step 3.

TORA LaHORA will perform the text with limited gestural language.

LADYSYSTEMS and CHASE improvise a song and movement together.

Mistakes Were Made

(Post-Glamour walk. A little sweaty. A little fabulous.

A sassy DING.

The effigy gets rolled onstage.)

CHASE

Shit.

No.

I DON'T WANT YOU.

(Of course, the effigy doesn't move.

To audience:)

Summer ended. And just as I expected...

M3 (TORA)

I didn't ever mean it when I said I didn't love you.

CHASE

Well—

Well...

Well well!

M3

I miss you. I miss you so much. I'm so lonely at night.

CHASE

(out)

Another thing I would often hear from men.

(To M3)

I'll... TALK TO YOU LATER!

(The effigy leaves.)

I was feeling good! I was feeling on my game! I was open— and healed— and running full force into a STRONGER FUTURE!

Which meant... I said yes. I said YES.

I missed him, too.

And things were different, for the both of us.

At the start of my Sophomore Year, we had a giant party at my house to welcome in the new freshmen class, and also to celebrate my birthday. There must've been nearly 150 people inside our 5 bedroom house. I was running around like a chicken with its fucking head cut off.

Hey— use a coaster!

No, sir, I would not like to buy ecstasy from you.

THOSE CURB YOUR ENTHUSIASM DVD'S ARE NOT PARTY FAVORS!—

M3 (TORA)

You seem stressed.

CHASE

I'm fine.

M3

You always say you're 'fine' when you're not.

CHASE

(terse)

Doesn't everyone.

M3

Um. Okay. I'll walk away.

CHASE

(to the audience:)

I continued to get drunk. And my shoulders continued to rise in stress.

After a couple more drinks I realized that I had been mean to Michael... and I tried to show him that I cared.

(Drunk, drinking, to the effigy:)

Hey.

M3

Hey.

CHASE

Where are your shoes.

M3

Um— by the front door?

CHASE

I think... y'sh'move them.

M3

...are they in the wrong place?

CHASE

Yes.

M3

Where should—

CHASE

Y'sh' move them t' my bedrum.

M3

Ooooooh. I get what you're doing.

(Smiles.)

You're hitting on me.

CHASE

Nooooo.

M3

Okay, listen. I'll move them to your bedroom.

And YOU can go get a glass of water.

You're gonna need your stamina for later.

(The effigy leaves. CHASE pauses.)

CHASE

Oh. This kinda whoreish.

I sh'prolly... wait 'til like... Date 3?

(Sober.)

But I didn't!

We slept together.

And in the morning... I woke up with a particularly

empty

feeling.

There wasn't remorse— there wasn't even a huge feeling of happiness.

I had planned to get back together with Michael. And that's what I was doing.

'Well— I've just grown up.' I told myself. 'So that *neediness* is gone.

This is what adult relationships feel like— pleasantly detached.'

Yeah, because

the plethora of empty red solo cups

scattered around my naked ex-boyfriend
really screamed ADULT RELATIONSHIP.

Nevertheless, like adult men we blindly carried forward.
 And... it was pretty decent.
 He was always there for me, and he bought me gifts.
 Said nice things about me.
 Tried to include me with his friends.
 It was entirely what I had always wanted...
 What I didn't foresee was *me* moving past Michael.

Of course— I overcompensated.
 A month after getting back together I bought a plane ticket to see his family in San Francisco for Christmas.
 Now— this may sound crazy— because it kind of was.

BUT— it ended up being the highlight of our relationship.
 I fell in love with his family. They were perfect. His older sisters— all in their thirties— were exactly what I wanted to be: drunk, tanned, apathetic yet pragmatic, and somehow still awesome mothers.
 The vacation bought me more time. Falling in love with his family convinced me that I was in love with Michael.

And I wanted to be... so bad.
 But he annoyed me.
 His little voices, his buoyant— *flaming* charisma, his somehow remarkable way of dealing with children... and on top of all that— he was actually an AWESOME friend.
 WHY DIDN'T I REALLY LOVE HIM!?

Now, in hindsight I can say all of this. At the time, none of this occurred to me. I thought we were going to get married. And every time he irritated me I convinced Michael that it was something wrong with *him*.

(*Beat.*)

But I made sure everyone thought we were doing great.
 My classmate, Joy, came up to me.

JOY
 (*overanimated*)

How you and Michael-boo doing?

CHASE
(overanimated)

Oh GREAT!

JOY
(overanimated)

GREAT!

[TORA, under his breath:]

Asshole.

(Beat.) [A light song— maybe the ‘Michael’ song— might begin to play underneath.]

CHASE
In four months we were over.
I broke up with him over a phone call.
Even though I lived a block away from him.
I was a fucking coward.
There’s really no dramatizing it. That’s what it was.
I was a coward.

(A HORN—IT’S JARED. TURN THE PAGE!)

Spank Me, Tom Daley!

JARED ZEIGLER ANNOUNCES FROM THE BACK OF THE HOUSE VIA LOUDSPEAKER:

THE FOLLOWING IS A YOUNG GAY MAN’S FANTASY INVOLVING
THE U.K. DIVER, TOM DALEY

CHASE
I’m working three jobs— and overloading my body with anything that’ll distract me from the self-loathing.

I turn on the TV— The London Summer Olympics. I’m studying abroad there in the fall and can’t help but be curious.

Men’s Diving.

A small man with chestnut hair climbs up to dive.
Like a little beaver.
But cuter.
A lot cuter.
His abs glisten as he bends over.
He jumps and his feet tuck in with
perfect pointe—
a small ballerina beaver man— a
and slips into the water without a splash.

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS/TORA

“AAAAAAAH!”

CHASE

I scream— like a twelve year old girl.

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS/TORA

“Tom Daley!”

[A PROJECTION OF TOM DALEY IS REVEALED.]

CHASE

He speaks.

His British accent and sibilant “S’s” hit me like Imperialism and I LIKE IT.

TOM (TORA)

*I just went in, with the mentality, of just— do it or die, they say.
I’ve had to work so hard. I mean at the beginning of the year I was FAT.
I’ve lost seven and a half kilos.*

(CHASE smacks himself.)

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS

(whispered)

Tom Daley.

TOM

But now everything’s worth it. I can eat what I like.

(CHASE smacks himself.)

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS

Tom Daley.

CHASE

Eat *me*.

I turn off the TV but he's still on my mind. Those beady little eyes beating on my heart and I'm just screaming GODIWANNABEINBRITAINGODIWANNABEINBRITAIN.

I make him the background on my laptop.
After a long day of selling soap at the Mall of America I cuddle up in bed and open my computer screen.

There he is. Smiling with his eyes and winking with his lips. Like he's got a secret.

(CHASE 'jerks off' a large, filled water bottle.)

I imagine that it's a misty British night in London.
We're alone. Sitting on a fountain outside the Olympic Village.
We talk about how much we enjoy the night.
And then he grabs me.
I say: Tom! What about the media!
He says:

TOM

I don't care! I have my bronze medal! All I want is you!

CHASE

And then I have my way with him.

[CHASE RUNS UP AND KISSES THE PROJECTION.]

It's a week into the Games.
I'm on my way to work. The train passes the airport, veteran's memorial, but all I see is—
WOOSH Tom Daley *WOOSH* Tom Daley *WOO—
The idol's perfected olive skin and droopy lips call for me— like a vision rising above IKEA.
Bleary eyed and hung over, I'm infected.
How can some twink— an obsession of my imagination—
make my blood rise,
bring tears to my eyes,

and make my life feel so full?
The train pulls into the Mall.

Later in the day, a coworker comes up to me:

CO-WORKER (TORA)

Uh— hey, Chase. Whatcha doin' tonight?

CHASE

Nothin'.

CO-WORKER

Do you wanna go to...

[Suddenly in a very deep and scary voice:]

THE SALOON!?

CHASE

The Saloon is an infamous gay bar in downtown Minneapolis.
The place reeks of Britney Spears's latest perfume and semen.
So it's popular.
I say: Yes.

It's Sunday. And it's SHOWER NIGHT.

(Beat.)

The place is packed with furry bears, their shaved Asian admirers, and me.
Spotlight— on a young 18 year old boy, climbing up to a glass-enclosed shower.
He's the sacrificial offering of the night.
Every shaved head and quaffed Mohawk in the building is watching. The water starts to fall on him as he strips down to his briefs.
We watch. Like dogs surrounding a glass enclosed piece of soggy veal.
(RYAN, CHASE, and LADYSYSTEMS cock their heads. Sniff.)

I turn.

(The effigy gets rolled onstage.)

SHIT! It's him— Michael the 3rd. I duck (as if he didn't see me).
He ducks, too.

(Someone kicks the effigy over.)

FUCK!

We're mortified. I wave.

(CHASE painfully waves to the effigy.)

He avoids— my— eye contact.

Because... he's... with someone.

A blonde haired, make-up wearing, clown of a man. Who's Ripped. And Petite.
They kiss.

CHASE grabs the water bottle and viciously jerks it off.)

I'm fine. I'm fine. No— really I'm fine. Totally fine. Nothing wrong. I'M— FINE!
TOMDALEYTOMDALEYTOMDALEYTOMDALEYTOMDALEY!!!

[CHASE KISSES THE PROJECTION.]

CHASE

Mr. Daley's on the news.

NEWS REPORTER (TORA)

Tom Daley and his barefoot girlfriend—

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS

AHHH!

NEWS REPORTER

—Kassidy Cook emerge from nightclub—

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS

AAHHHH!

NEWS REPORTER

—as they celebrate his A-Level results.

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS

AAHHHHHHH!

CHASE

I screamed, like a twelve year old girl.

TOM! YOU SNEAKY LITTLE QUEEN!

The world seems smaller. My gay hope— My ballerina beaver—

All those nights, dreaming into his eyes...

His small form becoming my body pillow as I would whisper,

CHASE/LADYSYSTEMS

You Know Me So Well.

CHASE

ALL A FRAUD.

My hand... drifts... towards my phone. Michael the 3rd's voice rings in my head.

No.

(CHASE slaps his hand.)

No.

And with the speed of an Olympic dive— Tom was gone.

But LONDON.

LONDON.

The place where men of all colors, sizes, shapes, and tastes gather to remember their youth. The Tom Daleys of the world uniting in one place. One club.

[GOD SAVE THE QUEEN BEGINS TO PLAY.]

So... I step on to that plane. Look out into my future and say...
HELLO BOYS! GET AT ME!

[CHASE PLACES THE LARGE WATER BOTTLE IN A CONTRAPTION THAT MAKES THE WATER BEGIN TO 'SHOWER' DOWN ON HIM. HE DANCES IN THE SEMEN RAIN.

AT SOME POINT THE MUSIC STOPS AND JARED YELLS OVER LOUDSPEAKER: **FANTASY SEQUENCE OVER.**]

Gutterslut

CHASE

FLASH FORWARD A FEW MONTHS—

It's some Friday night in London.

This, of course, means my usual:

going and buying an entirely new outfit,

getting far too trashed in our Camden flat while pre-gaming,

and then proceeding to a 'fresh and new' club—

that will inevitably remind me I will never be trendy enough.

Until next Friday when I'll try all over again.

But THIS Friday

is Special...

as we are going to...

GUTTERSLUT.

None of us know what "GUTTERSLUT" actually is.

But we saw it online and the name snagged us.

Also, it's in East London...

and East London always promises to be the pinnacle of homosexual cool.

There are three of us going.

A sort of gay clique that we named “The Gays” (creative)—

Zachary, Ryan,

(TORA makes a noise)

and me.

Three young 20-year olds with very different tastes...

Zach prefers a young gym body in bright tank tops with tightly manicured hair... though he inevitably just finds men that are attracted to young, naïve Jewish boys...

Ryan

(TORA makes a noise)

prefers... attractive men... but with one fatal flaw. Like dreads on a white guy, or a missing tooth. If the dude hasn't showered in a week that's definitely a plus.

And I... myself, prefer...

(Look to TORA.)

Well, I don't fucking know. A hunky 38-year old really gets me going, but I don't have the confidence... or, rather... *lack* of confidence... to commit to such an act. If they promise intelligence but then just act like a douchebag-- I'm pretty much set for a relationship.

But back to the point:

The three of us have different taste. But somehow the alluring “GUTTERSLUT” got us all on board.

And in walks ... Michael the 2nd.

RYAN

Chase, I'm in this scene.

CHASE

...

RYAN

RYAN— ME— is in this scene. I'm not doing your lines anymore.

CHASE

...

RYAN

I was THERE— Fuck it— I don't care. Y'know— I have a story, too, Chase.

CHASE

Not right now. This is the— this is the part of the show— where—

(not wanting to give up the plot:)

where I meet that guy Donald at the club, and he turns out to be a drag queen, and I think I like it, but I really don't like it— and Michael goes with us to the club, and he ends up meeting David— and I have a cow because I think David is an ugly prick, and he's like 30, and then I slowly start to realize—

RYAN

—NO! IT'S MY TIME TO SHINE!

[LIGHTS. SOMETHING SPECTACULAR.]

LADYSYSTEM

(loudly, and somehow distorted:)

IT'S TIME FOR THE TORA TAKEOVER.

CHASE

What the fuck is going on.

RYAN

Here—werk it:

(pulls out two scripts, hands them to LADYSYSTEMS and CHASE)

CHASE

!!?

RYAN

Read it!!!

CHASE

You were planning this!?

RYAN

Go sit on my stool— and read it.

CHASE

!!—

(RYAN's glare cuts CHASE's protestation.

Beat.

TORA TAKEOVER

A THROWBACK TO THE DECONSTRUCTION SCENES

CHASE READS THE STORY, AS **TORA**, HOWEVER **RYAN** NEEDS HIM TO READ IT.

RYAN CAN BE DOING AN EXOTIC DANCE TO THE TEXT... HE CAN USE THE EFFIGY... HE CAN BE RAPPING... HE CAN SAY TEXT TO **TORA**... THIS SHOULD BE FIGURED OUT AND CONSTRUCTED.

HOWEVER, THE STORY SHOULD BE ABOUT **RYAN'S** GAY IDENTITY... IDEALLY INVOLVING A CHOSEN STORY FROM STUDY ABROAD. EXTRA IDEAL IF IT SOMEHOW RELATES BACK TO ANY OF THE OTHER CHARACTERS (chase, michael fell, zach). HOWEVER, IT CAN ALSO HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED SO FAR IN THE SHOW.

....

Then....

A deconstruction...

LONDON UNDERGROUND...

Then...

///

///

January 2013: Chase's Bedroom – Minneapolis

(The effigy is onstage. It now represents M2. The projector reads: Michael the 2nd. The date appears underneath it: January 2013.

M2— the effigy— and CHASE inside his new bedroom. It's dark. They stand next to each other, facing out towards the audience.)

CHASE

I still have to get all my stuff from my boss's house in St. Paul. It's been a whirlwind since coming back.
(Beat.)

The room'll look better soon— These aren't even my sheets. The guy I'm subleasing from just left them.

M2 (voiced by TORA)

Oh—

CHASE

I cleaned them!

M2

That's good.

(Both 'in bed'. Pull up a sheet in front of both.)

CHASE

Yeah... the bed's pretty big though. Which is nice.
(Extended silence.)

M2

So... I'm just gonna put it out there... Are we gonna hook up?
(CHASE laughs.)

CHASE

Yea—Do you want to?

M2

Only if you want to?

CHASE

I d— Um. I do. AH. (Laugh.) I'm so bad at this.

(Lean in... start kissing the effigy.)

LADYSYSTEMS and TORA LaHORA play a variety of playful percussion. M2 and CHASE fool around to the percussion. The fooling around should be a bit uncomfortable— it IS an inanimate object—, though the playing of it should be very genuine.

INTERSPERSED THROUGHOUT FOOLING AROUND:
(Out of breath.)

CHASE

Wow. We've gotten... a lot better at this!

M2

Yeah. Holy shit!

I could do this for hours. CHASE

OH! M2

FUCK!
(Beat.) CHASE

Did you cum? M2

Yeah. CHASE

Me too. M2

Awesome. CHASE/M2

High five. CHASE

*(High five the effigy.
Beat.
Push the effigy away. Have the sheet just wrapped around CHASE.)*

Can I have a pillow? M2

What are you doing? CHASE

I was gonna sleep down here— M2

You don't have to. I mean, if you want— CHASE

Sure!
(Pull the effigy back into position.) M2

CHASE

I guess we've never actually 'slept' together.

M2

Yeah, I guess we haven't.

(Pause. Smile. Then turn around and spoon. Standing up. LADYSYSTEMS dings some percussion instrument. CHASE step forward. The effigy stays sleeping.)

CHASE

So we slept together. In the morning, Michael would tell me:

M2

You snored like a Japanese schoolgirl all night long.

CHASE

What?

M2

Yeah. Like: *(imitates:)* Heeheeheeheehee.

CHASE

People don't snore like that.

M2

You did. It's pretty cute.

(Pause.)

You wanna go get coffee?

CHASE

Yeah. Yeah I do.

(Effigy gets pulled away.)

Anything Can Happen

CHASE

Two nights later,

we went to see a play together.

In a 'strictly plutonic' fashion.

It was January— but in the name of 'plutonic' romance,

we braved a walk across the Stone Arch Bridge.

Underneath the bridge, Michael spotted two figures

camping out on the ice— lit by a rising fire

they had built together.

My immediate response was that they were homeless scavengers taking shelter from a day of pillaging.

'Let's get the fuck outta here.'

And I began to— quite literally— sprint past them.

Michael grabbed my arm.

(A noise. CHASE looks at his arm.)

He, always the more rational between us,
saw them as what they were— just a couple on a date.
Albeit, a very Midwestern, cold, *January* date.

'It's romantic.' He said.

(Pause. As if literally gripped.)

'Romantic... Yeah, it *is* romantic.'

My immediate response to everything is to run.

It doesn't matter if I'm running towards something
or running away,

I'm always moving at the speed (and efficiency) of a German bullet train.

Michael— however—

gripping my arm on a bridge over the Mississippi in the middle of January—
was asking me to pause.

To breathe the night in with him.

And it was in this moment that everything melted.

(Back to dramatics:)

Swifter than the ice caps over a northern Alaskan village...

(Back to realness... whatever that is:)

my feelings ruptured. Michael... Michael—

the 2nd?—

was simultaneously always what I had been running away from,
and towards.

In the final blackout of the play that evening—

smelling his cologne

and wondering if he just naturally smelled like the perfect mixture of pine and gym locker—

I began to weep.

Like... profusely, embarrassingly weep.

(The roar of the audience's applause covered it... so I don't think Michael noticed...)

But all those wet, hidden feelings fell down my face

at an uncontrolled speed.

I loved him.

I had always loved him.

From the moment I met him,

each romantic decision I had made revolved around him,

as if our meeting was some celestial collision.

And ever since then he had been orbiting around me

like a moon.

Maybe This Time

Step 1. Call Michael 2, and ask him to tell the story of the date over Stone Arch Bridge.

Step 2. Put the conversation onto this document on a word processor.

Step 3.

TORA LaHORA will perform the text with limited gestural language.

CHASE will sing the jazz standard “Nearness of You” to the Effigy.

LADYSYSTEMS will accompany CHASE with some light percussion or music.

Trying too Damn Hard

CHASE

It doesn't take long for us to start dating.

(A bell— like a gong.

CHASE runs around the stage with the effigy.

It's frenetic, and infatuated.

Each statement is almost a discovery, and the best discovery of a lifetime.

In the fast paced yelling, however, the effigy almost gets torn apart.

CHASE should be physically sprinting back and forth around the stage.)

HE'S ADORABLE! GENEROUS! AND FEISTY!

IF HE ARGUES WITH ME, HE DOESN'T BELITTLE ME!

HIS MUSIC TASTE MAKES ME SWOON!

HE COMPLIMENTS!

HIS LIPS ARE BEAUTIFUL!

This year his birthday falls on Spring Break,
and so I surprise him with a weekend at the
Wisconsin Dells!

(In the Midwest your Spring Break
involves a blizzard—
So the best solution is to vacation to an
Indoor water park!)

The night before we leave
We watch THE DARJEELING LIMITED!
And play VIDEO GAMES!
And eat fancy cheese from SURDYK'S!

He tells me that he always SITS DOWN

WHEN HE PEES!
 I, too, ALWAYS SIT DOWN WHEN I PEE!
 This small fact makes me think I've found my SOUL MATE!

The Wisconsin Dells are PERFECT!
 (Well, terrifying, and still freezing.)
 But PERFECT!

We stop by his parents house on the
 WAY BACK!
 He warns me that they are a little foreign
 To the "HAVING-A-GAY-SON-THING"
 But they ARE NOT!
 They ask to place our coats on the GUEST bed!
 They want us to STAY THE NIGHT!
 And WE DO!

(Stop. Physically exhausted. The effigy is torn apart.)

That night I look at Michael:

Michael, I don't want to make you uncomfortable.
 But I love you.

M2 (TORA)

I've been thinking about it, too.
 And, I love you, too, Chase.
 I really do.

*(The bell sounds three more times. The tone becomes more serious.
 CHASE is physically run out of energy.
 And the effigy is almost scattered in pieces around the stage.
 CHASE walks around the pieces.)*

The infatuation phase leaves...

After the night where he tells me he loves me,
 He starts to disappear.

He doesn't answer my calls as often.
I try to have conversations about our relationship,
and he says:

M2 (TORA)

I want to go to bed.

CHASE

Which makes me anxious, so I keep talking—

M2

Chase, we'll talk in the morning.

CHASE

But we never do.

(Beat.

CHASE tries to put the effigy back together.)

A month and a half later we go out to dinner with my mom while she's in town.

On the way home, I tell Michael:

I love you.

He says nothing.

(CHASE attempts to put together the effigy faster.)

We get back to his apartment, and he suddenly bursts out:

M2

Chase— I'm done.

(CHASE stops putting together the pieces.)

I don't love you.

I don't!— I try... Because you're so goddamn
persistent about 'loving' me. But I don't.

I'm sorry.

I need to break up.

(CHASE sits down.

LADYSYSTEMS begins the 'MICHAEL' song.

RYAN comes onstage and sweeps off the effigy pieces.

He also turns down all of the picture frames.

[A LOUD DRUM NOISE. EMILY COMES ONSTAGE DRUMMING. EVERYONE LOOKS BACK OUT TO THE AUDIENCE... THEY KNOW THE ENDING. AND IT IS TIME TO PERFORM IT.]

MICHAEL MICHAEL MICHAEL: or, God Bless America

CHASE

(To the audience:)

The first time you decide to put yourself out of the way
And LOVE someone...
Is a crazy experience.
In my case, I like to think that I had 3 of these "first loves".
They were messy, beautiful, stupid, and in the end by loving THEM,
I was led back to myself.
This show is dedicated to the first time everyone loved.
And, especially, to those magical FRIENDS,
That endured and supported us through those stupid times.

So thank you, Michael, Michael, Michael... and Ryan.

(CHASE runs offstage.)

LADYSYSTEMS

Ladies and Gentlemen, if you'll please stand...
Tora LaHora will now sing our united anthem.

[RYAN begins our national anthem. EMILY, CHASE, and RYAN come back onstage with the bowl of names. They proceed to read all the names.

Big flourish.
And finish.]