

*Notes: Any ethnic marginalizing contained herein is intended for entertainment purposes, only. No members of minorities are harmed or killed in the course of making this film. Mr. Gus Van Sant owns all rights to these characters, originally seen in My Own Private Idaho.*

Bob

*Setting: The Late Mid-'80's. The scene is an iron park bench beneath a lamppost at night. In Bob's lap is a wooden briefcase that serves as a desk. He is writing on a lavender legal pad. As he looks up and across the wide dirt pathway, he sees Scott and a patron cavorting in a somewhat stultified manner around an oak tree. The older man, who is African-American with a shaved head and wearing a black trench coat, puts his hand on Scott's shoulder. The two gleam at each other with exaggerated affection, as if to increase some doubts and decrease others in whatever involvement they are pursuing. Seeing this brings a look of depression to Bob's face. He gently heaves a strained breath through his nose and tries to concentrate on his writing, but reluctantly looks up, again. The patron has one arm around Scott's waist, and is kissing him with an apparently counterfeit rapture that suggests a great self-involvement. Bob tries to laugh this off with a nauseated, droll sneer. Camera looks down at the paper, and viewer sees a single drop of water hit the page. View changes to close up of Bob. His head is tilted 45 degrees and his eyes are closed. When they open, he smiles.*

Scott

What ya' writin', Bob?

Bob

It's a science fiction story about a black guy who uses condoms.

Scott

That's not science fiction: that's fantasy! Sits down next to Bob. Closes his eyes. We now see that there is a line of moisture running down Scott's cheek, which he hurriedly wipes away. His face resumes

*a leonine composure, as if to erase all memory of the teardrop, as well. Looks up into the distance. He heard us.*

Bob

*(In a circumflex tone:)* Oh, shit! *Concerned pause.* Are you okay?

Scott

It's my parents. And, it's me. Some of it's you.

Bob

Am I okay?

Scott

You get me agitated.

Bob

Why?

Scott

I love you.

Bob

So, get to know me.

Scott

It's not worth it.

Bob

Well, how's about you just let me nibble on you for a while?

Scott

They'd kill me.

Bob

You mean, there's a chance they won't?

Scott

You got me, there. *He scoots away, turns his head, and arches down to get a better look at what Bob is writing. He reads aloud from the page:* “I remembered, somehow, that I had earlier been given a dose of mescaline. Seemingly, by means of a shaft of living moonlight, the jackal god entered the room. He then approached my sleeping friend and touched him on the shoulder. As I looked on, I was virtually unable to speak or move.”

Bob

So, tell me about your father.

Scott

Eventually, you have to become your own dad.

Bob

Well, I guess that’s better than looking in the mirror and going, “Eek! I’ve tuned into my mother!”

Scott

*Looks at Bob with a squint.* That’s good. You’ve resisted the temptation to rub it in how a boy on the street always has a bad relationship with his dad.

Bob

*Flutters eyebrows. (In a sultry tone:)* But, for how long? *Just then, a dwarf in leather garb passes by. He treads just the right distance from the lamplight to make his appearance and disappearance seem even more bizarre. Bob looks a bit taxed by this apparition.* Do you ever get the feeling that you’ve stayed up way too past bedtime?

Scott

Okay, then, you tell me about my dad.

Bob

*Stylish pause. (In a manner even more suggestive of Morticia Addams:)* Married men are interesting. They’re already so...broken in.

Scott

Takes you down memory lane, eh? I know what you're thinking. For me, this IS memory lane. *Smiles as he gestures with spread hands toward the road. Chuckles a bit, as if to beat Bob to the punch.*

Bob

If you become your own dad, you will be a bad dad, and your son will have to face the same shit, since you also become your own son, and he is you.

Scott

*Looks pleasantly stunned.* That's the first time I've seen psychiatric medicine administered with a tranquilizer gun! So, you really want to be my father figure bad enough to analyze me to the bone?

Bob

*Smiles.* To the boner. *Pause.* I'd better try a different approach, quick, huh?

Scott

Now, a sensei doesn't have ulterior motives, right?

Bob

Absolutely right, Boittoi-san. I'm just here to help. Hee-hee. Any time you need help getting out of those pants, just let me know.

Scott

Dirty old man!

Bob

A true mentor's patience expects nothing and respects everything.

Scott

So, you were just kidding?

Bob

About being a true mentor? *(With a bit of hastiness:)* Yes. But, being a dirty old man doesn't make my teachings false.

Scott

Just less credible. A cantankerous man can't anchor us, man! *Deftly raises hand, briefly calling attention to a ring featuring a small ankh.*

Bob

*Looks bested. Ponders for a moment.* If we don't get our beauty sleep, they won't pay us for sex.

Scott

You never spared any effort keeping me up, before. *He scoots closer and playfully rests his chin on Bob's shoulder. His face then becomes nonetheless serious. (Coolly:)* Bob, I'm going to explain this to you one time: I'll give you my love because I don't want you trying to entice me. I want you to teach me what you can of what you know. If you're trying to entice someone, you can't afford to ignore his discomfort. If you're trying to teach someone, you can rarely afford not to. I'll never be able to trust you if I think you're beating yourself up trying to impress me. So, be satisfied with what love I can give you, and tell me the truth when you think I need to hear it. *Arches head down, digging into Bob's shoulder, and looks from under eyebrows.* Got that?

Bob

*Looks shocked. (Very quietly:)* Yes, Mr. Favor. *Looks toward Scott with sober expression, then looks away and flashes a dementedly overjoyed one.* What a prince! Something tells me you're going to learn more than I have to teach.

Scott

*(Gently but sternly:)* If you ever find that to be the case, don't let on. My court has to reflect my prestige. *Lightly grasps Bob's hand and nuzzles the crown of his head under Bob's chin, in the manner of a cat with its caregiver.*

Bob

I'm going to get majorly grifted, ain't I?

Scott

I'll take you for all I can, and never give you a break. Deal?

Bob

What do you take me for?

Scott

That's already been explained. *Gets up, takes a pair of sunglasses from inside his coat, and puts them on.* Play your cards right, and it might be a ride or two. *Walks into the night with a bouncing gait.*

Bob

Hey, Scott! Why did James Dean go to the prom?

Scott

*(From the distance:)* He wanted to try banal sex!

Bob

*Looks over his shoulder to watch Scott walk into a patch of fog and begin fade from sight. Turns back to the writing pad, which he now places into its carrying case. Within, we see a small folding picture frame of black leather, a gold ankh stylishly glyphed on its cover with a calligraphic paint marker. Without taking it in hand, Bob inserts his index and middle fingers, flipping open the folded frame to reveal a picture of Scott, upon which the camera lingers to proper effect. A drop of water hits its plastic pane, then another. Bob closes the case as we see that it is beginning to drizzle. As he gets up and turns around, he is startled to find that Scott has silently returned and has been observing him.*

Scott

Bob is one for the books. Books few understand, right?

Bob

*Widens his eyes as if to suggest the impropriety of a succinct response.*

Scott

What? *Gestures like a stage magician for satirical effect.* Are there things that shouldn't be known? *Tone is gently mocking.*

Bob

Maybe there are things that shouldn't be asked.

Scott

*Looks at Bob as if to say, "Don't ignore me."*

Bob

It's not sarcasm. I had a friend who was a gung ho Rajneesh disciple. She was quite pretty. She approached her guru and asked his advice about something. I forget what. Of course, she did the opposite of whatever he suggested. Then, she went to India and contracted dysentery. Shriveled her up like a prune.

Scott

*Widens eyes.* Is your wisdom so deep, Bob?

Bob

I doubt it, but I try to help kids who are out of the womb and STILL dodging coat hangers, you know?

Scott

*Is motionless for a second. Sits down next to Bob, and puts his arm around Bob's shoulder. Seems to be internalizing his sentiments.* I understand our modern salvation business has more streamlining than quality control, but I have a friend I want you to meet. His name is Mike. Maybe we can make his stay on Planet Earth longer if we put our heads together. *Grins.*

Bob

My pillow is already liking that idea.

Scott

Bob, Bob, Bob... What am I going to do with you? Wait, don't start!

Bob

Well, if Fanny Hill met Benny Hill, they could come up with a few pointers. But, anyway, bring him over, tomorrow, and we'll go eat. It may be his only chance to see my apartment.

Scott

Your apartment is incredible.

Bob

Sometimes, I don't believe it, myself.

Scott

Why would you leave?

Bob

Your father is my landlord.

Scott

Oh, shit.

Bob

Tell me about it. Once a guy owns enough low rent housing to constitute a virtual monopoly, he gets a feeling of omnipotence, like a utility company.

Scott

Why don't you move out, before things get tricky?

Bob

Magisterial reluctance is of compassion or caution, not cowardice.

Scott



A master is a hero who's got the shrewdness of a villain. You can't trap him with own words.

Bob

So, don't get cheeky with him, or his minions? I'm not saying I don't trust the guy, but if I get a can of peanut brittle from him, I'm opening it away from my face.

Scott

I can't stand him. I don't sass him. I'm not afraid of him. I've seen how an asshole like him can come out ahead. He's polite with the right people.

Bob

I've got you, but I'd have to watch myself and keep my armor polished very shiny to vanquish someone like that. I lack the relentlessness to be more than a tragic hero. I've been the master of a few interesting moments, though.

Scott

But, what was it you said, the other day? "For a wise man, a powerful enemy is a respected enemy." And, "a comic hero knows his limitations." I know, you already told me: too much work! I guess pet obsessions are more interesting than dealing with life!

Bob

I've noticed a lot of people get away with choosing their own problems. When people say we should be responsible, it usually means they want to put a guilt trip on everybody they can, so they can come out on top.

Scott

I never hear you complain about me being on top.

Bob

You're a prince. I may not know my place in the world, but I see that some boys are more deserving than others.

Scott

Who are you to judge that?

Bob

I judge on appearances. I like it better than judging by self-interest, the way most people do.

Scott

There's a compliment in there, somewhere?

Bob

If I said was, then there wouldn't be.

Scott

*Looks suddenly tired. Crosses eyes, slightly.* Bob, the true seeker: He never stops until he finds an irrational explanation. *Squints downward at ground, with knuckle to chin, as if searching for an appropriate thought.* "Your princes are rebellious, and have become the companions of thieves."

Bob

Oh. Right. So, I need to get a load of your friend, before the world folds, spindles, and mutilates him; before some Vlad the Impaler gets hold of him.

Scott

Yeah, when you see him, you'll be thinking how to get his load.

Bob

I hope he's a Mama's Boy. *Smiles "knowingly"*. They usually come pre-loaded, if you can put up with all that yelling screaming.

Scott

Not if they're the more pussy-whipped kind.

Bob

You're right. I sound opportunistic. They don't stay boys very long

with a serious case of vagina envy. At least I know my decadence comes from an ignorance of alternatives.

Scott

You don't envy the problems of youth.

Bob

I admire its solutions. Old folks say there's no substitute for experience, but there obviously is, and it's youth!

Scott

Too bad you can't bottle it.

Bob

Bottle something phony and sell, anyway. I even overheard a guy, once, who said he sold New York tap water in antique-looking bottles he found at a dump, until it finally occurred to people that it was only just that. Look at Jeff Stryker advertising penis enlargers. You can't make me believe he ever needed, used, or physically benefited from one. Still, advertising gets to the deepest levels of ignorance in people. Stage magicians call it, "misdirection".

Scott

Are you running a game on me?

Bob

If you thought I wasn't, I couldn't prod you into building your character. When an embattled youth loses his temper, his best friends by default become his worst enemies. I might as well challenge you in ways you despise, at times, or you'd lose all respect for me, just from entropy.

Scott

Your entropy or mine? Can't you just believe in me? Are those a motivator's words? *Smiles dryly.* Charm school's different when you're into voodoo, I guess.

Bob

It depends on your archetypal style. I don't like telling people what they ought to do. I tell people what they could do if they wanted to survive some of the things I've seen. Believe me, I would really like to always be pleasant to you. I like to be liked. I'm not just senilely asserting my status as an elder. I'm doing what I can to arm you against the things that came after me.

Scott

Okay, so its not a control freak or old-timer's disease talking. My life is still different from yours.

Bob

If you keep listening to those who make as much sense as you do, your life will be better. I keep your inner child close to the surface with my antics. So, I try to protect the little guy, too.

Scott

Be careful. My inner child is an ogre. Be happy with what you see. *Pause.* Let's go abuse some alcohol. *Gets up.*

Bob

How can you say I abuse alcohol? I never spill a drop! *Gets up.*

Scott

*Begins walking away from bench, with Bob.* You can ignore all of life's speed bumps if you don't drive, huh?

Bob

*Pause for reflection.* If you let someone else do the driving, you still have to be sure you fasten your seat belt. Your friend, Mike; I don't mean to presume that he's full throttle into a life of waywardness, but, do you think he values himself enough to be careful? Or, is he one of those BORED-of-health guys?

Scott

Good question, but not one we can answer without keeping an eye on

him, for a while. HOW we find out can make a big difference.

Bob

Right. If he won't let anyone love him on any but his own terms, he'll end up on the shelf with the rest of life's defective novelties, eventually. *Stops in his tracks as Scott turns around to give him a look of warning about himself.* Well, if I'm on my way into the bin, at least I do what I can. *Just then, an old man wearing a more respectable version of a fishing or rain hat walks by. He eyes Bob's hat, which resembles a tarboosh, but is decorated with Keltic motifs.*

Old Man

*(Perhaps jokingly, in a whining, but not bitter, Brooklyn accent:)* What are you, in that hat, some kind of terrorist?

Bob

What? This is an IRISH hat! Wait. Yeah, I guess.

Old Man

You're smarter than you look! *Walks on.*

Bob

I'm definitely smarter than you look! *Again stops in tracks, as if waiting for a look of admonition from Scott, who glints, but doesn't turn back.* I know, I know, good people don't make up for lost time by doing evil. Amazing how often they try. *The pair continues walking, and begins to disappear from view into the mist.*

Scott

I thought you'd have some USDA Grade A Choice words about that. So, where can we go, around here, where they'll believe I'm twenty-one?

Bob

The nearest place is a troll bar.

Scott

What's a troll?

Bob

That's a guy who thinks he's cuter than he is who stalks a guy who thinks he's smarter than he is.

Scott

That would explain the curious number of unclaimed Japanese pick up trucks with little metal fish symbols on the tailgates, huh? *Fade out. Dark screen long enough to suggest that it is the next day. Fade in on Scott's apartment.*

Mike

What ya' readin', Scott?

Scott

Book by a friend of mine.

Mike

*Moves closer as if to show interest.*

Scott

*Holding his place with forefinger, he closes the book to show its yellow, black, and white cover, which reads: Mummies for Dummies, by Robert Pigeon. Scott then opens to the title page, where it has been autographed, "Best Swishes, Bob." Underneath this greeting are four symbols, indicating two hugs and two kisses.*

Mike

Is it any good?

Scott

*Flips book back to saved page, smiles, and begins to read: "The newly dead were normally kept at home (and away from the embalming tent) for several days. Most experts believe this was to discourage any eccentric mortuary workers from tampering sexually with corpses.*

One Egyptologist, a French lady, doubts this idea, pointing out that males as well as females were kept at home until any appeal had faded. *Pause.* Perhaps this gave families time to observe loving prayer vigils. Of course; why would we suppose the fresh body of a boy might appeal to the typically upstanding undertaker? The supply of women cadavers would surely provide all necessary distraction. *Line drawing beneath shows a shirtless, shaven-headed man shrugging.*

Mike

I'm sure the funeral business community appreciates his support. What's his next book, Archaeology 1001: Digging Up Dirt On the Pharaohs? *Makes the pseudo-Egyptian pose with arms, pointing flat hands away from body, then makes an effeminate waving gesture with the one following his line of vision.*

Scott

I told him he's taking us out for supper, tonight. Be nice.

Mike

Won't going out with a known homo limit our appeal? I mean, I don't mind Daddy Carroll, but I don't wanna follow him around.

Scott

Bob's not a fag. He's creative, If you date Liberace, your options narrow. If you make friends with someone who doesn't drip fairy dust, people don't turn their backs you. He's one of my best friends.

Mike

Oh, he gets the "I love you" discount, eh? *Smirks playfully.*

Scott

Maybe. But, he actually likes guys enough to let them cheat him. I call that the Five-Fingered Mary discount.

Mike

He won't get all criminal on you if you chicken out?

Scott

Right. He's still struggling. If all you ever go with are rich married or gay guys who have to have everything their way, you feel like a career hustler, instead of a dude who's down on his luck and falling back on easy money for a while.

Mike

You know your checks and balances.

Scott

I should, but I've seen a lot that leads me to believe that, in the long run, love has the deepest pockets.

Mike

I can see that: lust sure seems to have its cabbage hanging right out of its pockets. *Tugs at the linings of his pockets as if trying to turn them out. Makes a little gust of a laugh.*

Scott

Men like Bob know they're suckers. You don't have to think up new ways to scam them. It leaves time for friendship. I try not to hurt his feelings unless I have to. He's not one of those Johns you never want to see again, or always meet the same day of the week.

Mike

So, is Bob a writer?

Scott

He's into various arts. He's got his finger in several pies.

Mike

And you're his little tart?

Scott

Very funny. Let's go. *He sets the book down onto the night table and looks into Mike's eyes, as if to gauge his level of attachment. He then*



*grasps the heels of Mike's hands, which are still in his pockets, suggesting a sincere degree of respect. Mike trembles a bit, and looks slightly sad, as if starved for fraternal affection. Mike slowly lifts his hands, with Scott's still holding on, and places them on Scott's shoulders. Scott then moves his hands toward Mike and (with a sentimental tug) places his forefingers through the two front belt loops, through which run a length of rope quaintly serving as a belt. He looks tense, perhaps scared, as if about to cross a personal boundary.*

**Mike**

*Gasps in a light-hearted way. Places his hands on Scott's head, playfully moving a thumb slightly back and forth in his hair. (With a comic enthusiasm:) Yeah! Let's go! Flexes his hips suggestively. Need some help beating your stress?*

**Scott**

*Pulls slightly back with a look of mixed disappointment and relief that Mike has broken the tension and saved him more embarrassment, yet has sold short a sacrifice. Need some help beating your meat? Grimaces. I'm too young and cool to have boy problems! Smiles. Inserts the rest of his fingers into Mike's pockets, tugging Mike downward as he lifts himself up, with a hint of bullying. They stand face to face for a second. Scott reaches down and leans closer, as if to make an advance, but bends down and grasps Mike behind the knees, hoisting him over his shoulder and back like a captive, then carries him to the door. Close up on Mike, who looks extremely delighted. His hair shows its length as his head hangs upside down. He places his hands into Scott's back pockets. Let's go get baby some food! Scene fades out and in, changing to the hallway in front of Bob's door.*

**Scott**

*Knocks on door, and then opens it. Hello! Bob, it's Scott!*

**Bob**

*From the next room: I just got out of the shower.*

Mike

Are you decent?

Bob

Not since I was about thirteen.

Scott

I heard you wrote me a love poem. I'm waiting.

Bob

*Appears wrapped in a large towel, with another around his shoulders and head like some form of desert garb. Folds his hands in greeting, smiles.*

If you told me I suck  
Then I would be in hell  
Though I would be in luck  
If you said I sucked well

Mike

Bob, how can you say such things? *Looks a bit embarrassed.*

Bob

Scott's family is looking for a scapegoat, and I'm doing my best to recommend myself for the job.

Scott

I think you're okay, Bob, you're a regular modern-day Will Rogers...

Bob

Yeah, I never met a boy I didn't like!

Mike

*Squints, waves raised hands from side to side as if calling for a clarification.* What, so you think Scott's gay?

Bob

Mm; Scotty's what I call "Texas gay". You can't really tell, you know?

Scott

And Bob's what I call "British gay". You can pretty much tell, but you can't really hate 'em for it. So, where are you taking us for dinner, Bob?

Bob

I found the worst sushi bar in town. *Waits for response.*

Mike & Scott

*In unison:* How bad is it, Bob?

Bob

It's so bad, their specialty is beef and e-coli.

Mike

I should have guessed Bob was some kind of homo. That rainbow towel gave it away.

Scott

Yeah, it just screams, "Ask me about sodomy!" doesn't it?

Bob

Like you can talk, the way you keep pressuring me for sex!

Mike

How does he do that?

Bob

He keeps taking my money. *Thoughtful pause.* Hey, Mike, how can you tell a hustler?

Mike

*Supercilious pause, slow turn of head, then:* Okay, Bob, how?

Bob

He's the guy who could USE a friend.

Scott

*Looks slightly insulted.* Bob seems to think practically all good looking boys are queer. Or, is that just wishful thinking, BOB?

Bob

Scott, what gets a white boy excited faster than a picture of Raquel Welch?

Scott

*Grins with a rather guilty look of deference, then a hint of a chuckle. Quickly raises hands with palms upward, as if to shrug.*

Bob

Two pictures of Andrew Jackson!

Scott

*With a look of regaining the moral high ground:* So, back to the matter of dinner... I vote for the old reliable Chinese place.

Bob

Mike looks like a novice. How many Depeche Mode albums do you own, boy?

Mike

Who? Oh, that band Scott's always listening to... They go over my head; like Scott's ankles for dudes in G.Q. suits.

Scott

Thanks a lot, Mike. *Sits down and picks up a guitar.*

Bob

There's beers in the fridge, boys. Mike, are you old enough to drink?

Mike

Not in this county.

Bob

Then I'll need to see some fake I.D..

Mike

I lost it in a card game. Will a real gun permit do?

Bob

I guess, as long as I don't have to see the real gun.

Mike

So, Bob, how is it that a rich young dude like Scott and a poor old dude like you got so tight?

Bob

My boy, Scott and I have unfinished karmic business.

Mike

*Exhales with a single gust of incredulous whispered laughter.* Huh?

Bob

You see, Scott was my doctor in ancient Egypt, and he neglected to cure me of my optimism. *Smiles widely as he looks over his shoulder at Scott.* So, Scotty, how's the heart-breaking business?

Scott

Thriving. How's the asshole business?

Bob

Awh! Now, that's unfair. You're tuning me into more of an aspirin hole!

Mike

So, is Bob like your boyfriend or something?

Scott

I guess I could call him my significant something-or-other, when I'm not calling him something more fitting, like "dickhead".

Bob

It's all very traditional, Mike. In ancient Greece and feudal Japan, they discovered the best way to keep your warrior buddy watching your back was to let him watch your booty. *Makes a sly, lascivious expression.* Hey, guys, what did one valiant Greek warrior say to the other? *Pause.* "I got your back!"

Mike

That was short and sweet.

Bob

So were they!

Mike

Aren't you just using philosophy to justify being a pervert?

Bob

No, son. The idea of having a mentor is so one can make it through his youth without losing out to stress. If a young warrior has too much to contend with, it could end up harder for him to handle a woman's unpredictability. If Scott doesn't end up happily married in five years, I'm a failure.

Mike

*Tilts head downward a bit; looks unconvinced.*

Bob

Right now, can you handle all the negotiations necessary in keeping a woman?

Mike

*Looks a bit more convinced.*

Bob

Don't you ever get lonely when it seems like nobody will tell you the whole truth about anything?

Mike

*A sudden flash of gloom comes across Mike's face. His eyes roll upward and his lids flutter with a tremor of narcolepsy. He closes his eyes and takes a deeper breath. After a moment, he regains control. When he opens his eyes, they are wet.* So, Bob, where's your girlfriend?

Bob

Have you never thought it strange how finding the love of your life should be about crossing some great bridge, yet most people approach it more as if it were, perhaps, a pothole to be filled? *Gestures as if to suggest this is a grand idea.*

Scott

Bob has given up on finding a woman who's as much of a loser as he is.

Bob

I wouldn't wish a used up guy like me on any woman. You can't run a decathlon with a broken leg. You can coach, though.

Mike

But, what makes you qualified to be a teacher to someone from a high class family like Scott?

Bob

Love.

Mike

*A look of skepticism returns.*

Bob

Love gives us access to knowledge that others miss. Love isn't just a form of energy, it's a form of information. It's coded because it's

tailored from the gods' own supplies. I know things about Scott that no one else should know, not even he.

Mike

*Raises chin and an eyebrow very high, in a look mixing amazement with disbelief.*

Scott

Bob must know that you're a good friend, Mike, or he wouldn't psychoanalyze me in front of you. *Looks at Bob with a hint of impatience and suggestion to change the subject. Leans over toward Mike, makes a gesture of mesmerism in front of his face. Intones hypnotically:* You will remember nothing of what has been said... *Pause. Looks at Bob.* We're touched by your commitment to family values, Bob. *Looks back at Mike.* I don't know if I'd want to let him around my kids, though.

Mike

Is he that evil?

Scott

No, no. It's just his colorful use of metaphor.

Bob

*(In childlike a falsetto:)* Mommy, what's a natural endowment for the arse? *(In a lower, feminine tone:)* Oh, Billy, that's when the government gives free money to hungry artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, so they won't be so skinny! *(In natural voice:)* See, damage control isn't so hard if you have imagination!

Scott

I know, but if you're talking possible meltdowns, preventive maintenance is best. *Gives Bob a somewhat stern look.*

Bob

You're right about that around rich folks. They don't hold onto their



wealth by being too blunt with their opinions or candid with their business. Scotty is already thinking like a successful man.

Mike

Bob, what do you want to be when you grow up?

Bob

*Sighs pessimistically.* Long term goals were never my forte.

Mike

*Smiles. Glides past Bob into bathroom. Looks into mirror and begins to comb hair. Glances at a narrow shelf not far from mirror. On the shelf is a tiny Absolut bottle filled with Prozac pills. Laughs. Sitting in a cup rack mounted to the wall is a plastic tumbler. Within the cup, peeking above the rim is a plastic object with a phallic tip. Mike looks quizzical, glances over his shoulder, and lifts the object, which is shown to be a toothbrush. Laughs again, but much more quietly. Brush drops back into cup with a noticeable sound.*

Bob

Ah! So you found Scott's training tickler, eh? Shows what a tight ass he is!

Scott

You don't want to see Bob's.

Bob

Now, hold on, here. You don't want to say something truly tasteless and warp this impressionable young fellow's personality forever, do you?

Scott

Right. We want him to become a people-person like me, not a peephole-person; like you! *Smiles widely.*

Mike

*Sound of flushing is heard, but not loudly, as Mike emerges from*

*bathroom.* Bob, you've got all this mystical-looking art on the walls. Are you serious about magic?

Bob

Well, mysticism is more about printing up stickers that say "Float downstream," and magic is more about getting a river to freeze over so you can cross it. I guess somewhere in between is a better understanding of how the world affects your mind, and your mind affects the world, if you look for it.

Mike

*Walks over to the stove of the studio apartment.* Bob. Are you some kind of devil worshiper? *Eyes flinch larger as he looks at the unusual gas-jet racks atop the range.*

Bob

*Proceeds to dress without displaying himself.* Those gas jet racks are from an eighty-minute black and white movie I made in New Orleans about a voodoo cult. They were specially wrought in the shape of pentagrams. *Camera closes on top of range.* *Bob begins to sing a song from a Mad Mike the Hippie Bum album:* I love the Devil, he's the only guy who's on my level.

Mike

Bob, do you call on Satan? *Looks excited but quite uneasy.*

Bob

He comes around from time to time. We talk. I don't go looking for him if he's out past midnight. I might find out something I don't want to know. Besides, he has all his little followers running around town. Help is never far away.

Mike

So, do you have a religion?

Bob

I favor the ways of the Irish Druids.

Scott

Mike, you've got him started, now.

Mike

*Somewhat heedfully:* Why the Irish Druids?

Bob

Because, without a written language, they had a completely oral tradition! *Big smile.*

Mike

*Sensing something amiss, looks down at his fly. Sighs. Zips it up.*

Scott

Don't worry, Mike, he's just trying to get a rise out of you.

Mike

*Backing up slightly, hits his head on a small blackened bronze oil lamp hanging on a narrow chain from the ceiling. Turns around, looks at the lamp. Is this a magic lamp?*

Bob

It's not old, but the style is. It's from Turkey or Iran, I'm not really sure. I bought it because it looked a lot like one from Byzantine Egypt that I couldn't afford. Take it with you, if you like it.

Mike

Thanks, but I really don't have my own place, yet.

Bob

Then, when I burn it, I'll pray that you will, soon. If you change your mind, it's there. *Has finished dressing. Pulls on an ethnic-looking hat. Walks toward the door.*

Mike

Thanks. So, you're not really evil?

Bob

*Pensive pause.* I've dreamed some beautiful dreams, but no genie ever appeared to help me make them come true. Maybe the lamp will work better for you. When you dream too much, the gods just send some handsome devil to pull you out of life the way a fireman pulls a cat out of a tree. For evil to exist, good must exist, but I never found the good.

Mike

Gee, that's kind of poetic.

Bob

My head may seem a little fat  
But please don't spray me with your mace  
I want to write a poem that  
Will touch you in a naughty place

Scott

Bob, I thought that all your love poems were for me.

Bob

They are. I just like to sprinkle my conversation with them. It's a bard thing. *Picks up a vial of liquid phosphorus from a shelf. Opens it, steps over to lamp and dabs some of the material onto each of the dual wicks. Caps bottle, returns it to its place, and prepares to exit.*

Scott

So, are you really going to go out with us dressed like that?

Bob

Rock and roll stages are filled with people who look like they just went dumpster-diving behind Carnaby Street. You know what I always say: "Be surreal!"

Scott

Just goes to show how boys in their second childhood crave attention

like boys in their first.

Bob

*You've got my number. Opens door. Walks through, and Mike follows. As Scott pulls the door, he looks at the oil lamp. One of the pair of wicks, then the other, ignites with its flame. Scott flips the wall switch. Only the lamp internally illuminates the room, whose gloom is bisected by the light streaming in from the hallway, which narrows as the door closes.*

A whisper from Melpomene is heard  
The scribe commits to parchment, now, his plot  
He paints a sanguine portrait with his word  
Behold, the lamp is wicked, is it not?

Mike, Scott, Bob

*Walk away from camera toward the stairwell of what is evidently the top floor of the building. The corridor is lit only by a single fixture, across from the door of Bob's flat. Its amber, textured glass casts a patterned glow through the hall, insufficiently bright to permit viewer to clearly see the moving figures once they reach the far end and begin to descend. Scene fades out and fades in on street, below.*

Bob

*Produces a Toblerone candy bar from his coat pocket, opens it. He breaks off the top third, and hands it to Scott, who then taps on the passenger window of a taxicab. Driver rolls window down. Scott puts his head through to discuss the destination, pulls back, opens door, and gets in. Bob breaks off another third of the bar and offers it to Mike. So, do you take candy from strange men?*

Mike

*Smiles, reaches with a slow, comic caution for the piece.*

Bob

*Opens the rear door of cab, gets in, slides over behind driver, leans*

*toward Mike.* Do you get into cars with them?

Mike

You trying to get somewhere with me?

Bob

Yes, indeed! To a restaurant.

Mike

*Raises an eyebrow, smiles, gets in.* Uh huh. I get the feeling spring rolls are your favorite. *Pause.* The poster of the two lovey-dovey Egyptian guys on Scott's wall was your idea, I suppose?

Bob

That's Ni-ankh-Khnum and Khnum-hotep. They're kind of the patron pagan saints of brotherly love. They may have been friends, step-brothers, possibly twins. Evidently, their fondness for each other was acceptable to those around them, even in a society as conservative as ancient Egypt. It says to me that whatever they had was real and honorable.

Mike

So, it's your advice for every guy to grab a guy and get brotherly loving? *Laughs.*

Bob

I'm an artist, not a politician. I offer explanations, not advice, especially where I'm not involved.

Mike

What's the difference?

Bob

Explanations asserts facts. Advice asserts opinions.

Mike

You don't think there's a spin on what you say?

Bob

I guess it's unavoidable if you enjoy being the center of attention, but I'd never steer you wrong on purpose. And I don't join movements, except for the Bhagwan's, which is really more of an anti-movement. If I ever stumble onto the wrong side of your velvet ropes, you can probably bet that I've lost my mind, or my love of life. *Bob kisses his thumb and touches it to Mike's cheek.*

Mike

*Looks reflective. Seems to understand the humility of Bob's professed approach.* Will there be any hope for you, then?

Bob

Well, as Shree Rajneesh says, enlightenment is where you can come and go from your mind through the front door. Insanity is where you get locked out of your mind through the back door.

Mike

Are you enlightened?

Bob

*Pause.* Is there a test? *Raises eyebrow.*

Mike

*Eyes enlarge as if suitably impressed. Face becomes motionless.* In other words, don't give up on you and your nutty mission of mercy?

Bob

Sounds too much like advice, but I'll allow it!

Mike

Those clothes make you look kinda like a priest; a witchy one, anyway.

Bob

Maybe we should go to Carnival. You and Scott could dress as altar

boys. You're naturals: you see almost as much action as real ones! *Camera shifts momentarily to the Nacho Man storefront. Bob points to it.* Look, there's the gay Mexican restaurant! They make the best chicken in that chili and chocolate sauce.

Mike

*Sighs somewhat impatiently.* Bob, you sure do notice the world around you, and maybe some of the hidden world. Do you know any magic words?

Bob

I believe that I've rediscovered the magic word whereby the Egyptian priests turned a snake into a staff.

Mike

Okay. How about a demonstration?

Bob

*Knits his brow, puckers his lips, and lowers his head. Looks down at Mike's crotch. (In a descending musical tone, very lovingly:) Pleeease! Long pause.* Well, is it working?

Mike

*Looks from side to side: surprised, then nervous. Smiles happily. (Quietly:) Yeah.*

Bob

Now, don't go revealing that one. It took me years to perfect it.

Scott

Trouble is, though, Bob has concentrated on snake charming to the exclusion of most other dark arts.

Bob

Like pulling money out of a hat, huh? You seem to find enough of it in your bikini shorts.



Scott

When I wave my magic wand, things happen.

Bob

“Greater things than I have done shall ye do.”

Mike

Besides quote the Bible, what great thing have you done, lately?

Bob

Well, there was that friend of Scott’s, the one with the power of three times three, as we say in polite company. He had a great thing.

Mike

You were in polite company? Is that the name of a new pub?

Bob

You’re thinking of that bar for upper class boys, Queers. You know, *(sings to the tune of Cheers, in an effeminate lisp:)* You want to go where nobody knows your name!

Mike

If you do one of Scott’s friends, won’t he get jealous?

Bob

I keep my self-esteem strategically low, so that Scott won’t form a more durable bond with anyone else.

Scott

Bob, are you in some form of distress?

Bob

I dunno. I’m just a dolphin caught in your tuna net.

Scott

Okay, then. As long as you’re not a shark, I’ll let you stay.

Bob

You see Scott's head for business, Mike. He takes ideas under advisement without confrontation. In Japan, a manager's genius is that he doesn't let a worker know if he finds fault with his respectfully submitted input or not.

Mike

So, Bob, when WAS the last time you had a girlfriend?

Bob

About five years ago. We were watching Robin Hood, and she said, "Now, who would want to go off and live in the woods with an all male bunch of hoodlums?"

Mike

And then you said...

Bob

"Aye, Sherwood!"

Mike

So, you never saw of her, again, except for the "Dear Little John" letter, right?

Bob

Pretty much.

Scott

Not everything that's clever to think up is appropriate for mixed company.

Bob

What gives you the right to be condescending?

Scott

Schadenfreude!

Bob

I know. Scott's right. He's civilized. When I grow up, I want to be like him. You know a guy's got class when his favorite sex toy is a glass napkin ring.

Scott

Not just any Viennese crystal napkin ring, Mike, but one that belonged to Mozart, and later, Crowley.

Mike

Who?

Scott

You know, the wizard Ozzy sings about. *Begins to hum introduction to the song, "Mr. Crowley", which continues in background. The taxi reaches its destination, Mike, Scott, and Bob disembark. Bob begins to pay the driver, but Scott pushes past him and does so. Bob tips his hat at Scott, and the trio walk toward the restaurant. One door before the restaurant is an occult shop. Scott points to a picture in the window and looks toward Mike. There! That's him! Scott veers toward the door, opens it, and walks in. Mike and Bob follow. Inside, "Mr. Crowley" is playing, rather quietly, on the sound system.*

Mike

*(Quietly, to himself:)* Oh, God. *Begins to look around, but with very little turning of the head.*

Man Behind the Counter

*(With a sissy inflection:)* Well, if it isn't Harold and Maude!

Bob

*Looks amused, but a little hurt.*

Scott

*Glares at the man, though without any deep animosity. Reaches over, grasps Bob's hand, and holds onto it.*

Mike

*Seeing this, looks suddenly chilled, deprived, and helpless, but holds himself up with a childlike pride. Catches sight of girl behind the counter, who gives him a knowing, ardent, innocently salacious smile.*

Scott

Bob's an old friend.

Bob

Not THAT old.

Girl Behind the Counter

Who's your new friend, Scott?

Mike

*Rubs his hand on his trousers as if to buff it clean. Mike!*

Girl Behind the Counter

*Mike Reaches out with an awkward but polite reluctance to shake her tentatively outstretched hand. On her forefinger can be seen a silver ring that features a unicursal hexagram. Hello! Are you a good witch, or a bad witch?*

Mike

*Puzzles for a moment. Looks over at a picture of the pyramids that incorporates ankhs falling from the heavens, then to another of Crowley swathed in a turban and caftan. He then looks at the ring with a small ankh on his own hand. He walks over and scoots in between Scott and Bob, as if posing for a humorous portrait. I'm a sand witch!*

Girl Behind the Counter

*(With a hint toward orderliness:)* Play with my head: don't make a mess. *Turns toward Scott, smiles.* He's captain of the swimming team cute.

Scott

Hmm. What am I?

Girl Behind the Counter

Oh, captain of the track team cute, I suppose.

Scott

You guys have rearranged the place a bit.

Man Behind the Counter

Everything must change! *Points to a Tao diagram with the eight trigrams.*

Bob

Every day, the hair on my head gets a little longer. That's about as much change as I can stand.

Man Behind the Counter

Ah, but how much change can you SPARE?

Bob

Not much, after I do some shopping in here.

Man Behind the Counter

Well, we come into the world with nothing, and we leave with nothing.

Bob

Tell that to King Tut and Steve Martin, eh? *Looks at Scott, then a picture of King Tut.* You know, maybe we should be a stand up team; and you could be the straight man.

Man Behind the Counter

Oh, I don't think so.

Mike

You can say that, again.

Man Behind the Counter

And I'm sure you will, many times, behind my back. *Smiles more playfully than bitterly.*

Girl Behind the Counter

Mike, you should come swimming, sometime, with me and my sister.

Man Behind the Counter

Careful, Mike. She's a leg man, and her interests go up to the waist.

Mike

How's that?

Man Behind the Counter

She has an entire wall devoted to photos of boys' behinds.

Girl Behind the Counter

When are you going to learn to keep secrets? Some big mojo occultist you are.

Man Behind the Counter

Hey, I'll show you. *He closes his eyes and places his hand to his forehead, touching his temples with thumb and middle finger. Then holds the other hand up, as if to conjure. (In a pretentious, musical voice like a stage magician:)* You are taking this boy to a Chinese restaurant, and there, he will order; a hamburger!

Bob

*Seems amused.* That's not Kreskin, that's the voice of experience. *(Looking through the glass into the showcase:)* Look, Scott, they've got your napkin ring. *Points to a crystal ball sitting on a glass ring that incorporates a design resembling a unicursal hexagram.*

Scott

That's a molded copy. Look close and you'll see the seam. Mine was hand blown and carved.

Mike

*(In a voice resembling Beavis:)* Heh-heh, heh-heh, you said, “blown.”  
*Suddenly, a sharp squeak is heard from an antique fan that stands on the floor, well behind the counter and the doorway into the office.*

What was that?

Man Behind the Counter

Oh, that was Squeaky. She’s over fifty years old. She only does that when she needs oil in the case. She must have heard you. There was a movie star in here, last week, who told her, “Good fans blow; bad fans squeal!”

Girl Behind the Counter

That author from Ohio was in here, yesterday. You know, the one who writes horror for children.

Man Behind the Counter

So, Bob, are you still writing dirty books for kids?

Bob

It’s called “young adult romance”, thank you.

Man Behind the Counter

On the advice of your lawyer, no doubt.

Bob

It never says anything saucy unless the story calls for it, and all the jokes go over the head of anyone who’s never gotten any. The characters are in high school and rarely even kiss.

Girl Behind the Counter

Yeah, I was flipping through one of your tales, and I kept wondering, “Are they gonna do it or not?”

Bob

Makes you wonder, don’t it? When’s the last time you saw a story that was page after page of mental foreplay? I mean, that wasn’t some

toney, gratuitously obscure foreign film?

Man Behind the Counter

So, Mike, how is it that you have run into the clutches of the likes of Scott and Bob? Are you from one of those homes that's like, "Welcome to Helmsley?"

Mike

Don't talk about my mom; she's great.

Bob

Call me a pretentious clown if you can't resist, but I show my little alley cats the difference between the real tuna fish out there and the kind that's been spiked with anti-freeze.

Girl Behind the Counter

Well; be careful. Being urbane is a rich man's game, as Oscar Wilde found out.

Bob

*Pauses to reflect, as if receiving an important insight.* There goes my lifelong ambition of becoming a man of pristine candor. I'm already becoming ur-banal!

Girl Behind the Counter

*Slowly raises her ringed finger with a somber and mystical pointedness.*

Offenses can separate cousins  
In ways that a fence never could've

Bob

Would the attendant priest care to interpret that sibylline prophecy?

Man Behind the Counter

A kind master will kill for peace.



Bob

An ancient Egyptian proverb. *Pause.* So that's the way the cookie crumbles?

Girl Behind the Counter

Cookies are baked to be eaten, not to be trampled under foot.

Mike

Oh, I get it, Miyagi-san: wax on! *Makes a circular, buffing motion with his hand.* Whacks off! *Makes a gesture of simulated masturbation.*

Bob

*Looks at Scott with sadness.* You don't raise your staff to a prince, you raise your chalice. *Hands his walking stick to Scott, and makes his way toward the door.* I'm the world's worst actor.

Scott

Mm?

Bob

Everyone else is standing around, pretending not to notice how gorgeous you are. *Walks out.*

Mike

What was that about?

Girl Behind the Counter

It was about time.

Mike

*Looks slightly downward, with contrition.* We made Bob look bad.

Girl Behind the Counter

A truly diligent effort is often blessed with cooperation.

Scott

*Closes eyes, as if to gather resolve, then opens them.* When a child comes into the world, he is often referred to as a “bundle of joy”. My parents never treated me like that. Bob tries, though. He sometimes makes me feel the peace that a real father should.

Man Behind the Counter

Oh, does he bounce you on his right knee, his left knee? *Smiles mischievously at girl.*

Girl Behind the Counter

Or his WEE knee!

Scott

*Exhibits a rather placid look of indignation mixed with amusement.* That’s one demerit for each of you.

Girl Behind the Counter

Scott, Bob’s right. You’re a prince. Most people’s deeper inclination is to please you, yet most don’t know how. You’re a mystery. So, we have to settle for teasing you.

Scott

That’s fine and dandy, I guess. What’s this, now, about Bob writing fiction? Does it actually have girls in it?

Girl Behind the Counter

*Walks into the office. Returns with a small book decorated in a rustic art nouveau style, and hands it to Scott. Careful; it’s a future shock-type piece. As Scott takes it, we see close up of cover and title: Thorn And Rosie. View reverts to original angle as he opens it and looks inside. Scene undergoes a dreamy transition suggesting the start of a play within a play. At this point, filmmakers should assemble a sufficient selection of vignettes from the tale to suggest the passage of time required to read it. To hint a serious limerence between the pair, the same actor and actress should portray the roles of Thorn and Rosie as do Mike and the girl. Scene opens with girl wearing a large towel,*

*bending down to pick up a mouse in a trap. The sorrow with which she looks at the mouse indicates that she is not at home.*

Thorn

*Sits on a rustic bench at a simple wooden dinner table, in a rather dimly lit kitchen/dining area at night. Prospero's Speech by Loreena McKennitt is playing in the background, seemingly from a large stereo down the hallway. The music is not loud enough for the audience to notice that the short song is on a loop. We see that the light is coming from a hurricane lamp on the table. The scene then switches to the bathroom.*

Rosie

*Is taking a steamy shower, and begins to sing along with the song.*

Thorn

*At first staring off into space, breathes a very quick, quiet sigh, then rises and wanders over to the counter. He looks at the objects, there, and carefully but playfully picks up a red polyethylene ketchup squeeze-bottle in his left hand and a white rubber-bladed cake spatula in the other. He then begins to crouch, moving toward the bathroom, stabbing at the air with the spatula and holding the bottle as if preparing to shoot a stream of ketchup. The scene shifts back to inside the bathroom. Hey, is it okay if I come in there just a sec and grab something?*

Rosie

*(Descending a bit from her shower reverie) Mm? I guess!*

Thorn

*Is seen fuzzily through the matte clear shower curtain, as the door slowly opens. He stalkingly approaches Rosie whose is facing 120 degrees away from the door. He is no longer holding the items from the kitchen, but reaches into the shower and, with a low chortle, tickles Rosie's back near the bottom rib, then gracefully makes a quick exit.*

*As he goes back to the kitchen, he laughs a quiet, gnomish He-he-he...*

Rosie

*Seems mildly flabbergasted, mouth open with only an animal-like snort or two. Then smiles as if musing on some mischievous revenge. The scene then seems to close, temporarily, as if to suggest the passage of time.*

Thorn

*Comes out of the shower, dry body, wet hair, in briefs. Rosie sneaks up and gives him a wedgie and then a surprisingly mature, gentle pinch. He jumps a bit and says, What's your problem?*

Rosie

*Places her thumb under her chin and her forefinger against her nose, occasionally tapping it in a noticeably contemplative manner. Silence for a moment, then, A friend of mine told me that most boys as cute as you smell like night blooming jasmine, down there; at least; when they're clean. She then inhales briskly through the nose, flares her nostrils and bats her eyes in a deeply focused and placidly lustful manner, as if about to quietly chuckle in gentle torment.*

Thorn

Well, that's really deep! Who told you that, your old maid aunt?

Rosie

*Smiling with tongue pointed out in a somewhat triumphantly taunting grimace: No, your old bachelor uncle: the one with the cabin in the woods!*

Thorn

*Looks downward at about a 45-degree angle. He slowly draws in a breath, then as slowly releases it, through the nose, as if to control a deep exasperation. He is motionless, for a little while, except for knitting movements of the eyebrows and pursing of the lips, as if searching his imagination for an appropriate retort. He then smiles*

*very widely (almost fiendishly), as his eyes open with confidence of a clever idea. He then goes over to Rosie's chest of drawers and begins opening them and browsing through them in a rather staged-looking perusal.*

Rosie

So, what are you doing?

Thorn

I wanted to be able to tell the guys that I got into your drawers!

Rosie

What are you looking for, my crystal ball?

Thorn

No, your Hogwart's diploma. I figure that it'll be rolled up inside your pointy black hat! *He continues to browse through the clothes, though in an unfocused manner, as if to imply an apology for doing something impolite. His hands begin to slow down, as if he were trying to prevent them from trembling. He closes his eyes as if to conceal something sorrowful descending upon him.*

Rosie

Okay; what are you really looking for? *She walks out of the room, for a moment, and returns with a white bathrobe, embroidered with a fleur de lis hotel logo.*

Thorn

I was just wondering if you're nice to me because you're considering me for a mate, or if you've got some herbal gerbil that you want to sell door-to-door in Sausalito, and think I'd come in handy.

Rosie

*Places the robe around Thorn's shoulders, and grasps them in a motion for him to rise.* You mean you've got a tender heart to go with those brass balls of yours? Your Dad wasn't around to teach you how to be

an asshole, so you need a non-threatening female? *After he gets up, she puts a hand on his shoulder, and guides him over to the bed. She glides her hand down his arm until she can grasp his, then sits beside him. He looks at her in a somewhat puppy-dog fashion, closes his eyes, and slowly rests his head on her shoulder. She looks back across the room at the chest of drawers. She then smiles as if she's thought of something else to goad him with. With a hint of wickedness, she says, The Japanese comic books are in the bottom drawer!*

Thorn

*Opens eyes suddenly, then shifts them from side to side. Aha! Hard evidence!*

Rosie

*Tilts her head and gaze very slowly downward toward Thorn. Then she sneakily reaches down so that she can lift up part of the robe for an inspection. With a smile of confirmation, she says slowly and from the back of her throat, Aw huh... Then, with a sudden single motion, she sits up on one knee, puts the foot of her other leg on the floor, takes Thorn's ankle in her hand, and hoists it up over his shoulder onto hers. Then, she lunges forward, throwing most of her weight onto him and says, Now, hand it over!*

Thorn

*The viewer cannot see who does it, but someone turns off the lamp on the nightstand. The light coming from other sources is dim, but general outlines are visible. After a long moment, we hear the whirring of a small electric motor. Aaahh! What the hell is that!*

Rosie

*(Laughing with hearty self-satisfaction):* Calm down. Can't you take a joke?

Thorn

*(Rattled but not angry):* No, not one that's bigger than I am! Besides,

if you wanted me to be down with your sense of funny on this one, I'm about six shots of tequila shy. *Then, more calmly:* If you want to go all samurai romance on me, I get to be Riku, and you can be Sora. *He touches his nose to hers.*

Rosie

*Chuckles until she has enjoyed the exchange, then:* That's my ambiguously straight Thorn!

Thorn

Why do you call me that?

Rosie

Because I don't get the feeling that you'd do something cowardly just to impress me.

Thorn

I'm glad you don't think of me as some kind of messed up kid.

Rosie

I'm not too worried about messed up kids, except maybe the ones who think they're not because they took some short cuts.

Thorn

Have you been watching too much Oprah?

Rosie

Not really. I just think I notice some things about guys that most of them don't.

Thorn

You mean how most of us feel safer acting like a prick than trying to understand ourselves? I mean, it usually works better in an iffy situation, especially where females are involved.

Rosie

Yeah, I know. But in the end, those guys may get over, but they never become anyone's hero, unless you live in Iraq or somewhere. O.J.'s

girl friend might disagree, but I don't care.

Thorn

If I'd decide I want to be your hero, I might ask you some things; well, a lot of things. But, you know I'm probably going to want to handle most of 'em my way. Even if I started to feel like I couldn't live without you, I'd need you respect me enough to understand... even if we turned out to be Father Earth and Mother Sky...

Rosie

You took Mythology, too?

Thorn

Well, if you call reading around in alternative religion websites that.

Rosie

Father Earth and Mother Sky are Egyptian gods, but *Riku* is Japanese for land and *Sora* means sky. I'm impressed. It reminds me of something an Egyptian friend once told me, that the men in her country were not too into talking about love, but pretty good at showing it.

Thorn

*(Singing from the Peter Gabriel song):* Sing through the land, land sings through me/ sky blue, sky blue...

Rosie

*Looks down at Thorn's face. The light has now adjusted to show her features more clearly. Her eyes are as full of tears as they can be without allowing a stream to fall. In India, the girls pray to Lord Shiva to send them the right man. Pause. What a responsibility that must be, to believe a prayer like that can really be answered, huh?*

Thorn

Maybe not. Shiva is the destroyer. All a husband can honestly guarantee is that he'll make a complete shambles out of his life, and then die. *He grins and opens his eyes widely, as if to suggest a bit of*



*divine madness and ironic comedy, then begins to guffaw with quiet laughter.*

Rosie

*Closes her eyes. Smiling, slowly and rather dramatically slides downward and to the floor. She stands at the foot of the bed and holds her hands in a salute: You've got the stuff, Man! Then, she walks backwards, cheeks wet but still smiling, out of the room.*

Thorn

*Comes into the den where Rosie is lying on the couch. He lifts her feet, sits down, and puts them into his lap. You know, just because you get drunk enough one time to let some guy...(silent stammer)...go down on you doesn't make you a...dedicated follower of fashion.*

Rosie

I know. Did I ask you for the "low down" on your "down low"?

Thorn

*Looks a bit wounded and misunderstood. Starts to get up.*

Rosie

I'm sorry, I'm sorry! I didn't mean to be harsh.

Thorn

How come I get the feeling that I'm going to be painting your toenails in order to prove my masculinity? Isn't that an oxymoron?

Rosie

Mm... Because you think so highly of yourself? *Pause.* That's okay. I think highly of you, too. *Pause.* Then, in a more throaty tone, Is there some reason I shouldn't?

Thorn

Well, there's the time I came home to find a couple of squad cars pulled up in front of my next-door neighbor's house. My friend's mom

had totally freaked over a threatening post card that came in the mail, that day.

Rosie

I don't mean to raise too many taxing questions. *Giggles in a friendly fashion.*

Thorn

It had a stick figure kind of reaching out like this (*demonstrates by stretching arms upward and outward, cocking head to side, and making a goofy face*), and it said in crayon, "I'M NOT DEAD".

Rosie

So, where'd it come from? (*Seems very amused.*)

Thorn

*Looks down, folds hands together in a manly way, smiles, then peeks from under his brows with a beaming blend of guilt and innocence, hair dangling in front of eyes. Thorn's expression seems at once both self-validating and yet searching for support. After a long moment, the smile tightens into a frustrated frown.*

Rosie

Well, at least, when you're the instigator, we laugh with you, not at you, if we laugh at all. What's the matter?

Thorn

There's a pair of headlights coming up the driveway.

Rosie

*Gets up with a start, but doesn't exit. She then pulls up her nightshirt and tugs it down over Thorn, forcing his face against her chest. She kisses the top of his head through the cloth and then raises the shirt again, releasing him. I'll be thinking highly of you. Runs back to her room.*

Thorn

*Seems noticeably stressed. (In a low voice to himself): Did I just get fucked? Then, he unfolds a blanket that was lying on the couch, throws it over himself, and nestles into the pillow. Begins to play possum, as sound of approaching car grows louder. The listener can faintly detect that Thorn's breathing is touched by a depressed labor.*

Rosie

It's good to be the smart ass, or in his case, the cute ass. *Smiles.*

Thorn

*The music has stopped. The sources of light in the room have changed. Thorn's sleepy face and posture on the couch have shifted to suggest that it is some time later. A cell phone begins a muffled ring to the tune of The Addams Family. He reaches into a backpack set close by and pulls out the phone. Hello?*

Rosie

Y' know, some folks think trying to butter your bread on both sides is a good way to let life slip through your fingers.

Thorn

*Pause. Searches for a focus to his thought. Seems to fight an impulse to roll his eyes. Yeah, John Rechy called them "fascists", even though he was totally gay. But, anyway, none of them better lay a finger on my Butterfinger. Pause. So, why the interest? You looking for a guy who talks fancy like Randy Harrison and has no pointy plan with the babes?*

Rosie

Ooh... a book-reading boy. That makes my nipples hard. Well, my right one, anyway.

Thorn

Would I be flattering myself if I got the impression you have an idea to put me one of those posters of the latest Corvette, lying down naked

on the hood?

Rosie

That's a pretty hot idea; but I kind of prefer your poster-boy-for-Covenant House look.

Thorn

If anybody else'd said that, I'd have thought they were aiming to hurt me.

Rosie

I guess a lot of it has to do with aim. But, if you're playing Pin the Tail on the Donkey, it's best to keep your eyes open unless you're the one wandering around blindfolded with the pin.

Thorn

So, if you're just shooting in the dark when it comes to sweet talk, you'd probably better be playing with a paper jackass instead of a real live one, so you don't get the sugar kicked out of you, right? But you're the smart ass. I mean, you could probably even sit on a jellybean and tell me what flavor it was; and I'd probably swallow it, but I won't urge you to start passing them around.

Rosie

Thorn, I don't want to get you too upset. I suppose I sound like I'm trying to see how much of you is Harry Pothead and how much might be Harry Pofter, but I have to tell you that it doesn't matter, because I like them both.

Thorn

Well, if I were a billy goat you were going to bring me home from the SPCA, you wouldn't want to vivisect me, would you? Well, I'm not going to go get an axial scan of my preoptic hypothalamus, because my curiosity doesn't work that way.

Rosie

Wow. I'm unmasked as your future ex-court jester, huh?

Thorn

I'm sorry. It's your castle, princess. Maybe I just want to be in the doghouse with you so that I'll at least feel that I'm welcome on the grounds. If I can be this up front with myself and with you about it, I guess I can feel like I've achieved some pathetic level of security. But, I don't know if my answers are the right ones. I am starting to feel like, with the probing you've been doing, I'd rather take my chances with your oversized joy buzzer. Where did you get that thing, anyway? Don't you have to be grown up before they'll sell you one of those?

Rosie

Well, I didn't actually steal it, but, there has to have been someone a few minutes later who said, "Help, I've fallen on Bourbon Street and I can't find the sex toys I just bought!" Thorn, are you homophobic?

Thorn

Why does everybody always want to bring fear into a question of taste? Some people don't like to get into airplanes, so their friends go, "Oh, you have a fear of flying!" The truth is, it's really about the crashing that makes you think twice.

Rosie

So, you wanna crash in here?

Thorn

Oh, are you ready for a shotgun wedding?

Rosie

Thorn, how come there are so few homosexuals in the Appalachians?

Thorn

I'm guessing because shotgun weddings work a bit differently if you're gay, right?

Rosie

Yeah, but since I'm a girl...oh, who am I kidding? Sometimes, safe sex is just a matter of who finds out.

Thorn

*Gets up and goes into Rosie's room.* Rosie, I have a theory.

Rosie

Yes?

Thorn

On days when I feel that I haven't given you any reason to be unhappy with me, all kinds of people give me this look like I'm someone important and beautiful, especially if they're the kind with that clean, aware look in their eyes.

Rosie

I have a similar theory. I look at guys, and they always seem to fall into two categories: Thorn and not-Thorn.

Thorn

You're trying to get me killed, huh? *Slides into the bed.* Oh well, what a way to go!

Rosie

Are we in love?

Thorn

*Takes her hand, closes his eyes.* Mr. Pointy thinks so.

Rosie

*Places her ear to his chest.* What about Mr. Thumpy?

Thorn

*Begins to look a bit glazed.* What does he say? *His eyes slowly close.*

Rosie

He seems to be wondering how well the lock on my door works.

Thorn

Uh, he seems to be doing the thinking for both of us.

Rosie

*Pulls back a bit, takes him by the shoulder, and rolls him onto his side, facing away from her, then snuggles closely and possessively.*

*Camera view shifts to the door. The knob turns and the door swings slowly open, revealing nothing but a pitch-dark doorway. As light adjusts, we see the silhouette of an old woman holding a shotgun. (Whispering): Think of something, quick!*

Thorn

*(Whispering): I can't! You go first!*

Rosie

Hey, Thorn, how come the mob can't use gays?

Thorn

How come?

Rosie

Too many loose ends!

Thorn

Whatever, Baby! Give it to me big time with that groove thing of yours! When we get to Heaven, you're the only angel I want to wake up and find in my end zone!

Rosie

*(Looking toward the door): Ah, the tragedy of being male! While girls just want to have fun, boys desperately need to!*

Thorn

*(Looking toward the door with a manic grimace): Like she said! Continues with his forced grin until the silhouette lowers the gun. A series of gusty, unvoiced chuckles is heard from the figure in the doorway, whose shoulders jitter with the quiet laughter. The door then slowly closes. Silence for a long moment. You've got a good head on*

your shoulders.

Rosie

Wouldn't you like to find out?

Thorn

Well, maybe if you learn to control your nag reflex.

Rosie

You bitch!

Thorn

*Quiet for a few breaths. Rosie, please, watch the heart: broken in several places... Buries face in pillow.*

Rosie

Oh. Is that why you want to play "Doctor"?

Thorn

What would you prescribe, Dr. Schittersplitter?

Rosie

*Gets up, goes over to the door. Locks it. He-he-he!*

Thorn

*Is lying on his stomach, face partially buried in the fluffy pillow, as if drawn in by some unusually comforting quality. His eyes are closed, but he opens one and looks back at Rosie. His eye widens in slight amazement as his brow rises. (Slowly, with a hint of awe or innocence:) As seen on TV?*

Rosie

Showtime!

Thorn

*Face rises a bit from the pillow. He breathes in with a bit of feigned horror. Eyes roll upward as if entranced, he gasps a bit more loudly*



*as if pleasantly but genuinely shocked. Camera remains on Thorn's arms and head.*

Rosie

Thorn, you tell anyone about this, and you will see that gun, again.

Thorn

*Yes, Ma'am. Pause. Gasps again with an almost silent shriek. Camera view moves out window toward a dark but clear horizon with very visible stars. Love To Be Loved by Peter Gabriel begins to play. Scene fades to a very dark shade of rose.*

Rosie

*Scene reopens. She walks over to the closet with a Crown Royal bag that seems to contain her toy. She opens the door, and on the inside we see a near-life-sized poster of Elizabeth II. You know, Thorn, if your girlfriend KNOWS, that's bisexual. If she doesn't know...*

Thorn

So, what'd you know? If you're like my mom, not much. She's the kind of person who, if she thinks her son has tendencies, is more likely to start keeping track of the cucumbers in the fridge than the tranquilizers in the medicine cabinet.

Rosie

*Looks down with a frown, perhaps a bit ashamed of her lack of compassion. She reaches back into the closet and pulls out a couple of long pillows, throws one to Thorn. She grasps hers tightly, steps over, and whacks him lightly over the head with it. So, tell me about your mom.*

Thorn

One day I had a friend over who I think was gay. He wasn't sissy or anything, but he kind of had that overly handsome and optimistic thing going on. She came in and started chastising at will, as she normally does, and he appeared really offended for me. He got this

amazed look on his face while she was going on and on. When she'd run out of breath, he told her, *(gleefully)* "Go BACK to Hell!" *Rolls eyes from side to side.*

Rosie

I don't guess his visit lasted long.

Thorn

No, but it felt good to have someone take up for me, for a change. So, later, she starts in with, "You hate women!" So, I say, "I only hate women who remind me of YOU!"

Rosie

I bet that made her happy! *Pause. Rosie pushes out her cheek a bit with a wiggle of the tongue, inside her mouth.* So then you went to stay with friends for a while, right? *Pause.* So, do I remind you of her?

Thorn

*Lurches dexterously forward and reaches his hand lightly around Rosie's waist, draws her close and touches his forehead to hers, then pulls back. Looks off, quizzically.* Remind me of whom? *Thorn's smile looks forced, as if he were in some kind of pain.*

Rosie

What's the matter, honey pud?

Thorn

Did guys suddenly start telling people what's the matter?

Rosie

Okay. I'll try my Miss Cleo powers. *Closes her eyes.*

Thorn

Miss Cleo was discredited.

Rosie

Shut up. I like her. Since when did card readers start guaranteeing their work? Like Lorne said on *Angel*, magic is annoyingly unreliable; especially when you go public with it. (*Seems to concentrate.*) I see you, like some other boys, carrying a cross, waiting to find that plug-in patch that'll let you run your favorite old Windows 98 game on the new XP system.

Thorn

Well, at least it distinguishes me bit in a world of Elbonians who expect to be humored for reasons unknown except the rest of us like to make it home without getting pissed on.

Rosie

I think I get it, now. If your friends or family or anyone is sympathetic enough to ask you where it hurts, you feel patronized.

Thorn

Every man has weaknesses. The more people know about them, the more they can drag you down. It would be nice if trust were a thing other humans could honorably win from you, but if they try that, it usually turns out to be some kind of scam, or they have good intentions but they're skimpy on skill.

Rosie

So, they just grab for the nearest fuck and take their chances that things will work out, one more time, like Russian Roulette.

Thorn

That's not how I want to be, though. I want there to be some honor in my life, something that will outlive me.

Rosie

But a boy still needs love, so a girl has to be a mind reader.

Thorn

Well, I think every sane boy hopes to find someone who knows all

there is to know about him, but won't let it out into the street. If there were a miracle mate, she would be patient enough to wait until there's an obvious way to lift her guy up. I mean, we always have to work around girls' mood swings during their periods; or at any other surprise moment.

Rosie

That's pretty sharp. Maybe a little too sharp. So, what can we do? Find some way to read each other's thoughts? Wouldn't you have to smooth out some of those rough edges for hocus pocus like that to work? *Takes her pillow and begins to buff him like a shoe.*

Thorn

Um, I guess that means a good guy would give his lady his trust, but that brings us back to uncertainty all over, again.

Rosie

So the only thing I can do to try to keep you on the straight and narrow is to just be my irresistible self?

Thorn

*Shrugs.* It might be too late. My will is so free; I don't even seem to have control over it.

Rosie

Then, we're actually getting nowhere?

Thorn

We just came from somewhere. *(Begins to intone like Groucho Marx:)* And I hope we can go there, again!

Rosie

Oh, true love has no agenda, as such.

Thorn

A spiral agenda, maybe, not a linear one.

Rosie

If you're so smart, why aren't you rich? *Smiles.*

Thorn

*(Playfully:)* If you were as smart as I am, you'd know!

Rosie

*Muses for a bit, then,* Now who's the smart ass?

Thorn

I've been trying to get that trophy away from you, I suppose.

Rosie

I guess I should be happy you're such a jerk; otherwise I'd have a lot of competition. *(In stagy male voice:)* No, no one else may have you! *She takes her pillow and begins a pretended smothering.*

Thorn

*After a pretense of struggling, goes limp and feigns unconsciousness.*

Rosie

*Gets up and returns with a red stocking of the kind hung from the mantel at Christmas, and fits it onto Thorn's foot.*

Thorn

*Removes pillow from face.* I'm afraid to ask what this means...

Rosie

I had done some praying to Santa Claus, you know, the patron god of pagan holidays disguised as Christian ones. I said, "You live at the North Pole, why don't you bring me one of those bipolar teddy bears down along when you come!"

Thorn

And since he's a pagan you figured he'd bring you one with all working parts, not like those neutered ones in the stores.

Rosie

Well, the mouth seems to work fine.

Thorn

Hey, if you want to be an ass-wipe, I've got a special ass-wiping tool, right here! *Bats eyebrows.* And mine's standard.

Rosie

I love you.

Thorn

I love you, too. *Pause.* There'll probably never be a worse time to say this, but, you know I don't need one of those women who always tells you how much she loves you and then shows you how much she doesn't, because, you know... *(Covers face with pillow.)*

Rosie

I know. You have a mother.

Thorn

I guess I'm not exactly doing my part if I want to be rescueded from a life of sinful hitchhiking, huh?

Rosie

*Eyes are slightly downcast. A look of thoughtfulness, then protective sympathy comes to her face.* It has come to my knowledge that; in America, when parents tell a boy, "It's my way or the highway," all roads generally lead to Hershey. *Looks up, with an upset expression.*

Thorn

I was starting to think I'm the only one who noticed. How did you?

Rosie

I'm exceptionally bright. What's your excuse? *Bares teeth in wide, satirical smile.*

Thorn

Doctors and lawyers always want to buy me booze and get me high so that I'll be agreeable when they tell me all about how important they are. It expands my horizons.

Rosie

Is that all that gets expanded?

Thorn

Aw, that's cold, Baby. Don't worry; I'm not hooked up with any serious creeps.

Rosie

But a guy's got to spin the old wheel of fortune, eh?

Thorn

I can't say all of my experiments turn out the way I want them to. I guess this time I should have thought more about the outcome than the fun of watching the chemicals in the test tube fizzle.

Rosie

I hear that just a few years ago, there was a whole underground world where bad boys could hide, in the care of dirty old men who sometimes weren't that dirty or old, if their parents kicked them out.

Thorn

That enchanted forest is a paved-over parking lot, now. You could take up with a fairly mellow sex offender who'd never been caught, instead of being thrown into boot camp with a hardened bunch who had.

Rosie

What happened?

Thorn

Well, for hundreds of years, it seems, a lot of guys around the country were pretty easy about giving drifters a new home for a while. I guess that most of them weren't so much perverts as just lonely for a little brother or something. If you got into trouble on some minor shit,

hitting the road 'til you hooked up with one of them was often a cooler option than "the cooler".

Rosie

A couple of my friends commented about that, that those men seem to have disappeared, almost overnight.

Thorn

It's a lot like how you can leave your doors unlocked in a sleepy town, one day, then some troublemakers find their way in, and everything changes. Those guys are usually like the drifters, they can take or leave the sex, but if it comes down to trouble, they start locking their doors.

Rosie

What's gone down, then? What's the trouble? Are they finally starting to worry about getting sick? Twenty years ago, they didn't really have to, that much.

Thorn

That might be part of it, but it's more of a social crapola thing. Boys have often become wanderers because they went off in search of something they weren't quite sure of. Now, you've got abandoned buildings in Los Angeles full of homeless kids who ran away with big plans of making it as TV stars. There's a difference between running off alone in search of yourself and running off alone just to grab a bigger slice of the pie. At least a James Dean type kid is looking somehow to deepen himself as an individual, and I think that's something that the gods never really minded helping us with, when they could.

Rosie

So, the glitter of it all has started getting to people. Grab a rifle and be part of the big adventure. "I want it all, and I want it now." But, how did this new confusion between fantasy and reality affect the Hershey bar highway?

Thorn



Some people standing up too tall for rights that others don't feel that they deserve, I guess. President Clinton thought that the armed forces should be a "don't ask, don't tell" arrangement. Nobody should get kicked out for cock smoking unless they make a big fuss like Corporal Klinger. Sounds fair to me. The family can be like that, too, though.

Rosie

*Speaking slowly, searching carefully for her words:* Especially a rich family or one from the country. Members tend to keep quiet about things that might rock the stability of their unit. But, with a tightening economy, working mothers, and the raising of children turned over more and more to Barney and other incarnations of Big Brother, the average family is losing its private formulas for success. You know, in the old country, family had deep roots. People took tribe and religion seriously because it helped hold society together and give its people support. Now it looks like a lot of families just wonder if what they're doing is getting them anywhere. We see some of the leftover pieces, from time to time, making noise on Jerry Springer. But, that's about as much as you can find out in Civics class about this problem. What's the rest of the story?

Thorn

*Squints, rubs chin, and looks pleased.* You can tell a woman is on your side when her agreeableness sounds like somebody in a Plato dialogue. But, anyway, maybe it's that religion isn't fun, anymore. Maybe the Information Age makes some people insecure about what they grow up with, never challenging. But it's that same numb attitude that makes it so easy to embrace something else just as worthless. Being Baptist didn't get me the attention I wanted, so I'll join Gay Liberation! You don't even have to get dressed up to get onto the internet. What could be more convenient?

Rosie

You don't have a lot of pity for the simple-minded, do you? So now I think I've heard enough to make a guess: raging hormones plus a lot of pep talk from strangers equals the new "out and proud" gay

teenager.

Thorn

Well, the new "out of my house" gay teenager, anyway. Of course, a lot of these guys don't have the inspiration of a rebel who becomes one for other reasons than fitting in.

Rosie

In other words, "don't try this at home."

Thorn

Unless you want to join a project of gene pool cleansing. My friends tell me there's a whole new breed of street kids who are little more than post-modern prostitutes. The old soft-core, smooth trade johns don't want anything to do with them, and there isn't as big a market for what they have to offer, which is sex with a stranger, then ripping him off.

Rosie

So the men who used to take in the troubled boys have been scared off by a new breed, like people who enjoy feeding wild doves, but one day finds they've all been replaced by sickly-looking pigeons. And, if you are a wild dove, the sanctuaries are suddenly overrun by flying poop machines.

Thorn

If a guy in search of himself made some screw-up in the past, he could maybe make a break for it and end up part of someone's life. Now there's no net between the tightrope and the ground.

Rosie

This deepens my concern for you, but you may understand how it doesn't exactly make me feel more special.

Thorn

You think I'd rather have a sugar daddy than another dove? *His eyes begin to become glassy and wet.*

Rosie

Boys like you should never leave the gene pool. *Smiles with deep affection. A knock is heard at the door.* Go away, no cause for alarm. Necking and petting going on, nothing else! Bye, now!

Thorn

You think our kids could find a cure for cancer?

Rosie

If we can keep them under the radar of people who freak because you talk at on 12<sup>th</sup> grade level, and you're only in 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Thorn

*(In a Hindi accent:)* We shall teach them wisdom!

Rosie

*Looks puzzled, as if inviting more explanation.*

Thorn

You can always tell what a nerd is into.

Rosie

*Raises brows, makes an O with her mouth.* A clever girl has things going on that don't always come oozing out. She can keep people guessing.

Thorn

But a clueless one can have "that talk about our relationship" every night, and things only get worse. So, live by principles, or live by wits, but if you live by expectations, you usually end up living by ones borrowed from folks who couldn't make theirs work.

Rosie

You've painted a pretty cold picture of the world. I hope you're in the mood to make up for it by keeping me warm. *She flips the wall switch, and light level goes down to that of bedside table lamp. She*

*then lies down next to Thorn, pulls up the covers, and snuggles close.*  
Sweetie, what do you think about these men who like boys?

Thorn

Well, I like puppies, but not for a midnight snack!

Rosie

So, men aren't all the same?

Thorn

God, I hope not. I'm supposed to be one, soon. *(Gestures dramatically in the air with hands and expressive finger movements:)*  
It would really suck if that initiation consisted of being ritualistically led by tribal elders into a torch lit room, only to come face to face with one of those pods from Invasion of the Booty Snatchers.

Rosie

You've given this matter a great deal of thought.

Thorn

With your help, thank you. But it doesn't stay on my mind the way getting a decent income does. I don't want your family calling you a "hobo sexual".

Rosie

*Pause.* What's that?

Thorn

A girl who's only attracted to bums!

Rosie

*Pause, with suggestion of quiet laughter.* Aw, I only have eyes for your bum. *Reaches around and takes his hand from below, places her chin over his shoulder.* So, Thorn, do you like boys?

Thorn

It's so great how you always look for the common ground between us.

(*Snorts.*) One day when I about five years old, I was watching MTV. My grandfather walked into the room, looked at all the long, flowing hair, and said, "Bunch o' queers!" This was my new word for the day, so later; I asked my mom what it meant.

Rosie

What did she say?

Thorn

"That's a boy who likes boys!"

Rosie

So, what did you say?

Thorn

"I like boys!" I thought she'd explain, but she just told me that, no, I didn't. So, I said, "Yes, I do!" *Pause.* We just went on like that back and forth for a while until she left the room.

Rosie

I gotcha; little souls wandering around who want to become sons are going to look for fathers who can cherish them as they are, rather than someone who constantly has to be imitated for them to get fed.

Thorn

St. Paul said that, when he became a man, he put away childish things. I don't think that he would have made a very good father. A boy is definitely a childish thing. But, he never had kids. He made it his business to teach religion to young adults.

Rosie

So, men should like boys?

Thorn

Good men have always liked boys, and vice versa. They don't get too carried away with it, though. In the old days, if a man called you a prince, it meant that he wanted to place his sword at your disposal.

Now, it just seems to mean he wants to place his wand in your disposal.

Rosie

Well, our culture is pretty superficial. Maybe if you keep sharing your wisdom with the world, you'll eventually find the knights who'll rally to your cause.

Thorn

A band of Mary men? I can see it now, a bunch of gay Wiccans with me as their high priest, and we can all greet each other with "Mary meat!"

Rosie

Well, if that's the best you can do. Just keep your feet on the ground and inspire them to do great things.

Thorn

Or, my heels on the mattress, eh? You want exclusive rights, huh?

Rosie

Damn right. I saw you first, anyway. *Pause.* But, Thorn, brotherly love is important to you, isn't it? Haven't you ever daydreamed of being swept off your feet by Superboy?

Thorn

Haven't you? Hasn't everyone with a heart? That doesn't mean I want to be manhandled in the middle of the night by some fellow with his own methadrine lab and who makes puppy chow out of real puppies.

Rosie

I see. So, what do you want?

Thorn

*Raises his hands in front of him, makes a frame with L-shapes of the fingers, squints one eye, cocks his head to the side, and looks at Rosie.*

Rosie

The only thing I can add to appearances is that I'm not out to get you; I mean like being cruel on purpose just to feel powerful and all that. I am out to make you my love slave, of course. *Her expression stretches into a delightfully demented smile.*

Thorn

I'm not calling in sick on you. *Expression becomes a bit stoically downcast, as if mood has changed, decisively.*

Rosie

You're going to get all quiet and inward, like Heero from Gundam Wing, now, aren't you?

Thorn

He always seems fond of his friend's really long pigtail. Maybe it's really the intestine of some slain enemy.

Rosie

Maybe it says something about having guts, even if you wear someone else's, hanging from a coonskin cap?

Thorn

Or the guts to take it up the zook from your best friend?

Rosie

Well, they're fighter pilots. They face death every day. I guess in a world where you get drafted at age fifteen, you're more aware of your need for love, especially if that world is so advanced that spaceships are easier to come by than adults.

Thorn

I guess in their world, isolation means an even quicker death. But it's clearer who the enemy is. In ours, doubt is everywhere. There's no room for it in theirs.

Rosie

There's no doubt that sticking together is the way to go, for them.

Thorn

I don't doubt the way to go, I just don't have a master plan of how to go about it. The wars they fight are on a clear front. The enemies of love seem to be everywhere.

Rosie

As long as they aren't inside of us, I think we stand a chance.

Thorn

*Smiles as if experiencing an epiphany of sorts.* Oh, were you thinking about digging them out of me, somehow?

Rosie

Am I driving you nuts with all of this?

Thorn

It's cool, Cara Mia; if you read that I tried to hold up The Comedy Store with a banana, I won't try to blame it all on bad girlfriending. *Makes a crazy face.*

Rosie

Okay, okay; I don't want the cops to find you. I can hear them now on the evening news: "Yeah, all we and the dogs had to do was follow the smell of grilled chicken to the home of Rosie's aunt!"

Thorn

Well, I'm probably done to tender perfection, now. Why not have another taste?

Rosie

Thorn, are you like me?

Thorn

How's that?



Rosie

Bisexual.

Thorn

Remember when Madonna said that she was a gay man trapped in the body of a woman? I thought, "Oh, well, that's pretty darned convenient!" Anyway, I guess I'd have to describe myself as a lesbian. *Camera zooms in on his left ear as he pushes the lobe forward with his forefinger. Two small earrings are situated there: both are shaped in the symbol of the planet Venus.*

Rosie

Why?

Thorn

For one thing, because I've never actually done things to shame my family (in that area); for another because I feel that there has to be a Fortress of Solitude in a man's own mind. And, also because, if you let people get their foot in the door calling you that, behind your back they're going to go, "Oh, yeah, right, bisexual: he likes men AND boys!"

Rosie

Remember in junior high, when we thought that we could tell the gay boys because they always seemed like they were looking for somewhere to put their hands? *Makes insecure-looking, limp-wrested gestures in the air.*

Thorn

Yeah, and when we got to high school, we found out who the gay boys were because they always seemed to be looking for somewhere to put their hands! *Bats his eyebrows at Rosie and makes spider-like gestures with his hands as they crawl affectionately up her arms. He rapidly taps one arm as if it were a musical keyboard.*

Rosie

You can play me like a piano, huh?

Thorn

No, Baby. Truth is stranger than fiction. I'm being honest. Trouble is, I'm even honest with people who hate me. I keep trying to give them a piece of my mind so they can see what I think is a better way; and that's a great way to get into hot water, whether you're humble like Abel or haughty like Joseph.

Rosie

So, none of this is bullshit?

Thorn

In The Buddha of Suburbia, Bowie says, "Can't tell the bullshit from the lies." It made me think about the difference. At least bullshit can be a little sincere: I could be saving someone else's feelings, or my own ass. With lies, though, you know you're dealing with someone who doesn't want to be connected in a fair way; they just want to take what they can. If you let me have my own sacred space of silence, from time to time, I think I'll never have to hand you any bullshit.

Rosie

That's a lot to ask of an American girl, you know. Even one with the heart-beatle-mania I have for you.

Thorn

I know, but I'm a fairly tenderhearted guy.

Rosie

I'll give you that. Something tells me I'd cramp your style if I asked you to wear a T-shirt that says, "Huggery, Not Buggery", though.

Thorn

No, that's far too lame and sappy. How about one that says, "Hag Fag"?

Rosie

That's antisocial enough, I guess. You'd probably need a Mohawk and

a couple of nose rings to get away with wearing it, though.

Thorn

*Places thumb and forefinger to bottom lip, arches brow, and looks upward, as if contemplating some rude escapade.*

Rosie

All right; the persecution rests. *Winks at Thorn. Reaches out with both hands, grasps him behind the head, and smooches him on the mouth. Reaches over and turns out table lamp. Some moments of darkness, then, the projection of a red light is seen sweeping the wall opposite the windows.* Oh, shit: gentlemen callers; and something tells me that they're not here to invite us to Baba Bob's Hum Drum Meditation.

*Scene reopens in occult store. Mike and Scott are sitting in two sturdy antique chairs that seem to be provided for friends of the shop or customers who need a close look at the book they are considering. On a small table between them sits a lamp with a rounded, fringed silk shade, suggestive of one that might be used by a crystal gazer. "In Your Arms Tonight" by Stephen Trask is playing on the sound system. I'm getting hungry. Did Bob abandon us?*

Scott

Naw, he probably went to go find some linseed oil for his teakwood chopsticks. The art supply store across the street is the only place that sells cans of it small enough to run out of.

Mike

Why would he want to run out?

Scott

Ah, got to have something to gripe about, y'know? *Hands book back to girl.* Thanks!

Mike

*Looks out the window. There he is. Camera zooms across street, where Bob is sitting on a bench talking to a young man with long black hair and all black clothing.*

Scott

And flirting before sundown. He's gonna pay!

Man Behind the Counter

The fellow he's talking to is our guest speaker on astral projection, tonight. Run along, then, boys. We'll get your money next time.

Scott

*Waves and smiles in brief appreciation as he heads out the door, accompanied by Mike. Song continues to play in background as they make their way across the street. By the time they make it to the bench, the man in black has made his way elsewhere.*

Mike

The story was okay, Bob, for a bleak vision. How come you never made it?

Bob

Fruity casting couch potato masher had me black listed.

Scott

You told him where to get off?

Bob

I should have.

Mike

But, instead, you told him HOW to get off, huh?

Bob

It's a little more complicated than that, but what amazes me is how stupid people can get when they feel the need to have an adventure. What I should have done is cleaned up my act, made my mark, and

tried to be happy.

Scott

But, being a Scorpio...

Bob

I can resist anything but temptation! *(With a glint toward Scott:)* You can wear drawstring shorts to my screen test, any time. *Pause.* Hey! Why did the chicken cross the road?

Mike

*Smiles with mixed suspicion and anticipation.*

Scott

He heard the bar across the street wasn't carding!

Bob

*Looks at Scott as if to say, "That's a good one." Why, to see Bob, of course! Pats thigh lightly and rapidly with hand in a somewhat patronizing but affectionate beckoning.*

Mike

*Looks stubbornly resistant to the possible condescension, but touched and gratified by the mischievous implications of Bob's invitation. Reluctantly puts hand on Bob's shoulder and slowly sits down on his leg. Teasingly puts his hand behind Bob's head. Looks into his eyes with a mock romance. Don't start getting it up unless you want me to get up, understand?*

Bob

Yes, boss.

Scott

Whatever happened to your band, The Irrumators?

Bob

Projects like that consume a lot of time and effort, Scott, and I had to catch up on my drinking, being virtually married and all.

Mike

Wait. What's an irrumator?

Bob

Don't you read your Catullus, boy?

Paedicabo ego vos et irrumabo:

"Screw you in the ass, I will, and fuck you mouthly"

Scott

I take it to mean something like "oral rapists", then.

Mike

I see how you became a scapegoat. You gun your mouth like that around Scott's family, don't you? Keep it up: They'll be calling you Clay Pigeon! *Pantomimes a man with a rifle. It's good to be the mayor! Follows imaginary target along its sighted path. Makes a noise in imitation of a gun going off, pantomimes recoil against shoulder.*

Bob

You got that right. Too many fauxs pas can make a foe paw!

Mike

So, Bob, how about a payday loan?

Bob

That's highly appropriate, seeing as pede is French for "faggot".

Mike

You're just full of tricks, aren't you?

Bob

Not really. I make them wear condoms.

Mike

You should collect your wise sayings in a book, Bob; I wouldn't count on your disciples doing it, posthumously.

Scott

Yeah, you could call it, Jokes From the Johns!

Bob

Is that what you call how your sheets look after a heavy date?

Mike

Bob, I really had my heart set on some mo shu pork, but now you've gone and left that image in my mind. Ugh.

Bob

I got one for you. When did Scott realize that he'd been date raped?

Mike

*Gives Bob a look like, "Don't go there."*

Bob

When the check bounced!

Scott

*Laughs quietly.* Bob, if you keep this up, you're going to invoke my displeasure. *Laughs again.*

Mike

*Mike's eyes are closed, as if some of his past is rushing in on his emotions. His breathing is deep, as if he suspects that he is being held by someone whose concern is genuine. Bob notices this and pulls Mike a bit closer, as if to lend support. Why aren't you getting excited? I thought I was cute.*

Bob

*Looks at Mike from the corner of his eye, then straightens his neck as if*

*about to concentrate on some mental feat. Bob closes his eyes, takes a deeper breath, and goes into a spiritual stillness. After a few moments, he opens his eyes with a willful flick. Appearing as if from nowhere, a group of school children then passes by. At the end of the line, two little boys who seem very happy with their friendship are walking arm in arm. Pause for Mike and Scott to absorb some of the significance Bob places on this image. I'm not a child molester, Mike. I just love you. It's nothing really selfish, and it's nothing extremely personal. Understand?*

Mike

*Looks troubled, eyes closed, as if allowing a small catharsis to occur. When he opens his eyes, they are wet, but his face is cheerful. Maybe.*

Scott

This is about as touching as I like to see two guys get in public; however innocent.

Bob

It's Platonic love, Scott. We're just ahead of our time. It'll catch on, one day.

Scott

It's a little pathetic, if you ask me.

Bob

Remind me to ask you, sometime, then. Please try not to let your personal demons use me as a heat sink. *Turns to Mike. With some politeness, inspects him up and down.* Wouldn't you be a nice little golden idol for some lucky pagan to bow down to? *Pause.* Boy, don't you just remind me of a big, luscious scoop of vanilla ice cream!

Mike

*Bats eyebrows. Two scoops. Smiles mischievously.*

Bob



With a little chocolate-covered cherry in the middle, eh?

Mike

Add a banana, and you've got a smiley face! *Squirms.* But, aren't you in love with Scott?

Bob

It's different. I wuv you, Mike. *Touches knuckle of forefinger to Mike's chin.* I lurve Scott, though. *Sticks tongue out side of mouth suggesting some tragic emotional attachment.*

Mike

Oh. So, I get the cotton candy and caramel apple, but you want to ride the roller coaster with him, eh?

Bob

*Seems a bit impressed by the cheekiness of Mike's comment.* Hey, can I use that, some time?

Mike

Yeah, but, Scott and I are nearly the same age.

Bob

Mike, even if his parents haven't been overly attentive, the station of Scott's family has groomed him for responsibility for a long time. He's more like Alexander than you and I could be in this life, you know? I hope you give him more respect than I do. Please try to give him a responsible degree of care. Once Alexander's best friend died, he basically drank himself to death. Great souls need great love.

Mike

I think I follow you. But, don't you want to enlighten me about the joys of gay liberation? *Jokingly bounces up and down.*

Bob

There's nothing much enlightened about a political movement. A group like that is held together more by shared problems than by

shared solutions. *Pause.* The success or failure of friendship doesn't rely on the support of some queen with a cocktail, much less a thousand screaming ones. You should hear some of the crap they try to fill one another's heads with. No, actually, you shouldn't. *Pause.* Talk about wives' tales. True love has no agenda but to make itself ready for the happy encounter, or to protect the beloved.

Mike

*Smiles, thoughtfully. Then, as if determined to test the depth of Bob's position, Mike pulls the two of them closer. But, don't you want to...? Leans over and whispers in Bob's ear, pulls back, and flicks the tip of Bob's nose with his tongue.*

Bob

*Shudders as if to flatter Mike's charms, but remains composed. I have the right to remain silent.*

Mike

That'll be the day. There's gotta be a soap box with your footprints worn deep into its lid, somewhere. Isn't there?

Bob

Okay, kid. Do what you feel, y'know? I'm singing you the Silens' song, so you'll have some defense against the Sirens' song.

Mike

What?

Bob

Silenus was an old satyr, like Pan. A Silen was one of his kind: a drunken old fellow who was half goat, half man. These guys ran around chasing the nymphs, the pretty little girl spirits of the forests. Silens were not young and handsome like the satyrs. They were rude but harmless. The Sirens, however, sang a song to sailors that was so compelling that to listen to it meant to follow; and to follow meant certain death.

Mike

You're a dirty old man, but the lesser of two evils?

Bob

I'm like you. I'm as good as I know how to be and still walk the path that life seems to have put me on. That may not be saying much, I guess. But, I've never deliberately chosen evil. I'm simply not as strong as I'd like to be in some areas. *Begins to weep, but holds back.* I'm probably just too stubborn, ignorant, or lazy to try to start over.

Mike

Only you can know that.

Bob

That's no guarantee that I will ever know.

Scott

A boyfriend is like a pot of coffee.

Mike

*Squints as if to process input from both men. His cheerful humor finds a point of deflation, and his expression becomes somber.* And, at what point am I supposed to start feeling better?

Bob

After your first Chinese burrito, I guess. *Pulls Mike close, kisses him on the cheek, and gets up. Begins walking toward the restaurant.* Sorry to babble on like that.

Mike

Did I just get some kind of sidewalk Sunday School lesson? Hey, Bob, why not be like Friar Tuck, and give God your poverty, chastity, and obedience?

Bob

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Mike

*Runs ahead of Bob, turns around facing him, standing in his way. Bob halts himself as he bumps into him. (Wickedly:) I want you to die in my arms.*

Bob

*Smiles widely and wildly, as if contemplating something wholly ecstatic. I would have expected the Angel of Death to be a brunette. Pause. You know, Lord Krishna's people believe that if they are thinking of Him at the time of death, they will return to Him.*

Mike

*But, what if I am Krishna, and Scott is really Shiva? Raises his arms and gestures gracefully but somewhat ominously with his hands. Raises one leg as if to dance like Lord Shiva.*

Bob

*Looks at Mike, whose face is rather radiant. Pause. I wouldn't be at all surprised. Continues on his way.*

Mike

*Repent, Bob! Repent! Skips along in a childlike manner.*

Scott

*Yeah, Bob. (In a southern evangelical drawl:) Repent!*

Bob

*Stops. Turns around and runs into position behind Mike. Bends down behind him and lifts him onto his shoulders. You're not exactly talking to Scrooge, here, Tiny Tim!*

Mike

*Pulls the brim of Bob's wool hat down over his eyes.*

Bob

Michael; being a minister, a monk, or a master sergeant is for strong men; not for poor broken-hearted bastards like us who bawl at the drop of a hat.

Mike

*Takes Bob's hat off and twirls it around, as if he were going to toss it away.*

Bob

Don't you dare throw my hat on the ground. I don't want it full of the neighborhood cooties. I like my rock and roll hair do just the way it is, without any munge, thank you. *Gently grabs Mike's arm and retrieves his hat.*

Mike

*Rocks up and down on Bob's shoulders. Giddy up! Seems to enjoy the situation of extended childhood.*

Bob

I should have guessed: you're part Krishna and part cowgirl!

Mike

Scott, can I borrow Bob, sometime?

Scott

Mike, I wouldn't advise you to develop a taste for patient, adoring lovers. They never have any money.

Mike

Then, why do you bother with him?

Scott

I have my own money!

Mike, Scott, Bob

*Walk toward the restaurant as the sunset is seen overhead, in the distance. Scene closes as Scott hands the walking stick back to Bob.*

*Scene reopens with the three at a window booth, inside. They have evidently finished eating, and Bob is looking at tarot cards that he has laid in front of him upon the table.*

Bob

*Takes a sip from his glass of water. After he sets it down, he uses the condensation from the glass to further clean his hands, wiping them carefully on a linen napkin. He seems reluctant to elaborate his impressions.*

Mike

*Has puzzled look, as the obvious querent of the reading. Frowns as if he senses that what he regards as private matters will soon be brought to light. (With a hint of anxiety:) Well?*

Bob

*You got the Queen of Swords on your ass, little buddy. This is usually a female with a cut-and-dried approach to how men should behave. We find this occurring naturally in, say, a mother who is overworked and underpaid... Without moving his lowered head, his eyes look up at Mike for possible confirmation. (In a softer, more musical tone to cushion the impact of the coming sarcasm:) "I could have been a ballerina, but I got pregnant; etcetera, etcetera..."*

Mike

*Looks hurt, sighs. Okay. Nail my other foot to the floor.*

Bob

*Sorry. I know I can be more of a barnstormer than a brainstormer, sometimes.*

Scott

*Let's just say that many people find you perpendicular to their purposes.*

Bob

Things got worse when she noticed you were suspiciously happy in the company of some new friends?

Mike

*(Disingenuously:)* What do you mean?

Bob

True friends discover it's hard to get enough of the communion that rebuilds the spirit. Most people are threatened when they see us take joy in deep discussions, hanging out, and acting silly because the "responsible" alliances they make are so superficial. They don't know what to make of you, with your inner child showing. They assume there must be something alien going on, and not knowing what makes 'em furious. They'll crack down, so you don't learn more than they do about how to use this strange power. When a mom and dad, especially, don't get what your talking about; yet you talk in front of them, anyway; they get as nervous as strangers do when you speak to them, just out of friendliness. They guess you're coming from some weird angle, and must be carefully regulated. The cost is your freedom, your sanity, and your chance of gathering enough data on the world for a shot at happiness. Just go with them every Sunday the First Utilitarian Church. Don't rock their treasure boat. Just be their little lap dog, and everything will be fine: FOR THEM. It's wise to understand their possessiveness, but not to let it soak your soul. The thing about best friends is that, you never know where the time together might be going, because you don't set hard boundaries on each other. You're an inconvenience waiting to happen.

Mike

*Silence for a little while.* There's truth in what you say, but, what are you really driving at? Aren't you trying to play with my head? I mean, how will you get some if you don't?

Bob

*Places his forehead in his spread hand, covering his eyes. Massages his temples for a moment with his thumb and middle finger. Puts his hand down and looks at Mike with a no-nonsense expression.* Yes, I'd

like to do the mango tango with you because you're adorable and I personally like you. *(With sarcasm:)* Everything else is just bullshit, right? But, we have the mission of looking after Scott. So, are you with me?

Scott

*(Suppressing a sneer:)* Oh, so now the two of you are my training wheels? I feel really empowered, now.

Bob

*Looks at Scott with a bit of disappointment, then looks at Mike.* Even desperados like us never have the luxury of being desperate, it seems. What I want to explain is something of the traps life sets for us, before we go lunging at our next piece of cheese.

Mike

Oh. I thought all men had to learn to be tyrants, in their own way.

Bob

Misery is the staple of tyranny. Tyrants have to perpetuate misery in order to extend their power. If I didn't believe in God, I'd invent one, so I could pray you're wrong about that, pretty baby. I think the gods have always helped shamans and playful spirits learn how to put on masks, so that good hearts could hide behind the wrath of divine protection. The spirit of religion usually begins as a response to some kind of oppression. Unfortunately, any humanitarian movement ends up with an authority structure, and begins creating the very thing it sought to control.

Mike

Sounds like something we'd hear on PBS. But, how do you get from there to *(slowly, in a shrill, Cockney, comic voice styled on Monty Python)* "Eere, roommate, eere, roommate, I got somethin' for ye!"? *Grabs crotch and mockingly makes a face resembling Jethro Tull's Aqualung.*

Bob



*Drops hands as if to surrender any pretensions. Seems a bit disenchanted with his own ability to reason creatively. (In an ascending musical tone:) You've got me!*

Scott

It must be where the golden rule becomes one with the golden shower, huh?

Bob

I never thought about it that way, before. *(Musing philosophically:)* "Doo doo unto others..." Well, every Daughters of the Revolution porch needs a bag of flaming poo, at some point. Some German divinity professor doing Hallowe'en research probably looked at all the implications. I've just never seen the dissertation.

Mike

*Takes his can of non-alcoholic beer and switches it with Bob's bottle of Chinese beer.*

Bob

*Snorts quietly and grimaces with false annoyance. Reaches into his coat and brings out a silver whisky flask decorated with the bladed ankh from The Hunger. Opens and pours from it into beer can. Slyly smiles. Replaces flask into coat, and begins to reach for the can.*

Mike

*Dexterously switches can and bottle back to original positions.*

Bob

*Looks surprised, perhaps a bit proud of Mike's wit. Pause. (Sings:) He's-a tappin' my shoulder, he's-a gettin' it all tapped off. Looks over his shoulder as he senses portly, bespectacled waitress approaching.*

Waitress

*Appears at table. Can I help you?*

Mike

*(With great nonchalance:)* I'm fine.

Waitress

*Smiles somewhat creepily, gently fingering the rainbow pin on her uniform's lapel. (With a slow melodiousness:)* You sure are, honey. If you had longer hair, you'd look like a girl.

Mike

If you only had one chin, so would you.

Waitress

*Huffs, rolls eyes.* Give my regards to YOUR battered wife! *With as little disrespect as possible, she taps aside the collar of his shirt to show the athletic "wife beater" shirt, underneath. Walks away.*

Mike

*Looks down at beer, with a sad smile. Closes eyes. Vividly imagines that placemat says, "He-Man Woman-Haters' Bar and Grill," and waitress places a dish in front of him covered with eggplant pakoras: each clearly cookie-cut into shapes resembling brides. Opens eyes, takes beer, chugs it empty, and sets it onto table. Someone please crush that for me. I'm not feeling very macho, right now, or I'd belch and get the last word. Scoots out of booth and heads for exit.*

Scott

*(Raising voice protectively:)* Don't do anything I'd do!

Bob

What did I do, now?

Scott

Mike hasn't seen his real mom since he was a baby. You could be tuning in on his governess at the foster home, or someone we don't know about. Or, maybe it's a warning to you not to try to know or pretend to know what's going on with him.

Bob

*Looks stunned and ashamed.* Continue.

Scott

You want to see a toy soldier spring into action? Just call him one! It's just as well. If you were going to tell him that he needs a man old enough to be his pop to tell him he's great, take crap off of him, and worship his pee pee, unfortunately for him, I saw you first.

Bob

*Still looks fogged about Mike's behavior.* Why did he play along?

Scott

He's got a gift for it, and he's had a lot of practice getting to know people by watching them in action. Child services has its own share of Nurse Ratshits.

Bob

I'm getting old, huh?

Scott

Yes, Bob. A little of you goes a long way. *Patronizingly puts his arm around Bob's shoulder.*

Bob

*(With self-congratulation:)* Hey, that's because I know how to use it! *Pause.* Hmm. Where do you figure Mike flew off to?

Scott

I hope he doesn't hook up with any of my friends. Some of them would cut him a new hole, just so they could use it for sex.

Bob

Yeah, and my friends aren't much better. They've got too many cruel and unusual uses for the ones he already has.

Scott

I'm going to leave the tip, now. So, don't you go swiping it up behind me and leaving the racing form, instead.

Bob

You've only caught me doing that, once. Besides; the service was atrocious. Foul times require foul measures.

Scott

That waiter already had a boyfriend.

Bob

With good waiters, you shouldn't be able to tell.

Scott

You're thinking of bartenders.

Bob

All the time!

Scott

You're asking for trouble.

Bob

*Smiles. Pause. (Whimsically:) And so much more... Looks out window. Wait. Isn't that Mike, getting into that black SUV?*

Scott

Does it have a license plate that says, "BAD GUY"?

Bob

Not sure. From here, looks like it could.

Scott

Shit! I wouldn't go with that guy if he were in a plastic bubble!

Bob

Or, you could end up in one, eh? I think I know the guy you're talking about. He definitely doesn't meet emission standards.

Scott

Yeah, that fucker is just mad at the world. Too many trick-or-treaters shoved rotten eggs up his tailpipe, I guess.

Bob

But, haven't you taught Mike anything? Do you think he'd be stupid enough to let this guy put sugar in his gas tank?

Scott

Mike's not stupid, he's narcoleptic; and this guy always has a lot of weird drugs.

Bob

Ugh. They're gone, now. Well, he's not the Brawny man, but he must have charm. *Smiles dementedly.* He's certainly "the quicker picker-upper". *Expression becomes very sober.* What are we going to do?

Scott

What CAN we do?

Bob

*Arches brow with an air of exaggerated sophistication.* First, we must ask ourselves, what do we WANT to do! *Furrows brows and contemplatively puts thumb to chin and finger to mouth.*

Scott

We really can't expect him not to get into trouble.

Bob

No, it's what boys do, when they're not doing their homework. *Frowns, but with a hint of pleasure in the adventure of this idea.*

Scott

*Looks out the window.* It's starting to rain. Pretty hard, too. *Looks*

*back at Bob.* I never see you with an umbrella, Bob.

Bob

When I was in school, people were always carryin' umbrellas on days it didn't rain. This made me believe there was something wrong about them, like the prissy lady who can't decide where she wants her piano. Then, one day, I saw my favorite professor, super intelligent fellow, walking along with his umbrella hoisted gleefully above his head, and it wasn't raining at all: it hadn't been. It was like a scene from King of Hearts. I figured they must have an evil mind of their own, and I should leave them alone.

Scott

I have a mind of my own, and you don't leave me alone. I guess you were more into raincoats; and as close to the girls' dorms as you could get. Right? Or, do you just enjoy the serendipity of suddenly looking like a drowned rat, so you can depress people or have an excuse to cry to heaven, "Why me?"?

Bob

Drama isn't about the dining, Scott. It's about the whining.

Scott

Oh; better to drive people nuts rather than to go nuts, yourself!

Bob

If you don't like the way I drive you nuts, find another soul mate. But, anyway, we have to find a way to show Mike: we don't think he's dumb, we just don't want him dead. *Winces sentimentally.*

Scott

Bad Guy thinks his shit doesn't stink.

Bob

He covers it up with perfumed bullshit. Hitler did the same thing. He kept chanting his ideas, over and over. It was like a drug. It was hypnotic. Since no one with his charisma was saying anything

different, he recruited all the vicious and ambitious people to his cause, and conditioned passive minds to reject anything else. That's when we start straining at gnats and swallowing camels. You can't beat 'em? Join 'em! If the alternative is boredom from having to think too hard, we become sheep. The shepherd is going to sell us all for stew meat, but this is easier to face than the challenge of running away with the goats.

Scott

Give Mike credit for running away. I don't think you can set a soapbox trap for him. He has hypnotic powers of his own. I don't think they'll be much of a match for Bad Guy, though. I don't know if the rumors that he tortures and kills kids are true, but his towering stash of designer drugs is enough to scare me.

Bob

And folks think we're the wrong crowd. *Rolls eyes.* Parents tend to tolerate people like Bad Guy, with their slick manners and clothes, ignoring the bitchiness. It's so much easier than destroying your children, yourself, once you've stopped loving them for being different. Let 'em join the mob. They'll either pull in some extra cash or get themselves killed. If you want your parents to love you, you must carefully imitate their most horrible mistakes.

Scott

*Looks slightly vexed. Looks a Bob as if to say, "There's more."*

Bob

Or, be so compassionate and cunning they don't catch you succeeding where they didn't, until it's too late to stop you. When they feel like failures, they so often want to smash the mirror of them that you are.

Scott

Mike's mom seems to love him. She doesn't seem to have much respect for him.

Bob

Real love isn't just affection. Respect has to be there, or it's insane.

Scott

She did spend some time in an institution, I believe. But, if Mike doesn't want her running his life, he won't want us running it, either.

Bob

Our mission as holy men isn't about running other people's lives. True educators teach others how to fix their own cars and drive more safely. It's about the difference between what's attractive in the short run and what's rewarding in the long run.

Scott

But, isn't that different for everyone?

Bob

It's actually the same for everyone who has discovered himself.

Scott

I'm gonna go along with that theory, this minute, but I'm going to check it for holes, later.

Bob

You're right, though. Enlightened people don't go around twisting people's arms. They share their truth, they don't push it. But, they do protect their friends. Someone who will never let you protect him isn't your friend, he's someone who will bring his troubles into your hideout and make you miserable, if you let him.

Scott

So, we do the best we can, and that's how we find out who our friends are.

Bob

Right. Your heart has to be in the right place where your friends are concerned, even if you've still got a lot to learn.

Scott



That's why you're not afraid of making Mike hate you.

Bob

I love him. If I make him hate me, he'll be under the power of the dark goddess until I can escape him.

Scott

Don't try that on too many people, or the only escape might be death.

Bob

I know. But, Krishna has a lot of connections.

Scott

And, never do it on purpose, understand? So, what are we doing, sitting here, philosophizing?

Bob

Networking, waiting for a better plan to show itself. It's either that or work on inventing a masculine deodorant spray.

Scott

What did we use in Egypt?

Bob

A wineskin.

Scott

Is that why you always wear one to the Renaissance Fair? Nostalgia?

Bob

The wise virgins brought along their own oil.

Scott

You're expecting to run into Conan or the Beast Master, then? Aren't you kinda disgusting, sometimes?

Bob

You mean I'm not disgusting all the time? I must be slipping. I

realize the whole matter of extreme hygiene may seem somewhat unappealing, but Hindu magicians practice it religiously, because their helper spirits are invisible, about three feet tall, and have a keen sense of smell. *Pause.* Then, there's the image of that little queen ahead of me in line at the grocery, the other day, with a bunch of disposable enemas for his hot date. I felt like slapping him with my hat and telling him, "Honey, you're going after an elephant with a pea shooter!"

Scott

I'm glad you waited until after we ate to talk about this shit.

Bob

I understand. It's like my date for the prom said about making out: "You don't talk about it, you just do it!" Of course, since I don't see much action at my age and income bracket, talk is about all I do.

Waitress

*Returns to table.* Can I get you guys anything else?

Scott

Yes. Please get Bob a clue.

Waitress

Well, your little friend just ran off to spend the early evening with one of those shady perverts.

Bob

What's the world coming to? I always say, if God had intended for man to get buggered, He would have put a hole in his bum!

Scott

*Silently snickers. Places a hand over one ear.*

Bob

Something wrong with your ear, Baby?

Scott

That's my virgin ear. I just can't let him listen to some of the things you come out with.

Bob

*Exhales through pursed lips with a quick, quiet guffaw.* I'm glad to hear some part of you is still a virgin.

Waitress

Whatever. If you need me, I'll be in the john, throwing up. *Smirks.*

Bob

I guess Mike will be in the John, pretty soon.

Scott

That's the best-case scenario, anyways. But Mike has these fits where he becomes completely unconscious. Virgin or not, at least I know the difference between a friend's house and a chop shop for human souls. It's Mike we don't want stripped for spare parts, right now. If Bad Guy is the weasel I think he is, Mike'll never know what hit him.

Bob

And people with abysmal gifts have a way of catching their prey in a whammy, just like the guy who goes rabbit hunting at night with a high intensity flashlight. I once watched a cat who was so passionate about catching a gypsy moth flying up near the ceiling, she started chattering at it. It slowly came down within her reach as if it had no choice at all. So, how do you know Bad Guy?

Scott

Mostly by reputation. I've only spoken to him, once.

Bob

*(With an air of pride like Sherlock Holmes cracking a case:)* Let me guess. You looked through a hole in the wall at the bathhouse, saw it was him, and said, "See ya' fellator!"

Scott

*Looks perturbed, and verbally outmaneuvered.*

Bob

Haven't you had a talk with Mike about the birds and the bees?

Scott

You should know better than I do that stuff like this can't be dealt with until it comes up. Guys who can listen to preaching don't run away from home.

Bob

*Props his hand up and rests his head on it. Looks to be feigning a stunned ennui.*

Scott

What?

Bob

I never thought that I'd be working for the March of Dimes.

Scott

*Puzzles for a moment. Oh, you mean saving overgrown Gerber babies? I guess it beats comparing tattoos with other old burnouts. Smiles with a bit of opportunistic cruelty. So, do you have a crush on Mike? Grins like a man who just made a clever chess move.*

Bob

Look me in the eye and tell me he isn't the most important thing in your life. *Glares with the confidence of a resourceful counter move.*

Scott

*Pause.* Bob, when did you realize you were bisexual?

Bob

When I noticed that I hated myself for leaving the toilet seat up!  
*Pause.* I keep forgetting to go to the bank.

Scott

What would you do in a bank, except rob it?

Bob

I need to get some foreign currency. Doesn't matter what kind.

Scott

*Looks at table for a moment.* Oh, so you can leave annoyance tips!  
*Returns to a state of cogitation.* So, what if we do keep Mike safe this time? What about next time?

Bob

There are two kinds of important men in this world: princes and players. Princes keep their secrets with honest men; players keep their secrets with dishonest men. We may or not be able to save Mike from fatal errors, but if we don't act as guardians for the ones we love, we'll slide into the quicksand, ourselves.

Scott

What can you tell me that Machiavelli couldn't?

Bob

I never read Machiavelli. I do think a prince needs to be aware of all the tools in the toolbox of pragmatism, though. Italy depended on a rather twisted system, because it served Mars, the god of war. But a prince isn't a lot like a player. *(Flourishing with satirical facial and hand movements:)* He isn't high-strung, hopelessly self-involved, or always babbling so he can wear people down and exploit their conditionings. He cultivates their strengths. I don't know if Mike can develop the fortitude to rise above his distractions like you. I do see he has a purity that makes a real prince want to help him build up his insulation, so that he doesn't become isolated. Alexander lavished his friendship on a deserving and loyal Hephaestion, benefiting himself in the process.

Scott

You trying to marry me off? He is practically under my wing.

Bob

Well, if there's a fallacy in what I'm saying, you'll fluff each other up and be ripe for the picking, won't you? Always take care that a Scorpio isn't just Rasputinizing you! I could be pumping your little head full of nonsense as we speak. *Grins widely.*

Scott

That's pretty oppressive. *Pause.* You think friends can really make a real difference on purpose?

Bob

By being big on caring? Can't hurt too much. I doubt it's possible to "save" somebody by bribing him. If we want to keep our pets around, we pamper them. But if we go too far, eventually they catch on we've trapped them. If we do have rare insights about a friend, though, it's our timely support that shields him. I don't want to be under your feet all the time. I try to get what makes you cool.

Scott

Are you going to use your abysmal gifts to find out where Mike is?

Bob

*Scoots out of the booth far enough to see his feet, and looks down at them. He clicks his heels together three times and closes his eyes. There's no boy like Mike. There's no boy like Mike. There's no boy like Mike. Remains for a while in a jocular imitation of trance.*

Scott

Could you see him? Or, are your heels just starting to feel a lot lighter, thinking about his angelic yet virile bod?

Bob

No, but for a second, I was at a Kansas concert! And; maybe!

Scott

At least you're a foot or two closer to the door. *Notices a man walking past the restaurant.* Hey, isn't that that food critic?

Bob

Yeah, the expert at whining and dining. We still need a smashing plan between here and the door. *Looks up, as if to Heaven. (Slowly:)* Okay, guys... *Puts hands together in front of face, fingers undulating against one another to suggest some quiet, idling motor.*

Scott

You praying for the gay gods to come help us?

Bob

Yeah, expect Donald, Mickey, and Goofy to show up at any second.

Scott

Tinkerbelle, Peter Pan, and the Wicked Queen would be second string for a mission like this.

Bob

They'd have an inscrutable array of powers, but I'd be wary of their faith. People like Bad Guy have a way of magnetizing the party girls to their way of thinking, that life is a string of cheesy formulas, or a dance marathon for happy zombies.

Scott

Why don't you try something of your own? S'matter? Dog ate your spell book?

Bob

Thank you for that excuse. *Closes eyes.* Let me try this:

"The Corner Pocket"

Once in bygone year  
Saw the boys were queer  
So, I came in here

Looked up from my beer  
There was Udo Kier  
Smilin' ear to ear

Scott

Who's Udo Kier?

Bob

Andy Warhol's Dracula. The Book of the Dead says that Ra created magick so that good men would have a power that they could recruit to turn the actions of an evil man against him. When the powers of light won't serve, sometimes we resort to the powers of darkness. *After a long moment, the man dressed in black appears at the window, raising his hand as if to tap, but doesn't. Bob opens his eyes and sees him, gets up, and sets his hand lightly on Scott's shoulder as he passes. The man moves toward the door to meet Bob, who silently goes out, and the two disappear together.*

Scott

*Counts the money in the waitress' tray, gets up, and exits. When he gets outside, there is no sign of Bob or the other man. He seems to ponder the universe, for a moment, looking at the moon largely surrounded by clouds. Bob has walked into a black rainbow. As if making connection with some symbolic clue, Scott reaches into the inner pocket of his jacket, bringing out and opening a small book.*

I sense my friend's in danger  
And I don't know what to do  
His clan is all around him  
But they don't like me or you

It's easy when you're thought a man  
To cover tracks or make a stand  
It's hard to tell the tools from toys  
When yet my heart is still is a boy's

When you're high on your horse



Bound for destiny's lodge and  
The pistols are shiny, the leather, the sword  
Just beside you, of course  
May be all that you need to  
Intimidate Satan, not saying a word

I've this or that to offer  
Though I can't pretend it's me  
The living dead take shortcuts  
In collection of their fee

Is it so rare a fantasy?  
A pal to see the things you see?  
Did I mistakenly surmise?  
This world such things to advertise?

So we're never to fill  
Up our hearts with a brother  
A ghost could not haunt us with such a success  
As hyenas will kill  
The wee cubs that were cornered  
The lions arrive but to find them a mess

*Replaces the book in his coat. His movements are slow and pensive. They suggest that he is searching the poem for oracular clues that might help his intuition to probe the situation. The words seemingly hold a mystical synchronicity with his quandary.*

#### Man In Car

*A worn Chevrolet sedan slows down and rolls to a halt in front of Scott. The passenger window is down, and the cockpit is dark, within. The driver leans over, his bespectacled face becoming only slightly visible in the light from the restaurant and street. His voice seems calm, but inebriated. Howdy. Would you happen to be one of them boys who gets paid for doing the nasty?*

Scott

*Raises an eyebrow, much like Mr. Spock. Actually, I'm the son of wealthy merchants. I'm sure a man of the world like yourself, though, understands it often happens that: you want to play with the puppy, you got to feed the puppy. A strong but gently trembling hand pulls up the lock button of the door. The rear passenger window is intact but crackled and opaque in the available light. It is not obvious whether the hand belongs to the driver or another passenger sitting in the back seat. Scott seems to sense something ominous. Stepping back a bit from the car, he raises his hand. Well, if I see any hungry puppies, I'll tell them you're interested. He then smiles as if to excuse himself, and slowly walks in the opposite direction. After a block or so, he comes to a storefront whose window features curiosities derived from science fiction and fantasy. The tallest piece is a wooden carving of a troll. Several smaller, polyethylene trolls are seen around its feet. He contemplates this sight, for a moment. Trolls. He then walks to the door. An old lady is coming as if to close up for the night. With a humble body language, he opens the door, as if in recognition that he may be inconveniencing her. Please pardon me, Ma'am. I'll come back, another time, but, if there were one thing you would say to me about trolls, what would it be?*

#### Old Lady

The big one is from Norway. The dolls were a fad in America, years ago. You might be too young to remember. Most kids who go to kindergarten hear the fairy tale about the troll who lived under a bridge and wanted a toll from everyone who crossed it. *She looks up at Scott's face, which seems to be pleading for something deeper. She smiles. Oh, you mean something profound? She seems amused by the tension in his apparent state of mind. Sighs. I'm not sure how true to legend this is; but, in modern fantasy stories and games, a troll always stalks its prey to the death. (Then, as if making a youthful, playful incursion into Scott's condition:)* The ones over here just talk you to death! *(Laughs in the scorching style of Phyllis Diller:)* Ha-ha!

Scott

Thanks. *Pause.* I guess. *Backs toward the door, reaching behind him to open it. Salutes her as he exits. Looks worried as he pulls the door gently closed so that it won't slam, looks once more at the window, and continues on his way. He crosses the street and heads back in the direction of the occult shop. He soon encounters an attractive man who is imaginatively dressed, like a performer. They smile at each other, and both appear interested.*

Rock Star

Good evening. I wouldn't want to annoy you, but, you wouldn't happen to be one of those roving freelance professional sex therapists, would you?

Scott

You looking to get hugged?

Rock Star

I know, I deserve a bit of cynicism on your part, perhaps, but it seems I've forgotten the combination to the safe where I keep my stash. It happens, once in a while, when I experience poor circulation.

Scott

And, you need some gentle CPR to help restore your memory, right?

Rock Star

Every so often, I come across an angel of mercy who helps me out, like one of those Saint Bernards wandering the Yukon with a cask of spirits around his neck. If you think you can, please give me a call on my mobile phone. *He hands Scott a tight green packet, then places his finger to his forehead as if to tip an imaginary hat in cordial departure. Walks on.*

Scott

*Looks at the wad, and unfolds it. We see that it is a fifty-dollar bill, and a business-sized card with only a telephone number printed on it. Smiles, and turns around. Hey, man, fuck you!*

### Rock Star

*Turns around and heads back, a playful glare in his eyes. He shakes Scott's willing hand with a gentlemanly fashion. (In a sober, virile tone:) Well, if you've got the time, that might do it. Gently grasps Scott's chin in a slightly more patronizing but still endearing manner. Turns and continues on his way.*

### Scott

*Comes to the occult shop. He notices a tiny troll doll, hanging without dignity in the window, by its neck. Briskly, quietly chuckles. Looks down at the posted announcement for the night's class. Looks at his watch. Goes inside.*

### Girl Behind the Counter

*Smiles. Walks over to a black velvet curtain and draws it slightly aside, motioning for Scott to enter, which he does.*

### Girl with Cross

Don't you believe in The Bible?

### Man In Black

I'm seldom eager to talk about psychic arts like astral projection with fundamentalists. It becomes less like a class and more like a debate. Their real drive is usually a somnambulistic authoritarian agenda, but progress in occult matters takes independent thinking. In Hebrew, the Book of Genesis begins with, "In the beginning, the gods created the heavens and the earth." The word alohim is plural. But, if my God were only one, He'd still tolerate diversity. If He were to limit himself to one mask for long, free thinking people couldn't survive. There would be no true human identity, which is always a balance between same and other. With pagan magick, a helpful, creative spirit can have reasonable faith that his worthiness will find favor, somewhere; whether it is with this god or that goddess.

### Bob

*Scene shifts to a dark-walled room (presumably nearby), lit only by a few small colored lights. In front of Bob is a table, covered with an indigo cloth. On the table is a quartz dodecahedron. He seems to be making an effort to gather psychic impressions on the whereabouts of Mike. Looks worried or frustrated. Picks up the crystal, then gently tosses it upward, as if it were a twelve-sided die used in a Dungeons and Dragons game. Closes his eyes.*

Spirit Guide

Is he family?

Bob

*Sees a dark vision of Mike lying face down, unconscious, on a couch. The boy is wearing only red plaid flannel boxer shorts and a pair of fluffy, gray socks. A middle aged, balding, mustached Latin-looking man, dressed in a pinstripe suit and gaudy gold jewelry approaches, and places a glass of wine on a glass coffee table between couch and camera. Then, the man proceeds to tug at Mike's shorts, slowly but not so gently pulling them off. Bob looks wounded and angered at this, grits his teeth and makes two fists. He opens his eyes, which are slightly wet with tears and cold sweat. He huffs and puffs a few times, as if to steady his nerves at the troubling premonition. Then, he quickly recomposes himself. Well, he reminds me of my cousin! Opens his eyes and breaks into an ironically blissful smile. What cute butt! Rolls eyes, slightly. Quietly inhale-chuckles in a good-natured way, as if to banish fear or sorrow. Pushes tip of tongue out corner of mouth and bats an eyebrow in comic lasciviousness. Somehow, in his manner, he conveys to the Spirit Guide that this comment is more to dissipate stress than to indulge in sinful fantasies, as he still looks noticeably hurt. Closes eyes, again.*

Spirit Guide

Do not turn your back on one who says, "I am your brother."

Bob

*Pause.* Thank you. I will heed your wisdom. Please, though, how can I make a more immediate difference in this situation? *Waits.*

Spirit Guide

What is your goal?

Bob

*Looks compressed.* I can't wait to go to work for a fortune cookie factory! *Groans.* That one's gonna to cost me, huh?

Spirit Guide

Needless to say. Follow the yellow brick road.

Bob

*Opens eyes, as if he understands that the Spirit Guide has concluded the audible portion of the night's consultation.*

Scott

*A widening vertical line of light appears in the room.* Bob?

Bob

I'll just be a few more minutes. *Light returns to normal dark as Scott quietly excuses himself. Bob closes his eyes, again, and bows his head.* God, you really outdid yourself when you created boys as a breed, and again, when you made Mike. A lot of people claim to have the care and feeding manual for this strange creature, but only You really do. Please help me with some trouble shooting? *Silence for a moment, then, Bob begins to receive another vision. We hear two gunshots, and see a cloud of smoke. When it clears, we see Bob in a cowboy hat with two long-nosed pistols, which he holds upward, as if in triumph. He blows the remaining smoke from each barrel, and proudly pushes the brim of his hat up with one of them. Opens his eyes. (With an ascending tone and a mildly stern look, as if to suggest a less mischievous strategy would be greatly welcome:)* God? *Closes eyes again. Soon, a dreamy scene opens on what seems to be an episode from Mike's childhood.*

Gray-haired Woman

*Slaps Mike's face hard, several times, knocking it from side to side. Why did you let him do that? Grabs his shoulders and shakes him. He could have bitten your thing clean off! Do you know what happens to little boys who let people suck their things? They get them bitten off, and they have to wear dresses for the rest of their lives!*

Young Mike

*Quickly shakes off the pain of being slapped, as an eye-widening look of astonishment and horror comes over his face.*

Teenage Boy

*Is on his knees, in front of Mike. His head is bowed with the shame of being caught in something forbidden. (Sobbing:) Don't believe that shit! I did it 'cause I like you.*

Gray-haired Woman

*You son of a bitch! You come with me! Grabs Teenage Boy by the ear and drags him out of the room with her.*

Young Mike

*Turns his head slowly and ominously toward a man standing in a rather cowering posture near the wall. (With love and trust in his voice:) Would YOU have bitten me?*

Gray-haired Man

*Looks terrified. His hand is raised in front of his mouth, as he seems to have been desperately gesturing for Mike to remain silent until the others had left. If I told you the truth, then you'd trust me. But, you shouldn't, because I make mistakes. All I ask is that you let me trust YOU. Mike? Please. This is really important. Tilts head in a humble, sad way that emphasizes his need for cooperation.*

Young Mike

*Smiles with an expression of great confidence in his ability to be a good*

*friend. I'll never tell!*

Gray-haired Man

*Steps over and lifts Mike in his arms, holding him tightly. I love you!*

Young Mike

*I love you, too! Purses his lips and fearlessly plants a powerful kiss right on the man's mouth. I'm sorry my mouth isn't big enough to make your big thing happy, the way you did mine.*

Gray-haired Man

*Sometimes, Mike, not having a big mouth is about the best thing that can happen to a person.*

Young Mike

*Gently takes the man's earlobes in his hands. I like your ears, the way they feel when we play "giddy up". I don't want her to tear them off, dragging you away for a paddling!*

Gray-haired Man

*Frowns. Now, I'll have to pretend to punish you. Smiles. Got any ideas?*

Young Mike

*I scream for ice cream!*

Gray-haired Man

*Oh, all right. But, you're going to have to make it sound good! Sits down on a cushioned chair and raises a hand toward Mike, who smiles, looks down at his rope belt, and unties it. He loosens his trousers and lets them slide down, then takes the man's hand, who turns him over his left knee as if for a serious spanking. The man raises his hand to strike, and it comes down with a loud whack on his own right thigh.*

Young Mike



*(Screaming with an abandoned shrillness:) Aaeah! Looks up at the man, smiles, and squirms a bit as he tugs his briefs down for a more convincing appearance. The man whacks his own knee, a few more times, and each time, Mike bellows with another different blood-curdling outcry. Ai! Ow! Ee! Oh! Aw! Yaiee! Camera angle shifts to face the man and Mike's back. When the man has stopped the whipping, Mike gets up and sits down on the carpet, rubbing his behind briskly back and forth on it to redden it up. He then stands up, and as he pulls his underwear slowly back up, the lady returns.*

Gray-haired Woman

Don't you go killing him, for goodness' sake!

Young Mike

*View of Mike's face, who winks at the man, then contorts his expression into one of sorrow and pain, as he pulls up his trousers and fastens them. Continues to sob, intermittently.*

Gray-haired Man

I guess I overdid it, this time. I'll have to make it up to him, now. Come on, Mike, I owe you a double cone of rocky road! *Reaches out to take Mike's hand, who slaps it and gives him a look of obstinacy before following him. Scene fades back to room in occult shop.*

Bob

*Sighs through his nose, very sympathetically. Aw, Mike! The door to the room opens, again. Bob squints as the light comes up.*

Man Behind the Counter

Sympathy for the little devil?

Bob

Or, the falling angel?

Man Behind the Counter

What's the difference between a falling angel and a little devil?

Bob

If I knew that, I'd know what people who like to play God pretend to know.

Man Behind the Counter

You mean the teachers and parents with worse learning and behavior problems than the kids?

Bob

Exactly.

Man Behind the Counter

Well, whether it's up the street or down the road, you know he's going to find someone else who's more fun. Then you'll become the surrogate parent and new scapegoat.

Bob

I don't have a big thing for him, but I see that he's something else; and loyalty is the way I like to express myself. He's Scott's project, really. If what I saw was a reflection of something real, Mike's not the kind of boy who goes around hating people.

Man Behind the Counter

*(Without a sarcastic edge:)* Give him time.

Bob

*(Serenely:)* When we achieve Buddhahood, some day, we'll be able to subdue the film critic, within. *Folds hands in front of him, in a gesture suggesting piety and illumination.*

Man Behind the Counter

You do seem to have the technique down, at times.

Bob

I think it came after I stopped caring who's a crook and who's not.

Man Behind the Counter

*Smiles.* Including yourself, eh?

Bob

You don't really believe in universal love, do you?

Man Behind the Counter

Sure. You got a hold of some of those triangular yellow pills, didn't you?

Bob

*(As Scott enters:)* Scott, this man is doing your job: he's deriding me.

Scott

*Grimaces.* I should be able to feel the love, you know? There's no shortage of apples or roses in this town for offerings to Venus. *Shifts slight glare back and forth at the two men. Sits down at the table. Unfurls the fifty dollar bill, and the small card falls into view. He stretches the note between his two hands, popping it, and displaying it gleefully to Bob.* I pulled a quickie!

Bob

That's a down payment from someone slick, isn't it? *Notices the card, which has a faint yellow decoration on it. Looking closer, we see that it is a design resembling a brick wall. (Very quietly:)* "Follow the yellow brick road."

Man Behind the Counter

His quest has once again placed him at the center of the Spiral Dance.

Scott

Why does he talk to himself so much?

Man Behind the Counter

He's gotta stay in practice in case he ever finds a friend.

Scott

He sounded like he was talking to somebody who knows some stuff.

Man Behind the Counter

That could come from his adventures in interactive synthetic folklore, I suppose. It is full of hints about how magick works.

Scott

Hm? Oh. Dungeons and Dragons.

Bob

Don't mind him. It's just the vodka talking. I sometimes find Favor with the powers that be.

Man Behind the Counter

He's talking about you.

Scott

*Thoughtful pause.* Sometimes, I am. I mean, I do feel close to them when I sell a bond from my safe deposit box.

Bob

Scott, will you help me sleuth this out?

Man Behind the Counter

What? Is this job too tough for *(sings to the tune of Goldfinger:)* Brown Finger?

Bob

*(In a more no-nonsense tone than usual:)* Look who's talking, Mr. Most Likely to Be Killed by a Jealous Wife!

Man Behind the Counter

Aren't you macho, all of the sudden?

Bob

*Looks as if to muse over some riddle.* What do you call it when a guy

is the opposite of macho?

Man Behind the Counter

I don't have to laugh at your jokes. You're not signing my checks.

Scott

What do you mean? *Looks at Bob.*

Bob

I mean, when a guy exaggerates his nelly side to boost his bitchcraft powers. *Gets up, and returns to the lecture room, with Scott following.*

Man In Black

Ironically, it often does take some sort of Zen-like realization before a person can really succeed in the realm astral travel. It's not really a world for people who want to impose their limitations onto others, but for ones who seek to loosen up those limitations that other people and stock conceptions may have imposed on their minds. In the study of yoga, such a realization is prized above the mystic powers that come with it. In tantra, though, mastering the actual power of prapti, or soul travel, is the objective.

Girl Behind the Counter

So, it takes a healthier or more scientific attitude than religious dogma?

Man In Black

Psychologists tell us that children with healthy personalities are told WHY parents expect this or that from them, rather than just, "because I said so." *Makes a clawing gesture with his fingers in the air, as a scholar indicating a quotation.* People of healthy intelligence clear away arbitrary notions from the relevant facts. Facts are often cluttered over by ideas that are more palatable. In a genuine study, though, it's our desire for excellence that will lead us to the more valuable data, or, the "real thing".

Bob

That's the careful way. But most people prefer entertainment to the labor of adaptation. It gives them their daily opium: freedom from choice.

#### Man In Black

It's pointless to disturb the reality-consumers too much. That's why occultism exists, because most people don't want an active part in a harmony of cosmic artists. So those who do participate have to be careful. People with psychic development gradually see the cosmic realities layer by layer, but those who have been indoctrinated with some rigid social paradigm exclude anything outside its customary parameters. This can sometimes form a barrier to astral travel, if a student harbors guilt over his or her effort to see more deeply into the universe.

#### Bob

So, an occultist doesn't get too assertive when he sees error being taught as fact.

#### Man In Black

Unless it's in a domain where he has to keep things straight, like his home, or a teaching situation where he has responsibility.

#### Man With Cross

So, if I burn some of the Dittany of Crete blend in my house, what will happen?

#### Man In Black

You might offend Jehovah. Isaiah said that his deity disliked the smell of incense, and much preferred the blood of rams as an offering.

#### Man With Cross

That's your interpretation.

#### Man In Black

It's an observation, based on my knowledge of primary sources. At its best, religion, like magick, is applied anthropology. It's a process to

bring about happiness based on careful observation. At its worst, it's speculation, controversy, and a play pen for ego. Its adherents will sometimes elevate a book as infallible, yet never open it. Real faith takes study, practice, and meditation.

Man With Cross

Sounds like something beyond the scope of most people.

Bob

I was at the head of my anthropology class!

Man In Black

Something tells me Bob's not talking about grades. *Makes a face as if to say, "Anyway..."* Faith in a magickal sense doesn't always have to be elaborate, but it does need to be pure, especially when a votary desires change. A temple for astral projection is prepared such in a way that it allows the practitioner to focus on his goal. It's not an arena for controversy. *(Somewhat smugly, but in a good humor:)* What I'm saying is based on my experience, not a manual constructed to exploit some segment of the population for whatever coinage may be stirred loose from it. *Gestures as if stirring with a graceful movement of both hands.*

Bob

So, wizards don't organize parades where they carry angry slogans.

Man In Black

Occultists can be tribal, of course, but sacred sciences are essentially humanitarian. Healers may have progressive styles of psychology, but this has to remain on a discreet scale. Creative people can't afford to be conformist in their thinking, but should control their behavior so it's congenial enough not to trigger unmanageable hostility. You can be a fair mystic or a theologian and be opinionated, but a true occultist isn't someone headed for martyrdom. He generally conceals his opinions. His guidance is specialized, and he has to have a good deal of reserve to do justice to the discipline.

Scott

A good cause deserves its share of sneaky people.

Man In Black

A sharp observation, bluntly put. When you have a purpose, it's harder to be a good sport.

Girl With Cross

So, are you gay?

Man In Black

*Laughs.* Why? Do I sound like a sissy? Or, do you ask because you saw me talking to Bob?

Bob

Or, maybe it's 'cause your cut-downs sound so much like the ones Mom used to make!

Man With Cross

Maybe it's that you're too well dressed to be straight.

Man In Black

Thanks. Well, for a wizard or artist, androgyny at some point becomes a non-issue. The human use of supernatural power involves tapping into both ones yin and yang currents, and ultimately balancing them. I'm not a practicing homosexual, but I guess I do blend in with the artsy crowd. I think that this is an important point, though, because good sorcery requires an unconfused mind.

Scott

Can taking it up the butt make you a better warlock?

Man In Black

*Smiles.* If that's your STYLE. I haven't studied tantra enough to know what workings require it as preparation. In some people, it could free the mind, I guess. In others, it could make their bondage worse. Some people cut their guilt loose by becoming evil, but they eventually



lose their humanity and reap the due rewards. Everyone with sound ethics has to find where each kind of experience fits in.

Scott

So, guilt is an obstacle to magick?

Man In Black

Skillfully confronting the world of cause and effect involves calculating your risks and taking responsibility for your actions. When you're free of guilt, the surprise attacks from the jealous people who want you to fail are easier to deal with. So, being a good person really comes in handy for an advanced occultist. Living well usually means innocently keeping yourself off the hook, unless you're an asshole, and regard others as but resources to be tapped.

Man With Cross

You would admit that human resources are important?

Man In Black

Of course. But, in magick, with so many non-human intelligences to recruit insight and cooperation from, it's good to court all forms of life with as loving an approach as is safe. Tyrants take short cuts that subjugate living souls and create patterns with so much inertia and misery that they either collapse, or have to be brought down. Be it ever so humble, I want my castle to last a lot longer than Hitler's did.

Girl With Cross

Do you look at pornography?

Man In Black

Not deliberately. I do occasionally look at erotic art.

Girl With Cross

What's the difference?

Man In Black

Pornography is basically desensitizing, though many may find it energizing. By definition, it's contaminating, dirty. Erotic art is

resensitizing for people who can draw benefit from it. It's a peek at what goes on behind closed doors between beings who understand love, sex, and romance better than the average mortal. The temples of Konarak and Khahurajo are covered with sculptures depicting every imaginable loving embrace. When approached with the proper respect and gratitude, such things are holy to most followers of Hinduism.

Scott

Are there sex rituals that help astral projection?

Man In Black

Certainly, with most magick users who have sex, there's usually something along those lines that can be done to help bring the effort along. You've probably seen books full of naked pictures that claim to teach "tantric yoga". It's a kind of religious approach to sex therapy. But, that's outside the scope of our investigation, tonight. *Silence for a moment.* Right? *Pause.* Our hosts have arranged some refreshments, as you can see. I'll be back in about twenty minutes, for those of you who'd care to continue this discussion. Thanks. *Steps away from the podium. Scene fades out.*

Scott

*Scene reopens in front room of shop. Scott and Man in Black are sitting at the table. Lighting in the room is colorfully gloomy. Bob is standing, looking at a book.* So, how do you know Bob?

Man In Black

*Is smoking a black cigarette.* We were roommates in college for a semester.

Scott

Why only a semester?

Man In Black

He slams dishes around like a frustrated bitch when you're trying to study.

Bob

Well, maybe if you'd have washed a few, yourself...

Man In Black

Well, I didn't really use that many, myself. Plus, Bob got into trouble for starting that Krewe of Gallagher.

Scott

What's that?

Man In Black

At carnival time in New Orleans, the marching organizations throw doubloons, costume jewelry necklaces, and other trinkets from floats at the parades. The black people have their own special Krewe of Zulu, where the hallmark souvenirs are coconuts and spears. Bob decided to have a club that would throw watermelons off the back of a truck by a handful of guys dressed up in striped shirts, caps, fake mustaches, and long, frizzy wigs.

Scott

I guess joy buzzers and squirty lapel flowers have limited appeal for a man with Bob's ambitions. Little watermelons, or big ones?

Bob

Little ones, of course. They cost less and sail a lot further.

Scott

But, aren't they less juicy?

Bob

Not if you inject them with as much liquid as you can, before the parade, with a mortician's syringe.

Scott

What kind of liquid?

Bob

You'd be amazed at some of the things you come across, cleaning up after a frat orgy.

Man In Black

How do you know Bob?

Scott

He saved my dad's life.

Man In Black

From whom?

Scott

From me.

Man In Black

*Looks concerned, then slightly puzzled.*

Scott

I couldn't stay at my parents' house, any more. They say there's freedom of speech in this country, but I couldn't really say anything on my mind, there, without either getting seriously mommed or popped for it.

Man In Black

I'll bet that sucked.

Scott

Well, yeah. Especially since a good chunk of their fortune came from tapping what they could off a legacy that was left for me when I turn twenty-one.

Man In Black

What brought things to a head?

Bob

No, they didn't catch us.

Scott

They decided to throw away all my albums, posters, and books that might be related to an interest in the supernatural, or any other kind of alternative to their way of life.

Man In Black

Oh. Time to save your soul, eh? The Ozzy posse?

Scott

Ozzy never made me want to treat them badly. He did help when I needed to drown out the demoralizing static.

Bob

*David Bowie's "Station to Station" has been quietly building in the background. At this point, the vocals break in. This song was also written about Mr. Crowley.*

Man In Black

I hadn't realized that, until you mentioned it. I had noticed that he's drawing the Tree of Life with sidewalk chalk in the rather haunting photo on the album's back cover. *Pause to focus.* When he first came to America, he dubbed it, "a nation starved for love".

Bob

Yeah, America's full of people just picking up the pieces and getting on with their lives. *Silence for a moment. In a corner of the room that has remained dark, we see the flare of a match being struck and lifted to a cigarette.*

Man In Trench Coat

*His face is eerily visible by the flame as he lights up. (From the side of his mouth, without an affected accent:)* Well, you're one wise CRACKER, ain't you!

Bob

Oh, brother.

Man In Trench Coat

Got that right; and I caught your African History moment on PBS about Ramesses inventing the condom 'cause he only had rooms in the palace for fifty sons. Lem'me tell ya', I don't mind putting one of them on at the start of the festivities. It's pretty stylish when my lady (or yours) hears that "pop" and she knows she's about to get what's coming. But, once I'm going real good and that little rubber bitch busts, I ain't into going through multiple costume ch-ch-ch-ch-changes during the performance.

Bob

A mind is a terrible thing to waste, especially when it's time for a "come as you are" party, I suppose.

Man In Trench Coat

Take me as I am. *Smiles.*

Bob

I like to think what little I have to offer might be of a more affectionate and personal nature.

Man In Trench Coat

Well, if you want to get all, "I'd SWALLOW for you," with your boy, here; maybe you could try that with some of the cute comments around his parents.

Bob

I know, I know. I'm not worthy to drink the melted ice from their salad bar. But, it's a free country.

Man In Trench Coat

Ain't too much, free. You check into the same hotel as Scott's mom and dad, you'll be the dude there with a gift certificate in one hand, and you' sister's Discover Card in the other.

Scott

*(Muffling a laugh:)* C'mon. Don't mess with Bob. I'VE got HIM fine-tuned.

Bob

*Glares.* Look who's talking. The only thing you have in common with a Sugar Daddy is the color.

Scott

*(In an ascending tone:)* Bob.

Man In Trench Coat

That's okay. I'm down with the hot chocolate shit. White boys call me "Ex-Lax".

Bob

Why's that?

Man In Trench Coat

'Cause I give thei' ass a rush. *Pause.* Well, I'll see you all, later. Scott, tell your dad I said "thanks" for that new position with his company.

Scott

Okay. Hey. Any idea where Bad Guy might be?

Man In Trench Coat

Mm. On about any given night about this time, he'll be over at the bathhouse.

Scott

Think Mike might have gone over there, with him?

Man In Trench Coat

Well, if they did head that way, together, they'd have to stop by the hardware, first.

Scott

How come?

Man In Trench Coat

'Cause, the two of them over there at the same time? They'll have to paint a line down the middle of the place.

Scott

*Looks embarrassed.* I'm talking about Mike Waters.

Man In Trench Coat

Yeah, I know. I'm just yankin' on your dick. *Smiles.* Bye! And, Bob, remember the lesson of King Oedipus.

Bob

*Glares, smilingly.* What's that?

Man In Trench Coat

Even solved the Riddle of the Sphinx, he was so slick, but wasn't hip enough to see what a mother fucker he was, 'til it was too late!

Bob

Well, shit happens.

Man In Trench Coat

Yeah, and it happens to everybody. Some people just don't know when to flush! *Exits with a reverently raised hand.*

Bob

Yeah, America's full of people just picking up the pieces and getting on with their lives. *Silence for a moment. In a corner of the room that has remained dark, we see the flare of a match being struck and lifted to a cigarette.*

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Girl Behind The Counter

*Has evidently entered the room while Man In Trench Coat was speaking. In the mostly darkened room, her face is lit from below from a fixture inside the showcase. Silence for a moment, as she raises an eyebrow. (Laughing slightly:) Who the f-(hissing sound) was that?*

Man Behind The Counter

Another experiment in permissive parenting gone horribly wrong.

Man In Black

He's rather harsh. I guess his mambo never taught him any better.

Scott

For a horse-hung guy, he's' not the most down to earth. That's why we call him, "Pegasus".

Bob

He's a fellow I went to high school with. We voted him "Most Likely to Bring About the Downfall of Civilization".

Scott

And Bob was voted "Most Likely To Succeed", right?

Man Behind The Counter

Suck whose seed?

Girl Behind The Counter

Where'd Mike get off to?

Man Behind The Counter

Maybe the question is, "Who?" He went to go find some friends with money to BLOW, right?

Bob

I guess it's an almost universal dream of boys to be "hired muscle", nowadays. When I was a kid, we tried to find more of a cause.

Man Behind The Counter

Oh, give him time. Let him go get eighty-sixed from some place. He'll have a cause so important, we'll all hear about it. So, Bob, when did you realize you were gay?

Bob

*Glares with a look of supercilious exasperation.* I realized I was bisexual when I noticed that I hated myself for leaving the toilet seat up. *Pause.* I realized I wasn't gay when I noticed that some of my

photomontages didn't have penises in them.

Man Behind The Counter

Oh, so you're one of those “straighter than thou” fellows who has to be drunk to get into gay sex. Some might find it a bit offensive that you characterize more self-honest people as inherently motivated by lust.

Bob

When I'm ready to give up being a clown, I'll start saying I'm sorry. At least a joke makes most people around feel better. An apology just tends to make most people around feel worse. To get a laugh, you have to make fun of somebody. I think I have a pretty good track record of making fun of myself. Besides, there are other cool people who don't mind laughing at themselves.

Man Behind The Counter

Looks like our friend, there, met your challenge to make the world a happier place. Let me guess: did that stem from some painful generalization regarding his complexion?

Bob

No, from a painful generalization inspired by his racist behavior of being very dishonest about his personal habits with his white playmates.

Man Behind The Counter

You're jealous because he's a bigger, better hypocrite?

Bob

I don't wear masks so that I can exploit people. I understand that most people are bored by that, and equate it with poverty. I don't know what my ultimate reward will be for practicing love, but I do know that when it's dished up, it will be God that I'm facing.

Man Behind The Counter

Oh. So, you claim to see the distinction between love and lust better than the rest of us?

Bob

Love is a concern for another's happiness so strong that it makes you try really hard to see things her way. Lust is a concern for your own happiness so strong that you must warp another's perceptions until she sees things your way. I get that if you want to go through life being a dick, you prefer being lusted after to being loved. You're confident the cards you hold are going to bring you the pot of doubloons sitting on the poker table of life. I guess being the object of lust can seem a lot more flattering than being the object of love.

Man Behind The Counter

That's just it. If you have enough generosity to give somebody a good feeling, maybe the best way you can love him is by making him feel wanted, instead of patronized.

Bob

Well, that's just fine, if you're not evil. I meet kids almost every day who don't know what love is, and would just rather have two scoops of attention on what they think is their terms, until they find out too late they've been had.

Man Behind The Counter

But, if you really have love in your heart and believe in God, then you want to respect other people's experiments in free will, right? No sense in being impatient with Prometheus' fire from heaven.

Scott

*Pause.* To like being flattered better than being saved from myself might not be a luxury I can afford, but it is my right, isn't it?

Man Behind The Counter

And, honestly. A lot of the time, when somebody says, "I love you," he really doesn't know what he means, any more than you do.

Bob

Maybe not. But, if he says, "I'm IN LOVE with you," he's either

devoting himself to your happiness, which ought to be pretty flattering, or he's out to rip you off, the way our fiend, there, is.

#### Man Behind The Counter

“Fiend?” Who are you to judge what is in another man's heart?

#### Bob

I'm the baboon who sits atop the scales of Truth. I'm an observer of the way things go. A tree is known by its fruits, and this guy has a trail of rotting, half-eaten fruit behind him. In a way you're right, though: nobody who fancies himself a man ever wants to hear that he might fall a tad short of enlightenment.

#### Man In Black

*Gestures with a slow rising flick of the forefinger.* No, because once you upset the fragile environment of illusions that keep a REAL MAN from seeing how perfect and independent he isn't, he goes into an ideological frenzy. He desperately grabs at the apron strings of the social matrix that reinforces his ego by reinventing you (the heretical critic) as the enemy and the actual vandal (his role model for worldly success) as the savior.

#### Scott

You come to a big fork in the road when you're looking to break out of the loop you grew up in, or test your luck in the world. A lot want to see if they can even the score by climbing over everyone.

#### Bob

I know. It takes guts to put that sign on your desk that says, “The buck stops here.” *Pause.* I guess our friend, there, is happier have it over his bedroom door as, “The young bucks stop here.”

#### Rock Star

*Sits in a chair that has been mostly out of camera view.* When I understood the difference between the wild party and the concerned party, I drew a line in the sands of time.

Scott

*Turns head.* Where did you come from?

Rock Star

*Folds hands together with elbows on knees, thumbs inward and forefingers together pointing upward, resting against lips. Looks upward for a moment, as if toward the stars.* Door was open. Sorry I'm late. Did I miss the seminar? *Gets up and moves toward case, looking at the contents. (Very calmly:)* My, aren't these some nice crystal spheres?

Man In Black

You haven't missed much. Do you scry with balls? We seem to have lost a little lamb, this evening.

Rock Star

*Smiles.* I mostly just play with them. *Thoughtful pause.* For bringing back little lost sheep, I would probably try one of these. *Steps over to a resin sculpture of a mummy coffin. In its folded hands are crook and flail scepters. He tugs out the crook and raises it into the beam of a track light, slowly twirling it back and forth, as if to gently invite it to awaken its power.*

Man In Black

*Raises eyebrows.* Very good. *Places thumb against jaw and forefinger across upper lip, as if anticipating another intelligent idea. Closes eyes, as if to cooperate with the magick of the crook. (After a few contemplative moments:)* Will you help us?

Rock Star

*Squints. Smiles.* Sure. Scott has my number. *Replaces crook in hand of mummy. (Gesturing circularly with fore and middle finger, as if in blessing or conjuring:)* Discuss amongst yourselves. *Exits.*

Man In Black



*(Looking to Girl:)* I guess I need to wrap up the talk.

Girl Behind The Counter

The serious people in the meeting have asked that you return sometime, and continue when we can do it without the ones who have come in a posture of menace.

Man In Black

Then, there's no sense wasting any time, if we have the Four P's.

Scott

Huh?

Bob

In clerical magick, you need a purpose, a plan, a party, and a prince.

Scott

A prince?

Man Behind The Counter

Someone civilized enough to keep you honest and influential enough to help with your work. He shows the good guys how to raise their standards of behavior so the bad guys will have a harder time rocking their boat.

Scott

You mean, like me, once I have more experience.

Man Behind The Counter

And acclaim as a philanthropist. Experience will show you how to focus and use your truth filters more effectively. A prince is usually an artist who is popular, despite his refusal to compromise his art for the sake of popularity.

Scott

You mean, someone who is a true success, on his own terms.

### Man Behind The Counter

Lady and gentleman artists usually support charities with cash and let art do what it can when it can on the public conscience.

Reinforcing traditional values gets tricky when your mission in life is to help free human minds. Someone like Peter Gabriel manages to work both sides of it, though. He has a heightened spiritual sense, and he's well informed and articulate.

Scott

You mean... a true mentor has to be a wise man, himself.

Bob

He has to be able to see reason. Lord Carnarvon didn't die from the curse of King Tut. He died from the curse of Howard Carter after they disagreed on how to treat some of the objects from the tomb.

Man In Black

*Looks about, as if waiting to make sure it is his turn to speak. Lunar power is a qualitative concern. Witches and wizards who aren't charlatans are usually looking for a hand, rather than a hand out. When Richard Gere and Robert Thurman support the Dalai Lama, the value of their moral contribution outweighs that of their financial contribution. With problems like persecution and genocide, just throwing money at them doesn't always help. Speaking of King Tut, should we go to the Anubis chapel and see that all is in readiness to make the right impression on our new prince? Grins, making sure that the expression in his eyes has a dark quality to underscore the serious side of their project.*

Scott

Hail Anubis, slaughterer of unfit Pharaohs!

Man In Black

*(As if to reinforce piety:)* Hail Set, instructor of Horus in archery techniques and wrestling holds!

Bob

Especially my personal favorite move, the Ankle Grab! *Looks about, as if to see if the others were annoyed by his comment. Exeunt.*