

(Mary) Todd

By

Dennis Bush

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Dennis Bush would like to offer special thanks to Lester Thomas Shane for his masterful direction of the original production and encore run, and to Xavier Reminick for his incomparable, extraordinary performance in the original production and encore run, and Pam Eckert for costumes and incredible support. Dennis is boundlessly grateful to All Out Arts and the Fresh Fruit Festival – especially Louis Lopardi, Liz Thaler, and Frank Calo – for their support of this play and their advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community.

Thanks to the actors who inspire him, the directors and producers who bring his work from the page to production, the publishers who support and represent his work with such enthusiasm, and Martin W. Scott for everything else.

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(Mary)Todd had its World Premiere production in New York City at the Fresh Fruit Festival, sponsored by All Out Arts, in July, 2014, with direction by Lester Thomas Shane, featuring the following cast:

Todd Lincoln.....Xavier Reminick
Recorded Voice.....Nick Coleman

An encore production of *(Mary)Todd* was presented in New York City at the Fresh Fruit Festival, sponsored by All Out Arts, in July, 2015, with direction by Lester Thomas Shane, featuring the following cast:

Todd Lincoln..... Xavier Reminick
Recorded Voice.....Nick Coleman

CAST: 1 Male, and 1 recorded male voice (a single line)

TODD LINCOLN male, late twenties/early to mid-thirties, brazen, completely comfortable with himself and his body, wishes he was as fearless as people think he is

RECORDED VOICE male, 30s, great warmth in his voice

TIME: Now.

PLACE: The living room of a small house in rural Kentucky. The decor is thrift-store-meets-hoarder. A sofa with mismatched cushions is next to a ramshackle bar, which flanks a rolling rack of elaborate mid-19th-century dresses.

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At rise, TODD LINCOLN strikes a regal pose, cocktail raised. He wears a Civil War-era hoopskirt, and a frilly blouse, slightly undone, reveals a bit of corset. Combat boots are hidden by the skirt. His wig is slightly askew..

TODD. Imagine going out for a night on the town and ending up with your husband's head in your lap... *(Taking a sloppy gulp of his cocktail)* When the police arrived on the scene, their first assumption was that Abe was going down on me. "Don't let us interrupt," one of the cops said, as he pointed at Abe's head, face-down in my crotch... *(With contempt)* Don't let us interrupt... Blood was pouring out the back of his head, and I was fully dressed but, somehow, the cop thought oral sex was in progress. Which was ludicrous. Because, if anyone was gonna go down on anyone, it would've been *me* going down on *Abe*, not *him* going down on *me*. And not in a car in the parking lot of the Quickie-Mart at 9 on a Friday night in April. Or any other month. But logic goes out the window, when a bullet comes in. *(Another big sip)* A gunshot can definitely put a damper on a date night... *(Another sip)* After the cops figured out that Abe had actually been shot, they wouldn't let me move. Even after the ambulance people pulled him out of the car, I had to sit there in the passenger seat and listen to the cops and the medical examiner make small talk while they took pictures of my bloody crotch and pulled bits of Abe's skull off my dress, the upholstery, and the dashboard. And then they decided that my dress was evidence and that I had to take it off. Right there. In the parking lot of the Quickie-Mart. While they stood around, laughing and making crude comments. Like they'd never seen a guy in mid-19th-century drag before. *(He does a genteel turn, removing his blouse in the process)* A blouse and corset on top, but not period-appropriate undergarments down below. I told the sergeant I wasn't wearing pantalettes. And he said whatever I had on was fine. Thing is, with a skirt like this, you can get away with being a

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lot more... *free* than you can in a skin-tight outfit. This ain't no RuPaul shit. No tucking required. I'm not serving up realness. I'm *real*. And I go commando under the skirt. *(Pause)* The cops weren't expecting that. *(Striding downstage, he takes off the skirt. Naked, except for the corset and combat boots, he strikes an aggressive pose)* You weren't expecting it either... But that's the way it goes. Shit just happens and you don't get a vote. You have to deal with it, whether you were expecting it or not. *(Yanking off his wig)* So deal with it. *(With a pose)* Bam! *(Gulping the rest of his cocktail)* Contrary to popular belief, being naked doesn't make you vulnerable. It makes you powerful. If your dick is hanging out, you're controlling the moment. Everybody in the room is distracted. Distracted by your dick. They're comparing, judging, lusty, obsessing, and a hundred other things. You're the only one on your game. You're leading a full-frontal assault. And you're the man. *I'm* the man. The motherfuckin' man. I'm a bottom. I own that. But it doesn't mean I'm some punk-ass bitch who really wants to be a woman. I know about psychology. I took a class. My drag is political theatre. It's a psychological mind-fuck. And it's no accident. *(Aggressively)* It's no fucking accident. It's part of the plan. A grand metaphysical plan. *(Pause)* Hold that thought... *(He turns upstage, searching through a pile of laundry next to the sofa)* I'm droppin' some complex shit on you and I can't have you be distracted by my dick... or my ass. *(Shouted, while upstage)* Somebody out there is going to be thinking about my ass when they're jacking off tonight. That's just a fact. *(He finds a pair of basketball shorts with ripped leg openings. He steps into them, without taking off his boots)* That's what I deal in – facts. So, when I tell you what I'm going to tell you, you can be sure that it's the God's honest truth... But I've got to work up to it. You need to be properly lubricated before I let the little girl out of the well. *(Quickly clarifying)* That's an expression, like "let the cat out of the bag." I don't actually have a little girl in a well. I picked it from from a customer at work. She says it all the time. *(Mimicking her)* "Don't keep that gossip to yourself, sweetie. Let the little girl out of the well." She may actually have a little girl in a well. I wouldn't put it past her. She does three loads of laundry every day. Always sheets and pillow cases. And assorted men's underwear in

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different sizes. I see a lot of peculiar loads at work. I'm the assistant manager at the Jesus-Washed-Me-White-As-Snow Laundromat and Pentecostal Church. Monday through Saturday, it's a laundromat. But on Sunday, they set up extra chairs and Darlene Matthews brings in her karaoke machine for hymns. Every Sunday morning, they answer the question, "What would Jesus sing?" (*Making another cocktail*) I don't talk much about my personal life with the customers at work. I'll talk about other people, though. I'll let the little girl out of the well, from time to time, if I can find out something juicy about somebody else in the process. I certainly don't talk about Abe or the shooting or about reincarnation. (*Takes a thirsty sip of the cocktail*) Reincarnation is a concept that requires lubrication. It needs to be explained carefully. So people aren't freaked out. That's something I learned from Abe. Making people freak out doesn't help them understand your point of view. And my point of view comes from a lot of research and two really intense past-life regression workshops at the Holiday Inn Express, up off the interstate. Everybody else was getting run-of-the-mill past lives, like a Roman gladiator... Medieval kitchen wench... a Jack Russell terrier. But mine was specific. And vivid. And amazing. (*A deep breath and sip of his cocktail*) I am... the reincarnation of... (*Sliding down the back of his shorts, he slaps his ass like a drumroll*) Mary Todd Lincoln! (*He turns downstage, shoves his shorts down to his ankles, then, stands up and raises his arms like a marathoner crossing the finish line*) Mary. Todd. Motherfucking-Lincoln! (*Pulling up his shorts*) I feel your envy washing over me like a wave of piss-warm ocean water on a summer day at the beach. (*A sip of his cocktail*) I feel your envy as Mary and as Todd Lincoln. My name – the name on my birth certificate – is Todd Lincoln. Todd is Mary Todd Lincoln's maiden name – in case you were confused and thought it was her middle name. (*Testifying*) My mother told me that, if I was a girl, they were gonna name me Mary. (*Further proof*) I was born and raised and currently live in Lincoln, Kentucky – which is the only town named for Abraham Lincoln to have been named for him *before* he was President. (*The most important fact*) And I was in a four-year-and-four-month relationship – a *marriage* – with Abe – *my* Abe – whose last name was – and this is a total fact – Lincoln. And he was shot

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in the back of the head. He was assassinated by the very people he was trying to help. In the Quickie-Mart parking lot at 9 on a Friday night in April. *(Taking a deep breath, overcome with emotion)* Every time I think about it, I'm back in that car, like it was happening again. Right now. *(Reliving it)* I hear the rap music playing so loud in the car a couple of parking spaces to the left of us. And another car full of white boys pulls in and parks between us and the rap-music car. And the white boys tell the rap-music-car boys to turn off their *n-word* music. They say the actual n-word. I won't. And one of the Black boys in the rap-music car yells, "It's Eminem. He's a white dude." And the white boys say the Black boys are full of shit. "No white dude would rap because that's just like sucking dick on the church steps." And they go back and forth yelling all kinda stupid shit. So, Abe leans out the driver's side window and tells the white boys, "The other guys are right. It's Eminem and he *is* white." And without batting an eye, one of the white boys pulls a gun and I say, "Oh my God," and Abe turns to look at me and the white boy shoots him in the back of the head. And, as Abe falls face-first into my lap, the white boys throw their car in reverse and back out of the parking lot and out onto the road and out of sight. *(Slowly draining the rest of the cocktail into his mouth, swishing it around, and swallowing)* The next few minutes – three or four or fifteen or twenty – are a blank. I think there was screaming. It may have been me. The sirens didn't come for a while. And when the cops finally arrived – like party guests who didn't have the courtesy to apologize for being so late – it was a clusterfuck. And I know about clusterfucks. *(As he makes himself another cocktail)* I've been in group sex situations where the logistics were poorly handled and the result was too many dicks trying to get in one hole. Or nobody knowing whose dick was going in which hole. Or a dick trying to get into the hole of a guy who had no interest in having a dick in his hole. The cops arriving at the Quickie-Mart were like a bunch of guys at a sex party standing around holding their own dicks instead of actively participating. You'd think they'd have procedures to follow. You'd think they'd do more than stand around and talk to each other like they were about to start a circle jerk. I get that it was a bigot cop's wet dream to show up at a crime scene and find a carload of Black boys

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crying and a guy in drag with his husband's head in his lap. It must have taken incredible restraint not to laugh when one of the Black boys said, "Some white dude shot the white dude who's with the other white dude in the white car." And it must have been a bit of a mind-fuck for the cop who thought Abe was going down on me, when he realized that Abe and I have the same last name. Even though we're not brothers. Or cousins. Or related-by-blood in any way. Or legally married. Or anything more than the beneficiaries of a same-surname coincidence. And that we were sitting in the Quickie-Mart parking lot in the town of Lincoln in a white Lincoln Continental. Which aren't even made anymore. But, aside from the blood and skull pieces splattered all over the white interior, it looked like it just rolled off the assembly line. Which is what a lot of crime scenes must feel like to cops and paramedics and people like that. Assembly lines. Everybody has a job and the victims and the witnesses and the evidence are just parts that have to be assembled into a report... So, when the head cop – no pun intended – told me to take off my dress because it was evidence, and to stand in the parking lot in nothing but my boots, a corset, and an expression of noble composure, I was able to do that. And it's why I was able to block the laughter and the crude comments out of my mind. I've been a stripper. In Chicago. When I was in my early twenties. I know how to block shit out of my mind and proceed with the task at hand. You do what you have to do and you get the fuck on with your life. *(Citing an example)* I've had men pay me to engage in certain sexual activities with them. I'm not a babe in the woods. I've been a babe *with* wood. And one of the cops standing off to the side and trying not to look at me, while I was next-to-naked in the Quickie-Mart parking lot, is someone who knew about my wood. When I was not yet sixteen – and a bunch of times after that – he paid me twenty dollars to let him suck my dick. Which didn't seem abusive in any way, except for the fact that he wasn't very good at it. *(With a quick sip of his cocktail)* But it was still a blow job and still twenty bucks. *(With another quick sip of his cocktail)* And twenty bucks is twenty bucks. No matter whether you earn it all at once or a buck at a time... I first met Abe when he stuffed a dollar bill into my jockstrap, when I was dancing at an underground club in Chicago. He waited till I was

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relatively stationary and he slid the dollar into my jock and said, “I appreciate the sense of freedom with which you dance.” That’s a word-for-word quote. (*Repeating it, smiling at the memory*) “I appreciate the sense of freedom with which you dance.” I don’t think I’d ever heard anyone other than an English teacher use “with which” in a sentence. And this wasn’t a “with which” kind of club. To get in, you had to have a membership card and to get one of those you had to be referred, in person, by somebody who was already a member. It’s how they kept from getting shut down by the cops. Because there was shit going on in that place that you couldn’t get away with in a regular strip club. I’m talking full-out sex between dancers and customers, and sex between the customers – when all the dancers were busy. And it was hardcore action. The kind of stuff that would make most people blush or look away. So, Abe could have groped my dick when he put the dollar in my jock, or he could’ve pulled the jock all the way off and put the dollar on the floor next to where I was dancing. I’d have let him. I’d have let him do all that and more. Because he was classy. And he had manners – which I guess comes with being classy. And he made eye contact. With my eyes. He didn’t just stare at my dick or try to slip a finger or two up my ass. He looked me right in the eyes and said, “You’re beautiful. I’d like to get to know you.” I wasn’t sure whether to blush, laugh, or grind my dick against his hand. I wasn’t prepared for the kind of interaction he was suggesting. I wasn’t prepared for *him*. Two minutes before Abe showed up, a guy slapped my ass and told me, “I wanna fuck you in the alley behind my house, while my wife is asleep upstairs.” *That’s* what I was used to. Not some pretty boy talking about “freedom” and “with which” and getting to know me. So I ignored him. I decided that he was a flake or a freak or just some guy trying to fuck with my head. But, hey, thanks for the dollar. I said that. “Hey, thanks for the dollar.” And he pulled out a five, pointed to the picture on the front and said, “That’s me. I’m Abe Lincoln.” I figured he was high on something. Something that would make him delusional. Charming and friendly, but delusional. This was long before I knew I was Mary Todd Lincoln reincarnated. I was just Todd Lincoln: Stripper... slut... survivor. And to survive I had to get my ass off the bar where I was dancing and up to the private room where I

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was supposed to do a shower show for a regular customer. He was paying a hundred and fifty bucks to piss on me in a plexiglass shower. I got to keep half of that one fifty, and rent was due, so piss away, Mr. Man... Sometimes, it took him a few minutes to work up to it. And the flow was more trickle than garden hose. I told him how hot he was and how much I looked forward to seeing him. He kept coming back and booking another session, so I guess he appreciated the ego strokes. He was in the scrotumnal (*pronounced skro-TUHM-nuhl*) phase of life. (*Explaining*) When your face is all shriveled like a ballsack. A *scrotum*. (*Thoroughly clarified*) The scrotumnal phase. Some of you know what I'm talking about. (*Back to the story*) So there I am, in the plexiglass stall and Mr. Man-in-the-scrotumnal-phase-of-his-life is doing his best to give me a golden shower he can be proud of, and I look up and see Abe Lincoln-Five-Dollar-Bill standing in the corner watching. So I put two and two together and decided that he was a voyeur. One of those people who likes to watch and comment and maybe jerk off a few feet away. Except he turned his head and looked out the door, like he was there in the room, but not watching. Which either made him a shitty voyeur or there was something going on outside the room that was more interesting to him than me getting pissed on in a plexiglass shower stall. After he was finished his pitiful piss, Mr. Man tweaked my nipple and put some rolled-up bills in the tip cup next to the shower stall. He'd already paid for the session. The manager took care of all that and gave us our cut after we'd done whatever the appointment was for. Made it easier than having to make change or have a credit card reader attached to our dicks. That wouldn't be practical anyway. (*A tangent*) Maybe one on a chain around our necks. (*Returning to the story*) So Mr. Man leaves and Abe Lincoln-Five-Dollar-Bill looks back in my direction and I say, "You must've missed the meeting on how to be a good voyeur" and I turn on the shower to wash off the guy's piss. And Abe walks toward me and says, "I'm not a voyeur. I just wanted to make sure you were okay. You left without saying goodbye, so I asked the manager and he told me where you were and said I could watch for fifty bucks." I tell him, "You didn't get your money's worth," as I'm toweling off outside the shower stall. "Do you believe in fate?" he asks me, while I'm bent over, ass-up,

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drying off my feet. “If you’re gonna tell me that it’s fate that your dick gets in my ass, tonight, I’m gonna fall on the floor laughing,” I tell him. And I would’ve. I’d have fallen right over and laughed like a crazy person. And he says, “No... In the larger sense.” (*A bit of a tangent*) Which didn’t mean shit to me, especially since I wanted to get down to the manager and claim half of the fifty bucks he charged Abe to watch me get pissed on. If you don’t jump on that shit right away, the manager tells you he don’t know shit about what you’re talking about. And half of fifty bucks is half of fifty bucks. Which is twenty-five bucks, in case you didn’t think I could do that kind of math in my head. (*Returning to his story*) And Abe put his hand on my arm and said, “Wait...” and I looked in his eyes and I was fuckin’ hypnotized. Like I couldn’t remember my own name or where I was. He asked me why I worked at the club and I told him that I liked to eat and pay rent. And he said, “There are other ways to make money.” And I told him that, if he was one of those rescue-missionary-Jesus-people, he probably should’ve stayed outside the club and not come inside where all the nasty stuff goes on. And then it occurred to me that he couldn’t have gotten into the club without knowing somebody who was a member and having that guy vouch for him in person. He must’ve seen the wheels turning and figured out what I was thinking, because he said, “I’m acquainted with the manager.” (*Grabbing his cocktail*) Well, okay, then. (*Taking a big sip*) So he asked what time I got off and I asked in what sense, and he laughed... And he kissed me. And I kind of got weak in the knees – which could have been because I’d been on my feet for the past six hours without a break. (*Taking a quick sip*) I said, “I’m gonna get my money from your friend the manager, head home, go to bed and dream that I have a bathtub.” He didn’t know what the fuck to say to that. Which was a good thing. It gave me the feeling that I was in control of the conversation for the first time since he started talking to me. He tilted his head like a puppy who’s confused. So I explained that, at my apartment, I had a shower but not a bathtub and that, after a long night like I just had, there was nothing I’d like more than soaking in a hot tub. So he said, “Well, then, you’ll just have to come home with me. Because I’ve got a jacuzzi tub that I never use and there’s nothing *I’d* like more

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than to have you relax in it while we get acquainted. “Acquainted like you and the manager of the club?” I asked him, with my eyes all squinted so he knew I could put two and two together. “Not even close,” he said, taking my hand like he was my boyfriend. We got in his car – a Volvo – and drove to his place, where he made me an omelet and some tea and brought it to me while I was in his jacuzzi tub – that was filled with bubbles that smelled like vanilla and something I didn’t recognize, but it was a nice – and he leaned over and kissed me and said, “I want to be the bubbles in your bath... In the larger sense.” (*A beat, then, confrontational*) Shit like that doesn’t happen. Not in real life. Not to me... But it did. And I wasn’t prepared for it. He didn’t play by the rules. At least, not the rules I played by. We didn’t have sex the first night we were together, which was sure as shit different from what I was used to. I got out of the jacuzzi bubble bath at his apartment and fell asleep on his bed before we had a chance to fool around. I guess we could’ve fucked in the tub, but that’s never as good as you think it’s gonna be. And, in the morning, he woke me up with homemade cinnamon rolls. Like, “Good morning. I made cinnamon rolls.” And he didn’t even ask me for a blow job. And I would definitely have sucked his dick. Shit, for homemade cinnamon rolls, I’d have gotten pretty damn freaky. Freakier than usual. That night, he showed up at the club with flowers and asked me out. While I was dancing. Which was sweet. And odd. Like what the fuck was I supposed to do with the flowers while I was dancing? Stick ‘em up my ass? I didn’t know the protocol. It was the first time anybody ever got me flowers. And the first time anybody asked me out. Like formally and specifically. So I said yes. And the next day we went out on a date. An actual date. For lunch. For those of you who aren’t aware, a lunch date is what civilized people do when they want to get to know each other without the expectation of sex happening at the end of the date. I learned that from Abe... Two weeks later, he asked me to move in with him. But I said no. Not till we had sex. I’m not the kind of guy who moves in with somebody without taking his cock for a test drive. So, if he wanted me to live with him, I said, “You better throw me down and fuck me like you own my hole.” (*Quick beat. A cocky smile.*) I know some of you are gonna use that line the next time you’re having sex. I

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would bet my balls on that. And I like my balls. A lot. So I wouldn't make the bet unless it was a hundred percent sure thing. (*Taking a quick gulp of his cocktail*) So we had sex... We fucked... He fucked me, according to our pre-determined sex-position preferences. (*Wistfully, working the moment, before speaking the truth*) And it was... mediocre. (*A quick sip*) Good enough for me to move in with him, but not so good that I'd put him in the top twenty or thirty... or fifty people I've had sex with. (*Flopping down onto the sofa*) He got better. I made sure of that. For Abe's benefit and my own. If you're the more sexually experienced one in the relationship, it's your responsibility – your *obligation* – to pass along those skills to your sex partner. And why wouldn't you? Unless you were an asshole who likes to feel sexually superior. And that's not who I am. Never have been. I'm a teacher... A *giver*. And I give... *gave*... way more than I took with Abe. Let's just get that right out in the open... Right on the table. Right where everybody can see it. (*With his legs spread wide apart*) You're thinking about my dick right now. Or my ass. Once somebody has shown you their junk, and then they talk about putting something out where everybody can see it, you can't help but think you're gonna get another look at their pleasure parts. Oooh, I like that. "Pleasure parts." I wonder if anyone has coined that as an official synonym for dick, balls, and ass. (*Quick pause; considering*) Breasts and vaginas could be considered pleasure parts, too, I guess. If you have them. Or if they bring you pleasure. I could look at breasts and vaginas all day and not give a shit. But you knew that. I can appreciate the female body – from an aesthetic, artistic perspective. And I can see how a straight dude or a lesbian could be attracted to the female body. But that doesn't mean I want to have sex with a woman. I've never been confused – sexually or otherwise. (*A simple truth*) I didn't have to fuck a girl to know I didn't want to fuck girls. (*He grabs a box of Captain Crunch, reaches his hand in and begins to eat the cereal, right out of the box*) Apparently, Abe had girlfriends – a lot of them – when he was growing up. I didn't get that information from Abe. Not directly. He didn't hide it. He just didn't think it was something I needed to know. And I didn't. No self-respecting gay dude wants to think that the dick that's fucking his ass has a history of fucking pussy. A long and vibrant

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history, according to Abe's mother and sister. (*Crunching a mouthful of cereal, his mouth barely closed*) That's what they said, though not in those exact words. His mother called it, "a long and vibrant history of enjoying the company of young ladies." But that means fucking pussy. It does. No two ways around it. (*Another mouthful of cereal*) I met them – his mother and his sister – when they showed up at our apartment – the one I moved into after Abe fucked me. It was an unexpected introduction. A surprise. (*Another mouthful of cereal*) I'm not a fan of surprises. They're selfish. The person who arranged for the surprise gets all the enjoyment – the pleasure – out of it. The person who gets unexpectedly ambushed is the victim. Coordinating a surprise is a form of bullying. So, in this one case, Abe bullied me. He knew his mother and sister were going to be in Chicago. He'd even made their hotel reservations. But he didn't tell me. He didn't warn me, because he didn't want me to stress out about meeting them. That's what he said. That was his logic. So, he figured if they just showed up out of the black-and-blue, they'd get to meet the "real me." I don't make a habit of *not* being real, so I'm not sure where he got the idea that I'd be somehow *less* real if I knew they were coming. It's not like I'd pull down my pants and show 'em my junk. Or my ass. I'll do that to you. But this is a whole different hoedown. And Abe's mother and sister got more of a hoedown than they were prepared for. (*Continuing to speak, as he shoves his shorts down and scratches his balls*) They showed up just as I was getting ready to walk out the door. In full mid-19th-century drag. (*He shoves the shorts all the way to the floor, steps out of them, and scampers to the rack of dresses, locating a particular skirt and blouse*) In *this* skirt and blouse. (*Putting on the skirt, he continues to speak*) I could've left the shorts on, just now, but it seemed wrong. (*As he's buttoning the blouse*) It'd feel anachronistic, and not in a good way. (*Back to his story*) So, ding-dong, the doorbell rings. Abe says, "Baby, could you get that," and I did. (*He mimes opening the door*) And there they stood. Abe's mother and sister, in practically matching wool crepe suits, ready for cocktails and dinner. And there I was. (*A pause*) There was the pausiest pause in the history of pauses, as they stared at me. It probably didn't help that I asked, "Who the fuck are you and what the

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fuck do you want?” *(A quick sip of his cocktail)* “It’s my mother and sister,” Abe announced, without getting up from the sofa. “Tell them to come in.” So, in addition to being the surprised, foul-mouthed boyfriend in mid-19th-century drag, I was also the doorman. Abe’s mother practically hugged the wall as she moved past me. I don’t think she wanted to touch my hoop skirt. His sister just looked at me like I was shit on a stick and pranced past me like an uppity poodle. Introductions were made. Hands were shaken. I apologized for the harshness of my greeting. I explained that, as they probably guessed from my reaction, their arrival was unexpected. Then they apologized. Both his mother and his sister. Apparently, Abe had played Tony in his high school’s production of *You Can’t Take It With You* and he thought a similar kind of surprise forced meeting between his mother and sister and me would have the same happy results as in the play. His mother smiled and said, “Oh, yes, I remember when you were in that,” like somebody who knew enough to pretend she wasn’t annoyed. The woman had skills.

(Munching a mouthful of cereal) Abe’s plan was for us all to have a quick drink together, then, they were going to grab a bite to eat before joining me for the show I was doing that night. I was the host of a weekly queer cabaret for social justice. I think Abe’s mother and sister heard “cabaret” and figured it was gonna be some Liza Minnelli kind of shit. Nothing against Liza or Kander and Ebb, but life *isn’t* a cabaret. It’s a clusterfuck. Or a clusterfuck waiting to happen. And I wasn’t properly lubed. *(He tosses a mouthful of cereal into his mouth and washes it down with a swig of his cocktail)* The headliner at the queer cabaret for social justice was a lesbian with a tattoo between her tits. A tattoo of a big, veiny cock with cum squirting out on her neck and collarbone. *(As if it should be obvious to everyone)* It’s visual irony! *(Laughing)* A lesbian with a *tit-fucking tattoo* between her tits. It’s genius. *(A quick beat)* Abe’s mother didn’t have an appreciation for irony. She didn’t have an appreciation for anything. She giggled like a teenager, when Fernando was doing spoken-word poetry about the challenges of being a female-to-male transgendered fireman. Granted, the line about being a fireman without a hose was funny, but Abe’s mom was laughing way before that part. And his sister... His sister just sat

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there looking like she had a mouthful of shit. And I know something about having a mouthful of shit. I have experience with it. (*Quickly clarifying*) Not by choice. But that's the way it goes. Shit – sometimes, actual shit – just happens, and you don't get a vote. You have to deal with it. Even if it's in your mouth. And if your man surprises you with a load of shit in the form of his mother and sister, you have to decide if it's a dealbreaker – if *they're* a dealbreaker. That's what I was deciding, as I got ready to do the closing number in the show. I almost didn't go on. Stupid fear, that's all it was. I was giving them all the power. And that's a victim's choice. And I will not be a victim. So, when the music started, I took a step through the shimmering mylar curtain and I launched into my act – a combination of truth and striptease. (*Recreating the performance; taking off his blouse as he speaks*) "I will not allow... what you think of me to have more value than my own self-worth. (*With growing intensity; bending over, and taking off his boots*) I will not allow... the path that you've followed to be perceived as the only acceptable path... (*With religious fervor; taking off his corset*) I will not allow... myself – or anyone I love – to forget how *difficult* and how *important* it is to be *different* in a world that wants everybody to be pretty much the same.... (*With pure simplicity; taking off his skirt, standing naked in a single spotlight*) I will not allow myself... to be afraid to be myself. (*A beat*) And when I finished, Abe ran up onto the stage and hugged me. And kissed me. With a lot of tongue. In front of his mom and sister and everyone. And he said, "I love you." Which he hadn't said before. Except once, when we were having sex, but that's not the same thing. (*With misty eyes*) And I cried. Like a punk-ass bitch. People laughed at me crying, but I didn't give a shit. (*He puts the basketball shorts back on, adds a tank top and slides into a pair of slippers, as he continues to speak*) A week later, we were loading up a truck and headed out of Chicago. (*Clarifying*) Not because Abe's mom and sister were bitches. They left the morning after the cabaret show. His mother's parting words were, "I never expected my son to get mixed up with a dress-wearing homosexual. Especially one who takes *off* the dress -- and everything else -- in *public*." I wanted to tell her, "Shit happens, and you don't get a vote," but I didn't. I just smiled and said,

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"Surprise." It made Abe laugh. We fucked like wild animals that day. It seemed like it went on for three or four hours, but it could've been forty-five minutes. Your sense of time gets distorted when you're fucking like a wild animal. After we were done, Abe said, "Let's hop in the shower. And let's go live somewhere else." "Where?" I asked. He was ready with a plan: "We could move to Kentucky and live in your hometown." It's pretty much the last place I expected him to suggest. I *left* Lincoln. *On purpose*. I wanted to live someplace where there were people like me. In Lincoln, I always felt like a shit stain on a white linen tablecloth – unwelcome and a bit of a mystery how it got there in the first place. But Abe loved the idea. He said that, together, we would claim the town for ourselves like colonists taking over a Native American village. I may not be remembering that exactly right. But we were definitely going to make Lincoln our own homo-paradise. I didn't think the move would happen as fast as it did. But, when Abe got excited about a plan, he put things in motion. Right away. He got things done. That's a very good quality to have in a boyfriend. (*Correcting himself*) A partner. (*Another correction*) A not-legally-wed-but-still-feels-that-way husband. He called my boss at the club and told him I wouldn't be working there anymore. He gave me a debit card and, every week, money just appeared in the account. It was very nice. I highly recommend it. He rented his apartment – which he apparently *owned*. I didn't think people owned apartments. Houses, yes, but not apartments. But Abe did. He owned his apartment with the giant jacuzzi tub. Everything *I* owned could fit in two duffel bags and one big box. The rest of the stuff we loaded in the truck was Abe's. He said the timing was perfect. The first half of his grant was completed and the second half needed to happen in a rural environment. He's a sociologist. I don't know whether I told you that or not. Sociologists get grants – from people and companies who give out grants to do things. Like studying how and why people do shit. Do *things*. Abe's grant was "to study the essential differences between urban and rural social structures arising from the sexual interactions that are unique to each cultural construct." Whatever the fuck that means. I found it a few days ago. I was going through his desk looking for anything that was important. He had the grant paperwork in a red folder,

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so I figured that meant it was important. I read the first page over and over. I don't know why. I just did it. And I memorized it. Sometimes, shit just gets stuck in your brain whether you know what it means or not. Abe would think it was funny. *(Clarifying)* That I memorized the stuff about his grant. You should have heard his laugh. It was like a little kid. Like a boy with no hair on his balls. A little-boy giggle coming out of Abe's grown-up man face. That's what I remember most about the drive from Chicago to here. His laughter. When we got off the Interstate near Lincoln, he stopped laughing. He got all serious and said that, despite my dislike for surprises, he had one more for me. I didn't know what to think. Or expect. Or *do*. And then we pulled up to a pretty white house with a wraparound porch and – as God as my motherfuckin' witness – a pale pink picket fence. Abe grabbed my hand and said, "Welcome home, sweet pickle." And it was. It *is*. This house is our home. He bought it from Harlan Jackson. Did it all through his lawyer. *(Clarifying)* Abe's lawyer, not Harlan's. Harlan wouldn't know a lawyer if one fucked him on the porch. And he arranged to have the fence painted as a political statement. That's what he said. "I had the fence painted as a political statement!" He learned things from me, too. And as he carried me over the threshold, I noticed a sign with fancy lettering, next to the front door: "The Lincoln's – All who enter in peace and love are welcome."
(Wistfully) Abe got things done. *(He opens a child-size container of applesauce and dumps the contents into his mouth)* I got things done, too. I wasn't just some slacker bitch living off Abe. Before the end of our first week in the white house with the pink fence, I had a job. Nobody was hiring, but that didn't stop me. I'm resourceful. I marched into the Jesus-Washed-Me-White-As-Snow Laundromat and Pentecostal Church, and convinced Bobby Robinson that he needed my help. He's the owner and manager. And it didn't take much convincing. I had a secret weapon... an ace in the hole: A pair of Abe's dirty underwear in a Ziploc bag, to be specific. Bobby used to give me free meat from his dad's butcher shop in exchange for letting him borrow my sweaty singlet after wrestling practice, when we were in high school. I'd take it off, hand it to him, and he'd go into the janitor's closet and sniff it while he jacked off. That's not a kink you grow out of. So, Bobby can drive

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around town with his wife and kids like he's in a parade for family values, and he can pretend to be as born-again Pentecostal as he wants, but I know what turns his crank and I wasn't afraid to use that knowledge to get myself a job. And a week later, I got a bonus, when I came up with a genius way to increase profits and provide Bobby with a steady flow of dirty underwear. We started offering a service: Customers who don't want to do their own laundry can drop it off and we wash it, fold it, and have it ready for 'em to pick up the next day. People who are too lazy to do their own laundry are more likely to have plenty of funk on their junk. too. That's the bonus for Bobby. He does the sorting. That way, he can sniff out the ripest briefs and boxers. *(Clarifying)* He's only into guy's underwear and sports gear. Finding a really rank, sweat-and-piss-stained jockstrap in somebody's laundry bag is like hitting the jackpot. Whenever he finds one of those, he disappears into his office for a marathon sniff-and-stroke session. I watch him sometimes. That's how I know what he does. And he likes it when I watch. He's a freak that way. *(Taking a gulp of his cocktail)* If you thought that freaks only exist in big cities and nasty sex clubs, you were mistaken. You were *wrong* – wrong as a load of cum with blood in it. Which is what Abe was. *(Quickly clarifying)* *Wrong* – not a load of cum with blood in it. He believed that freaks are an urban creation. He was naive. He'd been sheltered. Which means he probably had exposure to more freaks than I did. Upper middle class suburbia is crawling with 'em. People who look the most normal are the ones who like the sickest, perviest shit. Preachers and politicians? They like bondage and water sports. Guys married to women but who really want dick? They want you to call 'em "faggot" as they suck your cock. Dudes who were in the military – especially back when they couldn't ask or tell – they like choke 'n poke or sex in a public place where there's a chance they could get caught. *(Quick pause)* Choke 'n poke might be a new concept for you. Sorry. Sometimes, I forget that everyone hasn't had the wide range of sexual experiences that I've had. So, I'll break it down for you: Choke 'n poke is when you choke the guy you're fucking. *While* you're fucking him. To deprive his brain of oxygen at just the right moment so as to enhance his orgasm. Like auto-erotic asphyxiation, except that *you're* doing it *to*

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him instead of *him* doing it to *himself*. (*A bit of helpful information*) It can be hot. You just have to be careful not to choke him all the way out. (*A sip of his cocktail*) I know about all these complicated social interactions – and I’m not even a sociologist like Abe. Street smarts can be way more valuable than shit you learn in college. Especially where sex is concerned. Like when Abe said he wanted to fuck a Black dude, but he decided that it’d be racist because the only reason he wanted to do it was to find out if fucking a Black dude was any different than fucking a White dude. He said, if he was attracted to a particular, specific Black guy, it’d be a different matter, because then the desire to fuck him would be based on attraction and not just the curiosity of some personal research project. “Black men are objectified enough in society, as it is, baby,” he explained. “I don’t wanna perpetuate that.” Which is bullshit, in this case. Since Abe wanted to *fuck* a Black guy and not *get* fucked by one, he wasn’t contributing to any objectification. The objectification is based on the not-true-in-my-personal-experience theory that all Black men have big dicks. It’s the big Black dick that’s being objectified, not the man attached to it. (*A beat, as he lets his idea wash over him*) Christ, I’m deep. And, anyway, if he was curious if fucking a Black dude was different than fucking a White dude, he should fuck fifty of each and take notes. You can’t decide if fucking a Black dude is different than fucking a White dude if you only fuck *one* Black dude. He could be a lousy lay. (*An aside*) And many of ‘em are. (*Back to his theorizing*) He could have asslips like a jelly donut. (*As he looks through things piled on a table*) Taken on their own, asslips and jelly donuts are both good things, but nobody – at least not me – wants to deal with asslips that are so puffy and lumpy and purple that it looks like a day-old jelly donut has been hot-glued to the outside of the asshole. (*Focused mostly on his search*) Reflect on that, while I look for the jelly donut I had left from the dozen I brought home from work yesterday. Some woman left ‘em laying on top of the soap machine. She had her hands full with a little toddler that could’ve been half-monkey from the looks of it. It was running around the laundromat screaming and the woman keep chasin’ after it, cursin’ and smackin’ it across the head. I had a good mind to shove ‘em both in the extra-large front-loading washer and tell ‘em to

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hold their breath while they spun around like the Holy Spirt at a healing. *(Finding the box with one remaining jelly donut)* Hallelujah! *(Stuffing the donut into his mouth)* Halle-fuckin’-lujah! *(Struggling to be understood, with his mouth full of donut)* So, I told Abe to fuck a Black man. Or five, or twenty, or fifty of ‘em. I told him to do what he needed to do to satisfy his curiosity. Call it research, call it “gathering empirical data,” call it whatever you want. If you’re curious about something involving sex, I say do it, so you can move on. Otherwise, the curiosity takes on a life of its own and it becomes more interesting... more compelling than what’s happening in your real life. But Abe said, “No,” he didn’t need to do any such thing. He was just, “postulating a theoretical question,” or some bullshit like that. Of course, two days later he came back from interviewing research subjects and confessed that he’d fucked a Black dude that afternoon. Which is what most men will do. You tell ‘em that they should just go ahead and do what they wanna do and they say, “No way. I don’t want to fuck up the sanctity of our pretty-much monogamous relationship.” And you say, “Okay, if that’s how you want it.” And then they go off and do exactly what they wanted to do but, because they said they wouldn’t do it and then they do it, anyway, they get to feel like shit and mope around like some dirty pigfucker who cheated on you – even though you told ‘em to do it in the first place. And because I told Abe it wasn’t a big deal and I was fine with it, he said I must not love him as much as he loved me. Because, if I did, I’d be really pissed off and I’d yell at him and tell him how much he hurt me by fucking the Black dude behind my back. *(Clarifying)* Not literally behind my back. So I told him that sex isn’t love and that I didn’t need to be put through an emotional obstacle course to prove I loved him or that I was sexually attracted to him or whatever other truth he was trying to get to by mind-fucking me or ass-fucking the Black dude. After that, when he told me he was curious about something, I’d say explore it, and he’d say, “I think I will.” And he would. And then he’d come home and tell me about it – usually while we were fucking. *(Taking a sip of his cocktail)* We had some of our best conversations during sex. Being able to have a conversation with your man while you’re having sex is a very good indicator that your relationship is

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healthy. So Abe may have been exploring his sexual curiosities and I was doing my thing, but our relationship was solid. Bobby told me that he thought that I corrupted Abe – that he wouldn't have been curious about anything, if I hadn't been the first stop on his tour of the underbelly of society. Which is total bullshit. Because Abe wasn't as innocent as people thought. I didn't open any doors for him that he hadn't already walked through on his own. But, because he looked and talked and acted the way he did, people made assumptions. And he wanted them to. Their assumptions let him pass for vanilla. For *clean*. For *normal*. So he could do all kinds of sketchy shit on the DL and nobody had a fuckin' clue. *(Another quick gulp of his cocktail)* I can't pass for innocent. My shit is right out in the open. Always has been. While I was dancing and getting pissed on at the club, Abe was having rent boys brought to his apartment for him to fuck. You heard me right – *brought* to his apartment. Blindfolded. So they wouldn't know where they were going and, more important, wouldn't be able to tell anybody where they'd been. And he made 'em wear leather hoods for the sex. Like full head-covering leather hoods. With just a mouth opening. So they could suck his cock. And breathe. *(Staring down a member of the audience)* And you thought *I* was the twisted fucker. Bitch, please... When Abe told me about his sex life before me, I got all up in his face. Not because I was jealous or pissed off. *Fuck* no. It was *before me* – before we even met. I told him what he *did* was prove my freak theory. Period. End of sentence. Bam. And he was like, “No, it's not like that. I wasn't being a freak. I was being *discreet*.” Which made my jaw almost hit the floor. And I said, “Seriously?! So if I looked up ‘discreet’ in Wikipedia or wherever, would I find a picture of a hooded rent boy taking your cock up his ass?” Which made Abe laugh – *A*, because it's funny. And, *B*, because I was calling him on his shit. Which is what you do with somebody you love. *(Reaching under the sofa, TODD pulls out a few crumpled fast food bags and tosses them out of the way. Locating a plastic container of store-bought cupcakes with only one remaining cupcake, he yanks open the container and grabs the cupcake like a cross between an addict and a little boy, continuing to speak as he peels off the cupcake wrapper)* And then Bobby called and asked me to come into

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the laundromat early to help him reorganize his office – which is a shithole. (*Shoving nearly all the cupcake in his mouth*) So I asked Abe if he minded and he said, “Go ahead. I have some stuff to do.” And he kissed me on the cheek. On the *cheek*. Which he’d never done before. (*Popping the last bit of cupcake into his mouth*) Once you’ve kissed somebody on the lips – with or without tongue – you can’t switch to the cheek. Unless you’re sick and, if you’re sick, you have to specifically say that as you move in for the kiss. You have to say, “I’m sick,” as you move toward the cheek. Otherwise, you send the message that you’re demoting that person from a lips-kiss person to a cheek-kiss person. And that can be devastating. (*Licking a bit of cupcake icing off his finger*) On a side note: If I was going to be a drag performer other than my current incarnation, I’d be a sassy, slutty, seen-it-all queen named Deva Stated. And I’d punctuate all my deepest thoughts with, “That’s right, bitches.” Though I may have to be Black to really pull that off. Which is true for a variety of things. (*Back to his story*) So there I am, standing in the living room – almost in this exact spot – with my cheek freshly kissed, and Abe practically sprints out the front door. Like kiss, blink, gone. And I’m devastated – meaning my emotional state, not the sassy drag queen. And I’m wondering what was he talking about when he said, “I have some stuff to do?” Was the *stuff* related to the switch from lips to cheek? What fucking stuff prompts that kind of switch? People tell you they have stuff to do when they don’t want to tell you what they’ll really be doing. Or when they don’t want to give you a recipe. “Oh, I just threw some stuff in a pan and called it dinner.” And I don’t think Abe was talking about a recipe. He had things – *stuff* – to do that he didn’t want me to know about. And because of that, he kissed me on the motherfucking cheek. The whole way to the laundromat, I tripped on that kiss. And that *stuff*. And even after I got there and started helping Bobby organize his office – which was even more of a shithole than it was the last time I watched him sniff somebody’s underwear and beat off. He couldn’t have known where anything was. Except the Handi Wipe he used about a hundred times for a cum rag. That was on his desk next to the picture of his wife and kids. The rest of the office could’ve been a landfill site. It was that much of a fucking mess. (*Picking up the*

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plastic container that the cupcake had been in) The organizational state of a person's office is a direct reflection of his mental state. *(Licking a big smear of icing on the container lid)* That's just a fact. *(Looking around at the disarray around him)* That theory only applies to offices, not living rooms. Or bedrooms. Or bathrooms. Or kitchens. There are other theories for them. *(Defiantly)* That's right, bitches. *(Getting back on track)* And the whole time we were organizing his shithole of an office, Bobby was talking about his wife and how he wished she would understand his needs so she'd stop trying to get him to fuck her. And, then, he could finally tell her what he was really into sexually without the fear that she would shit the bed over the information. And by shit the bed, I mean get all crazy and tell everybody what kind of a perv he is and accuse him of sniffing his kids' underpants – which *never* happened and *never* would. But it'd get his wife full custody of the kids and a shit ton of his money and the house and car and the laundromat and pretty much everything else except the Handi Wipe cum rag. And I told him, "That'll never gonna happen. You are never gonna be able to tell her what's what and expect her to go on like everything is fine and dandy. And no matter how many times you walk through the front door of the Jesus-Washed-Me-White-As-Snow Laundromat and Pentecostal Church, nothing's gonna get washed-white-as-snow except the laundry. And, even during all of that, part of my head was still trippin' on what stuff was so important for Abe to do that he had to fuckin' run out of the house to go and do. And made him kiss me on the goddamn cheek. I think I may have said some of that out loud to Bobby, as we were organizing his shithole office, because he said, "So what you're saying is that you're worried about yourself and what you said to me about my situation was the result of you having a situation of your own." And to a point, I guess that's true. But only to the point that everybody's got a situation. *(Viscerally; practically growled)* Everybody's got a fucking situation! But Abe kissing me on the cheek and running off to do *stuff* is not the same as pretending to be somebody you're not. You can sniff all the underwear you want and jack off till your cock is raw and bloody in your hand. If that's your thing, then fucking do it. Compared to a lot of freaky shit, it's not even that kinky. But it's the secret that'll bite you in

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the ass. It'll eat you alive from the inside out. It'll change the way you look at other people and the way you look at yourself in the mirror. And if Abe's stuff is something that's so bad that he can't tell me about it – *me* who is about as understanding and accepting of stuff as anybody I know – then I might as well climb into the extra-large front-loading washer and drown myself. (*A beat*) But that's not gonna happen. And not because I couldn't fit in the extra-large front-loading washer.

Because I am not weak. I'm not pathetic. I'm not. Whatever you may think I am, I can assure you with one-hundred-percent certainty that I'm not fucking weak or pathetic. But when you grow up the way I did and you live the kind of life I've lived, you know where you stand. In this world, some of us are the strippers and the rest of the guys are the ones who put the dollars in your jock strap. Or thong. Or your undergarment of choice. Some of us are trailer trash and the rest of you live in nice houses in the suburbs and have bank accounts, and credit cards, and college degrees in sociology. And if you're trailer trash and you meet a sociologist who likes you and treats you like you're special, then you know he's the catch and you're just lucky. And any day your luck can change, because it's not something you can count on. (*With misty eyes*) That's right, bitches. So, when I finished work, I got in the car and drove home. I figured I'd find Abe asleep on the sofa with the TV playing full blast. And he'd wake up long enough to drag his ass to bed. I'd cuddle up next to him and he'd turn away. He'd kiss me on the cheek and he'd turn away. Because, when you don't spoon anymore, that's how you know the relationship is over. It's like lesbian bed death without being lesbians or anyone actually dying. When I pulled in the driveway, the house was dark except a faint glow in the back. And it was so quiet. If his car hadn't been there, I'd have sworn Abe wasn't home. And maybe he wasn't. Maybe he came back in his car and then some big Black sociologist bottom picked him up and they went off to have sex in an expensive hotel fifty miles away. I had all kinds of scenarios worked up, as I opened the front door and found Abe in the kitchen... With a cake that he'd baked himself. And a Happy Anniversary banner stretched from one end of the room to the other. He handed me a card and he kissed me on the lips. That would've been enough. The kiss on the lips.

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And the look in his eyes. I hadn't even remembered it was our anniversary. In my head, I was telling myself what a dumb bitch I was for not remembering. "I've been tripping on the craziest shit..." I started to explain, but he kissed me and said, "Read the card. It's not some Hallmark bullshit. I wrote it myself." So I opened the card. He definitely wrote it himself. In bright purple ink. *(With his eyes closed)* "My precious sweet pickle... The universe was at its best, the night it brought us together." *(Smiling, as he opens his eyes)* I have the card. *(As searches through piles of boxes and clothes)* I saved it. *(Continuing to search)* I save all the important things. That doesn't make me a hoarder. I just means I'm somebody who believes that some things – some *special* things – are worth saving. So I saved the card. I put it someplace where it'd be safe. *(Finding the card, with a squeal of delight)* And here it is! *(He strides downstage, striking a legs-apart stance as he opens the card. As he reads the card aloud, his finger points to the words)* "My precious sweet pickle." That's me. I'm sweet pickle. But you already knew that. *(Continuing to read the card aloud)* "The universe was at its best, the night it brought us together." Which is true. And amazing. And gives me hope that – on some level, in some way – Abe and I are still together and always will be. *(Continuing to read the card)* "A." *(As if it's not already clear)* For Abe. He never signed the whole name – just an "A" and a period. Bam. *(A breath goes through him. Dazed, almost as if he's forgotten where he is, he shuffles backward and sits down on the sofa; then, softly)* Bam. *(A quick beat, then, still a bit dazed; softly)* Shit happens... And you don't get a vote... You have to deal with it... *(Taking a gulp of his cocktail, regaining is focus and his volume)* Or not... It's easier *not* to deal with shit sometimes... *Most* times. At least it seems that way. But it just makes you a fuck-up. *(Correcting himself)* Makes *me* a fuck-up. *(With brutal simplicity)* I am a complete and total fuck-up. Bam! *(Shaking his head)* Even if what you're saying is true, you can't really bam yourself. You *can*. But it doesn't have the same impact or give you the same sense of satisfaction as bamming somebody else. Bamming yourself is just bamsturbation. And what the fuck good is that? *(Answering his own question)* It's not. It's not good. And neither is getting drunk after your husband gets shot in the head. But that's what

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I did. With my dress in an evidence bag and the Lincoln loaded onto a tow truck, the cops high-tailed it out of the parking lot like they wanted to be anywhere but there. As the ambulance drove away with Abe in the back, they turned on their sirens. He was dead. There wasn't a rush to get where they were going. And, apparently, *I* wasn't going anywhere. Nobody offered to give me a ride and I didn't think to ask. So, I walked into the Quickie Mart – wearing nothing but a corset and combat boots and I grabbed all the liquor I could carry, and put it on the counter. The guy behind the counter pointed to the “No shirt, no shoes, no service” sign. He didn't say anything. He just pointed like some mute-ass cumtard. So I said, “Listen, motherfucker, this corset counts as a shirt, and the boots are shoes, so gimme some goddamn service.” And he smirked like he was so fuckin' smart all the sudden and he mumbled, “I'm gonna need to see some I.D.” (*A very quick beat*) I was ready for him. I always am, when I go out. I pulled my license and ATM card out of my cleavage and slapped 'em down on the counter. “There you go, bitch. And double bag that booze!” (*A quick gulp of his cocktail*) I grabbed an extra plastic bag, too, and tied it up around my junk like one of those cock-and-ball covers the Polynesian pygmies wear. And I walked home. Three-and-a-half miles. I was drinkin' the whole way. As soon as I finished a bottle of bourbon or vodka, I'd just drop it and keep walkin'. It was a grown-up version of Hansel and Gretal's fuckin' bread crumbs. The police station or sheriff's office – or whatever you wanna call the double-wide trailer where they do their business – was on my way home. So I stopped in and asked if I could sit with Abe and hold his hand. They didn't think it was a good idea. I don't know whether that was because I was drunk and my ass was hanging out and my junk was tied up in a plastic shopping bag or whether they just had a policy against sitting with dead people and holding their hands. Either way, they weren't gonna let me in. And then one of 'em said, “He ain't here anyway.” It took me a minute to figure out he was talking about Abe. So, maybe they weren't letting me in because Abe's hand wasn't there to hold. (*He begins to cry*) I didn't like not knowing where he was. When somebody you love dies, you should be given some kind of GPS tracking device so you know where he is. We have the technology and it

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just seems like the civilized thing to do. *(Regaining his composure)* I think I pissed myself right about then. The bag tied around my junk filled up like a water balloon. So I poked a hole in it with my fingernail and let the piss drain out on the floor, at which point, Officer Jayson Johnson – Jayson with a “y” – offered to give me a ride home. Which means I didn’t actually walk the whole three-and-a-half miles, but one drunk mile is like two sober ones. *(To a specific section of the audience)* Somebody write that down. That’s helpful information. *(Back to his story)* Officer Jayson-with-a-y Johnson and I had a history. I told you about him. He’s the one who used to pay me twenty bucks to let him suck my dick. So, I wasn’t surprised, when we pulled up in front of the white house with the pink picket fence, and he held out a twenty-dollar bill and ripped the plastic bag off my junk. *(With a deep breath)* And I let him suck my dick. Not because a blow job is a blow job and twenty bucks is twenty bucks. I let him suck my dick because he let me hold his hand while he did it... I kinda passed out after I shot my load. Not all the way passed out. Just passed out enough that I couldn’t walk. So Officer Jayson-with-a-y-oh-y-are-there-so-many-downlow-dudes-in-this-world Johnson carried me into the house. He didn’t have the finesse that Abe had. My feet knocked down the sign next to the door. The last un-passed-out memory I have from that night is seeing "The Lincoln's – All who enter in peace and love are welcome," broken into a dozen pieces on the porch... *(Taking a slow sip of his cocktail)* I woke up and it was Monday – which means I slept through Saturday and Sunday. Getting drunk as Hell after your husband gets shot in the head in the parking lot of a Quickie Mart will do that to you. It will knock you the fuck out. And I shit myself at some point between Friday night and Monday morning. Which I also slept through. But I woke up with a load of shit in my asscrack, which was a pretty big clue that I’d shit myself. When I finally figured out what day it was and got the shit cleaned out of my asscrack, I called up Jayson-with-a-y Johnson at the double-wide trailer of law and asked him when and where I could pick up Abe’s clothes and watch and stuff. And claim his body, so I could see about a proper burial... There was a pause, like when a stupid person doesn’t know the answer and you wanna smack ‘em on the back of the head to make their

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brain work faster. And he said, “Mr. Lincoln’s person effects have already been claimed by his next of kin.” Which was confusing. How was that possible, since I’m the closest person there was to Abe. “*I’m his next of kin!*” I told him, in no uncertain terms. *(Getting louder)* “I’m his motherfucking next of kin, do you hear what I’m saying, Officer Cocksucker? *(A blaring blend of scream and shout)* “I’m Abe’s next of kin. I’m Sweet Pickle!” *(With the fervor and force of a revival preacher)* “I. Am. Sweet. Pickle!” And I grabbed the anniversary card and shook it at the phone. *(A beat)*

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