

# the F word

by Jordan Beswick

## THE F WORD

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*Special thanks to the actors in Paris who graciously donated their time and artistry in developing the F word; Maëlle Genet, Norbert Ferrer, Yvon Martin, Anne Mano, Anne Bouvier, Julia Faure, Emmanuel Chevallier, Jérémie Covillault, Xavier Lafitte, Olivier Lusse, Volodia Serre, Delphine Benattar, Cécile Vernant... and to Studio VO/VF for providing moral support and an incredibly safe space.*

*For Robin Spainhour, the mother of our two extraordinary sons and my dear adorable Sophie Vonlanthen, without whom...*

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the F word was first presented as a rehearsed reading on June 25, 2001 at Dixon Place at Vineyard 26 in NYC, directed by the author with the following cast:

Eric	Jeffrey Donovan
Mary	Oni Faida Lampley
Paul	Josh Hamilton
Cindy	Tristine Skyler
Stage Directions	Gaye-Taylor Upchurch

the F word was presented as part of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' New Play Network's Journey From Page to Stage Festival on September 2, 2002, produced by Actors Theatre of Washington, directed by Jeffrey Keenan with the following cast:

Eric	Louis Cupp
Mary	Lynn Chavis
Paul	Scott Fortier
Cindy	September Marie Merkle
Stage Directions	Christopher Banks

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the F word had its world premier production at Source Theatre in Washington, D.C. in 2003, produced by the Actors Theatre of Washington, directed by Jeffrey Keenan with the following cast:

Eric	Louis Cupp
Mary	Lynn Chavis
Paul	James O. Dunn
Cindy	Jennifer Phillips

the F word was produced by the Manufacture des Abbesses in Paris, France (French title Inconcevable, translation/adaptation by Marianne Groves), directed by the author, assistant director Cécile Carrere, with the following cast:

Eric	Benoît Carré
Mary	Sophie Vonlanthen
Paul	Cyril Hériard-Dubreuil
Cindy	Sophie-Charlotte Husson

the F word was included in the Greensboro Fringe Festival in 2020, produced by Todd Fisher, directed by Shelley Stolaroff Segal with the following cast:

Eric	Kolton Collins
Mary	Jamila Curry
Paul	Noah Daulton
Mary	Melanie Wallace

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CAST: 2 W/2 M

ERIC. 35, gay, agnostic, professional, brother, uncle, first time father.

MARY. 36, lesbian, non-practicing christian, professional, sister, aunt, first time mother.

PAUL. 34, heterosexual, atheist, professional, absentee father, uncle.

CINDY. 31, heterosexual, catholic with a capital CATHOLIC, sister, stay at home mom, aunt.

Time: 1996 Place: Manhattan

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## SCENE ONE

*TIME: 1996*

*PLACE: Manhattan*

*AT RISE: MARY [36, wearing a sweatshirt and panties] is busy organizing her Making-A-Baby needs in preparation.*

**MARY.** *(Off to Eric.)* How's it coming in there?

*(ERIC [35, jeans, sweat shirt, tennis shoes] enters holding a small [lidded] plastic cup.)*

**ERIC.** Your turn.

**MARY.** Give it here. *(Eric hands her the cup, then goes to a chair, sits, gets a book and begins to read. Mary takes a syringe and draws the semen from the cup into it. She then attaches a small thin flexible tube, that has been cut short, to the tip.)*

**MARY.** It really pays to have friends in the medical field.

**ERIC.** *(Turns and sees- )* What's the thing on the tip?

**MARY.** Isn't it genius? Robin got me the tubes because she thought it would help make sure it got all the way in there. And they're soft so they won't scrape me up. *(Mary pulls off her panties and positions herself on the couch so that her back is flat on the cushion seat and her legs are up and draped over the back. She begins to inject herself with the semen.)* Fuck! It just shot out all over the couch! *(Eric turns abruptly and stands.)*

**ERIC.** What're you doing?

**MARY.** What do you think I'm doing? I'm trying to get pregnant.

**ERIC.** I know that. But on the living room sofa? Jesus. Why can't you do it in your bedroom like everyone else?

**MARY.** Excuse me if I wanted to, at the very least, be able to tell our child that we were in the same room when she was conceived!

*(Eric exits into the kitchen. Mary sits up and looks at the syringe.)*

**MARY.** Goddamn it. *(Eric enters with a washcloth and hands it to Mary.)*

**MARY.** I lost it all. You're going to have to give me some more.

**ERIC.** But it's only been five minutes. I don't know if I can. What

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happened?

**MARY.** I don't know. I guess the tube is too soft and when I stuck it in, it bent back. *(Eric exits to the kitchen. Mary reaches into her "Making-A-Baby" kit and pulls out another plastic cup. She begins wiping the semen from the couch. Eric enters holding a napkin and as he passes Mary she holds up the cup. He grabs it and exits into his bedroom. Mary continues wiping up the semen. PAUL [34, stylish suit/tie, life of the party] enters and when he sees that Mary hasn't noticed him come in he slowly, extremely quietly creeps up behind her.)*

**PAUL.** Hey. *(Mary screams. Paul jumps back laughing.)* That was intense. Let's do that again. *(Mary throws the soiled towel at a still laughing Paul.)*

**MARY.** You don't do that to people, Paul! It's rude! *(Paul wipes the tears from his eyes with the towel.)*

**MARY.** I swear to Christ I'm gonna take your keys back. Eric, your brother's here!

**PAUL.** Mary... Not that it's any of my business. But, are you aware that you're not wearing any panties?

**MARY.** We're right in the middle of something.

**PAUL.** What's he doing?

**MARY.** Masturbating.

**PAUL.** Of course. Now... This is just me being curious but... Why would you know that?

**MARY.** He's whipping me up another specimen.

**PAUL.** Oh. Right. *(Paul realizes the significance of the towel and, disgusted, throws it back at Mary.)* Can I ask you a question? What's wrong with the two of you just having good old-fashioned sex?

**MARY.** With each other?

**PAUL.** You have to admit, it would be easier.

**MARY.** For you maybe.

**PAUL.** Eric's not a bad looking guy.

**MARY.** That's not the point.

**PAUL.** I just find it hard to understand.

**MARY.** Well Paul, no offense, but you would *(Eric enters and hands the cup to Mary.)*

**ERIC.** Mission accomplished.

**MARY.** Thank you, Daddy.



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**ERIC.** Hey Paul.

**PAUL.** Hey. *(Mary sucks up the semen into the syringe.)* I heard from your nephew today.

**ERIC.** *(Excitedly.)* You did?

**PAUL.** Yep.

**ERIC.** I've got to call him. How's he doing?  
*(Mary gets back into position on the couch.)*

**PAUL.** He's joining the navy. *(Paul turns and sees Mary as she injects herself with the semen.)* Hello!

**ERIC.** Jesus Christ, Mary. You're turning our child's conception into a featured attraction at Show World.  
*(Mary laughs.)*

**PAUL.** Eric, do not discourage Sean from going.

**ERIC.** I won't.

**PAUL.** What?

**ERIC.** I think it's a good idea.

**PAUL.** I was sure you'd be all up in my face about it.

**ERIC.** The structure will do him good. When does he go?

**PAUL.** Right after he turns eighteen.

**ERIC.** He keeping his nose clean?

**PAUL.** Except for knocking up his girlfriend...

**ERIC.** Oh no.

**PAUL.** Well, nobody can say I haven't tried to help him. *(Eric laughs.)*

**PAUL.** I know what you're thinking.

**ERIC.** No you don't. I was thinking about the dream I had last night about, Cindy.

**PAUL.** That wasn't a dream, it was a nightmare.

**ERIC.** She was actually really nice in it.

**PAUL.** Our sister?

**ERIC.** Yeah.

**PAUL.** What did she want?

**ERIC.** To know how I was doing. You think I should call her?

**MARY.** *(Without sitting up.)* No!

**PAUL.** Absolutely not.

**MARY.** Your sister's certifiable. Not to mention a religious zealot.

**PAUL.** Is there a difference?

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**ERIC.** It's been... What? Ten years since we last spoke.

**MARY.** Yes. But when did you last see her?

**ERIC.** Maybe she's... You know. Grown. I mean, evolution is possible.

**MARY.** Five years ago you were wiping rotten figs from your face when we marched on Washington.

**PAUL.** You were?

**MARY.** Who threw them?

**ERIC.** Cindy did but--

**PAUL.** Fucking fruit pelter.

**MARY.** Who handed them to her?

**ERIC.** My niece but--

**PAUL.** Families that hate together...

**MARY.** How old was she?

**ERIC.** My sister?

**PAUL.** Eve Angela.

**MARY.** Your niece.

**ERIC.** Seven.

**MARY.** While your nephews watched. Do you recall what they were all wearing?

**ERIC.** Mary...

**MARY.** Answer the question.

**PAUL.** Matching t-shirts?

**MARY.** Yes. Very good, Paul.

**PAUL.** Thank you.

**MARY.** Which said what, Eric?

**PAUL.** Kill Fags.

**MARY.** Subtler.

**PAUL.** God Hates You.

**MARY.** No.

**ERIC.** Gay = Plague.

**MARY.** With a picture of what?

**PAUL.** Good God! She illustrated them?

**MARY.** A man's face. Covered with sores. In the very last stages of--

**ERIC.** It was a message.

**MARY.** It certainly was.

**PAUL.** I'll bet you plague was misspelled. She's got the I.Q. of a turnip.

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**ERIC.** The dream was a message. I know it.

**MARY.** What? Suddenly you're, Shirlee Teabo?

**PAUL.** Who?

**MARY.** Eric's favorite psychic.

**ERIC.** She was so happy for me. She said that as soon as she'd heard from mom that I was going to be a father... Oh. You were pregnant.

**MARY.** Are you talking to me?

**PAUL.** She said that mom told her about this?

**ERIC.** Yes. And that she was thrilled.

**PAUL.** Mom? Our mother?

**ERIC.** Then we talked about her kids.

**MARY.** The ones she hasn't let you see in ten years?

**PAUL.** Except to pelt you with diseased fruit, that is?

**ERIC.** I shouldn't have said anything.

**MARY.** Did she know that your becoming a father doesn't change the fact that you're gay?

**ERIC.** No. I just assumed--

**MARY.** How can you assume something like that?

**ERIC.** I don't understand why you're being so negative about this? I thought you'd be glad that she and I are talking.

**MARY.** You're not. It was a dream, Eric.

**PAUL.** Eric. If you really want to talk to her again that badly, then... Go back to sleep and call her.

**ERIC.** Paul.

**PAUL.** Picture it. Christmas day. Our loving sister announces that you're not welcome in her family's life anymore. On the phone no less. After you'd spent money you didn't have to fly all the way out to Los Angeles to see everybody. And, correct me if I'm wrong, I had to pick you up from where you were staying and take you to meet Mom and Dad in the parking lot of Denny's so that they could give you your present before running off to join the Cuntess in joyous celebration.

**MARY.** Sweetheart, your sister told you that she didn't want you around her kids because you were "sick and might infect them."

**ERIC.** You didn't hear her last night. *(Mary screams. Paul goes to the cordless phone, picks it up, looks at the listed speed dial numbers and hits one.)*

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**PAUL.** *(Into phone.)* Yes. Hello. Dr. Wood?

**ERIC.** *(Jumping up.)* What are you doing?

**PAUL.** I'm Eric Carlson's brother. *(Eric tries to grab the phone out of his brother's hand, but Paul evades him.)* Right. Well. I just wanted to call and tell you that whatever you're doing for my brother? IT'S NOT WORKING! *(Eric grabs the phone.)*

**ERIC.** Dr. Wood? I'm so sorry about that. I know. He's crazy.

**PAUL.** *(To Mary.)* I'm crazy.

**ERIC.** Thank you. I'll see you next week. All right. Bye bye. *(Eric hangs the phone up.)* Don't ever do that again.

**PAUL.** You care too much. That's your problem. See? I could give a fuck. You know? People like me? Great. They don't. Fuck 'em. Honest. You should try it. It's liberating.

**MARY.** Listen to your brother, Eric. *(Mary gets herself up and stands. She pulls on her panties and begins cleaning up.)*

**PAUL.** You want to know what I think?

**ERIC.** No.

**PAUL.** I think Tom might be gay.

**MARY.** Her oldest?

**PAUL.** Wouldn't that just be perfect?

**ERIC.** Not for Tom.

**PAUL.** I mean, call me crazy, but I think to be almost sixteen and to never have had a girlfriend. Or shown any real desire to have one is an indication that he--

**MARY.** Doesn't want one.

**ERIC.** Maybe he's just shy. Or he's more focused on other things right now.

**PAUL.** Any normal--

**ERIC.** Word?

**PAUL.** Oh for God's sake. Any typical horny teenage boy is going to be thinking about getting laid. And if he's straight he's not going to have any trouble at all expressing a healthy interest in it.

**ERIC.** Not all straight teenage boys are like you and your friends were.

**MARY.** Well, if it's true you have to admit it would be beyond ironic.

**ERIC.** I want so badly to think that something, somewhere in her, has woken up. That she's realized something. About, humanity. About, love. Shit, about family. Even you. You say all this stuff about hating her but you

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still talk to her. You're still connected. You don't have to be. But you are. Because no matter how vehemently you deny it, she's your sister. And that means something. Even to you.

**PAUL.** You can read sentimentality into a piece of toilet paper. You know that?

**MARY.** It's true. But that's why we love you. *(Mary kisses Eric on the forehead and exits with the supplies.)*

**ERIC.** My head is throbbing. *(Eric stands and exits to his bathroom.)*

**PAUL.** Oh, I've been meaning to ask you. How's, Mark?

**ERIC.** *(From off.)* We broke up.

**PAUL.** You did? *(Eric enters struggling with the bottle cap.)*

**ERIC.** Years ago. Christ. I understand the need to make these things child proof, but give me a fucking break.

**PAUL.** I don't remember that at all.

**ERIC.** *(Popping the cap off.)* Finally. *(Eric shakes a couple of tablets into his hand.)*

**PAUL.** I liked him.

**ERIC.** I got a call from a friend earlier this year asking if I'd heard the news.

**PAUL.** What news? *(Eric starts to pop the tablets into his mouth, but stops himself.)*

**ERIC.** Oh my God.

**PAUL.** What?

**ERIC.** I can't believe I almost did that.

**PAUL.** What?

*(Eric starts to laugh.)*

**PAUL.** What?!

**ERIC.** One of my clients had me pick up some E for him today. I'm keeping it in here until--

**PAUL.** E as in Ecstasy?

**ERIC.** Yeah. He's on location shooting a film.

**PAUL.** You're running drugs for your clients?

**ERIC.** I'm not running drugs. I did him a favor.

**PAUL.** You're comfortable getting involved in your client's drug habits?

**ERIC.** He's out of town. He heard a rumor that things are drying up and he was afraid he'd get caught short.

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**PAUL.** And this is common practice? Managers scoring drugs for their clients?

**ERIC.** It's an isolated incident.

**PAUL.** I can't believe he felt comfortable asking you to do it.

**ERIC.** I can't believe you're getting so weird about it. Given your history.

**PAUL.** Maybe it's because it is my "history." I don't do it anymore. I've grown up.

**ERIC.** I don't do it anymore either. And you know what? I don't feel the need to justify this to you so...

**PAUL.** Does Mary know?

**ERIC.** No. And don't tell her. She'd kill me. She's never done drugs. Of any kind. One of her best friends OD'd in High School.

**PAUL.** I don't like it.

**ERIC.** Drop it.

**PAUL.** Anyway, there was some news.

**ERIC.** Excuse me?

**PAUL.** About, Mark.

**ERIC.** Oh yeah. Seems he'd come down with a pneumonia and had to be rushed to the hospital.

**PAUL.** I'm sorry to hear that.

**ERIC.** Did I ever tell you how sexually frustrated I was with Mark?

**PAUL.** *(Uncomfortable.)* Um...

**ERIC.** Nothing's worse than being with someone you're wildly attracted to who never wants to do it. So one day I blew up and was like, what the fuck? A really ugly scene. I'm not proud of it. I was throwing things. Literally. So he starts crying and says he's scared. And I said, of what? And he said he'd been with some guy before he'd, you know, met me who'd died.

**PAUL.** Not of...

**ERIC.** Oh yeah. And I was shocked. And a bit frightened because we...when we had had sex... never used condoms. And he always... You know. Me. And came. But, you know, I really loved him and I wanted to be fair so I, took a very deep breath and asked him if he'd ever been, you know, tested. And he said yes, several times. In fact he said he'd been tested so many times that his doctor, who he said was THE AIDS DOCTOR IN L.A., had told him that he was fine and just being paranoid. So I said, "Well then chill out."

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But he didn't. In fact he got worse. So finally after a few more years of it I just got so frustrated I ended it. Anyway, I get this call and he's got a pneumonia and he's rushed to the hospital and after running some tests the doctor asked him if he considered himself in a high risk category for AIDS. As his symptoms appeared to be AIDS related. And Mark said yes. And then he asked him if he'd ever been tested for AIDS and he said no.

**PAUL.** What?

**ERIC.** He'd never been tested. *(Exiting with the aspirin bottle.)* I better put this away. *(Mary enters.)*

**MARY.** Paul, we ordered a pizza if you want to stick around.

**PAUL.** No thanks I actually only stopped by because I'm hooking up with a client tonight in the neighborhood and I had some time to kill.

*(Eric enters.)*

**PAUL.** *(To Eric.)* But you're all right, yeah?

**ERIC.** Yes. Thank God. I really have been tested several times. I even got tested again after I heard the news. You think I'd be doing this with Mary if I hadn't? Anyway, you want to do breakfast in the morning?

**PAUL.** I can't. But if you want to meet me at my gym I'll get you in as my guest and we can work out together.

**ERIC.** I'm not really a gym person.

**PAUL.** Anyone with eyes knows that. Come on. We'll have fun.

**ERIC.** Is there a jacuzzi? *(Paul checks his watch and stands.)*

**PAUL.** No. Sauna.

**ERIC.** All right.

**PAUL.** Great. How about we say eight o'clock?

**ERIC.** How about we say ten?

**PAUL.** I'll see you at eight. *(Paul goes to Mary and gives her a hug and a kiss.)*

**MARY.** See you later, Paul.

**PAUL.** Keep him from doing anything stupid.

**MARY.** I'll do my best.

**ERIC.** Bye.

**PAUL.** Bye y'all. *(Paul exits. The intercom buzzes.)*

**MARY.** That must be the pizza. *(Eric starts to pull out his wallet.)*

**ERIC.** Here.

**MARY.** That's cool. I've got it tonight.

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**ERIC.** Thanks.

**MARY.** No problem. *(Mary exits. Eric turns back to his computer. The lights fade.)*

### SCENE TWO

*Central Park. Eric (in winter coat, gloves) and CINDY (31, winter coat, without gloves) enter.*

**ERIC.** This is it, Cindy. My favorite spot. I love Central Park.

**CINDY.** Is it safe?

**ERIC.** I've never had any trouble.

**CINDY.** The news is filled with stories. Horrifying things. That go on here. Especially in this park. *(Cindy blows into her hands, warming them.)*

**ERIC.** We'll be okay.

**CINDY.** You can guarantee that?

**ERIC.** It is so beautiful today. Don't you think?

**CINDY.** I brought my mace. Just in case.

**ERIC.** When I first moved here? I would come to this spot every Sunday. And just stretch out by the lake. And sleep.

**CINDY.** Are you crazy?

**ERIC.** It was wonderful. Really peaceful.

**CINDY.** You're lucky you weren't killed. Or worse.

**ERIC.** That bridge over there?

**CINDY.** I've seen that bridge. In pictures.

**ERIC.** Really? *(Cindy is freezing. She continues blowing into her hands, rubbing them together.)*

**CINDY.** Isn't it famous for suicides?

**ERIC.** No.

**CINDY.** What about it?

**ERIC.** Nothing. I just love it.

**CINDY.** Does it look like it's going to rain to you?

**ERIC.** No. *(Eric removes his gloves, offers them to Cindy.)*

**CINDY.** The sky looks pretty ominous. *(Cindy takes the gloves, puts them on.)*



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**ERIC.** Would you prefer..? Do you want to go on the Circle Line?

**CINDY.** The Circle..?

**ERIC.** It's a cruise. Around the island.

**CINDY.** Around what island?

**ERIC.** This one.

**CINDY.** This one?

**ERIC.** Manhattan is an island.

**CINDY.** It is?

**ERIC.** It's actually quite nice. The cruise. I've never actually been. But people have told me.

**CINDY.** No. I appreciate it. But I get seasick.

**ERIC.** Oh.

**CINDY.** It's awful. The boat can be docked. Mm-mm. Not good.

**ERIC.** Statue of Liberty?

**CINDY.** A friend of mine told me that she stood in line for eight hours to reach the torch.

**ERIC.** Well, the torch is under construction. So, maybe it's shorter to her crown.

**CINDY.** I don't... It's not... I really don't need to be entertained. That's not...

**ERIC.** What?

**CINDY.** I've got such a headache. I've been getting them a lot lately. I mean, I've had them my whole life. But recently they've gotten much worse.

**ERIC.** Have you seen a doctor?

**CINDY.** Yeah. Be he says there's nothing wrong. That he can see. I've probably got one of those tumors that's hiding.

**ERIC.** No you don't.

**CINDY.** You can guarantee that?

**ERIC.** Well, no.

**CINDY.** I'm so tired. And I can't seem to catch my breath. You know? Not a good one anyway.

**ERIC.** Maybe you just need... You know. A rest.

**CINDY.** Well, that's part of the reason I came. To get away. From my day to day. I really felt that if I didn't... You know, get a drastic change of scenery quick. I might just... I mean, I wouldn't. But... You know what I

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mean. (*Silence. Eric smiles, stands, walks to the foot of the lake and stares out at the water. He closes his eyes and breathes deeply.*) I'm really...

**ERIC.** Hm?

**CINDY.** You've really done it. Haven't you?

**ERIC.** Hm?

**CINDY.** Found your way. And really created something. Meaningful. For yourself.

**ERIC.** Yeah.

**CINDY.** I have to be honest with you. For a long time I was... Well, worried. About whether you ever would.

**ERIC.** So was I.

**CINDY.** But I knew. That if you just found the right one. It would change everything.

**ERIC.** What do you mean?

**CINDY.** Mary's a very special woman.

**ERIC.** Yes she is.

**CINDY.** You make a beautiful couple.

**ERIC.** We make a beautiful couple of what? (*Cindy laughs.*) Last night I went to a sex club. I was just so bored. You know? And lonely. So I did it. For a while I just stood around. Watching everyone go at each other. Then this guy walked in. He was really short. Five feet tall. If that. On crutches. His body was severely bent. He must've had MS or something. He was balding. I couldn't take my eyes off him. I watched him go from group to group. And people were making it painfully obvious that they didn't think he belonged there. So, he finally gave up. And leaned himself up against a wall and closed his eyes. It was breaking my heart. Then he opened them. His eyes. And looked right at me. So I smiled. And I guess he saw that as an invitation because he started maneuvering himself over to me. And the next thing I knew he was jerking me off. While I held him. When I came he took a silk handkerchief from his pocket and wiped me off. Really gently.

**CINDY.** How..? How could you tell me something like that?

**ERIC.** I--

**CINDY.** What did you expect me to do? Congratulate you for being so compassionate?

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**ERIC.** No. I--

**CINDY.** I'm supposed to think you're some kind of super humanitarian because you let some crippled midget..?

**ERIC.** You're missing the point.

**CINDY.** It's sick, Eric. If there is a point... It's that.

**ERIC.** Hungry?

**CINDY.** You haven't changed at all. You're still the same self involved, self destructive... Then that means... How could you? What could you possibly be thinking?

**ERIC.** About?

**CINDY.** You're going to bring a child into this..? Perversion? And you probably think that's a good thing. *(Cindy exits. Eric lets her go. He stares out at the water. At the bridge in the distance. At the beautiful day. He takes a deep breath. A light rises on Paul laying on a bench press, lifting weights.)*

**PAUL.** Now that sounds more like, Cindy.

**ERIC.** It was a nightmare. *(Eric removes his coat, revealing a t-shirt underneath which reads "Forget the bull, ride the cowboy." Paul replaces the barbell and adds more weight.)*

**PAUL.** Spot me.

**ERIC.** How? I can't lift that much weight.

**PAUL.** You won't need to. I'm just giving you something to do to make you feel useful.

**ERIC.** Oh. All right. *(Paul lays back down as Eric takes his position behind him. Paul does his presses.)*

**PAUL.** Eric?

**ERIC.** Hm?

**PAUL.** Where did you get that shirt?

**ERIC.** Texas. Isn't it cool? *(Paul resets the barbell, sits up and reads Eric's shirt.)*

**PAUL.** *(Reading.)* Forget the bull, ride the cowboy. I don't think it was meant to be worn by a man.

**ERIC.** No?

**PAUL.** Your turn.

**ERIC.** I don't know if I'm ready for this.

**PAUL.** I think you've put it off far too long as it is.

**ERIC.** I'm talking about parenthood.

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**PAUL.** (*Standing.*) Oh. Can't help you there. Go ahead, lay down.

**ERIC.** Okay. But you're going to have to take the majority of those round thingys off.

**PAUL.** Fine. Lay down. (*Eric lays on the bench as Paul removes the majority of the weight.*) All yours, Goliath. (*Eric lifts the barbell.*)

**ERIC.** Jesus! How much weight have you got on this thing?

**PAUL.** Fifty pounds.

**ERIC.** Is that all?!

**PAUL.** Don't think about it so much. Just do it. And breathe.

**ERIC.** I didn't know I wasn't. (*Eric continues to struggle with the barbell.*)

**PAUL.** I talked to dad this morning. I get so tired of his shit. You know? At one point I finally said, "You know, dad, I'm writing a book now. It's called, 'My Father's An Asshole,' but it's not about you."

**ERIC.** Can I stop now?

**PAUL.** No. He asked me if I thought you were ever going to change?

**ERIC.** Are you sure this is only fifty pounds?

**PAUL.** Yes.

**ERIC.** I really am in horrifying shape.

**PAUL.** I told him that as you're thirty five years old, it would be my guess that, no, you probably weren't. And that he should just let it go.

**ERIC.** Now?

**PAUL.** Okay. (*Eric replaces the barbell.*)

**ERIC.** Gracias, por favor.

**PAUL.** De nada. And those two things don't go together.

**ERIC.** I know. It's my own... You know. Language.

**PAUL.** I'm going to add another fifty pounds.

**ERIC.** What?! (*Paul adds more weight.*)

**PAUL.** Don't be a pussy. Jesus. I thought you guys were supposed to be so body conscious.

**ERIC.** I'm extremely conscious of my body. Do you know that I can still wear the same size clothes I did in High School? Can you say that?

**PAUL.** No. Thank God. And if I could, I certainly wouldn't admit it. Now lay down.

**ERIC.** Fucking dictator. (*Eric lays down and with a great heave, lifts the barbell.*) Oh my God! (*Eric does very strained presses.*)

**PAUL.** Mom's in the hospital again.

## THE F WORD

**ERIC.** I may be joining her.

**PAUL.** Last week she up and announces that she's leaving the church.

**ERIC.** I hope it was something I said.

**PAUL.** Reason being that she couldn't, in good faith, go to heaven knowing that her family wouldn't be there with her. *(Eric starts to laugh and loses control of the barbells.)*

**ERIC.** Help! *(Paul helps Eric replace the barbells.)*

**PAUL.** The woman is the poster child for codependency.

**ERIC.** You're just figuring this out?

**PAUL.** It's a miracle that you and I are as sane as we are. Sit ups. *(Eric gets into position, Paul holds his feet. Eric's attempts at sit ups are earnest, but ridiculous. Paul looks closely at his brother.)*

**PAUL.** I heard you guys get sperm facials to look young.

**ERIC.** No!

**PAUL.** Must be all that prostate probing. *(Paul reaches under and tickles Eric's ass.)*

**ERIC.** Stop! *(Eric does a few more then stops, stares up at the ceiling.)*

Paul? Do you think I'm doing the right thing?

**PAUL.** What I think doesn't matter.

**ERIC.** Because... I mean...

**PAUL.** I have this friend. He called me the other day and said that his city council had recently been inundated with fags. So, I'm waiting for the tirade. Right? But instead he says, "I'd been seriously considering moving. But things are really shaping up around here. I hate to admit it, but we should've put a few fags in charge years ago."*(Pause.)* Did you really do that?

**ERIC.** What?

**PAUL.** That thing with the midget?

**ERIC.** He wasn't a midget. *(Paul stares at his brother.)*

**ERIC.** It was a dream.

**PAUL.** So. Sauna? *(Black out.)*

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