

Under the Umbrella

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collective creation by

alyssa | amanda | andy | jake | kc | yax

facilitated by

davina | tahnia

presented by

cavalcade theatre company

CHARACTERS

ONE / TOPAZ

TWO / MAC

THREE / BILL

FOUR / JASPER

FIVE / MARGOT

SIX / RICK

[Top of show:

MAC is in the backyard, prepping the surprise party. She has thought of everything, food, balloons, presents - the works. As the audience arrives, she gives them all the information they might need for the surprise party. Once people have started to find seats:

MAC notices BILL lurking by the fence.

MAC

Uh. Hey Bill. Whats up?

[BILL enters with his toolbox.]

BILL

Hey... uh I know you're in the middle of a... *thing* here... but I remembered that your grill had some loose bolts.

MAC

Sorry, I missed that. I was just talking to Jasper's boss, Taylor, here.

BILL

Oh... yeah... no bud. That's totally cool. I'm the one interrupting your... uh... *thing*.

MAC

Birthday party?

BILL

Oh. Yeah, yeah. The birthday party... *for...*/Em-

MAC

/Jasper and Topaz.

BILL

...per. Yeah, Jasper, that's what I was saying. *[pause]* So... The uh... grill?

MAC

Yeah yeah, it's over there. In the usual spot.

BILL

[awkward laugh] Right... Not like you have... fair- no. Just gonna go check that grill now.

MAC

Great. Thanks!

[With great zeal, MARGOT has arrived at the party. She is toting a rather large birthday present, and far too many bags than necessary for her arrival. Immediately upon making it into the backyard - she abruptly drops all of the bags.]

MARGOT

Hey, so I am here. I also brought some games with me. I thought we could set them up... like over here... or wherever. I am chill with wherever they go - you can totally pick where they go. But I *would* say that they would look... like... really good.. Right... here. In this area. Where I am. Right here. Or wherever. I'm so chill about it.

MAC

Hey! Yeah, thanks so much for bringing those. I thought we had settled on one game... but this works too. That spot right there looks perfect. No complaints.

MARGOT

Great! So I was thinking that we could start the whole party with a lively game of ladders. Or pin the tail on the donkey. Kidding. I was thinking this might be more of a bocce ball style thing, or what about we make up some new games? I've been planning some on the /drive over. I think we could totally make up all the rules together... in the game space and... all...

MAC

/I trust your judgement, Margot. Whatever feels right to you, go right ahead. I hereby honor you with the title of *game captain*.

MARGOT

Game captain, that's fun. What does it mean?

MAC

It means you get ultimate authority on the game situation.

MARGOT

Oh good! I'll get everything set up.

BILL

Hey! Uh... is this one of those gay things you're always on about?

MAC

The birthday party?

BILL

Yeah... is it a *gay* birthday party?

MAC

I... Don't know what that means, Bill.

BILL

Is it... well it's just that I see... y'know don't /worry about it.

MARGOT

It is a birthday party, Bill! Same as we throw for you!

BILL

No one's ever thrown me a birthday party.

MARGOT

What?! Never?

BILL

No.

MARGOT

Well that just won't do. Next weekend I will come over and I will learn everything about you. Especially all the things you like and the things that make you tick. We will become very intimate friends, Bill.

BILL

Oh... I... Should get going.

MARGOT

No! Why wait? Let's talk now. What's your favourite game?

BILL

Uh...game? I play games....I guess..crib.../or

MARGOT

Crib! Of course! Amazing. Bill Bill Bill. I am about to change your world.

[MARGOT goes off on a tangent about all the games she's going to plan. BILL awkwardly tries to leave. As though on cue, RICK busts through the doors to the yard with two boxes of beer.]

RICK

WHAT IS UP, PARTY PEOPLE!?

[BILL swiftly turns back]

BILL

Oh... uh... hey, Rick.

RICK

Bill!! I've brought the beer!

MAC

No!

RICK

What?

MAC

I *told* you. This is a dry birthday party, Rick.

RICK

Yeah. That's why I left my trunks at home.

MAC

No, Rick. Dry means no alcohol.

RICK

What?

BILL

Is that a gay thing?

MARGOT

Not everything is a gay thing, Bill.

BILL

So...

MAC

No. It's not a gay thing! It's just- You know what? Not the time. Please get rid of it, Rick.

RICK

Uh.. yeah. Can do, buddy. Bro? Girl... Woman? Can do, lady buddy.

BILL

Oh hey, Rick. I'll uh.. Come with you.

[RICK and BILL leave to get rid of the beers.]

MARGOT

So about the games, I was thinking-

MAC

Margot, please. Jasper and Topaz are going to be here any minute. Can we please put the games on pause so we can get everyone ready?

MARGOT

You got it, boss... Admiral... Colonel... Whatever is above a captain. I don't know ranks.

MAC

General. Thank you. Do you know where Emmett is? He was supposed to be here twenty minutes ago.

MARGOT

Nope. What do you need him for, General? I bet I can do it.

MAC

No. I was just hoping he'd be here before Jasper got here.

MARGOT

But it looks like mostly everyone else is here.

MAC

Yeah. You're right.

[JASPER enters the backyard. As he does:

ALL

SURPRISE!!

[There is a long pause. Longer than you feel a long pause is. JASPER nods once, turns on their heels and walks into their greenhouse.

Beat.

SFX: Something in the Orange]

MAC

Well... shit. That's not good.

MARGOT

Maybe they just need a minute to pump up before the party. Otherwise they're never going to make it past nine pm. And they have too because I have a *game* plan.

MAC

Oh.. I'll uh... Go talk to them. Just hold the fort down.

[MAC heads into the greenhouse with JASPER. As they are in the greenhouse, MAC and JASPER seem to have a very serious conversation.]

MARGOT

Right. Hold the fort down. Everyone, we are holding the fort do- OH I KNOW. Let's play a game. Ok, ok. This game is called Celebrity.

So I have a bag here of names of famous people and in round one I can say whatever I want EXCEPT the person's name, or part thereof. I also cannot say something like 'it sounds like Wailer Lift' or something. Cool? We'll see how many I can do in a minute. Ready?

Okay, this was the first openly gay man to be elected to public office... he was assassinated... Sean Penn played him in a movie about him... his last name is a drink that comes from cows... Harvey Milk!

Okay, next one... Okay, this is an American artist, designer, activist, and vexillographer. He designed the pride flag in 1978... He's in the Guinness book of world records for making a pride flag one mile long to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Stonewall... Gilbert Baker! [to use if someone guesses and we need more time] Good job! Okay, next one, uh, this is... uh.. bisexual woman. She is considered 'the mother of pride'. She was a feminist, anti-war activist who fights for bisexual and queer rights. Worked as a phone sex operator. Was polyamorous, and had a long time primary partner...

SOMEONE IF AVAILABLE

Topaz!

[TOPAZ enters through the front gate.]

MARGOT

No, not Topaz... [turns around to see Topaz enter] Oh! SURPRISE! Shit. Everyone that's the birthday twin, all together now. [pause] SURPRISE!

TOPAZ

Oh my god... holy shit. Thank you. You even managed to pull Jackson away from whatever it is Jackson does in his free time. Amazing.

MARGOT

I brought some games! We're just about to play-

MAC

[reemerges] Shit, Margot we have-

TOPAZ

Mac!

MAC

Shit- Surprise! Oh god, this is a mess.

TOPAZ

No, this is so cool. Shit, Mac. You've crushed this. Has Jasper seen all of this yet?

MAC

Yeah, so that's the thing-

TOPAZ

Oh man... they've got Luke Bryan going on back there? Where's Em?

MAC

So that's the thing... I guess they met up with Em before this.

TOPAZ

So? She's still coming right. Em has never missed one of Jasper's birthdays.

MAC

So... I guess...

TOPAZ

You guess?

MAC

Shit... They should be telling you this.

TOPAZ

Fuck. Em?

MAC

Yeah. So... She won't be here.

TOPAZ

On *our* birthday?! That's fucked up.

MARGOT

Double fucked up.

MAC

Topaz, maybe you should go talk to Jasper? See if you can get them to come out.

TOPAZ

Yeah...that's a great idea Mac. Poor Jasper...do you know what happened?

[RICK and BILL bust through the door. RICK is holding up a pair of swim trunks.]

RICK

We're back! Got rid of the beer and got my swim trunks! Oh hey! Topaz dude! Happy surprise! Where's Jasper?

MAC

Uh, Jasper and Em-

RICK

Emmett? I LOVE that Lady dude! Where is she?

TOPAZ

No, Em and-

RICK

Yeah! Em! Come out lady buddy! Let's shotgun a beer! I'll go grab some

MAC/TOPAZ

No! Jasper and Em broke up!

BILL

Who's Em?

RICK

Jasper's *[RICK looks around and lowers his voice]* girlfriend.

BILL

Huh? Whaddya say buddy? My hearings not too good.

RICK

[a little louder] Jaspers girlfriend

BILL

One more time.

RICK

[Louder] Jaspers girlfriend

BILL

Jaspers what?

RICK

[Yelling now.] JASPERS GIRLFRIEND

BILL

Ohhhhhhhhhh Jasper's girl friend. Why did you whisper?

TOPAZ

No Bill. Like boyfriend. Jasper and Em were dating. Jasper met her-

BILL

Him? Jasper is dating a girl?

MAC

Was.

BILL

Huh?

MAC

Was dating a girl.

BILL

Ohhhh it's another gay thing. Coolcoolcool that's cool. I'm comfortable with the gay thing.

[JASPER comes out of the greenhouse at this point.]

BILL

Jasper! You have a girlfriend! Congrats!

ALL

No!

[JASPER wails and turns back into the greenhouse.]

SFX: Something in the Orange...but louder and we hear JASER singing along.]

TOPAZ

Nice going Bill.

BILL

I'm sorry. I don't know.... Sorry.

RICK

It's cool, buddy. You didn't know. Right?

MARGOT

It is what it is! Let's... Let's give them some space. To do their thing, y'know.

BILL

Yeah okay.

TOPAZ

Should one of us go in there?

MAC

I think if they wanted one of us they would let us know...

[Beat.]

TOPAZ

Poor Jasper. I wonder what happened.

RICK

Couldn't tell ya. Break ups suck though. When my last girlfriend and I broke up I cried for three days.

BILL

You cried Rick?

RICK

What? Guys can cry too.

BILL

Oh yeah. Me too. I cry. I'm a crying guy.

MARGOT

I have a great idea for a game.

MAC

Margot, maybe now isn't the time?

MARGOT

There is ALWAYS time for a game.

[JASPER comes storming into the backyard.]

JASPER

It's my birthday!

TOPAZ

/Our

JASPER

It's my birthday and she dumped me!

RICK

Ahh, the anger stage.

MAC

Rick! Not helping.

RICK

What? I know psychology. I read a paper once.

TOPAZ

Rick...just..no. Okay?

JASPER

I am so angry. I'm going to call her right now.

TOPAZ/MAC

No!

BILL

Why not?

JASPER

Yeah!? Why not!?

[TOPAZ grabs RICK and BILL by the arms and starts leading them to the greenhouse.]

TOPAZ

I think the door on the greenhouse is broken, guys. I need you to fix it.

BILL

OH yeah! I can fix it. We can fix it together, right Rick?

RICK

Sure buddy.

TOPAZ

YOU TOO MARGOT.

[MARGOT, BILL & RICK are in the greenhouse. TOPAZ returns after a moment.]

JASPER

I am going to call her. I'm going to tell her that I don't care what her parents think. We shouldn't have to hide-

MAC

Jasper! Slow down for just a moment please?

TOPAZ

Let's take some deep breaths okay?

JASPER

I don't want to take deep breaths Topaz.

TOPAZ

I know I know. Just do it okay? Then you can decide if you want to call her.

[TOPAZ leads JASPER through some deep breathing.]

TOPAZ

There we go. Talk to us Jasper.

[JASPER sits down]

JASPER

I'm tired of never being enough. Ya know?

MAC

You're not a fuck up Jasper.

JASPER

I didn't finish college, I'm stuck at a dead-end retail job that makes me want to scream all the time and the one good thing I had going for me just dumped me. 20 minutes before the surprise birthday party that he knew about!

MAC

/Jasper

JASPER

/We're supposed to have life figured out by now. We aren't kids anymore. When my parents were my age they had two kids, a mortgage, and careers. You looked at mom and dad and thought to yourself "Now there's two people who have it all. They're grown ups. Dependable. Stable." Not dumped and crying at their birthday party.

MAC

Life isn't a race you have to win Jasper.

JASPER

I know that but-

MAC

Why do you have to have it all figured out right now? People are supposed to make mistakes and take risks.

JASPER

Yeah, when you're 18. The world doesn't have patience for mistakes for people like me.

[SFX: Total Eclipse of the Heart - Bonnie Tyler

BILL, MARGOT and RICK enter. They perform a sick ass lip sync. By the end of it TOPAZ and MAC are laughing. Jasper is laugh/crying.]

RICK

You know, that song reminds me of a date I once went on with this girl-

BILL

A girl?

RICK

Yeah?

BILL

Uh no, that's awesome. A girl!

RICK

Anyways - her idea of the perfect first date was to sit in her car in the rain and listen to the whole discography of King Gizard and the Lizard Wizard.

TOPAZ

No way!

RICK

Yeah and it gets worse. She wouldn't drive me home because she had to go pick up her boyfriend.

TOPAZ

No fucking way!

RICK

Yeah bro! Then she texted me later that night and invited me over for a threesome.

MAC

That's hilarious!

MARGOT

Did you do it?

RICK

Do what? The threesome? No way man! You gotta at least buy me dinner first.

MARGOT

Oh oh oh! This would be such a fun game. I call it First Date. You have to tell the story of a first bad date. I'll go first. One time I was on a date. We went mini golfing and I totally won by the way. She spent the whole date talking about everything that she does with her best friend, Peter. And they do literally everything together. Cooking, reading, board game nights, they play music together. I know what you're all thinking, these two are totally in love, right?

[Beat]

No.

Peter was her pet hamster.

TOPAZ

I had a pet hamster once...

[TOPAZ shoots JASPER a glare.]

JASPER

Uh....MAC! Tell us the Gucci story!

MAC

What? No way! It's too embarrassing.

MARGOT

That's how you win the game!

MAC

No! I'm not telling that story.

MARGOT

Tell us. Tell us. Tell us. Tell us.

[MARGOT encourages the audience to participate in the chant until finally:]

MAC

Alright! I'll tell the story!

JASPER

YES! Buckle in guys. This is a good one.

MAC

I was seeing this person. It was super brief. One day for my lunch break I went over to their house to hang out. When I got there they immediately got high in their garage-

JASPER

Their parents' garage.

MAC

Yeah yeah, their parents' garage. Afterwards we were sitting in the bedroom, I was petting some cats and they were laying on their bed. Out of absolutely nowhere - they sit up, make hard eye contact with me and say "I hate when this happens. You need to leave."

RICK

You got kicked out!? Bro! That's hilarious.

JASPER

Just wait for it...

MAC

Yeah, I got kicked out. Later I texted them to check up. Make sure they were okay ya know? I sent this big long message about how I wanted to respect their boundaries but it was kind of jarring. They responded with "Nah, you gucci. How's work?"

MARGOT

So... are we thinking diarrhea?

MAC

Thanks Margot.

TOPAZ

I once went out on a date with someone minutes after the Queen died. I had to break the news to her. She cried. A lot. I guess she was a big fan of the show The Crown?

RICK

What about you there buddy?

BILL

Me? I don't have any embarrassing first date stories.

RICK

Not even one?

BILL

Well, uh, I've only been on one first date.

RICK

One? What happened?

BILL

I married her.

[There is an awkward pause.]

BILL

Then she divorced me.

[A longer awkward pause.]

BILL

But our first date was nice though. She ordered a strawberry cheesecake, a banana split with only strawberry ice cream and strawberry milkshakes.

TOPAZ

That's a lot of strawberry...

MARGOT

Strawberries are alleged to make you evil if taken in large doses.

JASPER

My first date with Em was amazing...we went for a drive and got some coffee. We parked by the giant Sundial and just talked for hours...it was the best first date.

[Beat.]

SFX:

Each of the characters who are presently on stage head to their spacebreak trees. Open the tree umbrellas]

TOPAZ

Heartache hurts in a different way when you have experienced love. I've been sad. I've been dumped. It's not the same. It hurts in a different way when the love that you have for someone else isn't enough. You can still feel the warmth of their arms around you, you can

still see the love you have when you look into their eyes. The realisation that it isn't enough washes over your body like a cold tsunami.

BILL

All you have in front of you is an impossible choice.

MAC

You can choose to save them. Or you can choose to save yourself. You can't have both.

JASPER

I chose to save her.

She chose to save herself.

And now I'm here. And I feel like I am drowning. That tsunami is filling my lungs and I want to wash away with the tide.

Instead... I'm here.

I'm watching the sun rise and fall.

I'm watching people pass by.

But I'm still just... here.

I'm crawling into bed just to get out of it later.

And I feel everything.

And nothing.

All at the same time.

And I'm still... here.

[beat.

The characters all return to their spots in the yard]

Does that make sense? It's okay if it doesn't. It doesn't make sense to me yet either. Sink or swim, right? I've only ever swam before. I can't help but wonder what it feels like... to just sink.

[The group gathers around the firepit; it's quiet, almost contemplative. BILL feels awkward.]

BILL

You know people they...uh...they call this Caveman TV

TOPAZ

Who calls it that Bill?

BILL

I don't know! Everyone I know.

MARGOT

Does that mean if I asked you to turn the volume up you add another log?

BILL

Oh ha...

RICK

Looks like we need more fire wood. No worries. I got it guys.

BILL

Wait up there buddy!

[BILL follows RICK to chop wood. For a moment all we hear is RICK chopping wood and BILL complimenting his chopping skills.]

BILL

You got a great form there bud...

JASPER

Do we have any marshmallows?

TOPAZ

Do we have the gelatin free ones?

*[MAC and JASPER share **a look**]*

BILL

Do you chop wood often? I can tell

JASPER

I couldn't even tell you what that means.

MARGOT

OH - I HAVE marshmallows!

[MARGOT goes for marshmallows. Comes back with instruments.]

MARGOT

/Who knows a good campfire song?

JASPER

/those aren't marshmallows...

[Improv: Musical chaos ensues. BILL and RICK return at some point.]

MAC

Topaz! What was that song we used to sing as kids?

TOPAZ

I don't remember...but how about a scary story?

BILL

Uh...scary?

RICK

Hell yeah!

TOPAZ

A beautiful young girl/

BILL

Ayyee...girls...amiright Rick?

TOPAZ

SH. As I was saying....a beautiful young girl is left home alone with only her dog to protect her. On the news that night, they announced there is a serial killer on the loose in the area. Before she goes to bed, she locks all the doors and tries to lock all the windows, but the one in the basement won't lock. She decides to leave it unlocked, but locks the basement door and goes to bed. Her dog takes its customary place under her bed.

In the deep of night she awakens to a dripping sound coming from her bathroom. Half-awake, the girl feels the comforting lick from her dog and falls back to sleep. She reawakens to the dripping sound, reaches her hand down to the dog where she feels the reassuring lick and falls back to sleep. Once more, she awakens to the dripping sound. She reaches her hand down and feels the lick of her dog.

Now curious about the dripping sound, she gets up and slowly walks towards the bathroom, the dripping sound getting louder as she approaches. She reaches the bathroom and turns on the light. She is greeted by a horrific sight; hanging from the shower nozzle is her dog with its throat slit open and its blood dripping into the bathtub.

Something on the bathroom mirror catches her eye; she turns around. Written on the wall in her dog's blood are the words "Humans can lick too."

[Beat.]

BILL

/ARE YOU OKAY?

RICK

/No wonder you're a feminist

MAC

/Why a dog?

TOPAZ

Hey! Don't blame me! Blame Sarah from the 3rd grade. She taught me that one.

JASPER

Ohmygod that explains so much.

MAC

Does it!?

TOPAZ

Hey! Margot! YOU GO.

MARGOT

Okay okay but I have a *great* idea.

[MARGOT produces a ball and explains the game and then:]

MARGOT

Once upon a time a person named *[gives ball to audience member to name character, takes ball back]* and their dog, named *[gives ball to audience member to name character, takes ball back]* moved to a quiet rural village called *[gives ball to audience member to name character, takes ball back]*.

But! As *[character name]* settled in, they started to notice something really weird. When introduced to anything NEW, —a new store, a new idea, or even a fresh perspective— someone would react by saying something horrifying was going to happen. It was typically something completely different each time, but always really dark and off base and would come up from out of nowhere.

For example, while in line at the post office, the postal worker told *[Character name]* that the town would be putting in a rainbow crosswalk for the warmer months. Then out of nowhere, one of the locals who was there checking his mail said something really strange and confusing and awful. He said if they start painting rainbow crosswalks instead of black and white ones then... *[tosses ball to Rick]*

RICK

Uhhh, I dunno, I guess, maybe then all the dogs in town will get excited and think the road was like a cool place to play and like get flattened all over the road or some shit? *[tosses ball to Topaz]*

TOPAZ

Ok, yeah, so then another time *[character name]* heard that there was going to be a new vegan restaurant opening up downtown that was going to have gender neutral bathrooms! When they talked to their neighbor about it the neighbor was all, "Oh no! If we put in gender neutral bathrooms..."

BILL

Huh?

TOPAZ

–that’s when anyone can use any of the bathrooms and there aren’t separate washrooms for men and women. If we have those, then... *[tosses ball to Bill]*

BILL

Then, when women are gabbing in the toilet and I come up to the urinal they get an accidental peep show and drop their jaw out of shock. Then a bee might fly into the back of her throat and sting the dangling thing back there-

TOPAZ

Uvula?

BILL

There’s one in the throat? Lordy. This is why I never married. Anyways, then no one of this generation can keep their heads on straight in a crisis situation and so she’s like turning purple choking on this bee and I know first aid so I try to give her mouth to mouth but her boyfriend comes in for a wizz and thinks I’m a creep, so then we’re fighting, she’s still choking on the bee and there’s blood everywhere on the new tile and in the grout and it’s tough to get blood out of grout because of the dark colour.... *[Mac steals the ball from Bill]*

MAC

Anyway... *[character name]* then went to the library and saw a bulletin board with upcoming community events and saw that they were hosting Drag Queen Story Hour on a rural tour. *[Character name]* was excited to see that and pointed it out to the lady next to him: “This sounds fun!”, they said. The lady smiled and nodded but then, under her breath, said... *[tosses ball to Rick]*

RICK

Oh, we can’t have queens reading to kids! Or... or... I mean kids and butt sex is a big no no, right? I mean, like, no offence *[tosses ball to Jasper]* just not for like kids. Or me.

JASPER

[Character name] was so confused, but they were in Generation X and so naturally they knew who would be the best person to ask. They went up to the reference desk and approached the librarian. “Excuse me,” they said, “Can you tell me why people keep thinking something horrible is going to happen when they hear about something new?” *[tosses ball to Margot]*

MARGOT

The librarian peered over her spectacles, her gaze shrouded in mystery. “You are new to town,” she whispered, “Perhaps you have yet to learn of *[gives ball to audience member to name character, takes ball back]*” Intrigued, *[character name]* leaned in closer, eager to unravel the enigma of their new home. “Penny was once a resident here. She was known for her sharp tongue and disdain for change. When she met her untimely demise many years ago, her ghost stuck around to try to keep everything exactly as she left it. *[Character name]*’s heart quickened as they listened intently, their mind swirling with thoughts of spectral mischief and otherworldly retribution. “But how?” The librarian’s face went pale

"The Pester Penny has the power to make the weirdest most horrible things happen, but she can't stand to be predictable. The only way to stop her is to guess the horrible thing. Then she won't do it."

BILL

So when everyone is saying something weird, they are really just trying to make sure that it never happens?

MARGOT

"Quite." The librarian confirmed, her lips pursed. And *[Character Name]* decided right then that they needed to take action. *[tosses ball to Topaz]*

TOPAZ

[Character name] called a town meeting and pleaded with everyone to confront their fears and embrace change with open arms. The speech was so compelling that everyone's fear was magically replaced by hope. *[tosses ball to Jasper]*

JASPER

The meeting after dark. *[Character name]* was enjoying their walk home. They thought about all the exciting things people would be free to try now that they had faced their problem and were brave enough to do something about it. *[tosses ball to Mac]*

MAC

There wasn't anything strange at first. It seemed like the air got just a little bit colder. Then the hair on their arms stood up. They took a quick look behind. Was that a shadow? They stopped and listened. The air was thick with silence. But then, after a moment *[character name]* could hear a distinct dripping sound.

MARGOT

They followed the slow drip drip drip towards a space between the bakery and the hardware store.

ALL

Drip drip drip.

MARGOT

[Character name] peered between the buildings. There was scarcely enough room for them to squeeze through, so they just poked their head in hoping to see what was dripping. Drip, drip, splat. A drop of warm liquid hit the top of their head. *[Character name]* recoiled, looked up, and saw... *[drops ball on Bill's lap]*

ALL

Drip drip drip drip...

[ALL continues to chant drip as they get up and move to where their Rainbow Umbrellas sit. Abruptly the chanting stops as the umbrellas pop open]

ONE

In folklore and childhood, many of us learned of the boogeyman. A monster that crept up on us in the night. The boogeyman hides in the shadows and preys on the fear of the unknown. It is sad that this boogeyman is real, and we are currently witnessing them come to light in the face of progression. This boogeyman is fueled by misinformation, ignorance and the fear that one will lose something if they give space for others. This boogeyman is being perpetuated by unfounded fear, and an unwillingness to change.

TWO

This boogeyman continues to show up to propagate fear and hate at events that are intended to bring joy.

THREE

At 1:20 a.m. on Saturday, June 28, 1969, four plainclothes policemen in dark suits, two patrol officers in uniform arrived at the Stonewall Inn's double doors and announced

SIX

"Police! We're taking the place!"

THREE

Approximately 200 people were in the bar that night. Patrons who had never experienced a police raid were confused. A few who realized what was happening began to run for doors and windows in the bathrooms, but police barred the doors.

FOUR

While this is not the only movement of note, it was one of the first to make substantial notable changes forward for the community.

FIVE

The raid sparked a riot among bar patrons and neighbourhood residents as police roughly hauled employees and patrons out of the bar, leading to six days of protests and violent clashes with law enforcement outside the bar on Christopher Street, in neighbouring streets and in nearby Christopher Park.

SIX

The Stonewall Riots served as a catalyst for the gay rights movement in the United States and around the world.

ONE

At one point, an officer hit a lesbian over the head as he forced her into the police van— she shouted to onlookers to act, inciting the crowd to begin throw pennies, bottles, cobble stones and other objects at the police.

TWO

On the one-year anniversary of the riots on June 28, 1970, thousands of people marched in the streets of Manhattan from the Stonewall Inn to Central Park in what was then called

“Christopher Street Liberation Day,” America’s first gay pride parade. The parade’s official chant was: “Say it loud, gay is proud.”

THREE

Marsha P. Johnson later said that it was the police that had started the fire in the bar. When demonstrators broke through the windows—which had been covered by plywood by the bar owners to deter the police from raiding the bar—the police inside upholstered their pistols.

FOUR

When the violence broke out, the women and transmasculine people being held down the street at The Women's House of Detention joined in by chanting, setting fire to their belongings and tossing them into the street below. The historian Hugh Ryan says,

FIVE

"When I would talk to people about Stonewall, they would tell me, that night on Stonewall, we looked to the prison because we saw the women rioting and chanting,

ALL

Gay rights, gay rights, gay rights...

SIX

By 4:00 a.m., the streets had nearly been cleared. Many people sat on stoops or gathered nearby in Christopher Park throughout the morning, dazed in disbelief at what had transpired.

ONE

"There was a certain beauty in the aftermath of the riot ... It was obvious, at least to me, that a lot of people really were gay and, you know, this was our street."

TWO

Police raids on gay bars did not stop after the Stonewall riots. And this was not the only time that LGBT people organised politically amid constant attacks. .

THREE

On January 24, 2023 the boogeyman showed up in Grande Prairie to condemn the Public Library for putting on Drag Queen Storytime.

FOUR

"The outcome that can occur watching a drag queen telling a story is that it can save the lives of those children who are struggling with gender nonconformity and free them to explore and express themselves in ways they were meant to be and not supposed to be" (Kort, PsychologyToday).

FIVE

"Many reasons have been cited as complaints and suggest a fear of the other, or a misinterpretation of the events as an early sexualization of children. Empathy for LGBT people rather than misunderstandings and fear exemplify the need for 'windows' in literature and other narrative experiences at early learning stages" (Townend, 2019).

SIX

Art, music, theatre and literature have all been created out of places of political unrest. It is a medium that exists to educate, broaden horizons, and push the boundaries of learning.

ONE

"Drag queen storytime is a highly visual and aural multimodal reading experience. With many modes for children listening to interact and make meaning from, [Drag Queen Storytime] builds on established skills and knowledge delivered by early years librarians and storytellers to bring a new and refreshing experience for children and adults alike" (Townend, 2019)

TWO

Drag based theatre has existed for centuries, predating the Greeks. Contemporary Drag Theatre pulls in aspects of clown, mask and movement-based theatre. They take small moments in life and make them grandiose through their movement, make-up and characters they have created. Drag Queens defy the bounds of the cisheteropatriarchy -

SIX

The cisheteropatriarchy is a system that prioritises cisgender, heterosexual men and devalues all other voices who act outside the perceived norm or majority.

TWO

- and provide a new way of exploring the world. These storytelling sessions are not just advantageous for our 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and children – they are a modelling of the differing ways in which people can interact with literature. They are beneficial for our neurodivergent youth who experience literature with differing stimuli, it's good for our creative children who want to see the words come to life – they are beneficial for anyone who wants to hold a little bit of ethereal magic in their life.

THREE

To strip children of the opportunity to experience magic like this is cruel and based in archaic thinking. At the end of the day it is hate that is the thing depriving children of happiness, wonderment and imagination.

FOUR

The boogeyman showed up on June 12, 2016 at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

FIVE

Where many of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community gathered to breathe together in shared identity. They were in a building that they felt was safe, and away from the eyes of judgement. They were surrounded by love, light, music and laughter.

SIX

Until it was taken from them by a gunman. A gunman who largely targeted the 2SLGBTQIA+ and Latinx communities. 49 individuals lost their lives that night, and 53 were wounded.

Countless lives were forever impacted, knowing that their safe spaces would forever be tainted with fear. For us, the boogeyman is real and always following us.

ONE

Edward Sotomayor Jr., Stanley Almodovar III, Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo, Juan Ramon Guerrero, Luis S. Vielma, Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera, Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz, Kimberly Morris, Eddie Jamoldroy Justice, Darryl Roman Burt II.

TWO

Deonka Deidra Drayton, Alejandro Barrios Martinez, Anthony Luis Laureano Disla, Jean Carlos Mendez Perez, Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez, Amanda Alvear, Martin Benitez Torres, Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon, Mercedes Marisol Flores, Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado.

THREE

Enrique Rios, Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez, Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez, Oscar A Aracena-Montero, Miguel Angel Honorato, Javier Jorge-Reyes, Jonathan A. Camuy Vega, Joel Rayon Paniagua, Jason Benjamin Josaphat, Cory James Connell.

FOUR

Juan P. Rivera Velazquez, Luis Daniel Conde, Shane Evan Tomlinon, Juan Chevez-Martinez, Jerald Arthur Wright, Leroy Valentin Fernandez, Tevin Eugene Crosby, Jean C. Nieves Rodriguez, Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala, Brenda Lee Marquez McCool, Yilmary Rodriquez Solivan.

FIVE

Christopher Andrew Leinonen, Angel L. Candelario-Padro, Frank Hernandex, Paul Terrell Henry, Antonio Davon Brown, Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz, Akyra Money Murray, Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez.

SIX

We say their names because we refuse to forget. We say their names so we remember to keep pushing. We say their names because they were loved and deserved to love unconditionally.

ONE

On November 19, 2022, we revisited that same fear. In Colorado Springs lived a gay bar by the name of Club Q. A club that was noted to be a place where 2SLGBTQIA+ folx went for drag performances, dance parties and drinks.

TWO

November 20th marks the International Transgender Day of Remembrance. A day that was founded to memorialise those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia. It was founded in 1999 by a small group to memorialise the murders of Black transgender women Rita Hester and Chanelle Pickett.

THREE

“It really surprised me that it had already, in a short period of time, been forgotten, and here we were with another murder at the same site.”

FOUR

Here we were, in 2022 on the eve of the Transgender Day of Remembrance. A community gathered, once again in their safe space. Only to be disrupted by another boogeyman and gunfire.

FIVE

Five people were murdered, and 25 more were injured. Again, countless lives were disrupted by fear.

SIX

Daniel Davis Aston.

ONE

Derrick Rump.

TWO

Raymond Green Vance.

THREE

Kelly Loving.

FOUR

Ashley Paugh.

FIVE

[a moment of silence]

SIX

The motive is published as Anti-LGBT Extremism.

ONE

In 2023 2SLGBTQIA+ travellers were issued a travel warning against travelling to the United States due to increased violence against the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

TWO

In 2024 there are, to date, 589 anti-trans bills that have been introduced in the United States, across 42 states. 42 of these bills have passed, and 328 are still actively awaiting approval. These bills seek to block transgender people from receiving basic healthcare, education, legal recognition, and the right to publicly exist.

THREE

Because someone has created a boogeyman that doesn't exist. An unfounded fear that gender neutral bathrooms will lead to increased sexual assault. Or that children will be having gender reassignment surgery without due course. Or that children will be identified as cats in their classrooms.

FOUR

The reason that classrooms have litter boxes in them is not because children are using them because they identify as cats. It is in the instance that a school has to lockdown due to gun violence in schools.

FIVE

Hate has increased in Canada as well. Between 2019 and 2021 police reported hate crimes based on sexual orientation rose nearly 60% between 2019 and 2021.

SIX

And Transgender Canadians are more likely to experience physical and sexual violence.

ONE

In December of 2023, bomb threats were called in to prevent a Drag Queen Storytime in Brockville, Ontario - where a protestor gained access to the roof and set fire to the building's HVAC system.

TWO

There is a boogeyman that is only being perpetuated by unfounded fear, and an unwillingness to change. The boogeyman is founded from a place of hatred. If this hatred is not tempered, the boogeyman will continue to live on. The only victims of the boogeyman seem to be us. Yet we show up everyday with rainbows on, a hope for love and aspirations for acceptance for all persons.

[Beat.

As the actors lower their umbrellas, they pick their DRIP DRIP DRIP chant back up and return to their seats around the campfire. BILL carries on as though the above never happened.]

BILL

Above his head was a clothesline and hanging from that clothesline was Mr. Clement's cat and Donna Jensen's poodle. But directly above his head, was *[dog's name]* - dead and dripping spit and blood right into *[character name]*'s eyes. *[Bill pelts the ball right into Rick's face.]*

MAC

Bill!

RICK

Bro, what...?

BILL

What!? It wasn't me! It was-

MARGOT

Bill, you finished the story.

BILL

I know but-

TOPAZ

See I'm not the only one!

JASPER

I wouldn't be proud of that...

TOPAZ

Who else has a story!?

BILL

Well..uh...the dog reminded me of one...

TOPAZ

Please go on Bill.

BILL

Erm...ahem...yeah..okay. I hear scratching on my window sometimes. I figured it's the real reason why pets aren't allowed in my rental. Not raccoons or coyotes but something else. The last tenants left very quickly into their lease, leaving no trace behind. Only took them a day to get everything out and it made it very easy for me to move in. I was putting away my box of kitchen supplies when I found the note in the cupboard. It read: "Don't look out the window". There was only one large window in my house. Above the countertop, overlooking the front yard, acting as natural lighting when the sun would hit it. I ignored the warning for a bit too long, leaving my blinds open and letting light in. It likely wouldn't have helped. It would have seen me once I left the house. The first few nights, the scratch started. A slow, sharp scratch. Not entirely rhythmic, sometimes barely heard. I didn't look out the window then. Until one night, I couldn't sleep. I figured I could at least catch up on a show with some hot tea. I went to my kitchen to start my kettle. It was dark out, my kitchen lights illuminating the yard. Waiting for the water to boil, my mind and eyes began to wander out of boredom. Unfortunately that's when I unthinkingly glanced out my window. It was just my reflection, me in my housecoat. And then it blinked. I jumped back as it sank out of sight. I had no interest in seeking it further, and closed my blinds. Now I only hear tapping with one finger. It saw me turn my kettle on. I've made a great effort to not teach it how to open a door.

TOPAZ

Bill..

MAC

Is that a true story?

BILL

I've always been uncomfortable looking at myself in the mirror.

MAC

What do you mean?

BILL

It feels like I can just lose myself in my reflection for hours. It's not like... I'm not... It's not like I'm so handsome and I just want to stare at myself. It's not like that. It's like... I just... *[beat]* It's like I'm looking at myself... but also... I'm not?

MAC

Like you're you, but not you?

BILL

Yeah.

MAC

I get that.

BILL

You do?

MAC

Yeah. I spent a lot of time looking at myself and wondering why I didn't seem to fit the way that everyone else seemed to just fit.

TOPAZ

Me too.

BILL

It's just... I like my body or whatever. It's not like... It's not like I don't think that I am a man or whatever. I am a man. A manly man. A real man. Or... whatever.

MAC

But something is missing?

BILL

Something is missing. I just... It feels like... I guess... This is so dumb. Nevermind.

TOPAZ

It's not dumb, Bill. We will hold space for you.

BILL

I just... It feels like something is missing. And when I married my ex wife I thought that was it. I thought we would be like the movies and that we would have a big church wedding and we would kiss and the rice would be thrown and we'd dance and laugh our way through life. We'd have kids and two dogs. A big backyard like this one. It was all going to be so perfect.

JASPER

Until it wasn't?

BILL

It just always felt like something was missing. Like we didn't have a spark or whatever. And don't get me wrong, she was beautiful. One of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. I just... Couldn't seem to get it all right.

TOPAZ

What happened?

BILL

It wasn't like we fought or anything. I just... I got distant I guess. I spent a lot of time working in the garage. I would go to bed hours after her. I'd lose myself in the mirror over and over and over again. I just thought that if I stared long enough I might find what was missing.

MARGOT

Did you?

BILL

Not really. Maybe? I don't know. I had to stop looking because I would get so frustrated. I was so mad at myself for not being able to make it work. For having this perfect thing in my hands and letting it slip away because I couldn't fucking make sense of a goddamn mirror.

JASPER

What were you scared of?

BILL

What?

JASPER

In your story... you were scared of letting your reflection open the door. Why?

BILL

I don't know! I don't fucking know! It's just... What happens... if I like... if it... What...

MAC

If you open the door and you don't like what you see?

BILL

Yeah.

Beat.

MAC

You don't need to be scared of yourself, Bill.

RICK

Buddy.. We're all gonna love you, even if your creepy ass reflection learns how to open a door.

[There's another moment of silence, almost as though there is a breeze cutting through the backyard.]

BILL

What if the thing comes out and it changes everything?

TOPAZ

What do you mean?

BILL

If I let it out, what if everything changes and it's scary and I can't get it back?

MAC

Do you already know what it is?

BILL

I... don't know.

MARGOT

You can tell us... if you want.

BILL

It's just... I don't know.

TOPAZ

You don't have to.

[There's another moment of silence.]

BILL

I've never known what it felt like to have a family.

MAC

I think we all know what that feels like.

BILL

And I didn't know that I would ever feel like... I knew what that would feel like... until...

JASPER

Until?

BILL

Until I started coming over here to help fix the gate.

MAC

You mean -

BILL

It feels like I have a little family here with... you guys.

RICK

Aw man, buddy. We like ya too.

BILL

But I think... It's... I think... I... Uh..

JASPER

Belong?

BILL

Yeah.

TOPAZ

Do you think it's because...?

BILL

I think I might have found the thing that was missing with my ex wife.

[There is another moment of silence, it is warm and understanding.]

Beat.

BILL and MAC sit across from each other at the campfire. Softly they play the instrumental for Blackbird. Other actors return to their trees. They pull out their umbrellas.]

ALL

Not all storms are the same.

MARGOT

When I first came out
– side I stepped into slivers of sun
Peaking through the overcast.
And even as I moved further
From the safety of my steps
Towards swirling dark clouds
There was barely a sprinkling
Before someone reached out
– a red umbrella
To save me from the rain.

TOPAZ

My coming out story was not a dramatic, radical one, where one day you finally decide to gather your family and friends to share the news and then face the drama that may come after... mine was more of a gradual journey with a lot of learning and work towards self acceptance. All I knew about being gay is that anyone admitting to be so, would be bullied to

shred s and live a life of constant harassment. Also, homosexuals were seen as the worst of society... I didn't feel I fit that profile at all.

MARGOT

I said thank you and
They told me
The red umbrella had been a gift
Given to them once
– upon a time
When they were caught
In a downpour.
They were soggy and stuck, they said
And shivering slightly
“And oh, what a relief it was
For the chance to dry off,” they say.
“And isn’t it the least I can do
To keep you dry if I can?”
So I stayed dry
And grateful
watching the storm
Around us swirl.

RICK

My friend returned from Christmas at home and let us know he had come out to his family. There was nothing surprising or noteworthy about their reaction, but they did decide to sit down with his younger brother to let him know as well. His brother was about 13 or 14 at the time. Upon being told the news the brother got visibly upset and started to cry. This was surprising to both my friend and his parents. After a few questions and a bit of prodding they found out that the reason the brother was crying was because he thought that being gay meant that you would get aids and die. For him being told his brother was gay was akin to being told his brother had a terminal diagnosis. Once my friend (and his parents) were able to educate the brother about homosexuality, AIDS, and HIV his brother relaxed and was entirely on board with his support.

MARGOT

Before finding my friend in the flood,
The red umbrella
Belonged to a man.
He had been stranded long time
In the storm.
During which
He was drenched to the bone
And quaking with cold
And his fingers were numb
With translucent tips.

ALL

He could hardly hold onto hope

MARGOT

– let alone the handle
Of a red umbrella.
The only reason he ever could grasp it at all
Was because of the one who stood beside
Holding a red umbrella aloft,
Shielding the shivering huddle
Of wet skin and chattering despair.
She stood still and patient
Waiting for his hands to relearn to open
She stood still and patient
And she sang him a song
About the woman she'd loved
Gone.
Not so long ago now,
Having drowned in a deluge.

JASPER

I never came out. I was outed. The first time, my dad looked at my phone and saw my texts to James, someone who asked me out within the week I met them. The second I was seen by someone who knew my parents kissing a girl and that person told them. That time was the worst time. I had never been called a slut by someone who cared about me. For a while, it felt like I had paparazzi following me and reporting on how much of a gay failure I was. I learned to hide everything from mostly everyone who was remotely curious. My name and every relationship I had ever had was a deep secret.

MARGOT

“Once upon a time,” she sang,
“Before I held
A red umbrella,
I held a heart.
I lost that heart to the storm
Even as I clutched the body that housed it.
The heart slipped through my hands
And stopped beating.
And I was left with the body
No Heart,
Just her body
And I...”

ALL

– She raged.

RICK

This stuck with me and pretty much my entire life. It was just a mentality of loving people for who they are, not for who they look like or who you judge them to be, which I think was an important lesson to learn.

MARGOT

She sprayed salted tears
Over the body of her lost love.

ALL

She raged.

TOPAZ

What made everything even more confusing was the fact that I was sexually assaulted by a male presenting person. It was a traumatic experience for me and my family but hey... I was a survivor.

MARGOT

At the storm
And at the injustice
And at the moon
And at the body
and in her fury
She tore that body apart.

JASPER

She was a secret for a bit. It was hard to express that I found someone I love so dearly to people who will never see who she is. I don't care that they say they accept me now. And that's because they really kinda don't. If they actually did, they wouldn't have a shitty goldfish memory and act surprised each time I mention my partner.

MARGOT

She ripped out fists of hair,
Unwrapped bones,
Braided together a hair rope and tied
Bone to bone to bone
She stretched the skin tightly
Across the shapes between the bones.
She stained the surfaces red.

RICK

Another friend of mine had always dated women, married a woman, and then went through a divorce. At some time subsequent to his divorce he met a man who he began a relationship with. He sat down with his parents to let them know that he is bisexual and was (at that time) in a serious relationship with a man. The discussion went well and was healthy and supportive. My favourite part was that my friend reported that the discussion ended with everyone singing a round of "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands" and my friend clapping up a storm.

MARGOT

She built herself a red umbrella
Out of heartbreak

And she used it
To save herself
From the middle of the needless storm
That refused to relent
As it dared her to go in
-side out of the rain.
But she braved the storm,
She chased down the rain,
She brought out her red umbrella
And used it on soaked strangers
That she found in roofless outposts
And exposed corners.

TOPAZ

Feeling unworthy, unenough, unlovable... is something I have carried with me since then,
more or less at different stages of my life.

It was also confusing that as I grew older, I really struggled feeling attracted to men. After the incident, it would just make sense that I hated men, right? Except... I did not. There had been great men in my life that I had been able to build meaningful connections with, but never felt comfortable in more intimate connections with them (emotional or physical), but of course, that should be related to my own brokenness.

MARGOT

Many of the strangers dried off enough
To join her in the storm,
Sharing their red umbrella with someone new
Just stepping out into the rain,

Like me.

JASPER?

It happened for me and I can't go back in time to be formal about it. I should have known a lot sooner instead of dismissing myself as a phase. Once I had cried about it at my university's pool, I had accepted who I was. Now I spoil her with every experience I got growing up. For now I wish I could be seen as what I want to be seen as. Maybe I will someday.

Also my first crush was a girl mii from the nintendo game wii sports. Not telling you which one.

ALL

Not all storms are the same.

MARGOT

I can't pretend to know
The terror of standing alone
And naked

In a hurricane.
I can only be thankful that I
Got to come out
to clapping hands
Rather than clapping thunder.

TOPAZ

I continued my life with no queer role models or any level of queer exposure / education. Even through Medical School! But then, in my fourth year, I had my first same sex partner. We have been in the same class since the beginning of Medical school. She is an intelligent, strong, beautiful woman who not only accepted me for who I am, past and present and all. She also corresponded with the feelings I expressed for her. Then it all made sense for me: it finally felt right, I could finally feel the connection, I was not broken!

Coming out to my family and close friends has been very smooth, with unconditional love and respect. It has since been a journey of learning about queer History, Biology, Psychology; changing stereotypes, being open so that others around me HAVE positive queer role models and know they can be accepted for who they are. But definitely that hardest part has been accepting myself and accepting I am worthy of love and connection.

MARGOT

I can only be on the lookout
For strangers caught in storms

ALL

In desperate need of a rainbow.

ALL

Blackbird singing in the dead of night
Take these broken wings and learn to fly
All your life
You were only waiting for this moment to arise

[ALL pull their umbrellas down and disperse around the yard. MAC and BILL remain at the campfire.

beat.]

MARGOT

What was that thing that Lady Gaga always says?

RICK

If you can't love yourself then how the hell are you gonna love anybody else!

TOPAZ

That's RuPaul.

MAC

You were born this way.

JASPER

We were all born this way.

BILL

Who's RuPaul?

RICK

Bill! Buddy... Pal... You haven't seen RuPaul's Drag Race?

TOPAZ

Rick, you have?

RICK

Don't be so judgemental, Topaz. I love Drag Queens.

BILL

I haven't.

RICK

Oh man. Come over next weekend and we will watch the whole sixth season. That's the best season to start on.

TOPAZ

Huh. You think you know someone.

MARGOT

You know what I think? I think this would be a great time-

JASPER

I swear on our lord and saviour, Lady Gaga, Margot, if you suggest another game -

MARGOT

No! *[abruptly gets up from her chair]* PRESENTS!

[MARGOT rushes to the obnoxiously large box she brought and immediately starts opening it on behalf of the twins]

MARGOT

I technically got this for both of you, and I think you will have so much fun with it. I think it would be great to add to our party right now. But also there is some assembly required. So like... it might take me some time to set up, but it's no biggie. I am totally happy to help set it up.

MAC

Uh... while Margot figures that out, I know Jackson brought a gift for Topaz. Jackson?

[Jackson is obviously in the audience with Topaz's gift. It will be opened onstage - characters react as they would]

TOPAZ

Oh wow... Thanks, Jackson.

MAC

Jasper... I have one here for you too.

[MAC brings out a gift - It is a box of old notes and letters that MAC and JASPER used to write back and forth as kids, included are old photos]

JASPER

Mac... this is... Wow.. This is so thoughtful.

MAC

I am sorry that today didn't go as planned, Jasper. I really wanted to make this day special for you and Topaz.

JASPER

Mac -

MAC

And I worked really hard to try and make it perfect. To put all of these pieces together so that you could both see how truly loved you are. To see that you are so special, because honestly the world out there kind of sucks sometimes. I wanted you to know that you have family, and that we are family and that we will always be family.

TOPAZ

Mac this has all been wonderful.

MAC

No. It hasn't. It wasn't at all what I pictured it to be. I keep trying to pull it all together and make sure that everyone feels as special as they are to me. Then Em goes and does something so fucking dumb and you can't even feel the love that is in the space with you right now.

MARGOT

Mac -

MAC

No. Stop. This isn't about me right now. I don't want it to be about me right now. I want the two of you to know that this day is about *you*. I just wanted one birthday to go well. I just wanted it to go right this time.

MARGOT

Mac, it's okay for you to take up space too.

MAC

It's not about me. Don't you get it?

JASPER

But it can be.

MAC

That's not how it works.

TOPAZ

It can be.

Beat.

TOPAZ

Do you ever think about yourself as a child?

JASPER

What do you mean?

TOPAZ

Like...what would you say to a past version of yourself?

RICK

Woah. Heavy topic there Topaz. This is supposed to be a party

TOPAZ

I know but...I take a look around this backyard and I see so many people who have come so far. I just wonder. Would you change anything? Would you give advice? Would it change anything?

Transition to trees

TOPAZ

I would like to ask you how you are doing, but I already know the answer - because I am you... were you? I am still not too sure on that part yet. I am sure there is some bigger philosophical argument to that logic that I don't really have the time for right now. But please know that I see you. I feel you. I hear you. I know how alone and confused and scared and angry you are, I am here to tell you that it won't last forever (as you rightly knew).

JASPER

I can look at myself in the mirror and I recognize the person looking back at me. It doesn't hurt to look anymore. People are starting to see me for me. People love me for me - all of me! I know that is something that we never really thought we would have. But we do now. I finally feel like me... like us? I hurt for all the hurt you carried and all the big and impossible

feelings that you have no words for. I still feel them from time to time. I like to take those moments and hold them close for you. I want to give you the love you couldn't give yourself, and the love that no one else knew how to give in that moment - and I think you feel that. Nothing feels cold anymore. That is the one thing I wish I could give you – the warmth of the now. The gift of time has become one of my most treasured gifts. Life can be so full – I am so excited for you to experience it. I love you, and I've got you. I will see you when you get here.

BILL

It feels like life will always be a struggle & that no matter how hard you try, you will never be enough...That is not the case. You have been blamed for something you did not choose; the person you trusted to protect you and support you..has made you feel like it's inevitable to hate everyone, yourself included, but please don't give up and don't believe those words. There is no rush, allow yourself time to heal. You get to shape your own path. It will be rough, but never stop learning, amazing things are yet to come. You are warm, loving, & amazing people will come into your life who will respect & love you for who you are. Unconditionally.

RICK

I wonder what you would think about your life.
Would you be impressed?

Disappointed?

Would you look forward to meeting me?

How would you camouflage the things that made you fundamentally different?

People will see a part of you because you are calling to a part of them they thought they had to hide. But who is calling out the hidden parts of you? In life you will engage in the partial investment strategy you have employed the same way that most men do. But I need to know that you have the capacity to hold your whole self and accept the whole of everyone else. You are strong. I wish that you knew what I know.

MARGOT

The one thing I have more of than you did is understanding that connection is pleasing. People need affirmation that they are worthy. Dating a woman you say is intimidating. You say "How do I embrace all of the many parts of myself and accept them?"

Authenticity.

Being wholly yourself whilst accepting another person's whole self is the heaviest of lifting. You are strong. Self-love? Self-compassion? They are a practice. You need to practice.

And when I add in a whole person into our family I first need to know what I can hold and accept all of that wholeness. There just may some lovely being out there who has the capacity to allow us to show up and be wholly ourself. Be patient, my dear.

TOPAZ

There are a lot of ways you struggle. You often feel that their love is conditional even though you didn't have know those words. You think they don't like you very much because you are were too different and awkward. This won't change. Even now you know their love is conditional. They love you because they are expected to not because you light up their eyes. They don't really love you, or like you really. If you're wondering, yes it does give you a complex. You will find yourself looking at the people in your life and wonder:

JASPER

I want to apologise for the shit storm that is your life. But then I would be taking responsibility for others' choices and mistakes. I won't do that to either of us. I won't add additional guilt to our already guilt wracked body.

MAC

People describe us as levelheaded now, introspective, mindful and thoughtful, kind and reliable. Honestly, I still have a hard time believing it. We probably should give ourselves some credit for the work we have done. I count my lucky stars that I got to keep your drive and veracity. There are no words in any language that I know to express my gratitude for you. You got me through the worst times. You have strength that is beyond that of the Gods, and I wouldn't be here today without you.

MARGOT

There is no rush. Take opportunities for connection, explore, experiment & eventually you will find what is safe, exciting & fulfilling. You get to shape your own path. Believe in yourself!

RICK

It took many decades on this earth for you to begin to appreciate your worth. And that is because of the many strong, safe, connections that you managed to foster over the years.

MARGOT

Don't placate the adults in your life by telling the perfect lies they want to hear. When you hurt, cry. When you're angry, shout. When you're hurting, don't hide. Infact, don't ever hide.

I could keep going. This whole letter could be warnings, advice, demands, pleas for you to ask for help. But the bottom line is this: You are utterly, perfectly, unconditionally enough.

[Exit out of the trees, all gather around the campfire]

JASPER

I love you guys.

MAC

We love you too, buddy.

TOPAZ

Did we ever find out about those marshmallows?

MARGOT

No, but we have cake!

JASPER

Cake!

BILL

Is it *gay* cake?

MARGOT

Seriously, Bill?

RICK

C'mon guys!

[Curtain call.]

Following curtain call: Someone starts singing Happy Birthday, we will pull out cake and start the Q & A portion.]