

YOUR LOVING SON

PHIL

(Signs letter, then reads aloud.)

I love you and I still need you. Phil.

(Shuffles pages into order and reads.)

Dear Mom, This is the tenth time I've tried to write this. I hope I can mail this one. I don't want to cut myself off from you and Dad, and I know that if I don't write, that may happen. I don't know what to say to your idea that I've "chosen" to be gay just to hurt you. I don't know how to answer your idea that I'm gay out of spite. I'm just gay and I am as naturally that as grass is green.

You say that I never gave the slightest indication. I can imagine what you mean by that: I seemed normal. As you say, I was such a good boy, got pretty good grades, did fairly well in sports, though never good enough for Dad. I was a good boy, because I didn't want to draw attention to myself. I found out early that if I was quiet and went about my business, I could stay private. Being good was my way of staying secret. And I've always had secrets; especially the secret that I was gay.

I told you the truth, because I felt that I could not go on lying to you about who I really am and to give you the chance to finally know me, with no old lies between us and no new ones that needed telling, like all that stuff I told you about my dating in college or bringing some poor girl like Edith home that Christmas. I think I did her a lot of harm. She was

expecting more from me and I've lost her friendship, because I used her.

You hinted in your letter that I waited to tell you I was gay till I'd graduated, so you'd keep on supporting me. The idea makes me angry and ashamed. And, to tell you the truth, I'm not sure it's not true. If that's why I waited, I didn't know it. But does that mean you wouldn't have sent me through school if you had known?

I don't need your money anymore, but I do need you and Dad, need to know that I still have a place with you. It hurts like hell to think that your love for me has always been conditional. My shrink says I have a lot of work to do on that. He says that I have a responsibility for letting things get this tangled and messy. I get furious when he tells me that. I told him that if you and Dad were going to cut me out of your lives, I couldn't see any point in working on my problems with you, because you wouldn't be around. He says that whether I ever see you again or not, my relationship with you will always be there. I hear him and it makes me angry, because I can feel he's right.

You say that if I'd written to tell you I was gravely ill you could handle it better than this. Have you any idea how that makes me feel, knowing that you would rather deal with my having cancer or being in some awful disabling accident? Or crippled? But, of course, you would prefer a grave illness that didn't include AIDS? Dead giveaway, that. As it is, I'm afraid I'm disappointingly well and likely to be happy. My God, Mom, think before you write such things.

You write that you haven't told Dad yet, because if he knew it would kill him. Why is my being gay enough to cause death? He never expected all that much of me anyway. It was you who always told me that no matter how he behaved

shows on the outside. Sure, it's all about an affinity for men in every way, but not only in the way most people think. I think God has made a special kind of man and He's given him a way of seeing and using the world that is very different from the way straight men and women see and use it. I think gay people even have special things to do in life. Because of our difference we contribute things that are special, sometimes even beautiful.

Being gay may even make me stronger, because I may have to go through life without a family I can turn to, with a lot of laws stacked against me, with employers who may not judge my work but my sex, even with churches that don't want my kind.

Well, I've said it all and I hope that I'll be able to send this one. A lot of your letter hurt like hell, so my fear is that I won't mail this and I'll just stop writing or calling. I explained to Dr. Szell that staying out of your lives might solve all our problems. He says not, but I'm not sure I believe him. Maybe I should just stay away for a while or wait till you can write me again.

And if you write, please don't close with "yours sincerely" again. Close with "your loving mother" the way you always used to.

I love you and I still need you.

Phil

(He stares at letter on his lap, picks it up and crushes it.)

towards me he really loved me. He never told me that.

Are you saying that my being gay is a test his unspoken love couldn't stand? If you sense some bitterness in what I say, you're right.

Now to the trip you may still be planning. Glen says he'll move out while you're here, but I don't want him to. It would be like Laura's husband moving out when you go there to visit. If Glen moved out, it would be like telling you that I was ashamed of him or that we were doing something that needed hiding. I'm proud of him and who we are. We're nice people.

You also say that you don't know how you could bring yourself to tell Laura and B.J., because they love me so much. Maybe they love me because they know. I was twelve when I told them, and I can still feel my heart hammering away when I remember trying to work up my nerve to do it. Neither of them fainted and Laura said she'd guessed and, to quote her, "So what?" B.J. had some trouble with it, his main concern being my not taking to wearing dresses or messing around with his football team. He's still uncomfortable and he tells me so, but it isn't enough to keep him from caring about his little brother or promising to beat the hell out of anybody who gives me trouble.

So, I haven't lost all of you. Maybe Laura and B.J. are the most family I can have. I know there has to be a price for demanding to be my own man in my own way. But please, Mom, think: I'm your son. I'm just not who you thought I was or who you planned on my being. But you know me in ways that no one ever will, so I pray that you'll find a way through this.

I don't mean to lecture, but I should explain what being gay means to me, because I don't want you to think that it's just a matter of sex. Sex is a part of it, but it's just the part that

MAGS . . . WHERE ARE YOU? . . . OH, MAGS, DARRING . . . HELLO? . . . ARE YOU THERE? . . . " (She reenters and faces them.) This was at my first show.

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FANNY

(Fatigue has finally overtaken her. She's calm, almost serene.) . . . and to you who see him once a year, if that . . . What is he to you? . . . I mean, what do you give him from yourself that costs you something? . . . Huhmmmmmm?

(Imitating her.) "Oh, hi Daddy, it's great to see you again. How have you been? . . . Gee, I love your hair. It's gotten so . . . whie!" . . . What color do you expect it to get when he's this age? . . . I mean, if you care so much how he looks, why don't you come and see him once in a while? . . . But oh, no! . . . you have your paintings to do and your shows to put on. You just come and see us when the whim strikes!" (Imitating her.) "Hey, you know what would be really great? . . . To do a portrait of you! I've always wanted to paint you, you're such great subjects!" . . . Paint us?!

Noticing what's going on around here for a change! It's all over for Daddy and me. This is it! "Finita la commedia!" All I'm trying to do is exit with a little flourish; have some fun. What's so terrible you haven't noticed. . . . Daddy, tap-tap-tapping out his nonsense all day; me traipsing around to the thrift shops trying to amuse myself. He never keeps me company anymore; never takes me out anywhere. . . . I'd put a bullet through my head in a minute, but then who'd look after him? . . . What do you think we're moving to the cottage for? . . . So I can watch him like a hawk and make sure he doesn't get lost. Do you think that's any thing to look forward to? . . . Being Daddy's nursemaid out in the middle of nowhere? I'd much rather stay here in Boston with the

What about opening your eyes . . . What about opening your eyes . . . Noticing what's going on around here for a change! It's all over for Daddy and me. This is it! "Finita la commedia!" All I'm trying to do is exit with a little flourish; have some fun. What's so terrible you haven't noticed. . . . Daddy, tap-tap-tapping out his nonsense all day; me traipsing around to the thrift shops trying to amuse myself. He never keeps me company anymore; never takes me out anywhere. . . . I'd put a bullet through my head in a minute, but then who'd look after him? . . . What do you think we're moving to the cottage for? . . . So I can watch him like a hawk and make sure he doesn't get lost. Do you think that's any thing to look forward to? . . . Being Daddy's nursemaid out in the middle of nowhere? I'd much rather stay here in Boston with the

few friends I have left, but you can't always do what you want in this world! "L'homme propose, Dieu dispose!" . . . really are. There's your picture! . . . (She points to GARDNER, who's quietly playing with a paper glider.) Daddy spread out on the floor with all his toys and me hovering over him to make sure he doesn't hurt himself! (She goes over to him.) YOO-HOO . . . GARP? . . . HELLO? . . .

Passing Game

Steve Tesich

Premiere: American Place Theatre, New York City, 1977
Setting: Upstate New York

Two New York actors have rented cottages at a semi-deserted upstate resort. There has been a chain of unsolved killings in the area, and guests have been staying away in droves. There is no one around but the lecherous night watchman Andrew, who's trying to shoot his old dog; Andrew's young nephew Randy; Debbie, the hard-to-get girl he's pursuing; two actors; two wives.

The two actors have never met, but know each other's faces from the audition circuit. Henry, a black man, has only been successful in dog food commercials. Richard, who's white, has not even succeeded at that—in fact, lately he's lost out to Henry on several commercial auditions. They take out their hostility in savagely competitive one-on-one basketball. Eventually, competitiveness yields to bonding, and they share their darker secrets. Both blame their wives for pumping them full of great expectations about their careers, and both are half-hoping their wives will be "taken care of" by the mysterious killer. Henry once tried to run over his wife in a car "accident," and