Standards of Care

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts

by

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CAST:

BRADBURY…………A female to male (FTM) grad student. Best played by a female actor.

CHARLOTTE (CHARLIE)…………… His younger sister

ISAAC……………… His best friend

ANNE……………Bradbury and Charlotte’s mother

LUCAS……………Bradbury and Charlotte’s father

TIME: From just after Christmas to just after New Years

SETTING: Bradbury’s apartment, bedrooms and living room in Anne and Lucas’ house, Charlie’s car.

Note: Settings do not have to be realistic. Most of the settings can be suggested. In the timeline of transitioning, because he is a week from starting testosterone, Bradbury has been living as man for at least three months. He is also probably in the process of legally changing his name. Because Bradbury is living as a man, and identifies as male, male pronouns are used in stage directions and descriptions.
STANDARDS OF CARE-

PROLOGUE-

Lights up. A cramped, cheap, uncluttered studio apartment with a narrow full length mirror covered with a sheet fixed next to a bed that has several layers of clothing laid out in order.

BRADBURY stands in front of the mirror. He is standing in a pair of boxers and a white wife beater.

He puts on the clothes from the bed. In a predetermined order he pulls on another wife beater, a white v neck t-shirt, a t-shirt, another t-shirt, a long sleeved t-shirt, and a polo shirt. He pulls on a pair of boxers, another one, another one, and a pair of gym shorts. Finally, his jeans.

Lights out.
SCENE 1-

Lights up inside a late four door model car. BRADBURY is in the passenger seat, his sister CHARLOTTE is driving.

CHARLOTTE
Stop squinting like that. Put your visor down.

BRADBURY
No.

CHARLOTTE
Your eyes will stay that way.

BRADBURY
See, we moved. I don’t need to put down the visor.

CHARLOTTE
You hate the sun in your eyes, it gives you a headache.

BRADBURY
It’s just a sun visor, let it go. Just breathe.

CHARLOTTE
Don’t you dare tell me to breathe. I’m just saying it’s frigging weird that you didn’t do something that you automatically do whenever you get into any car you have ever ridden in.

BRADBURY
I just didn’t want to put it down.

Why?

CHARLOTTE
Charlie-

BRADBURY

CHARLOTTE
I’ll turn this car around if you don’t tell me.

Silence from BRADBURY
CHARLOTTE
I mean it. You’re the one that wants to go to the Citadel Outlet Mall. I got The Lord of Ravencroft Takes a Bride to finish. I just got to the part where her half brother tried to stop the wedding because he’s really in love with her.

BRADBURY
Don’t you feel your neurons dying when you read it?

CHARLOTTE
You can’t judge. I know what you read online.

BRADBURY
That’s different.

CHARLOTTE
No, it isn’t. Just because it is Star Trek characters does not make it different. Now put down your sun visor like you’re supposed to.

BRADBURY
Only you could start a fight over a sun visor.

CHARLOTTE
Only you can stall answering an innocent question for ten minutes.

Silence.

BRADBURY
I didn’t want to look in the mirror.

CHARLOTTE
That is the stupidest reason I have ever heard.

BRADBURY
It’s true.

CHARLOTTE
Are you a vampire now?

BRADBURY
Don’t be a moron.
CHARLOTTE
You’re the one who can’t look in a mirror.

BRADBURY
Just drop it.

CHARLOTTE
No. It’s my car, I can talk about whatever I want.

BRADBURY
Why isn’t the radio on?

CHARLOTTE
Chris broke it.

BRADBURY
How?

CHARLOTTE
I have no idea.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
Do you have any idea what your crazy mother is doing now?

BRADBURY
Last time I checked she was your crazy mother too.

CHARLOTTE
When she talks to the lamps in the living room, she’s your mother.

BRADBURY
She wasn’t talking to the lamps in a conversational sense. She was merely expressing her displeasure that you and Dad bought lamps without telling her in her text book passive aggressive way.

CHARLOTTE
She’s crazy.

BRADBURY
Fine. What did our crazy mother do this time?
CHARLOTTE
She’s hiding from Kaiser.

BRADBURY
She owes them money again?

CHARLOTTE
No. They finally collected on that. They want her to get a checkup. Blood pressure, blood labs, the whole works. They’ve sent her letters and left about 3 messages in the voice mail. She just blocks them out. We finally guilted her into making an appointment right around New Years.

BRADBURY
Well, you don’t need me then.

CHARLOTTE
No, we do. We need you to convince her to go to the doctor.

BRADBURY
You just said you got her to make an appointment.

CHARLOTTE
We both know that means nothing. But she will follow through if you ask her.

BRADBURY
Fine.

CHARLOTTE
If you still had your car, you could even drive her. Why did you sell your car?

BRADBURY
That was subtle.

CHARLOTTE
Since we’re on the subject, why did you sell your car?

BRADBURY
I didn’t need it.

CHARLOTTE
I can’t drive you around forever.
BRADbury
I asked you to take me to the Citadel. It’s ten minutes up the five north. You love malls anyway.

CHARLOTTE
I don’t like going with you, you don’t look at things. You just want to get in and get out, like you’re some kind of weird shopping ninja assassin.

BRADbury
That makes no sense.

CHARLOTTE
Whose car is this?

BRADbury
Fine. Brilliant metaphor.

CHARLOTTE
Thank you.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
Why do you want to go to Ruby’s so badly? They don’t have fried cholesterol where you live?

BRADbury
I wanted to talk to you.

CHARLOTTE
I figured.

BRADbury
You did?

CHARLOTTE
It’s about that tramp you’re dating.

BRADbury
Her name is Veronica.

CHARLOTTE
She looks like a tramp.
You met her once.

I could feel the trampy vibes.

I thought women were all supposed to be on the same side.

We are.

You just called a woman you barely know a tramp.

I know you spent Christmas with her.

It’s one fucking day out of the year. I’m a grown up, I can pick who I spend my time with.

It is your father’s favorite day of the year.

What about all the birthdays and stuff you missed because you were off with Chris? Why are you allowed to have a partner and I’m not?

I didn’t say you weren’t.

You didn’t answer my question. Why is it ok for you to miss things and I have to be at everything?

I’m not going to fight with you about this now. It’s Mom and Dad’s problem.

It wasn’t about Veronica anyway.
CHARLOTTE
What else did you want to go to Ruby’s about?

BRADBURY
I just wanted to get out of the house.

CHARLOTTE
If you hadn’t sold you car, you wouldn’t be trapped in the house. You could drive yourself to the Citadel and I could read my book in peace.

BRADBURY
I had no choice about the selling the car and “book” is a loose term for what you read.

CHARLOTTE
What do you want to talk about if you don’t want to talk about Veronica? Sees the traffic in front of her. Fuck.

BRADBURY
What? Oh shit.

CHARLOTTE
Where are all these people going on a Saturday afternoon?

BRADBURY
You sound just like your father. You can just take Telegraph. That runs parallel to the freeway.

CHARLOTTE
I can’t get to the fucking exit because there are too many fucking cars. This is all your fault. You’re the one that rode my ass like a rhinestone cowboy to take you to the Citadel.

BRADBURY
Rode your ass like a what?

CHARLOTTE
From that one CD you listened to in high school until Dad threatened to break it in half.

BRADBURY
I really don’t think that is what Glen Campbell had in mind.
CHARLOTTE
Talk. You wanted to go to Ruby’s to talk, so talk.

BRADBURY
I can’t do it here.

CHARLOTTE
Talk. It’s either that or listen to me scream at traffic since Chris broke my radio.

BRADBURY
Fine.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
You have thirteen seconds to start talking before I start screaming like Dad.

BRADBURY
It’s not something you just come out and say.

CHARLOTTE
Just pretend we’re eating fried food delivered by a gay man with hair like Bob’s Big Boy and spill.

CHARLOTTE hits the steering wheel.

CHARLOTTE
Now we’re not even fucking moving. Just fucking great. You better have something good to make up for this.

BRADBURY
I want to come out to Mom and Dad.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
But they already know you’re a lesbian. I mean no offense, sweetie, but everyone kind of knows. You don’t exactly scream heterosexual.

BRADBURY
That’s not what I meant.
CHARLOTTE
Unless you’re pregnant there’s not really much you can tell them. Beat. You’re not pregnant are you?

BRADBURY
With what?

CHARLOTTE
Exactly. Pause. Are you cutting again?

BRADBURY
No.

CHARLOTTE
Then why all the clothes?

BRADBURY
I like them. Besides, I wouldn’t tell them if I was.

CHARLOTTE
You would tell me, right? Pause. Right?

BRADBURY
Charlie-

CHARLOTTE
You are cutting again. Goddamn it, Rachel. How can you do this?

BRADBURY
(Talking over her)
I’m not cutting.

Then what is it?

BRADBURY
I’m a transsexual.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
But you’re already a girl.
That’s not what I mean. I am what we call in the business an...F-To-M, a female to male transsexual.

So you want to be a man.

Crude and reductionist, but close.

So yes, you want to be a man.

I would say I am a man.

CHARLOTTE turns off the car. They watch the parked cars in front of them.

So how does it work? Do you just wake up one morning and crave a penis? Or like how you described realizing you were a lesbian? How you said it just hit you in the garage by the washing machine?

No, I didn’t just wake up one morning. Some people might I guess.

So this didn’t hit you by the washing machine?

No. It took years.

Maybe you’re just slow.

This is really hard for me to do.

Beat
CHARLOTTE
Why the fuck are we sitting here?

BRADBURY
Can’t you turn on KNX 107-

CHARLOTTE
No radio, remember?

Right.

BRADBURY
I’m going to kill Chris for this. Why do you want to tell Mom and Dad?

CHARLOTTE
Because they’re my parents.

Besides that.

BRADBURY
Because I am going to start taking hormones and have surgeries and I don’t want them to be too surprised when I suddenly get furry and sound like Burl Ives.

CHARLOTTE
Who?

BRADBURY
Never mind. Pause I want to tell them because I’ve started the process.

CHARLOTTE
What does that mean?

BRADBURY
That means I am one week from starting the testosterone.

CHARLOTTE
What comes after the steroids?

Testosterone.
CHARLOTTE

Same thing.

BRADBURY

No, they’re not. Probably surgery.

CHARLOTTE

Surgery. How long have you known you were going to do this?

BRADBURY

Awhile.

CHARLOTTE

How long is a while?

BRADBURY

Almost a year.

CHARLOTTE

And you’re telling us now?

BRADBURY

I have to now.

CHARLOTTE

How long are you going to be on this shit?

BRADBURY

Unless I decide to stop for some reason, life.

CHARLOTTE

Life? Like till you die?

BRADBURY

That’s what life usually means.

CHARLOTTE

You’re really having the sex change?

BRADBURY

I’m pretty sure I’m doing top surgery. Might not do bottom surgery.
CHARLOTTE
Top and bottom are different from what I’m thinking, right?

BRADBURY
Guaranteed. Top surgery is where they remove the tumors on my chest. Bottom-

CHARLOTTE
They’re called breasts.

BRADBURY
On you.

CHARLOTTE
On everyone.

BRADBURY
Mostly you.

CHARLOTTE
You’re really cutting off your boobs?

BRADBURY
It’s not like I’m doing it myself in the garage. It will be handled by a trained professional.

CHARLOTTE
Do me a favor and wait on telling Mom and Dad.

BRADBURY
Are you shitting me?

CHARLOTTE
It’s a lot to tell them.

BRADBURY
It’s a lot to hide too.

CHARLOTTE
Just wait until the Christmas thing goes away. Pause Just wait till the hurt goes away a little.

BRADBURY
I didn’t want to hurt them.
CHARLOTTE

Even if you didn’t mean to, it was like punching them with a nuclear bomb.

BRADBURY

That made no sense.

CHARLOTTE

Whose car is it?

BRADBURY

Fine. I did feel like shit when I saw everything up.

CHARLOTTE

Good. You did a shitty thing.

BRADBURY

I didn’t come home for Christmas. I didn’t burn down the neighbor’s house.

CHARLOTTE

They would have preferred that, especially if you came home over Christmas to do it.

BRADBURY

I live sixty miles away. I visit at least once a month. It’s not even New Years yet.

CHARLOTTE

You know how they look forward to everyone home on Christmas.

BRADBURY

I asked you before and you didn’t answer. Why are you allowed to miss stuff because you’re off with Chris, but if I am off with Veronica, I’m dropping a nuclear bomb?

CHARLOTTE

Because they don’t care if I’m there. They only care if you are.

BRADBURY

Don’t lay that on me.
CHARLOTTE
You didn’t notice that the tree was still up? All the lights, all the decorations? Who do you think they kept them all up for?

BRADBURY
Charlie-

CHARLOTTE
Not for me. They did it all for you.

BRADBURY
What do you want me to do, Charlie? Show up in a couple of months with my voice cracking?

CHARLOTTE
Just promise me you’ll wait till they’re ready to hear it.

BRADBURY
That is a really bad plan.

CHARLOTTE
Whose car is it?

BRADBURY
I don’t give good goddamn, just because it’s your car doesn’t mean it’s a good plan. If I wait, it will never happen.

CHARLOTTE
I’m just saying it doesn’t have to be right now. You broke their hearts with Christmas.

BRADBURY
And being transsexual will just make it worse.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
How do you want me to answer that?

BRADBURY
You just did.
CHARLOTTE
Just promise you’ll wait.

BRADBURY
I can’t promise that.

CHARLOTTE
Why did you really sell your car?

BRADBURY
I told you-

CHARLOTTE
You told me complete horseshit. Pause You want to tell Mom and Dad you’re becoming a man, you can’t look in mirrors, you dress like you’re going to conquer the North Pole, and you sell the car that Grandpa gave you as a graduation present. Christ, did you even tell Grandpa you sold his car?

BRADBURY
No.

CHARLOTTE
Why did you sell it?

BRADBURY
Charlie-

CHARLOTTE
I’m not going to ask again.

BRADBURY
Don’t push me, Charlie.

CHARLOTTE
Answer me or-

BRADBURY
What? You’ll turn this car around?

CHARLOTTE
Just answer me, Rachel.
Don’t call me that.

It’s your name.

No, it isn’t.

What is your name then?

Bradbury.

Silence.

That is a stupid name.

Of course it is. It fucking matters to me, so it must be stupid or lame or dumb or whatever you else come up with.

It just sounds like you have a Ray Bradbury fetish. Which is kind of creepy.

Creepy is a new one.

This is hard for me too, whoever you are. Pause You still haven’t told me why you sold the car.

Does it really matter?

You can’t drop bombs on me and not have any fallout.

Finally, a metaphor that makes sense.
CHARLOTTE
It’s to pay for this thing you’re doing, isn’t it?

BRADBURY
Yeah.

CHARLOTTE
What happened to all the money you saved while you were living with Mom and Dad last year?

BRADBURY
Not enough. The therapist cost eight hundred and seventy five dollars. It can go into the thousands, over a lifetime. And the surgery is between six and eight thousand. That’s just top surgery, bottom surgery goes for up to thirty thousand. And that’s if nothing goes wrong.

CHARLOTTE
Mom and Dad aren’t going to be able to help you with that.

BRADBURY
I don’t want them to. I want to take care of myself. And I want to do it without loans. I know guys that are my age and are already tens of thousands in debt. On top of their student loans. I don’t want that.

Silence as they watch the unmoving traffic in front of them.

CHARLOTTE
I know being lesbian is hard.

BRADBURY
Where the hell did that come from?

CHARLOTTE
I know because of all the times I had to defend you in school.

BRADBURY
I never asked you to.

CHARLOTTE
I’m your sister, you didn’t have to ask.
BRADBURY
Maybe I didn’t want you to.

CHARLOTTE
I fought for you. I fought the fucking school board so we could have a GSA at all.

BRADBURY
But it wasn’t your fight. It was mine.

Silence

CHARLOTTE
What is at the end of the rainbow for you in this?

BRADBURY
I’ll finally be happy with myself.

CHARLOTTE
There are less drastic ways-

BRADBURY
It’s either this or the cutting again. It’s either this or I go back to cutting and drinking and lit cigarettes against the insides of my arms.

CHARLOTTE
That’s fucking blackmail.

BRADBURY
I don’t care.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
Fine. Tell them. Just don’t expect me to help you pick up the pieces.

BRADBURY
Whatever you say. It’s your car.

CHARLOTTE
Damn straight.

Lights out.
SCENE 2-

Lights up on what used to be BRADBURY’S bedroom at his parents’ house.

BRADBURY is asleep on a twin bed. CHARLOTTE storms in.

CHARLOTTE

Get up.

What the hell?

CHARLOTTE

You’re a fucking liar.

BRADBURY

I was asleep.

CHARLOTTE

It’s eleven thirty in the morning. You’re always up at the ass crack of dawn.

BRADBURY

It’s called a nap.

CHARLOTTE

The hormones you want to take have side effects.

BRADBURY

I know. The risks are-

CHARLOTTE

According to this you could get tumors. You could-

BRADBURY

The tumors haven’t been proven conclusively.

CHARLOTTE

But the high blood pressure has, hasn’t it? And the cysts in your liver and ovaries? And the heart problems?
If you keep yelling like that, Mom’s going to think we’re fighting and come charging up here.

If you tell them you’re trans, I’ll tell them the side effects.

You’re blackmailing me?

You blackmailed me in the car yesterday.

That was different.

This isn’t a game. And I will tell them if I have to. We just had a conversation about how Mom is ignoring her own health and you’re doing the exact same thing.

I’m not ignoring it the way Mom is. The testosterone will be monitored. There’re blood tests every three to six months, regular checkups. It’s completely different. I know what I’m doing, Charlie.

Mom says the same thing.

I am not Mom. Besides, I already wrote the letter to them.

You’re telling them you’re transsexual with a letter?

What’s wrong with that?

You don’t think this is important enough to do face to face?
BRADBURY
You don’t want me to do it anyway.

CHARLOTTE
If you’re going to do it, you should do it right.

BRADBURY
And a letter is wrong.

CHARLOTTE
Well, yeah.

BRADBURY
It’s too much to do face to face. This way they can process what the letter says before we talk.

CHARLOTTE
Where the hell did you get that?

BRADBURY
The PFLAG website.

CHARLOTTE
I thought they were for gays and lesbians.

BRADBURY
They’ve branched out to other letters in the alphabet. Why did you wake me up to call me a liar?

CHARLOTTE
You didn’t tell me about the side effects.

BRADBURY
You didn’t ask.

CHARLOTTE smacks her open palm against the door.

A creaking floor downstairs makes them both freeze.

BRADBURY
You really want Mom to come up here.
CHARLOTTE
Why didn’t you tell me about the side effects?

BRADBURY
How was I supposed to work it into the conversation?

CHARLOTTE
We were sitting there for an hour and a half. You didn’t have time to bring it up?

BRADBURY
Telling you about them is not as easy you make it sound.

CHARLOTTE
But it’s easier for me to find it on the Internet?

BRADBURY
Charlie-

CHARLOTTE
I’ve seen more of what you’ve done to yourself than Mom and Dad can fucking dream of. Why? All I want to know is why you hate yourself so fucking much?

BRADBURY
I did all that stupid shit in high school that you will never let me forget because I was dying as the too tall, too fat, too butch girl that everyone avoided.

CHARLOTTE
You have friends now.

BRADBURY
It wasn’t about the being avoided. I was destructively unhappy about being a girl.

CHARLOTTE
Most of us manage to live with it.

BRADBURY
Because you are a girl. I’m not. We did all this in the car yesterday.

CHARLOTTE
And that’s why you’re taking this drug?
BRADBURY
It’s not a drug. You said that you manage to live with being female. I just pointed out that you like it and I don’t.

CHARLOTTE
What about Veronica? What does she call you?

BRADBURY
We’re getting off topic.

CHARLOTTE
I like this topic.

BRADBURY
I don’t.

CHARLOTTE
Because you haven’t told her yet?

BRADBURY
I have. Right now, she mostly calls me RG like most people.

RG?

BRADBURY
My initials.

CHARLOTTE
I can figure that much out. She doesn’t call you that name you came up with?

BRADBURY
It’s Bradbury.

CHARLOTTE
I know. I just don’t like it.

BRADBURY
She doesn’t like it either.
CHARLOTTE
There is something you’re not telling me.

BRADBURY
Like what?

CHARLOTTE
You’re the one’s holding back.

BRADBURY
You’re the one that came in here and woke me up.

Silence

CHARLOTTE
Have you thought about what you’re doing at all?

BRADBURY
Every single day.

CHARLOTTE
Did you think about who’s going to take care of you after you have surgery?

BRADBURY
I can take care of myself.

CHARLOTTE
You can drive yourself home from the hospital? You’ll be able to carry groceries upstairs and clean your apartment?

BRADBURY
My apartment’s not that big.

CHARLOTTE
That’s not the point. The point is that you haven’t thought this through.

BRADBURY
I haven’t thought about anything else for a year.

CHARLOTTE
But not the details. That’s not like you.
BRADBURY
You’ve been saying that a lot lately.

CHARLOTTE
Because you have fucking OCD.

BRADBURY
That has never been proven. That’s just what you and Dad tell people.

CHARLOTTE
You make lists of everything. You lay your clothes out in the order you put them on every morning. What’s happened?

BRADBURY
You keep saying that like I’ve been assimilated by the Borg. I’m still the same person.

CHARLOTTE
You’re talking about a different gender, a different name, you want to cut up and poison your body. How are you the same?

BRADBURY
I still love graphic novels and college basketball. I still think, no matter how hard you try to convince me otherwise, that baseball is the most boring thing on this planet. I still think that Gordon Lightfoot is the greatest singer/songwriter that ever lived. That’s how I’m still the same.

CHARLOTTE
Why are you telling them? What do you think you’ll get out of this?

BRADBURY
For the twenty seventh time, I’m telling Mom and Dad because this is going to happen and soon and they deserve to know.

CHARLOTTE
What do you want from them? You know it will go over better with them if you tell them exactly what you want.

Silence
CHARLOTTE
Do you even know what you want?

BRADBURY
I hate it when you right.

CHARLOTTE
You don’t know what you want?

BRADBURY
I want you all to help me.

CHARLOTTE
Fuck. I was afraid you’d say that. Two conditions: one, I still think this is the worst idea you have ever had. And for you, that’s an accomplishment. Two, you will owe me for the rest of your life, and possibly into the next one, for this.

BRADBURY
Your unconditional support is touching.

CHARLOTTE
Remember, you’re getting what you want.

BRADBURY
For now. Still have to do the deed.

CHARLOTTE
You really have a letter?

BRADBURY
A draft of one.

CHARLOTTE
When are you giving it to them?

BRADBURY
Not sure. By the end of the week.

CHARLOTTE
You are not just going to give them a letter that says you’re transsexual and then go back to Riverside. No website run by parents of anyone suggests that.
BRADBURY
What if they’re not ready to face me, not ready to discuss it before I leave? This will give them—

CHARLOTTE
This will give you time. You’re not ready to face them. Give it to them and stay. What happened to your “I’ll do what I want and the world can fuck itself” self? You’ve never been this afraid of anything since your twelfth grade English teacher.

BRADBURY
In all fairness to me, Mrs. Chari made the principal cry. Everyone was afraid of her.

CHARLOTTE
Why are you suddenly so afraid?

BRADBURY
I research and list and plan because I hate change. I hate disorder. I hate not knowing what is going to come next. I am scared because I don’t know what is going to happen next, or how it will get done, or when or even if I am ready to do what has to be done next. Does that answer your question enough?

CHARLOTTE
I have another one.

BRADBURY
Of course you do.

CHARLOTTE
What if you end up regretting it? What if you have to, what’s it called?

BRADBURY
De-transition.

CHARLOTTE
That. What happens if you have to do that?

BRADBURY
Believe it or not, most people don’t go into this obscenely long process planning to just turn around at the end.
CHARLOTTE
What happens then? We get used to calling you “Bradbury” and “he” and then you announce that you’re going back to Rachel Grace with more surgery and more medication.

BRADBURY
Charlie-

CHARLOTTE
And most of the side effects of the testosterone are permanent. You’ll be stuck with them the rest of your life, even if you go back. You’re really sure about this?

BRADBURY
That is the stupidest question you’ve asked the last two days.

CHARLOTTE
I’m on your side, remember? But don’t expect too much, I’m barely holding together myself here. But at least we’re scared together.

BRADBURY
That’s the spirit.

Lights out.
LETTER ONE:

Lights come up on BRADBURY onstage alone.

BRADBURY

Dear Mom and Dad,

I am putting this on your bed because I want to make sure you find this. I have some really important things to tell you. Obviously. Otherwise I wouldn’t be writing you a letter, would I?

For openers, I’m sorry about missing Christmas. I can tell you I missed it. A lot. The worst was Christmas Eve dinner of course. I could taste the feta cheese and lamb from Café Opa.

It killed me to me stay away. All I can say is that I thought it would be worse to come. I didn’t realize how much you missed me until I came home and saw the decorations still up. I realized I hadn’t thought about you enough in this equation. I’ve been doing that more and more lately. I get so caught up with what is going on in my own head that I don’t always think about what is going on around me anymore. That is why I am writing this letter to you.

Silence.

I am a man. I hope you appreciate how hard that is to write. Because it was. Not literally a man, not in the write your name in the snow kind of a way. Not yet. Although that sounds like it would take way more dexterity than I have anyhow. I mean I was born a girl, but that was a mistake and inside I know I am a man. Don’t ask me how I know, because there really is no way to explain it. It’s kind of like my subconscious and conscious are trying to do a jigsaw puzzle together but the subconscious is holding all the pieces for ransom.

Beat

You all had some warning about this: me playing with trucks in preschool, always wanting the boy Happy Meals at
McDonalds, wearing men’s underwear. My favorite was Dad “borrowing” my clothes while I was at college. Even though you had warning, it must still be hard to hear. It wasn’t that you did anything wrong or could have done anything differently. In fact, you all have been great. All my friends want to adopt you as their parents. I am just transsexual, have been since I was born I guess, and it’s not your fault. The website for coming out to your parents said to stress this a lot because parents might blame themselves. I’m not telling you to punish you either. Website said to say that too. I want to tell you because I am going to start hormones in a week and I am going to have surgeries eventually and I don’t want you all to be surprised.

Part of why I am writing this is to explain how I got here, to this decision. And you deserve to know. I just don’t know if I can tell you.

You all know that I came out as a lesbian when I was thirteen. And you also remember that choice really enlivened my high school years. To put it mildly. The point is, I identified as a lesbian because that was all there was. People like me, like what I could feel taking shape inside, despite the cheap whiskey and the cutting and the huffing I tried to kill it with before it could really take shape, didn’t seem to exist.

In college I began to admit to myself that lesbian didn’t really fit. Or you know how Ma claimed for the longest time that the stretch pants that Grandma Watson made her still fit? Like that kind of fit. So I began to look at the possibility of other identities. And nothing fit but transsexual. It took three years to admit that I was man.

Some days I am ok with the fact that I will never be like the faceless mob of people around me and some days it makes it hard to get out of bed in the morning.

I know all the surgeries and hormones in the world will only make me an approximation of a man. There will always be flaws, always be concessions to what I was born. So in a way it’s a mistake that can’t really be fixed.

Silence
There are risks to the hormones and the surgeries. I know that. And some of those risks are serious, really serious. I know that too. That’s the whole point of therapy, so you know what you’re getting into.

You’re going to have a fuck-ton of questions about what’s happening and what will happen and I will help you answer them as best I can. If I don’t know something, I’ll just make it up. I knew nothing when I started this, and I want to help you with what I do know now. Talk to me, don’t hide from me. The website says you might.

Your son,
Bradbury Stephen

PS. Yes I did name myself after Ray Bradbury. I like the way it sounds and I figured Dad would appreciate it.

Lights out.
SCENE 3-

Lights somewhat dimly up on ANNE and LUCAS’S bedroom at five in the morning. ANNE is sitting on the edge of the bed when LUCAS comes out of the shower.

LUCAS gets dressed for work as they talk. They do not touch each other at all throughout this scene.

LUCAS
I didn’t expect you to be up.

ANNE
I wanted to talk.

LUCAS
Nothing to talk about.

ANNE
I know you read the letter RG left us.

LUCAS
Rachel.

ANNE
You’ll wake up Charlie.

LUCAS
She has to get up to work at the daycare center.

ANNE
But after that she’s going into the office at LBCC for a few hours. And she was closing shift at Subway last night.

LUCAS
For someone who works so many jobs she never has any money.

ANNE
None of them pay enough.
LUCAS
It’s not like we charge her rent.

ANNE
She barely supports her car and her cell phone, especially since they cut her hours again at Long Beach City.

LUCAS
I don’t want her living here forever.

ANNE
She won’t. It will work out. It always does.

LUCAS
Things don’t just get better on their own.

ANNE
Sometimes they do. What are we going to do about the letter?

Pause.

LUCAS
Did you know about this, before she left us the letter?

ANNE
I suspected. From things RG said.

LUCAS
Am I really such a monster?

ANNE
No one said -

LUCAS
Rachel didn’t tell me about any of this. You didn’t tell me.

ANNE
I thought you knew.

LUCAS
You never bothered to ask.

ANNE
It’s probably hard for her to tell you.
LUCAS
Why? Why is it so hard for everyone to tell me any fucking thing? Pause. You didn’t even tell me that the pain was coming back.

ANNE
It’s not important.

LUCAS
I’m not going to fight with you about that anymore.

Silence

ANNE
How did you know?

LUCAS
I’m not blind. You think I don’t notice that you have to hold onto furniture just to move around the living room? You think I don’t know you’re eating aspirin like candy?

ANNE
Lucas-

LUCAS
And Charlie told me the chest pains were back.

Silence

ANNE
That was my fault, I shouldn’t have told her.

LUCAS
I’m tired of being blindsided by things. I’m tired of you hiding things from me.

ANNE
I’m not hiding anything from you. I miss having RG around, she’s really the only who listens to me.

LUCAS
Charlie only told me because she’s worried about you.

ANNE
I already agreed to go to the doctor. It’s done.
LUCAS
Will you really go this time?

ANNE
I said I would.

LUCAS
You’ve said that before.

ANNE
I was reading online that ninety percent of problems resolve themselves.

LUCAS
Chest pains do not resolve themselves. They are a sign of something serious.

ANNE
I’m going, that should make you feel better.

LUCAS
That’s not the point.

ANNE
What is the point?

LUCAS
It’s for you. You’re not just going to give up like-

ANNE
I’m not giving up.

LUCAS
What are you doing then?

ANNE
I just wish everyone would stop pushing me. RG never pushed me like this.

LUCAS
Rachel isn’t here. Pause What the hell are we going to tell people? What the fuck was she thinking? You said you suspected. What did she tell you to make you suspect?
ANNE
I don’t have an exact moment.

LUCAS
What will people think about her?

ANNE
It’s not like I’ve done this before. Pause RG’s always made things hard for herself.

LUCAS
And everyone else.

ANNE
She gets it from you.

LUCAS
Me? How the fuck is this my fault?

ANNE
It’s not anybody’s fault.

LUCAS
You just said she got it from me.

ANNE
I said she got your stubbornness.

LUCAS
You’re the stubborn one. You would rather live in pain than hear you have what your mother had.

ANNE
The doctors killed her.

LUCAS
She killed herself. Just like you’re going to.

ANNE
You have no right to talk to me that way.

LUCAS
You’re the one who wanted to talk.
ANNE

Not about me.

LUCAS

Just about Rachel’s letter. I have to get going.

ANNE

You don’t have to leave just yet.

LUCAS

I want to get there early.

ANNE

Don’t take off just yet.

LUCAS

Go back to sleep.

ANNE

I said I wanted to talk.

LUCAS

You only want to talk about the kids.

ANNE

What do you want to talk about?

LUCAS

I really need to go.

ANNE

You don’t have to be there for half an hour and there’s no traffic at five in the morning.

LUCAS

It’s almost five fifteen now.

ANNE

Still no traffic.

LUCAS

I can’t fly. It takes time to drive somewhere. And I’ve wasted almost fifteen minutes.
ANNE
Wasted?

LUCAS
Just go back to-

ANNE
Talking to me is wasting time?

LUCAS
It is when nothing gets accomplished. We’re just going in circles. Again.

Silence

ANNE
When are you going to be home tonight?

LUCAS
I have no idea. Rumor in production is there might be overtime again today.

ANNE
Can we talk when you get home then?

LUCAS
Don’t know when I’ll be home.

ANNE
RG will want to talk when she and Isaac come next weekend.

LUCAS
We’ll talk about it then.

ANNE
You’re not the only in QC at that plant. Let someone else get the overtime and come home.

LUCAS
Neither of them will do it right and I’ll have to redo it in the morning anyway.

ANNE
They might do it right.
LUCAS
I can’t afford to turn down the overtime. We can’t afford it.

Pause

ANNE
Can I ask where do you go after work?

LUCAS
Where the fuck do you think I go?

ANNE
I don’t. That’s why I asked.

LUCAS
Home. I work ten to twelve hours and then I come home. And fall asleep watching whatever you need to watch on TV and then I go to work for ten or twelve hours and the cycle of life continues.

ANNE
Why do you have to work so much?

LUCAS
Because you insist on working at that private school that’s been taking advantage of you for thirty years. It’s a hobby that’s cost us a shit ton of money and I have to work to support it.

ANNE
They need me.

LUCAS
Then they could pay you a living wage.

Pause

ANNE
Come home on time today.

LUCAS
Why? We’re just going to sit and watch TV.

ANNE
We could go out. We could go to dinner or something.
LUCAS

Maybe.

ANNE

You’ll come home on time?

LUCAS

I said maybe.

LUCAS exits. Lights out.

SCENE 4-

Lights up on BRADBURY’S apartment at night. There is knocking at the door. BRADBURY enters and opens the door for ISAAC. He enters with an overnight
bag and a sleeping bag.

ISAAC drops his stuff and hugs BRADBURY tightly.

ISAAC
I’ve missed you so much. You don’t look so good.

BRADBURY
Good to see you too.

ISAAC
You haven’t been sleeping.

BRADBURY
It would probably work best if you put your stuff in the dresser by the bed.

ISAAC
You haven’t been taking your medication.

BRADBURY
Yes, I have. I cleared a space for you to roll out your sleeping bag between the bed and the chair.

ISAAC
If you’re taking the meds, why can’t you sleep?

Silence

ISAAC
Sorry. I’ll back off.

BRADBURY
Alicia called. Charlie told her you were coming—

ISAAC
Why can’t you sleep? I’m not prying, I’m helping.

BRADBURY
Just have trouble sleeping sometimes. Do you want to see Alicia or not?

ISAAC
Whatever you tell me, I’ll believe you. Are you drinking
again? You know, to help you sleep.

BRADBURY

Is there one person who knows me who believes that I can keep my life together for more than three years at a time?

ISAAC

I said I would believe whatever you told me.

BRADBURY

When people say that, they think you’re lying.

ISAAC

Let’s start over. I don’t want to fight my first five minutes back in Riverside.

BRADBURY

Fair enough.

Silence.

ISAAC

It’s good to be back.

BRADBURY

It’s good to have you back.

ISAAC

When are we going to your parents’?

BRADBURY

I want to be on the road at eight.

ISAAC

Nine would be better. Pause You really gave your folks the letter?

BRADBURY

Yeah. Thanks again for helping me with it.

ISAAC

I owed you after the Kafka paper. How did they react?

BRADBURY

They haven’t.
ISAAC
But you gave it to them.

BRADBURY
They haven’t said anything.

ISAAC
You told your parents that you’re starting sexual reassignment and they didn’t react. Did you lobotomize them first?

BRADBURY
I put the letter on their bed and then Mom drove me back out here.

ISAAC
Are you fucking kidding me? You dropped the letter and then you left?

BRADBURY
I wanted to give them time.

ISAAC
Looks like tomorrow will be dinner and a show. Maybe I will meet up with Alicia. Charlie says she’s dating someone.

BRADBURY
Don’t know her name though.

Silence

ISAAC
We need to find something to talk about where we won’t push each other. Or we could just have a direct conversation.

BRADBURY
I don’t want a direct conversation.

ISAAC
We don’t have to go back to Downey. We can stay here and hang out with Alicia and her new whore.

BRADBURY
And people think you’re not over her.
ISAAC

Can’t imagine why.

BRADBURY

Besides, I’m too afraid not to go home after Christmas.

ISAAC

Yeah, you’re going to be going every weekend for the rest of your life.

BRADBURY

Don’t remind me. I’m glad you’re coming too. My parents like you better than me.

ISAAC

Everyone likes me better than you.

BRADBURY

I know. Trust me. I know.

ISAAC

It’s not my fault.

BRADBURY

I didn’t say it was.

ISAAC

Then don’t be jealous.

BRADBURY

Hard not to when every time they mention you, they refer to you as their “beta son.”

ISAAC

Well now they have an alpha son.

BRADBURY

I don’t think they see it that way yet.

Silence. ISAAC unpacks his overnight bag and puts the clothes in the drawers of the dresser next to the bed.

ISAAC
Are you still swimming? I don’t see your shorts dripping in the shower.

BRADBURY

No.

ISAAC
You know that would help you sleep. And relax. You know it distresses you. You always feel better after a swim.

BRADBURY
I didn’t know I knew so much.

ISAAC
Smart ass. Why did you stop swimming?

BRADBURY
Just don’t feel comfortable anymore.

ISAAC
That’s a good reason.
Silence.

ISAAC
What happened to Veronica?

BRADBURY
Nothing, as far as I know.

ISAAC
Are you still talking to her?

BRADBURY
Define talking.

ISAAC
You know, what we’re doing. Where you form words to express ideas and give opinions on things. For instance where you explain the influence of Greco-Roman mythology on Star Trek to ISAAC (CON’T)
someone who asked an innocent question.

BRADBURY
One: you asked me the difference between Vulcan and Romulan and I was just trying to enlighten you. Two: yes, by that
definition we still talk.

ISAAC
I just wanted to know why one had pointier ears than the other. I did not need a description of the cultural differences between them as well the references to classical myth.

BRADBURY
But aren’t you a better person?

ISAAC
Not really. You still have a thing for her.

BRADBURY
You still have a thing for Alicia.

ISAAC
That doesn’t count. Besides, we’re talking about you.

BRADBURY
We can talk about you too.

ISAAC
No, we can’t. I’m here to help you, remember?

BRADBURY
Talking about Veronica won’t help anyone with anything.

ISAAC
You scared her away with the Vulcans didn’t you? I tried to tell you, Vulcans scare normal people. You’re supposed to talk about things like what books she’s reading.

BRADBURY
We did that.

ISAAC
Good. What went wrong then?

BRADBURY
I told her I was trans.

ISAAC
Oh. That’s fucked.
I agree.

She really stopped seeing you for that? How would that come up? What did she say? How long ago?

Which one do you want me to answer first?

Surprise me.

It’s complicated.

I’m serious. What happened?

I told her I was changing my name to Bradbury and she asked me why and I told I was transitioning and she looked like a dog that just swallowed Irish Spring soap.

Wait. You’ve seen a dog swallow Irish Spring soap?

Once when Trundle was a puppy she got into my Christmas stocking.

You’re parents put soap in your stocking? Isn’t that kind of mean?

I like Irish Spring.

I’m just saying it kind of sounds like “here, child, you need to bathe more. Merry Christmas.”

I guess it does.
ISAAC
What did she say after she did her impression of a cocker spaniel swallowing Christmas soap?

BRADBURY
That she was a lesbian.

ISAAC
You knew that.

BRADBURY
Let me finish. That she was a lesbian. And she was angry with butches who were allowing themselves to be brainwashed into joining the trans/genderqueer bandwagon for the sake of male privilege. She basically vented about that at me for awhile before I got my drink and left.

ISAAC
Left?

BRADBURY
It was at Starbucks.

ISAAC
You came out to her at Starbucks? The emblem of crass commercialism?

BRADBURY
It was in walking distance. Which worked out well considering how it ended.

ISAAC
Did she apologize?

BRADBURY
Yeah. She called me a couple days later to tell me she still wanted to be friends.

ISAAC
And you told her to go to Hell.

BRADBURY
I told her I needed space for that.
ISAAC
Did you point out to her that as a femme she allows herself to be brainwashed by mainstream culture to join the beauty bandwagon for the sake of straight privilege?

BRADBURY
I didn’t think of that till later. I really don’t want to talk about it.

ISAAC
You just said a lot for someone who doesn’t want to talk about it.

BRADBURY
I’m not the wreck you want me to be.

ISAAC
You’re not as held together as you want to be either. I know what it means when you clench and unclench your hand like that. The cravings are back and I bet Veronica was a big part of that.

BRADBURY
Let’s just watch whatever foreign film you brought.

ISAAC
It won’t kill you to expand your American mind.

BRADBURY sits on the bed.

ISAAC
Brad?

BRADBURY
Do you know the first thing she asked me? “So are you straight now?” Nothing about how I feel or what I want or what I need. Just that accusation in the form of a question.

ISAAC
Are you?

BRADBURY
How the hell do I know? It’s not that easy. You’re pansexual, you of all people should know that. But it does bring up a
question, doesn’t it? If I transition, do the last twelve years of living as a lesbian just cease to exist?

ISAAC
What have you been calling yourself till now?

BRADBURY
Queer, I guess. With my luck as soon as I get comfortable calling myself queer, the LGBTs will hate the word again. Before I walked off, Veronica wanted to know why I couldn’t be butch or even stone or something like that. I tried to explain, again, that I don’t identify as a woman anymore—

ISAAC
But you still identify as a lesbian.

BRADBURY
I am only four business days away from starting T. This is real now. I’m leaving so much behind, I don’t know if I can just change my identity just like that.

Silence.

ISAAC
I didn’t know that you were that close to starting.

BRADBURY
I can’t keep track of what I tell people anymore. I probably didn’t tell you because you would try to talk me out of it.

ISAAC
You told me that you were thinking about testosterone for the future.

BRADBURY
Well, the future is now.

ISAAC
If you do this, you won’t have much of a future.

BRADBURY
You’re in Chicago. What are you going to do to stop me?

ISAAC
The fact that I am worried for you doesn’t matter at all?
BRADBURY
Why should it? I was worried about you and that meant diddly.

ISAAC
That was different. That was just sex.

BRADBURY
The point is I told you over and over again hooking up with guys you met on A for A was the stupidest idea you ever had and that meant nothing.

ISAAC
What I did wasn’t dangerous.

BRADBURY
No. Exposing yourself to STDs and AIDS is not dangerous. Putting yourself into a situation where you can be beaten, robbed, or murdered is not dangerous. At all.

ISAAC
Hiding behind sarcasm won’t work. It’s not my fault you’re so afraid of everything.

BRADBURY
I’m not afraid. I just happen to have more self-respect than you do.

ISAAC
Really? You really want to make that statement?

BRADBURY
I don’t let complete strangers use me for sex.

ISAAC
I’m not trying to poison myself.

BRADBURY
See how fucking hard it is? It’s really fucking hard to be a good friend when no one will listen.

ISAAC
I’m still your best friend, Brad.
Then why did you move to Chicago?

I can’t help it if only one grad school accepted me.

You left me all alone.

You have other friends. You have a family an hour away. You’re hardly alone.

No one I can talk to. There are people that still call me Rachel, people I’m afraid to correct no matter how much I hate that name. How am I supposed to talk to them?

I still couldn’t stay here forever.

I’m not asking you to.

Even if I was here, could I stop you?

You and Charlie.

I know– we know– guys who wake up in the middle of the night because the cramps in their ovaries are so bad. We know guys who are twenty eight and on high blood pressure medication. Charlie doesn’t.

And we know guys that have ended up in the hospital after hooking up with the wrong guy. We can’t change each other.

No matter how hard we try.

Pause.

BRADBURY

55
If I say “you win, I lose” can we move onto something else?

ISAAC
I don’t want to do it that way.

BRADBURY
How do you want end it then?

ISAAC
Goddamn- you know what, you’re right. Let’s move on.

Pause

ISAAC
Do your folks and Charlie know you and Veronica aren’t together anymore?

BRADBURY
My first girlfriend. Ever. It lasts four months, I tell her I’m changing my name and she runs. No good way to spin that.

ISAAC
It’s not your fault she had a problem with it. Look at it this way, if you had known how she would react, would have lied to her?

BRADBURY
Don’t ask me that.

ISAAC
Why not? It was supposed to be rhetorical, but since you brought it up, would you have lied?

BRADBURY
I don’t know.

ISAAC
With you, that means yes. You’re desperate enough to lie to a woman who’s going to walk out on you?

BRADBURY
Yes. I am. Happy?

ISAAC
Orgasmic.
Silence

BRADBURY
I just wish I wasn’t such a fuckup. Everything. I still have scars from the cutting and the burning. Those are fuck ups that will be with me forever. I am so afraid I’ll fuck up this gender thing too. And it seems like such a big thing to get wrong.

ISSAC
What are the chances of you getting something this big wrong?

BRADBURY
I’m all over the place tonight. I feel like I’m all over the place all the time lately. My emotions can’t stay in one place. I’m heartbroken and scared and exhilarated and guilty all at the same time.

ISAAC
And you want to pour hormones on top of that?

BRADBURY
You just go out of your way to make it sound like a bad idea.

ISAAC
Because it is. You know it is. Everyone who loves and cares about is going out of their way to convince you that this is a bad idea. The only one that seems to not get that is you.

BRADBURY
Like Veronica.

ISAAC
No, she’s a tramp. I meant your sister and me.

Pause.

BRADBURY
What I don’t get is why you can you do whatever you want with your body. Why can’t I? You do something damaging and self destructive and the gay community makes it an art form. It has its own language, its own communities, and I have to “support your choices.” All I want is the same thing.
ISAAC
I do. I just want my best friend around as long as possible.

BRADBURY
That was all I wanted too, but you just told me to stop interfering in your life.

ISAAC grabs his wallet and jacket.

ISAAC
You know what, I’m going to go see if Alicia wants to hang out for awhile.

BRADBURY
Zac-

ISAAC
Don’t. I’ll be back in a couple of hours. Maybe we can still do the movie.

ISAAC exits with a slam. Lights down.

SCENE 5-

Lights up on BRADBURY’S parents’ living room. ISAAC enters first, BRADBURY behind him. ANNE is doing a crossword in her chair. She is still
in night gown and slippers even though it is midmorning.

ISAAC

Hey, Anne.

ANNE

Hello, Isaac. How is the beta son doing?

Good.

ANNE

I’m so glad you could come out with...RG.

BRADBURY

Good to see you too, Ma.

ANNE

I was getting to you. I just saw Isaac first.

Beat.

BRADBURY

Where are Dad and Charlie?

ANNE

Dad got called into work because the new guy quit unexpectedly and Charlie is at Chris’s.

ISAAC

They’re back together?

BRADBURY

I don’t think they were ever officially off. I’ll go set up camp for us in my old room.

ANNE

We could talk. I bought grapes and cranberry juice.

ISAAC

Did you get vodka too?

ANNE

There’s some on the drinks cart.
BRADBURY
I’d rather get Isaac’s bed set up.

ANNE
Isaac and I will be down here if you need us.

ISAAC
I can set up the bed. You and your mom can have cranberry juice and grapes. I know how you like the room and you always fix it anyway.

BRADBURY
I do not.

ISAAC
You didn’t come here to inflate a Coleman air mattress. Talk to your mother.

ISAAC escapes upstairs.

So.

BRADBURY
We read your letter.

ANNE
This is something I would rather do with Dad here.

BRADBURY
He’s not here.

ANNE
Why did Dad go into work? He knew we were coming.

BRADBURY
He said that James didn’t—

ANNE
How many other people work at that plant? Why did he have to go in?

ANNE
He’s not avoiding you. He’s just getting used to the idea.
BRADBURY
He's avoiding me. Beat. I'm going up to my room.

ANNE
I want to talk to you. Why don't you want to talk to me?

BRADBURY
Fine. Let's talk then.

ANNE
This is a lot for your father.

BRADBURY
But it's not for me?

ANNE
You know he loves you.

Beat

BRADBURY
You want to talk about it now, let's talk about it now.

ANNE
I still think Samuel is a perfectly good name.

BRADBURY
I still say I am not Amish enough to pull off Samuel.

ANNE
There are non Amish people named Samuel.

BRADBURY
Most of whom are dead.

ANNE
My father's middle name was Samuel.

BRADBURY
In all fairness to me, he is no longer with us.

ANNE
Samuel sounds nicer than Bradbury.
I like Bradbury.

Bradbury just sounds old fashioned and kind of evil.

Evil?

Maybe it’s the old fashioned part. Old fashioned names always kind of sound evil.

Isn’t Samuel old fashioned enough to sound evil?

But it was my father’s name, so it’s ok.

All right then.

What about Robert instead of Rachel? That’s not Amish.

I’m keeping Bradbury. People already call me Bradbury.

What people?

Friends, Romans, Countrymen. Isaac.

At least you’re not changing your name for the family.

The idea is that I’m changing my name for everyone.

But not for the family.
BRADBURY
Yes. Family too.

ANNE
Kareem Abdul-Jabbar always said that as long as he had been Kareem, his mother and Coach Wooden still called him Lewis.

BRADBURY
Besides the obvious fact that I am not Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and you are not John Wooden, that doesn’t prove anything.

CHARLOTTE comes in the front door.

CHARLOTTE
Mom, Dad called. He said I have to get you to the doctor because he’s working today.

ANNE
I’m not going.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, you are.

ANNE
I am a grown woman and I will not go to the doctor if I don’t want to.

BRADBURY
The appointment’s today?

CHARLOTTE
Mom, you need to get your blood pressure checked again.

ANNE
I have my medicine. I take it every day.

CHARLOTTE
Mom, what if it’s too strong? You could blackout while driving if your pressure goes too low.

BRADBURY
You don’t want to screw with heart stuff, Ma.

CHARLOTTE
Mom, go pretty up, I’m taking you to Kaiser.
ANNE
No.

CHARLOTTE
Mom, I don’t have time to fight about this now.

ANNE
I am not going to the doctor.

CHARLOTTE
I’ll take you to a late lunch at Ruby’s. We’ll bond.

BRADBURY
You have insurance, you might as well use it.

ANNE
I don’t like the doctor they assigned me.

CHARLOTTE
After today, ask for a new one.

ANNE
Why does it have to be today?

CHARLOTTE
Because we’re both off.

ANNE
I’m not going.

CHARLOTTE
When else are you going to do it?

ANNE
When I’m ready.

CHARLOTTE
That means you’ll never do it.

ANNE
Stop pushing me.

BRADBURY
She can’t help it. It’s how she shows affection.
CHARLOTTE
Stay out of this, Rachel.

BRADbury
Bradbury. It’s three syllables. And you’re the one who wanted my help to get her to go.

ISAAC comes down the stairs.

ISAAC
Hey, Charlie. Camp is set up, Captain.

CHARLOTTE
You make your friends salute you now?

BRADbury
He does that on his own. I run a volunteer army.

ANNE
I can’t go to the doctor’s because RG and I were talking about the letter...RG wrote us.

BRADbury
The pronoun is “he.”

ANNE
That he wrote us.

CHARLOTTE
You’re fine with this?

BRADbury
If you have to go to the doctor’s we can do this later.

CHARLOTTE
Stay out of this. You’re fine with RG taking T?

BRADbury
You’re fighting about me. I am in this.

ISAAC
It’s Bradbury’s choice, not yours, Charlie.

CHARLOTTE
You stay out this too. And you’re a crappy friend if you’re encouraging this.
BRADBURY
If everyone stays out this, who exactly will you be fighting with?

ANNE
What is T and why don’t you want RG…him to take it?

BRADBURY
It’s testosterone. The hormone I mentioned in the letter.

CHARLOTTE
And it has nasty side effects.

BRADBURY
Charlie-

CHARLOTTE
I told you I would. She deserves to know what you’re doing to yourself.

BRADBURY
And this is the best way to do it?

CHARLOTTE
You made it clear you weren’t going to tell her.

ANNE
Tell me what?

ISAAC
I don’t think I should be here for this.

ANNE
What are you three talking about?

CHARLOTTE
The testosterone can hurt her. Will hurt her.

BRADBURY
Him. It’s fucking him. It’s not that hard.

ANNE
What do you mean hurt?
ISAAC

Charlie-

BRADBURY

(Emotionless)
It increases blood pressure. It causes cysts in your liver. It can shorten your life.

Silence

ANNE

So it can kill you.

Yes.

ANNE

You didn’t mention that before.

BRADBURY

There are no guarantees on anything. There is nothing to say that it will hurt me that badly.

ANNE

What are the odds that it will?

BRADBURY

There’s no way to know.

ANNE

What do you mean no way to know?

BRADBURY

I mean they haven’t done long term studies with T the way they have estrogen. A lot of the symptoms and side effects, those are just educated guesses.

ANNE

So it could do even more to you?

BRADBURY

You could read it that way.

Silence

BRADBURY
Mom?

Silence

BRADBURY

Mom? Say something.

ANNE

(Emotionless)

There’s nothing to say.

CHARLOTTE

There is a lot to say.

ISAAC

Charlie-

Pause

ANNE

What on Earth would posses you to do something this dangerous?

BRADBURY

Because I hurt enough to make this whole thing sound good. Beat
The body is just wrong. I’ve known it was wrong since I was
six years old. I just never knew how to describe it until now.

CHARLOTTE

We’re supposed to protect her.

BRADBURY

It is him. And what are you protecting me from? Myself?

Yes.

ANNE

We’re talking about RG’s letter.

CHARLOTTE

What is there to talk about? Mom, Rachel-RG-Bradbury could
die. Hell, you could die if you don’t go see Dr. Kline today.
ANNE
If you won’t let me talk to RG, leave.

CHARLOTTE
Make me.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
I love her-him. That’s why I’m so worried.

BRADBURY
Do you want me to leave so you all can sort this out among yourselves?

ANNE
Look what you’ve done.

CHARLOTTE
What? What have I done?

Beat.

CHARLOTTE
Have you decided what you’re going to tell Dad?

BRADBURY
Depends. How did he take the letter?

ANNE
He’s fixated on the fact that you missed Christmas to be with Veronica.

ISAAC
You told them you were with Veronica? Why the fuck didn’t you tell them the truth?

CHARLOTTE
Tell us what?

Beat

BRADBURY
I wasn’t with Veronica. We’re not—we’re not as close as we were. I didn’t come home because I was sick.
ANNE
What do you mean sick? Why you didn’t just tell us that?

CHARLOTTE
Why you didn’t just tell us that?

BRADBURY
You know. Sick. Fever, chills, in bed for days watching season four of Next Generation on DVD. Sick.

CHARLOTTE
I repeat: why the hell didn’t you tell us?
(Turns on ISAAC)
Why didn’t you?

ISAAC
I didn’t know till after.

BRADBURY
I didn’t want to scare you.

CHARLOTTE
You really fail at that.

BRADBURY
This is something I need to do with Dad here too.

ANNE
He’s not here.

CHARLOTTE
He won’t come. I tried.

ISAAC
Brad-

BRADBURY
No. It’s okay. I just need some air is all.

BRADBURY leaves. Silence.

ISAAC
I should go with him. He looked -

ANNE nods. ISAAC leaves.

CHARLOTTE
There’s no reason for you not to go to the doctor, Mom.

ANNE
Just leave me alone, Charlie.

CHARLOTTE
You know what, I’m tired of being the bitch. I just want—I’m just trying to help. Two of the people I love more than anything would rather die than-

ANNE
Stop talking about like I’m a child.

CHARLOTTE
Stop acting like one. Why won’t you go, Mom? Give me just one reason. And not liking your doctor is not a reason.

ANNE
Why does there have to be a reason? Sometimes there just isn’t one.

CHARLOTTE
If there is no reason to not go, then you should go.

ANNE
Why can’t it be because I say so?

CHARLOTTE
Because that’s not-

ANNE
It’s what I want and that should be enough. Why is it too much to say “Yes, Mom” and leave me alone?

CHARLOTTE
This isn’t picking out new towels, this is-

ANNE
Why can’t it just be what I want?

CHARLOTTE
You wouldn’t let one of us say that.

ANNE
Of course not, you’re important.
CHARLOTTE
You did not just say that.

ANNE
I know what I think, feel, do, and say doesn’t matter to you, but just this once can’t you just believe me?

Lights go out.

LETTER TWO:

Lights up. BRADBURY is alone on stage.

Dear Mom, Dad, and Charlie,
Silence.

Another letter with more shit that’s hard to hear. Trust me, this is much easier than talking. Guess I’ll jump right into it. I first realized women were afraid of me in the park. I still love to walk at night, especially in the summer and fall. I love the way the cooling air smells, the thick sunsets. I feel free.

Because I was in my own head, I didn’t register it at first. The way women crossed to the other side of the path when they saw me coming.

I began to notice how they would always speed up going past me, glancing out of the sides of the eyes, quickly turning their heads every so often, not wanting to make eye contact but not wanting to lose sight of me in case of...of whatever modern suburban nightmare their minds were conjuring. Normally it happens so fast that it takes a minute to realize, to feel the bottom drop out of your gut. Do you know what it is like to know a complete stranger is so afraid of you? In such fear that they change the way they move every muscle of their body?

I had to tell that bit to set it up the explanation of why I didn’t come home. Just trust me on this.

The women in the park aren’t the only ones who are afraid. I’m scared shitless every time I use a public bathroom. Bad pun. Christ, public bathrooms. Fear of having the cops called, of being stared at, of being beaten up and having a word carved into my chest like that man at Cal State Long Beach.

Didn’t hear about that one, did you? Most people didn’t, I guess. It was back in April. He was walking out of a men’s room and man asked him his name. He gave it. The guy beat him, ripped off his shirt, and carved “IT” into his chest with a knife. At a college, where everyone is supposed to be accepting and we are supposed to be safe. At colleges there are all sorts of rules and shit about how we’re supposed to be protected. We’re like the spotted panda. Just fucking paper it turns out. I had just started to use men’s rooms then. I didn’t after that. It was really uncomfortable going back to using the women’s but it was marginally better. They might stare and call me names and are convinced that I am there to rape them, but they don’t carve things into my chest. So it
was verbal assault over physical.  

Silence as BRADBURY tries to control his breathing.

You would think the staring would be the worst. The way that women just let their gaze go up and down your body as they try to figure out what gender you are. Half the time I feel like I should charge admission. If they’re going to stare at me like I’m Jojo the Dog-Faced boy, I’m going to get something out of it. You would think those would be the worst, the objectifying stares. No. It’s the women who can’t look at you. The women that are so uncomfortable in your presence that they can’t look up from the floor. Those are the worst.

That’s why I don’t like going out anymore. I don’t want to have to use a public bathroom. I get short of breath and my stomach churns and I feel cold, just at thought of having to use one. Of being in a situation where I know I will scare people and there is not a damn thing I can do about it.

You want to know how I know I scare people? It was late October. Charlie and I went to see Andrew and Bob’s play at that little hole in the wall theatre they work at. At intermission I went to their narrow bathroom. I was back to using the women’s because the attack at CSULB. The one stall was occupied and I stood there and these two kids came in. I heard them whisper “it’s a boy.” And then the oldest one stood in the lobby of the theatre and yelled that there was a boy in the girls’ bathroom. Finally, Bob’s wife came in and looked around and saw me and said “There’s no boys in here. You just have to wait.” I wanted to cry. Do you know how humiliating it is to have someone else defend your right to be in a fucking bathroom? How sickening to know you scare little kids? To hide your gender just so you can take a leak?

I never went into a woman’s bathroom again. So no men’s since April and no women’s since October. Life on campus was a treat. Now after all that set up, why I didn’t come home for Christmas. I had an infection. Turns out that’s what happens when you don’t take a piss for seven hours at a stretch five days a week. I didn’t know how to tell you I was sick without telling you how I got sick. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I know I should trust you, but it’s so hard to trust anyone. I really am sorry I didn’t tell you.
SCENE 6-

ANNE is still in her chair, CHARLOTTE is reading on the couch. They are sitting in tense silence as LUCAS enters.
LUCAS
Why are you still in your pajamas?

ANNE
Because it’s vacation.

LUCAS
It’s vacation for government workers and teachers. Those of us who work for a living don’t get a vacation. If you’re on vacation why aren’t you at the doctor’s?

CHARLOTTE
Don’t look at me, I tried.

LUCAS
Is that why you kept calling me at work?

ANNE
No. RG wanted to talk to you.

LUCAS
Who?

CHARLOTTE
You know who.

ANNE
You knew RG and Isaac were coming today.

LUCAS
Where are they then? If she wants to talk, where is she?

ANNE
They went for a walk.

LUCAS
How long ago?

ANNE
An hour.

LUCAS
Where the hell are they walking?
ANNE
No idea. They just left.

LUCAS
Maybe I don’t want to talk to her.

ANNE
RG only wants to talk to you.

LUCAS
Her name is Rachel. And I had a shitty day at the plant.

ANNE
Just wait till…they come back.

Silence.

CHARLOTTE
It’s not like this was a surprise.

ANNE
Charlie.

CHARLOTTE
What? We all knew this was coming. Rachel never looked right as a girl.

LUCAS
It was a surprise to me.

CHARLOTTE
Then you’re frigging blind.

Silence for a beat or two, broken when BRADBURY and ISAAC enter.

BRADBURY
Hi, Dad.

LUCAS
Hello.

BRADBURY
You got the letter?
LUCAS

Obviously.

BRADBURY

So, what did you think?

LUCAS

Why is all this coming up now?

BRADBURY

Because I can’t keep you all and my real life separate anymore.

ANNE

We’re not part of your real life?

BRADBURY

Mom, please-

ANNE

How are we not part of your life?

BRADBURY

That’s not the right wording. It’s more like my life is in pieces, right now I’m in pieces. There’s school me and work me and friends me and family me. Each me has a different name, a different part of me exposed. A different amount of me exposed. The other pieces are slowly starting to come together. I want the family piece there too.

Silence.

LUCAS

How come you never told me any of this? Your mother knew more than I did. I had to find this all out from a letter. Why am I just hearing about it now?

BRADBURY

I’ve been telling you in a thousand ways since I was two.

LUCAS

And I was too fucking dumb to see it? Is that it?

BRADBURY

Yeah. That’s it, Dad.
LUCAS
Why can’t you admit you have it easy? You work half time, teaching, which isn’t even a real job. You don’t have any responsibilities. You have a life anybody would want.

BRADBURY
I have a life you want. I’m actually going to finish grad school. I’m not married to someone I fight with on a daily basis. I don’t hate my job enough to start my countdown to retirement at the fifteen year mark.

LUCAS
So you have nothing to be unhappy about.

BRADBURY
Being born in the wrong body is something-

LUCAS
That is such crap.

BRADBURY starts up the stairs.

LUCAS
You’re running away because you know I’m right.

BRADBURY
No. I am going upstairs because I know you’re not going to listen to me.

LUCAS
I am listening to you. I am just pointing out-

BRADBURY
That what I say is crap. That really makes me want to talk to you.

CHARLOTTE
Well, this is going to fuck.

LUCAS
Shut up, Charlie.
BRADBURY
Stay out of this. You know what I want from you? What I’ve wanted from you since I was thirteen? I just want you to see me.

LUCAS
I see you. You’re right there.

BRADBURY
How much do you know about me, Dad?

LUCAS
You’re the one who stopped talking to me. No matter what I do or what I say or how much time I give you, you don’t give me anything back.

BRADBURY
You call me emotional, you tell me I’m full of crap when I do talk to you and then you complain that I don’t talk to you. What the fuck do you want?

ANNE
You said you wouldn’t do this.

LUCAS
Do what?

ANNE
You said you wouldn’t upset RG.

LUCAS
RACHEL.

ANNE
Don’t yell at me.

LUCAS
Don’t scold me. I’m not one of your kids at school.

BRADBURY
Mom–

ANNE
No. We had an agreement. We were going talk about this with...RG calmly.
LUCAS
Why did you just leave? Who just drops a letter like that and leaves?

CHARLOTTE
Told you.

ISAAC
You too?

LUCAS
Why am I the only one taking this seriously?

ANNE
What do you expect us to do? What can we do that we haven’t done?

LUCAS
I want to know why I’m such a bad father.

BRADBURY
Stop listening to the voices in your head and listen to me for once.

LUCAS
Don’t be such a smart ass.

BRADBURY
What else am I going to say? You just twist everything I say into an accusation.

LUCAS
Why can’t you just admit you have a good life?

BRADBURY
How would you know?

LUCAS
I was there the damn whole time.

BRADBURY
Except when you were off with Brett and Ryan and Josh.
LUCAS
You had a bad childhood because I helped out kids who didn’t have dads around?

BRADBURY
That’s not what I said.

LUCAS
Then what did you say, because I’m confused.

BRADBURY
Yes. You there for trips to the zoo and for getting us when we were sick at school. Yes we had fun together. We still do sometimes. But when I cut up my thighs so bad it hurt to walk, when my hands were so bruised and swollen from punching walls that I couldn’t open a bottle of Pepsi, when I told you I was gay, when I refer to myself as man, you deny it.

LUCAS
You always came to your senses before.

BRADBURY
I just found new ways to make myself bleed.

LUCAS
I never understood why you wanted to hurt something so beautiful.

BRADBURY
I’m not beautiful. I know that. I’ve almost accepted it.

ANNE
You are.

BRADBURY
You’re contractually obligated to say that.

ANNE
Who told you that-

BRADBURY
Nobody had to tell me. I managed to figure that out all by myself. But I’m finally starting to feel better. I’m finally
starting to feel like a whole person.

LUCAS
If I’m not a part of your real life, why are you even bothering to tell me?

BRADBURY
Because I fucking miss you. Did you ever think of that? Yes, I felt like I had to pull away from you, but I really want that to change. I was hoping it would change.

LUCAS
If you miss me so damn much, how come you tell your mother all this and leave me to be fucking blindsided?

BRADBURY
Because Mom was there. You were there for trips to the zoo and the beach. You took us camping and fishing and trapshooting. But it was Mom who talked to the assistant principal when I was caught cutting my wrists in class. It was Mom who picked me up when I got sent home for fighting. It was Mom who tried to get me to stop hurting myself. It didn’t work, but she tried. You just ignored it, just like anything else you don’t want to exist.

LUCAS
Everyone does stupid shit as a teenager. I knew you would outgrow it.

BRADBURY
But I never outgrow what made me do it.

Silence.

LUCAS
Do you have any idea what it’s like to come home and find a letter that your daughter is having a sex change and now calling herself some ridiculous name.

Silence

ISAAC
Brad? You okay?

Silence
BRADBURY
I picked it because of you. I wasn’t kidding in the letter. I really did choose my name, partly, because I thought you would like it. Back when we still talked, you were the one who got me hooked on Ray Bradbury. I was wrong. Again.

ANNE
RG, come here.

BRADBURY
No.

ISSAC
Brad-

LUCAS
Rachel, I didn’t-

BRADBURY
Of course you didn’t. Zac and I are heading back to Riverside.

ANNE
But the party-

BRADBURY
I think we all still need an adjustment period.

Lights out.

LETTER THREE:

Lights up on BRADBURY alone.
BRADBURY

Mom, Charlie, and I hope Dad,

I started T. I got my first shot two days ago. I’m scared. Rubbery bones, five year old lost in the horror house on Halloween scared. Just don’t treat me differently when I come home next time. I mean, call me Bradbury and use the right pronouns. That was for Charlie, but otherwise, don’t treat me too differently. There’s no going back now and that’s probably what scares me so much. It’s so hard to wrap my head around the fact that I will be a man, physically, legally, really.

Love,
Bradbury

Lights out.

Epilogue-

Lights up on a bus stop bench on
the corner of Seventh Street and Paramount, just outside the parent’s house. BRADBURY sits alone. LUCAS enters and sits next to him.

BRADBURY
I can’t stay at a dead stop any longer. I’m not Charlie.

LUCAS
No one’s asking you to be. Hell, nobody asked Charlie to be Charlie. She’s got to learn she can’t fix everything. Especially your mother. Beat It is peaceful out here, isn’t it?

BRADBURY
I think everything’s more peaceful at night. There’s just something soothing about the dark.

Silence.

LUCAS
You’re not full of crap.

BRADBURY
Thanks.

LUCAS
I’m trying here.

BRADBURY
That’s our script. You blow up, you cool off, and then we’re friends again. Until the next time you blow up. Charlie made you come out here didn’t she?

LUCAS
Charlie wouldn’t have known where to find you.

BRADBURY
You’d be surprised. She has surveillance techniques the CIA would sell off countries for.

Silence.

LUCAS
It was one of our last chances to have Christmas as a family.
BRADBURY
You’ve been saying that since my freshman year of college. That’s seven last chances.

LUCAS
I’m scared about you.

BRADBURY
A lot of people are I guess. I work really fucking hard not to be scared. I can’t afford to be.

LUCAS
I think this is the most we’ve said to each other in years.

BRADBURY
Bus stops have that effect on people. Are we really friends again?

LUCAS
I hope so.

Lights out. End of play.