

Selection

By

Justen Bennett

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Cast of Characters

PETER: A neurobiologist. Early 40's.

JOSEPHINE: Peter's wife. Early 40's

YOUNG PETER: Peter at an earlier time.
17-21.

DALE: Young Peter's lover. 17-21.

NATE: Peter and Josephine's son.
17.

WEST: Nate's boyfriend. 18.

KATE: Peter's colleague. Early
40's.

Voice of SAMUEL: Peter's deceased father; a
Baptist minister. 50's-60's.

Preview Only
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for Full Version
JustenBennett.ca

ACT I

Scene 1

The stage is dark. SAMUEL speaks in voice-over only, his first lines heard before anything is seen. SAMUEL's lines are always delivered as a sermon to a crowded church captivated and electrified by his every word.

SAMUEL

It is an abomination. It is an affront to everything that is holy. It is an evil, ugly, and unnatural thing and God does not, can not love those who choose this wicked path.

Lights up on DALE's bedroom. YOUNG PETER and DALE are in bed. SAMUEL's voice-over continues throughout the scene, unheard by the two boys.

YOUNG PETER

Morning.

DALE

Morning, Pete.

DALE kisses PETER.

SAMUEL

Homosexuality, my friends, is a plague afflicting this world and it is not an easy thing to cure.

DALE

Sleep well?

YOUNG PETER

The sleep I did get, yes.

DALE

I didn't hear any complaints.

YOUNG PETER

(laughs)

No, I suppose not.

SAMUEL

There are no buboes, no visible signs or symptoms, but there is sickness nonetheless.

DALE

I have to say, this is a rare treat indeed. What did you tell your father you were doing?

YOUNG PETER

I said we were prepping for finals and it'd probably be better if I just stayed the night. You know, so we could study more.

DALE is about to speak.

YOUNG PETER

Dale, if you make a crack about studying anatomy I'll hit you with this pillow.

DALE

(smiles)
Smother me with love?

YOUNG PETER

We'll start with the smothering and see if we make it to the love.

DALE

You'd think after a year, we'd have made it there already.

SAMUEL

Like any plague, it spreads. Homosexuals are our modern-day rats; the invisible cause of this illness before God. And I say yes, they are invisible.

YOUNG PETER

(playful; without commitment)
Maybe we have. Maybe you've caused me to fall head over heels for you and I'm hopelessly devoted.

DALE

(sharp)
Don't tease.

YOUNG PETER

Who says I'm teasing?

SAMUEL

They hide among us.

Beat.

DALE

When do you have to leave today?

YOUNG PETER

I have a few hours. I need to help my dad prepare for the sermon tomorrow. He says he likes to run them by me to make sure they're polished, but really I think it's just another chance to hear himself talking.

DALE

Then I guess he's in the right profession.

SAMUEL

They are found in our friends, our co-workers, and even our families, disguising themselves as true, righteous people. Many times we can't even recognize the threat at our doorstep.

YOUNG PETER

It was either this or be a politician, but I think the idea of making a speech every Sunday and not just during elections was what won him over.

DALE

Don't forget the captive audience.

YOUNG PETER

(awe)

You should see it sometime. He speaks with this power behind him, like he's channelling something divine. There are Sundays when it seems no one is able to take their eyes off him. The whole congregation hangs off his every word. They're good words, too.

SAMUEL

As the Lord says, 'You shall not lie with a man as with a woman; it is an abomination.' Leviticus 18:22.

DALE

Think he'd have some good words for me?

YOUNG PETER

I'm sure he'd have some words for you, but I doubt they'd be good.

DALE

You too, Pete. If he ever found out you were--

YOUNG PETER

I'm not! I'm not...that. What you are.

SAMUEL

They prey upon our children, our loved ones, spreading their bile, infecting those close to us and turning them away from our Lord, their salvation.

DALE

What I am?

YOUNG PETER

You know. I'm just...having fun. We're just having fun, is all.

DALE

A year's worth of fun?

YOUNG PETER

(smiles)

Yes. It's a lot of fun.

DALE

I like fun, Pete. Hide-and-Go-Seek and Truth or Dare are fun, but there's a reason the game's called Seven Minutes in Heaven and not Twelve Months in the Closet. Don't you think when something's gone on this long, it's more than just fun?

YOUNG PETER

I've told you before, Dale. I'm not the same as you.

DALE

In what way?

YOUNG PETER

You know.

(beat)

I like being with you. Isn't that enough?

Beat.

DALE

So, when do I get to see you next?

YOUNG PETER

Monday, at school.

DALE

After-school study session?

YOUNG PETER

Sure. I'll bring the milk and cookies.

SAMUEL

It is our holy duty to eliminate this sickness and turn these virulent sinners away from their black, bilious choice to the one true God.

Scene 2

Saturday morning. PETER, JOSEPHINE, and NATE are sitting around the kitchen table, breakfast on their plates.

PETER

Bless us O Lord and these thy gifts which we are about to receive in thy bounty. Amen.

They begin eating, NATE in an obvious hurry.

JOSEPHINE

Well, you're hungry today.

NATE

I don't want to be late for my shift at the sports centre. One of the trainers had a cancelled appointment, so she's going to teach me a few things about the new equipment we got in.

PETER

Calm down, Nate. You have plenty of time to enjoy a meal with your parents before you have to go.

JOSEPHINE

(to NATE)

How did you sleep last night?

NATE

Fine, thanks. Dad, are you going to fix the AC soon? My room is sweltering.

PETER

I'll get around to it, Nate. It's not the only thing I have to do around here.

NATE

You could just let me move into the basement. I'd be cool enough down there.

JOSEPHINE

We've had this discussion before. You're not moving into the basement. It's not even finished and what if there's a fire?

NATE

That's why there's a window, Mom.

JOSEPHINE

It's near the ceiling, it's not easily accessible in an emergency. What if you fell while trying to climb through? If you couldn't make it the first time you're not going to make it with a broken ankle the second. No, you're not moving to the basement. Peter, please take a look at the air conditioning.

PETER

I was hoping to relax this weekend, Josey. We've been busy at work lately. We're close to a discovery; it's just a matter of time. I'm not in the mood to be fixing anything in the few hours I have to myself.

JOSEPHINE

Peter. Your son is burning up. He can barely sleep at night.

NATE

I said I slept fine.

PETER

He slept fine.

JOSEPHINE

Peter.

PETER

Okay, Josey. Next weekend, I promise. You can make it through another week, can't you, son?

NATE

Yeah. But if you don't want to look at it, the basement's still--

PETER

I'll look at it next weekend.

JOSEPHINE

Nate, have you sent out your applications yet?

NATE

Not yet.

PETER

You'd better get on that. Competition's getting tighter and tighter every year. That's what my friend at Dalhousie's been saying.

NATE

I'll send them out soon. The deadlines aren't for a while, anyway.

PETER

Have you decided what you want to study?

NATE

I've narrowed it down.

JOSEPHINE
Well?

NATE
I'm not ready to talk about it. Give me another few days--a week? I'll figure it out by then.

JOSEPHINE
I just don't want you putting it off and forgetting about it.

NATE
I won't.
(beat)
Hey, could I bring someone to dinner on Thursday?

PETER
Of course. Who is it?

JOSEPHINE
Oh, I know. It's that trainer girl who's helping you this morning. You want to thank her, don't you? That's very considerate, Nate.

NATE
Actually, I'm bringing West.

PETER
Oh.

JOSEPHINE
Peter, dear, don't we have dinner with that nice Fulson family on Thursday? It must have slipped my mind.

NATE
You don't have dinner with the Fulsons until Saturday. You wrote it on the calendar and I checked before I asked. You're both free.

PETER
Your mother and I just don't think it's appropriate to--

NATE
To bring my boyfriend to dinner? For him to meet my parents? You practically begged Lisa to bring Mark over to meet the family.

JOSEPHINE
It was a different situation with your sister.

NATE

No, it wasn't. She had a boyfriend; I have a boyfriend. She brought hers to dinner and, on Thursday, so will I.

PETER

You're practically ambushing us, Nate. Your mother and I need a little more time to prepare.

NATE

Five days is more than enough. And it's not an ambush; it's being fair.

JOSEPHINE

If you're going to make a scene about it, then fine. Bring him to dinner, but don't expect anything special.

NATE

And you have to be nice to him.

PETER

We'll be as nice as the situation warrants.

NATE

I don't mean fake nice. Not what you do with Lisa and Mark.

JOSEPHINE

We love your sister.

PETER

Even despite her...arrangement.

NATE

See? That's just it! You say those things like you're okay with it, but then they're always followed by some comment that just makes it mean nothing.

JOSEPHINE

It doesn't mean nothing. We love your sister. We'd simply be happier if she and Mark were married before they decided to move in together. Or even engaged. We could live with that.

NATE

Mom! You did it again!

PETER

Nathaniel.

NATE

I'm not the only one who notices. The passive-aggressive shows up on Lisa's radar, too. She even mentioned it when I told her I was going to bring West here.

JOSEPHINE

And what did Lisa think about this dinner?

NATE

She thinks it's a great idea.

JOSEPHINE

Of course she would.

NATE

Just pretend to be okay with everything on Thursday.
All right? I'm done. May I leave the table? I don't
want to be late for work.

PETER

Yes, you may.

NATE exits.

JOSEPHINE

Why can't he just--

PETER

Josey, please?

(beat)

JOSEPHINE

I don't even know what to cook. Chicken? Fish? You
think he likes fish?

PETER

I don't think either of them like fish.

JOSEPHINE

How do you know that?

PETER

Just call it a hunch.

JOSEPHINE

It's supposed to get easier, isn't it? That's what they
say.

PETER

Who's they?

JOSEPHINE

Obviously not anyone who's had children.

PETER

It's our burden, Josey. If we were meant to have it
easy--

(beat)
Well, we weren't meant to have it easy. God didn't intend it.

Beat.

JOSEPHINE
More coffee?

PETER
No. I'm awake enough now.

JOSEPHINE
It's like I don't even know my own son anymore. We used to be close. He told me everything; more than Lisa did. Maybe that's what happened. Maybe it's my fault for spending so much time with him.

PETER
A mother is supposed to raise her children. You spent just as much time with him as any other mother did with her son.

JOSEPHINE
I should have noticed. He used to play with Lisa's dolls, you know? I should have stopped him. Now instead of playing with a Ken doll, he's bringing a real-life one home for dinner.

PETER
Except this one's anatomically correct.

JOSEPHINE
Peter! I don't want to have to think about--that. I just want to know what happened to my little boy.
(beat)

Maybe if you weren't always at work--

PETER
I was at work because I needed to be. I was trying to start a career and that meant long hours in the lab. Don't blame this on me. You know if it was within my power Nate wouldn't be this way.

JOSEPHINE
I've read that it has a lot to do with not having a strong male presence available.

PETER
We've been through this before, Josey. We had the same discussions when he came out to us four years ago. It's not your fault. It's not my fault. God decided that Nate should carry this burden and, as his parents, we

(MORE)

PETER (cont'd)
have to bear it, too. We can only pray that He grants us the strength we need.

JOSEPHINE
I don't know how many more burdens I can handle, Peter.

Scene 3

DALE's bedroom. YOUNG PETER and DALE are onstage.

SAMUEL
As God's creations, we have ourselves created many things He would be pleased with.

DALE
Have you finished your half of the report yet?

YOUNG PETER
Yeah, I've been done for hours.

DALE
Serious? I've got at least another half-hour left.

SAMUEL
Medicine to cure our illnesses, buildings to house our families and congregations, technology to help further communicate His message; all advancements for which we can thank science.

YOUNG PETER
It's not that difficult, is it?

DALE
Not everyone is a mini-genius like you, Pete.

YOUNG PETER
I'm not that smart. I did decide to spend my Saturday afternoon doing homework.

DALE
It's raining anyway.

YOUNG PETER
True. It's not like there was much else to do.

SAMUEL
Science, however, can go too far. All this knowledge has led many down a path of arrogance, of ignorance.

YOUNG PETER
At least the company's not bad.

DALE

The company is incredible.

YOUNG PETER

If a bit slow.

DALE

Hey, just in biology.

SAMUEL

There are those who believe we are the children of apes. They view Adam and Eve as a myth to explain our origin before we discovered the so-called 'correct' explanation.

DALE

Besides, I keep you grounded from all that pedestal standing you do.

YOUNG PETER

Pedestal standing? Hey mister, I ride no high horse and stand on no pedestal. Anyway, I think this is what I want to do with my life.

DALE

Professional pedestal stander-onner?

YOUNG PETER

(laughs)

No. Science. Biology.

DALE

Really? You could be throwing away a great career. Pedestal stayer-onner-and-not-mover?

YOUNG PETER sighs and laughs at DALE.

SAMUEL

Let me tell you, my friends, we have the correct explanation. We have always had the correct explanation.

DALE

Oh! Pedestal resident! Professional pedestal resident! Or not...

YOUNG PETER

It's the best option so far. So, come on. Tell me. What would you think if I went into biology?

DALE

I don't know. Why that over everything else?

YOUNG PETER

It's just...fascinating. There's so much to learn and so much to do. I'd have the power to help change the things that are wrong with the world.

SAMUEL

All the answers we need are in the Bible, the word of our Lord: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' Genesis 1:1.

YOUNG PETER

Dale?

DALE

Pete, what is it in the world you want to change?

Beat.

YOUNG PETER

Lots of things.

DALE

Like what? Be specific.

YOUNG PETER

Well, you know...

DALE

Yeah, I do know. I want to hear you say it.

YOUNG PETER

If you know what I'm going to say then there's no point in me saying it, is there?

DALE

Saying it makes it real, Pete.

(beat)

Why would you want to change this?

YOUNG PETER

I don't.

DALE

You're lying.

YOUNG PETER

No, I'm not, I--

DALE

You are, but you're not going to be what I want you to be and I don't want to leave you.

Beat. DALE rests his head on YOUNG PETER's lap. Despite the conversation, it is a tender moment for both boys.

YOUNG PETER

I'll tell you what I want to change.

DALE

What's that?

YOUNG PETER

I would like to improve the structural integrity of pedestals to allow for longer periods of standing.

DALE

Jerk.

YOUNG PETER

Noun or verb?

DALE

Noun.

(beat)

Then verb.

YOUNG PETER

Finish your half of the report and we'll verb later.

DALE

Slave-driver.

YOUNG PETER

Hormone-driven slacker.

DALE

Pedestal resident.

YOUNG PETER

(laughs)

Finish the report.

SAMUEL

This is all we need to know. This is all there is to know. Anything else is pure and simple blasphemy.

Scene 4

The lab where PETER works.

PETER

And how are our little beauties doing today? Been busy, I see. Looks like you've all been very productive. A little too productive.

KATE enters. She is a colleague and fellow researcher.

KATE

Good morning, Dr. Harris.

PETER

And good morning, Dr. Smith.

KATE

Any change?

PETER

Nothing. In fact, they seem more active than ever.

KATE

You're kidding. I thought we'd hit something this time.

PETER

Same behaviour as usual. Slightly higher egg count by the looks of it.

KATE

We should have something in the next few generations. If not, one of the other samples. They've only got four pairs of chromosomes, Pete. One of the groups is bound to react to our tweaks.

PETER

Eventually. You know, Kate, some days I wonder if I have the patience for this.

KATE

Rome wasn't built in a day.

PETER

But God made the world in seven.

KATE

What?

PETER

Sorry. It's something my father used to say. He wasn't a patient man either. He figured if you couldn't get something done fast, it wasn't worth doing.

KATE

If that's what you believe, you're in the wrong field.

PETER

I don't.

(beat)

(MORE)

PETER (cont'd)

Either, actually. I don't think God created the world in seven days and I don't think he'd have done a good job if he had.

KATE

Oh?

PETER

The earth started as a barren rock, devoid of life. Now it's healthy, functioning, and full of complex ecosystems and incredible varieties of life. That doesn't happen in seven days. It takes time, hard work, blood, sweat, and tears. That's the only way that kind of transformation can possibly happen. Anyone, my father included, is a fool to think otherwise.

KATE

Thankfully we only have to wait weeks, not millions of years, for these little fellows to transform.

PETER

If they do. I'm beginning to think it may not be possible.

KATE

We'll see. There are still six more months of funding in the bank before we have to reapply. Don't give up hope yet.

PETER

I'm praying for it.

KATE

(smiles)

I'm sure you are, Pete.

(beat)

Your father sounds like an interesting man. You don't talk about him much.

PETER

There's not much to talk about. He was a minister. Loved his family. Lived a good life. We just disagreed on a few things.

KATE

God being one of them?

PETER

No. Evolution. I believe in God, but I can't see any proof of Eden. I still think half the reason I went into science was to piss him off.

KATE

My mother wanted me to dance. She couldn't see I had the grace of a cow with three legs.

PETER

(laughs)

You, Dr. Kate Smith, danced?

KATE

Until I was 15. By then I'd convinced her that school was too important to lose all those precious study hours at the barre.

PETER

I didn't realize you were that committed a student.

KATE

Well, I retracted the argument in university, but then I spent my hours at a very different type of bar.

(beat)

Say, Nate's heading to university soon, isn't he? I remember when you brought him here for 'Take Your Kid to Work' day. What was he? Twelve? He was asleep underneath the microscope table by noon.

PETER

Yeah. Science wasn't his strongest subject. Gym class is about the only thing you can guarantee he'll get an 'A' in. Though, he's fairly decent at English and History, I suppose.

KATE

Not like his father at all, then.

PETER

In some ways.

KATE

You haven't spoken about him for a while. I remember every week there'd be some new amazing thing he'd done that you couldn't wait to share with everyone at the lab.

PETER

He grew up, I guess.

KATE

It happens eventually. What's he planning to study?

PETER

He doesn't know what he wants to take yet. Doesn't even know where he wants to take whatever it is he doesn't know he's taking. At least that's what he says.

KATE

He's confused?

PETER

No. Maybe. Personally, I think he knows exactly what he wants to do and either intends to torture his mother and I into thinking he'll miss the deadlines and not get in, or he's just waiting to drop a bomb and say he wants to be an artist or philosopher or some other nonsense.

KATE

You think he should pick something else?

PETER

Of course. Something more reliable, more dependable. Something stable.

KATE

And here I thought you were the rebellious one.

PETER

I am. I just rebelled into a job I could make a living with.

KATE

Well, we won't be making much of a living without any results. How is Group D anyhow? Will they be ready for the next procedure this afternoon?

PETER

They should be. I'll start prepping the equipment.

Scene 5

The night of the dinner. The HARRIS' dining room.

NATE

Mom, Dad. This is West.

JOSEPHINE

Hello, West.

WEST

Mr. and Mrs. Harris. It's a pleasure to meet you.

PETER

West, eh? So what are your brothers' names? North? Or maybe South-East?

WEST

I actually don't have any brothers, Mr. Harris.

PETER

What's the matter? Did you give your parents enough trouble?

WEST

They always told me they only wanted one child. I guess I worked out.

PETER

Hmm.

Beat.

WEST

I brought a bottle of wine for supper.

He hands it to JOSEPHINE.

JOSEPHINE

Are you old enough to be buying that?

NATE

West turned 18 last month.

JOSEPHINE

Red, I see. It doesn't exactly pair with chicken, but I'm sure it'll be fine.

NATE

You said you didn't know what we were having, so we had to guess.

PETER

You're right. It was only a fifty-fifty shot, after all.

JOSEPHINE

I think it's time we gathered the meal. Peter?

JOSEPHINE and PETER exit to the kitchen.

NATE

I am so sorry.

WEST

For what?

NATE

The 9.5 on the Awkward Scale.

WEST

(laughs)

It's okay. It was bound to be a little uncomfortable.

NATE

They're just very conservative, so try not to bring up any political or religious issues. They'll go on for hours about how we're young and wrong and don't know what we're talking about and I really, really don't want to put you through that. I really don't want to put you through this at all.

WEST

(smiles)
Then why am I here?

NATE

(sighs)
Because I'm a good son--mostly--and I want my parents to meet my boyfriend. I'm just trying to prepare you. They're not like your parents. My dad's father was a Baptist minister.

WEST

I see.

NATE

Pretty much says it all, doesn't it?

WEST

Pretty much.

NATE

I wish I had your parents. They're just so great about everything. I love how we can hang out on your couch and watch a movie with them and it's cool if we cuddle or hold hands or whatever.

WEST

They're not that great. You didn't hear them after they found out I failed the social studies essay.

NATE

So what? They accept you. And they take you on incredible vacations to places like Thailand and Australia. I don't think my parents have even left the province.

WEST

After we graduate we'll see those places together. I promise.

NATE

I'll hold you to that, mister. By the way, my dad's going to say grace, so remember to hold off from digging into supper and just go along with it; it's easier that way.