

Parent, Legal Guardian, Angel, Other

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CHARACTERS

ASH: 17. Closeted gay and trans guy. Optimist. In love with LUKE. Believes in their future. Senior in high school. He/him pronouns.

LUKE: 17. Closeted gay guy. Scientist and artist. In love with ASH. Full of skepticism. Senior in high school. Cisgender. He/him pronouns.

HEATHER: Single mother of ASH. Constantly tired and in need of coffee. Thirties or forties. Cisgender. Harbors guilt from strict religious upbringing. Trying her best. She/her pronouns.

PETER: Father of LUKE. Husband of MISTY. More accepting of LUKE than MISTY. Forties or fifties. Cisgender. He/him pronouns.

MISTY: Mother of LUKE. Married to PETER. Devout born-again Christian. Projects guilt of her sins onto others, particularly her son. Forties or fifties. Cisgender. She/her pronouns.

FINN: 20. Nurturing, protective, and kind. Kicked out of their house as a teen. Focuses on others to avoid focusing on themselves. Acts as an older sibling figure to ANGEL. Genderfluid. Nurse. They/them pronouns.

ANGEL: 15. Nonbinary. Ran away from home. Full of fire. Has a massive, unrequited crush on FINN. Prone to impulsivity and self-harm. They/them pronouns.

CHARLIE: A Jack Russell. A good boy. Best at car and toy. Terrified of storms. He/him pronouns.

SETTING

The present.

Takes place in The Closet, a hospital waiting room, an inpatient room in that same hospital, Finn's house, and a park. Settings can be as simplistic as you want, particularly the liminal spaces, and can be communicated via lighting, sounds, etc.

NOTES

The Closet can be interpreted as literally or metaphorically as you wish. The one thing I imagine being kind of necessary though is that until you're permanently in The Closet, you can't touch anyone. The first form of physical contact comes when ANGEL and LUKE hug.

It is important to me that trans actors are used in the transgender roles. I don't mind if the actor's gender identity does not exactly align with the part they are portraying, as long as they are not cisgender.

Time is fluid in this play. We exist in the past and present and even a little in the future. It should feel like a puzzle. The audience may not see the picture being formed at the beginning, but by the end they should. If needed, contact me and I can provide a timeline of events.

CHARLIE is written in such a way that using an actual dog should be optional.

The teenage parts do not necessarily need to be portrayed by teen actors given the content of the play but the age differences between the teens and adults should be maintained.

PROLOGUE

Lights up on ASH in liminal space.

ASH

Do you remember your first heartbreak? Not your first kiss or partner or whatever but the first person you loved. That person you fell asleep thinking of, who made you suddenly believe in cliches and soulmates. You went from sensible and smart to lacking the capability to complete simple tasks, just because you were so hopelessly head over heels for them. You knew it would be always and forever so you didn't cling to them. Then suddenly, they vanished.

Do you remember your first love?

Where did they go?

ACT I: SCENE 1

Lights up on a hospital waiting room.
HEATHER, PETER and MISTY sit,
waiting.

MISTY

So you're the one who found them?

HEATHER

Yes.

MISTY

So did you-

PETER

Misty, perhaps now is not-

MISTY
(cutting in)

Do you have any idea why they did this?

HEATHER

No.

MISTY

Are you sure?

HEATHER

I think so?

PETER

Misty.

MISTY
(imitating)

Peter.

HEATHER

Look, I get that you need answers. I want them too, but I'm as lost as you are.

MISTY

They didn't leave a note or anything? Usually with — It was a suicide, correct?

HEATHER

Sure looked like it.

MISTY

But they didn't leave a note?

HEATHER

Ash did.

PETER

Luke didn't.

MISTY

Why were they together?

HEATHER

They're a couple.

MISTY

What?

HEATHER

Didn't you know?

MISTY

Why didn't you tell us?

PETER

Misty I think-

MISTY
(ignoring him)

This information would have been useful.

HEATHER

How? Their relationship doesn't change anything.

MISTY

You should have told us.

HEATHER

I thought you knew.

MISTY

Any other pertinent information you'd care to share with us?

HEATHER

You know everything I do.

MISTY

What about the note your daughter left?

HEATHER

Private.

MISTY

Like the rest of this?

HEATHER

I'm not sharing it.

My daughter shouldn't have complete strangers reading her last words.

MISTY

Your daughter lost her say in the matter when she did something this selfish.

HEATHER

How can you say that? Your son did the same thing-

MISTY

Because we believe suicide is a sin.

PETER

You believe.

MISTY

Not now, Peter.

PETER

No, she's right. Some things should stay private. She (indicating HEATHER) is not our enemy and treating her as such is only hurting someone in pain. This arguing gets us nowhere.

HEATHER

Thank you.

MISTY

My apologies. We are...I am not at my best at the moment.

HEATHER

Tell me about it.

A silence. MISTY thinks.

MISTY

Why didn't he tell us? It just doesn't add up.

PETER

Tell us what?

MISTY

He had a girlfriend. He was cured. Why didn't he tell us?

PETER

I don't know.

MISTY

There must be something we're missing.

ACT I: SCENE 2

ASH paces agitatedly in a liminal space hereafter known as The Closet. LUKE, his boyfriend, watches him.

LUKE

We could get kicked out of school.

ASH

Fuck school.

LUKE

And college?

ASH

We've already applied.

LUKE

Offers can be revoked. And besides, I don't know about you but I cannot afford college on my own, let alone housing and food and-

ASH

You could stay with me.

LUKE

How do you know you wouldn't get kicked out too?

ASH

You've met my mom Luke.

LUKE

Yeah and how do you know she's safe?

ASH

She's my mom. She's a good person.

LUKE

But you don't know that. Not for sure. And she can say all the right things about how she wants the best for you but people are only safe if they're like us.

ASH

That's an incredible oversimplification.

LUKE

You're just idealistic.
I thought my parents were safe too.

ASH

But you still live with them-

LUKE

Because I told them I was cured! I said the prayer and the shitty fucking counselors worked because I couldn't take it anymore.

ASH

Luke I'm sorry I didn't-

ASH goes over to LUKE, trying to hold him. LUKE shrugs him off.

It's fine. I'm fine.

LUKE

No you're not.

ASH

Yeah well, what can you do?
Look, I get this isn't fun. But it's better to just stay alive.

LUKE

For what it's worth, I'm glad you're still alive.

ASH

Thanks.

LUKE

You're supposed to say me too.

ASH

But I'm not.

LUKE

I think you need a therapist or something.

ASH

No fucking thank you. The last time I saw a therapist, I came out with shit that made me sick and nightmares.

LUKE

What kind of nightmares?

ASH

That place.

LUKE

What was it like?

ASH

Draining. Like they'd show us pictures of cute guys and guys holding hands then switch to blood and gore and the worst things imaginable. It felt kinda like they were trying to force me out of my own body.

LUKE

ASH

I am so sorry, I didn't realize. I can't-How did you survive it?

LUKE
(comforting)

Hey, I'm okay babe. I mean, this was like two years ago.

ASH

That doesn't make it better!

LUKE

Yeah but it's almost funny now that I'm out. Like, the "reasons" we were gay. Absolutely insane.

ASH

Yeah?

LUKE

Yeah! Like the chemicals in our food "feminizing" us.

ASH

I'm sure that pissed you off.

LUKE

It was so dumb! That's literally - Estrogen in food doesn't work like that!

ASH

I know babe, you've told me.
Did they say anything else funny?

LUKE

Oh you know. The standard God and sin spiel. If it wasn't the cheetos turning us gay, it was the art classes or doing dance instead of football.
And, I mean, well. Sending me to that camp was kind of oxymoronic.

ASH

How so?

LUKE

I mean I was surrounded by guys my age, most at least moderately attractive. What did they think was gonna happen?

ASH

You didn't!

LUKE nods, a mischievous glint in his eyes.

ASH
(playfully scandalized)

You were a freshman!

LUKE

I was a freshman surrounded by attractive males. Sue me.

ASH

So, I'm not your first?

LUKE

Nope.

ASH

That kinda stings.

LUKE

Why?

ASH

I thought I was. I mean, you're mine.

LUKE

You still kinda are.
I didn't even know his name.

ASH

Really?

LUKE

Yeah, what we were doing didn't exactly require us being on a first name basis. It only happened because we thought we'd never find anyone else. We thought we would always be alone.

ASH

I'm sorry you had to go through that.

LUKE

It's okay.

ASH

It's not.
It's really messed up.

LUKE

I'm not denying that. But it happened. You have to either get over it or—
Besides, it wasn't all bad. Nothing is truly good or bad.

ASH

You get so pretentious when you're upset.

LUKE

I'm not upset.

ASH

Whatever.

LUKE

What are you thinking about?

ASH

Nothing.

LUKE

Knowing you, that's not possible.

ASH

You really wanna hear me whine?

LUKE

Always.

ASH

I wish we didn't have to wait to be a couple.

LUKE

We are a couple.

ASH

You know what I mean. I just want to kiss my very cute boyfriend in public, is that a crime?

LUKE

No one's stopping you.

ASH

Yeah but then when I come out to my mom it's gonna be this whole ordeal and I love you s but I really do not want to be your girlfriend-

LUKE

I think you've made your point babe.

ASH

And I've never even been to your house or met your parents-

LUKE

Cause you'd hate it.

ASH

I know, I know. I just wish we do all the dumb shit our friends get to do. Get to be a real couple in the eyes of more than each other.

LUKE

Your mom knows.

ASH

Not really.
I told her it was a cover for you.

LUKE

Oh.
Well.
Would your mom let me spend the night then?

ASH

Maybe, but your parents-

LUKE

They're volunteering for like ten hours at this church event thing next Saturday.

ASH

They'd kill you.

LUKE

They'd never find out.
I leave while they're gone, come back before they're awake.
You do not get more typical high school couple than that.

ASH, who up until this had been maintaining a no-nonsense poker face quite uncommon for him, allows himself to break his stoic expression with a wide smile.

ASH

This'll be perfect!

I hate it when you say that.

LUKE

I know, I know, just let me celebrate a little!

ASH

I think you're overreacting.

LUKE

You always think that.
Hey.
Guess what?

ASH

What?

LUKE

I love you.

ASH

You always say that.

LUKE

I know.

ASH

Love fades.
Nothing is forever.

LUKE

Maybe.
But in this moment
I love you.
And I say I'll love you when the next moment arrives.
And the next one.
And the next.
You may disagree.
But for now
And for as long as I can
I love you.

ASH

ACT I: SCENE 3

In the evening, FINN's apartment. FINN is cooking dinner while ANGEL sits nearby, occasionally helping them. As FINN cooks, they carry on their conversation.

ANGEL

You do not get any gayer than Captain America.

FINN

Captain America is not gay.

ANGEL

And under what authority do you say that, Finn?

FINN

More authority than you. I mean, at least I'm actually male. Well, right now at least.

ANGEL

But I thought-

FINN

Oh, earlier it was in between. But I'm in male mode now. Definitely.

ANGEL

Whatever. It doesn't change the fact that I'm right.

FINN

You are the furthest thing from right.

ANGEL

I've got two words for you. Bucky. Barnes.

FINN

They're just close friends!

ANGEL

Oh please.

FINN

And what about the girlfriend he had in the first movie?

ANGEL

He crashed a plane into freezing waters just to avoid going on a date with her. How do you get any gayer than that?

FINN

He had no choice!

ANGEL

He had full control of the plane! The bombs weren't set on a timer or anything.

FINN

That's lazy writing, not proof, Angel.

ANGEL

You don't know that! It could've been intentional. Besides, have you seen the sexual tension between him and Bucky?

FINN

I mean, I guess.

ANGEL

It's undeniable!
Plus his costume! He's practically running around in tights.

FINN

You really care about this, huh? I hadn't pegged you for a Marvel fan.

ANGEL

I'm just full of surprises, aren't I?

FINN

You're not the only one. Come here, I've got something for you.

FINN sets down a cupcake in front of
ANGEL.

ANGEL

What's this for? It's not my birthday.

FINN

You've been clean for an entire month now!

ANGEL

I didn't realize.
You were keeping track?

FINN

Of course! I'm so proud of you! You're getting better, you're making progress!

I don't know what to say.

ANGEL

I think a thank you would suffice.

FINN

Thank you.

ANGEL
(a mumble)

What was that?

FINN

You know what I said.

ANGEL

I have absolutely no clue.

FINN
(feigning innocence)

THANK YOU FINN.

ANGEL

You're welcome! (indicating hugging them) May I?

FINN

ANGEL nods. FINN embraces ANGEL and kisses them on the top of their head in a brotherly way. When FINN turns back to the kitchen, ANGEL looks down at their lap, smiling and blushing.

Why are you doing this?

ANGEL

Doing what.

FINN

This. Why are you doing all of this for me?

ANGEL

I love you stupid.

FINN

ANGEL cuts FINN off by kissing them.
FINN pushes them away.

FINN

No.

ANGEL

I don't understand.

FINN

Angel, you do understand I'm too old for you, right?

ANGEL doesn't respond.

FINN

I can't feel the same way about you. It wouldn't be right.
I'm sorry, this is on me. I love you like family. Like a little sibling.

ANGEL

Oh.

FINN
(comforting)

I'm, uh, sorry-

ANGEL

No it's my fault-

FINN

No it's not. You don't need to apologize for anything.

ANGEL

Uh-huh.

ANGEL is clearly still upset and now very
embarrassed.

FINN

I promise it's okay. I don't want you to feel bad. You're not a bad person. Okay?

ANGEL

Okay.

FINN

Are you just agreeing with me so I'll change the subject?

Yes.

ANGEL

FINN laughs a little at that and ANGEL relaxes a bit.

FINN

Why don't you put on something Marvel while we eat? Who knows, maybe you'll even be able to convince me Captain America is anything other than straight.

ANGEL

Oh I won't have to. The movie will.

FINN

Yeah right.

ANGEL

Ten bucks says you agree with me by the end.

FINN

You're on.

ACT I: SCENE 4

MISTY and HEATHER are cleaning up a rec room in the basement of the church. There were others, but in this late hour, everyone has left. Even PETER has fallen asleep, much to his wife's irritation. Throughout the scene, PETER snores.

HEATHER

I see you around a lot. You're sure involved.

MISTY

You could say that.

HEATHER

I made a coffee for you. Want it?

She offers MISTY the sweetened one.
MISTY sips it, surprised at how much she
enjoys it.

MISTY

Yes, thank you.
Oh my, that's excellent.

HEATHER

It's just coffee.

MISTY

Thank you so much. It's delicious.

HEATHER

Sugar does that.

MISTY

You have a magic touch.

HEATHER

You could say that.

MISTY

I normally can't stand coffee. That bitter taste. But this is nice.

They sip their coffee.

HEATHER

I can't believe he's asleep.

MISTY

To be fair, it has been quite a long day. He's been on his feet almost twelve hours.

HEATHER

We've had the exact same day.

MISTY

Well—

Suddenly PETER snores loudly. HEATHER
giggles. MISTY sighs.

MISTY

Okay I give up.
I mean, we're up, still working and here he is just snoring away.

He's a dick.

HEATHER

I suppose you could say that.

MISTY

I'm sorry your husband sucks.

HEATHER

Tell me something I don't know.
But what can we do? Even if they do...suck. Even if they can't fulfill all of their duties.
Even if they can't be the man we want them to be, there isn't exactly an alternative.

MISTY

HEATHER checks her watch.

Holy shit, it's late.

HEATHER

Is it? I hadn't noticed.

MISTY

Guess I'll miss tomorrow.

HEATHER

Really?

MISTY

Yeah. I mean, God will still be there next week.

HEATHER

I suppose.

MISTY

You could skip too, you know. I don't think anyone will blame you for missing.

HEATHER

It's not really about that.
Why do you go to church?

MISTY

Does it matter?

HEATHER

MISTY

It matters to me.

HEATHER

So why do you go then?

MISTY

I go because God healed me.

I've felt his love and I remember what it's like to live without it.

I never want to feel that way again.

HEATHER

I'm sorry.

MISTY

For what?

HEATHER

That you had to be healed.

That you used to be in pain.

MISTY

It's okay.

HEATHER

But, to answer your question, I go because I have hope.

That's really all I have left.

I don't have faith in God or being healed or eternal life or any of it really.

I hope for God.

I hope for healing.

I hope that one day he will hear my prayers.

MISTY

Well, having faith that He will hear them is the best way to know they'll be heard.

HEATHER

Would you have faith in him if He hadn't healed you?

MISTY

I don't know. I probably wouldn't be here.

The only thing that stopped me was His voice calling out my name. He guided me to the church.

And these people here were the first to show me kindness.

HEATHER

They're good people. They actually took me in too, years and years ago.

MISTY

Is that so?

HEATHER

It was the only place I could think to go after I got kicked out. I had basically been raised there so I figured it was worth a shot.

How'd you end up here? I don't remember ever seeing you in Sunday school or bible study growing up.

It's like you just appeared one day and fit into place like you had always belonged. Did I just forget or—

MISTY

No, you're right. I was not raised in the church. Or even Christian.

HEATHER

What changed?

MISTY

I had nothing left. I ended up in this church when I was close to death and bound for Hell. The people here all encouraged me to repent and once I did, it was like a miracle. I was healed.

HEATHER

Oh.

What did you do?

MISTY

What do you mean?

HEATHER

What did you do to think you deserved Hell?

MISTY

That's quite personal.

HEATHER

So don't answer it.

MISTY

I lived . . . I had a host of vices. I'm sure you can imagine from there.

HEATHER

At least you've recovered.

MISTY

Mostly.

HEATHER

Mostly?

MISTY

I have to remember the woman I once was, the things I did.

HEATHER

I understand.

MISTY

Somehow that doesn't surprise me. You know, you remind me a lot of myself.

HEATHER

So, close out with a little prayer circle?

MISTY

That sounds lovely.

HEATHER

Should we wake your husband?

MISTY

Peter? No. Let's let him rest. Speaking of husbands, where's yours?

HEATHER

Mine?

I uh –

Don't have one.

I usually prefer women.

I mean, I like men.

Like I'm attracted to them.

But men are also responsible for almost all of my problems.

And it's just easier to be alone.

It's familiar.

I've been that way for a while.

MISTY

Does your daughter know?

HEATHER

What? That I like women? No.

MISTY

That's good at least.

HEATHER

What are you getting at?

MISTY

You're a mother. You have to set a good example for them, to lead them away from a sinful lifestyle.

HEATHER

(clearly disagreeing with her but not finding the energy to pick another fight)

Mhmm.

Back to prayer?

MISTY

Oh, yes.

They join hands and HEATHER bows her head. They are each a little uncomfortable with the other but find themselves comforted by the act of prayer.

MISTY

Dear lord.

Thank you for all your kindness, for ensuring such a wonderful staff at this church to aid us, and for the comfort I have found in the company of this woman.

Please heal her so that she may provide her daughter with every ounce of strength she has.

And please provide your guidance as Peter and I struggle, er, work to represent You and your Word as we raise our son to live a life in your image.

Please (she falters) Please guide me in the days and months to come so that I may aid my son's journey towards healing.

And- and please forgive Heather for missing services tomorrow so she can sleep in.

In Jesus's Name, we pray.

They share a small smile. HEATHER can barely contain her giggles.

HEATHER

Feel better?

MISTY

I do.

Thank you for this.

The two smile and fall silent. HEATHER begins gathering her things.

HEATHER

Ash is probably wondering where I am.
I'll see you around.

MISTY

Goodnight Heather. Be careful out there.

HEATHER gives her one last smile and
exits as it begins to rain.

ACT I: SCENE 5

The middle of the night during a
thunderstorm. ASH's room. LUKE sits up in
his bed suddenly, having awoken from a
nightmare. He looks around but ASH is no
longer on the bed with him, which worries
him. ASH is on the floor with his dog,
CHARLIE, who's currently losing his shit.

LUKE

Ash? Ash where are you?

ASH

Shhhhhhh. Down here.
You okay?

LUKE

Bad dream.

ASH

Need me to come back to bed?

LUKE

Yes, please.

ASH

You're so polite.

ASH joins LUKE on the bed.

LUKE

Why're you up?

ASH

Charlie woke me. Is he okay?

LUKE

It's the thunderstorm. He hates them. Nothing I can do will calm him. But leaving him alone definitely doesn't help.

There is a silence. They pet CHARLIE.

LUKE

I can't believe your mom let me stay over. My parents would have an aneurysm if they knew.

ASH

Well, she knows you're gay. I'm pretty sure she thinks I am too.

LUKE

To be fair, you are. Just not in the way she thinks.

An extra loud clap of thunder makes them both flinch.

LUKE

I used to be afraid of thunder, you know.

ASH

Really?

LUKE

Yeah. Terrified. But apparently boys aren't allowed to be afraid of thunder so I had to learn to deal with it. I'd actually wet the bed because I was so scared I wouldn't even be able to move.

ASH

I'm sorry.

LUKE

It's okay. Once I learned how it worked, it wasn't scary anymore. That's why I love science. If you can understand something, it can't hurt you.

ASH

I guess.

LUKE

Okay, this is unfair. I told you an embarrassing story about my childhood. It's your turn now. Spill.

ASH

About something I was afraid of?

LUKE

Preferably. Anything embarrassing, really.

ASH

I was afraid of the dark. I slept with the lights on for years.

LUKE

You know that's not good for you, right?

ASH

Neither are milkshakes, but that doesn't stop us from getting them when we have a shitty day. We're humans. We're irrational and emotional. A life entirely based on reason is unfulfilling.

LUKE

I beg to differ.

ASH

You don't count, though.

I mean, you're arguing with me about how I coped with fear as a twelve-year-old.

LUKE

Yeah, I'm— Wait, twelve?

ASH

Yep.

LUKE

Isn't that a little old to be afraid of the dark?

ASH

Since when have I let that stop me?

What were you dreaming about?

LUKE

I'm alone and being swallowed by this black mass of darkness. Sometimes there's people with me at first but then I get overtaken and they just leave me behind in the dark.

ASH

People?

LUKE

You. My parents. Strangers.

ASH

That's intense.

LUKE

It's not fun.

ASH

Do you actually like worry about that stuff?

LUKE

Yeah.

I mean sometimes I feel like I'm just dragging you down with me. I'm keeping you from being happy and one day you'll figure it out and just leave me behind.

ASH

I don't think that.

LUKE

I know but—

ASH

I promise you, I will never leave you alone in the dark. If push comes to shove, we'll face it together, okay? You're not getting rid of me that easily.

LUKE

Okay.

ASH

Okay now go back to sleep. It's like two in the morning.

LUKE

Come hold me, coward.

Gay cuddling ensues. LUKE attempts to steal some of the blanket, much to ASH's chagrin.

ASH

'Night asshole

LUKE

'Night stubborn.

ACT I: SCENE 6

The hospital. ASH sits in a hospital bed, bandages covering his wrists. He has worked himself into a panic when FINN enters.

FINN

Knock knock.
You up?

ASH

Where's Luke?

FINN

Luke?

ASH

Luke! The boy who came in here with me? Where is he? I haven't seen him, is he okay?

FINN

Ash, I need you to calm down.

ASH

How do you know my name?

FINN

It's on your chart. I need you to listen to me, okay? Breathe in for four seconds.
Hold for four.
Okay, now breathe out for four seconds.
Feel any better?

ASH

But Luke –

FINN

You aren't doing anyone any good by working yourself into a panic. Breathe.
Everything's okay. Okay?

ASH

Okay.
I'm calm now, what happened?

FINN

Okay A) You're not, I'm not stupid. And B) Even if you were, I couldn't disclose that info.
Patient confidentiality and all that.

Oh. ASH

FINN
Here, I tell you what. You answer a couple questions for me and then I'll send your mom in. She can fill in whatever I miss. You good with that? I promise I'll make it as quick and painless as possible.

Okay. ASH

FINN
What are your preferred pronouns?

My what? ASH

FINN
Yeah, I know the wording is a little outdated –(seeing his face) What?

ASH
I didn't know that's something people asked.

FINN
Well I did. And I still need an answer.

ASH
He/him.

FINN
(Marking on their clipboard)
Can we use your pronouns in front of your guardians?

ASH
I'm not out to anyone. Almost anyone.

FINN
Got it. Preferred name?

ASH
Ash is fine, thank you.

FINN
Sure thing.

Now, these questions might be a little awkward, but I need you to answer honestly. It's all confidential.

Do you smoke, vape or otherwise ingest nicotine?

ASH

Nope.

FINN

Are you sexually active?

ASH

Yes.

FINN

Any chance of STI's?

ASH

I don't think so.

FINN

Just to be safe, we'll get you tested, but if you're right, then it's not a huge priority
Any chance you're pregnant?

ASH

No.

Just uh, you know –

FINN
(cutting him off)

I catch your drift.

Last menstrual cycle?

ASH

Two Saturdays ago, I think.

FINN

Great. You okay?

ASH

Yeah, this is just really weird. You know more about me than my actual, biological mother.

FINN

Well, there's no rush. She'll find out when you're ready for her to know.

ASH

Is this normal? The whole asking name and pronouns thing?

FINN

Not really. It's kind of the exception, not the rule. I'm the one who argued that we needed those questions added to the form and I personally kinda hate going to the doctor. But it's getting better.

ASH

So what are your pronouns?

FINN

They/them.(At his look of confusion) I'm genderfluid.

ASH

So you're like . . . everything?

FINN

Well. Not all at once. That'd be a little overwhelming, but I do flip back and forth.

ASH

Wow.

FINN

Not sure that's wow worthy.

ASH

You're the first trans person I've ever met.

FINN

Well then. I'm honored.
Any questions for me before I go?

ASH

Why are you so young?

ASH realizes what he's said a second too late. He's embarrassed but FINN is amused.

FINN

Junior college. I was pretty desperate to get out of the house.
You need anything else? (ASH shakes his head no) Well, it was nice to meet you, Ash.

ASH

Wait, what's your name?

FINN

Finn. I'll see you around.

FINN exits.

ACT I: SCENE 7

A loud noise is heard in the dark. Lights come up on ANGEL who has punched the wall and cannot get their hand out. FINN enters.

FINN

Hey whaddya want for- Oh. Oh my god.
I'm assuming the wall had it coming?

ANGEL
(panicking)

I can't get it out. I can't get it out Finn, I can't get it out you need to help me.

FINN

Shhhhhh. Calm down. This is kinda my job, remember?

FINN drops their stuff and goes over to ANGEL. They tilt ANGEL's wrist gently, eventually getting it at an angle where they can extricate it from the wall.

FINN

Better?

ANGEL

What are you gonna do to me?

FINN

What?

ANGEL

I screwed up. I was bad. Bad kids get punished.

FINN

Judging from the look of that hand, I think you've been punished enough.

ANGEL

Are you gonna kick me out?

FINN

No of course not. That's never gonna happen with me.
We just gotta, we just gotta figure this out.

ANGEL

What's "this"?

FINN

Well this isn't exactly new Angel. It's a pretty well established pattern of behavior. And clearly, whatever I'm doing now isn't fixing it. Maybe, maybe you need something else. Someone else.

ANGEL

You don't want me.

FINN

No, it's not like that. I'm an awful guardian if you get hurt under my watch.

ANGEL

But you weren't there.

FINN

I'm pretty sure that makes it worse.
I'm worried Angel, I want you to be okay and that- (They indicate the hole) Is not okay.
Can you at least tell me why?

ANGEL

Bad dream.

FINN

Jesus. How bad was it?

ANGEL

You remember how we met? (FINN nods) I keep replaying that night over and over and then I wake up and it's like I'm still in his house and I can't fight back- I've been wanting to for a while. Hit something, I mean. 'Cause I wished I'd done that instead of just freezing up and- (breaking) I'm scared, I'm scared all the time-

FINN goes over to them

ANGEL

And now you're not gonna want me either because I break everything.

FINN

Hey, it's okay. If what you need is to break things, then we can break as many things as you need. There's nothing irreplaceable here. Except for you. But (taking their hands) if that's what we're gonna do, I'd prefer we limit it to things and not your hands. (getting up) C'mon, let's get you bandaged up.

ANGEL

I can take care of myself. You're not my, uh, what is it today?

FINN

Female.

ANGEL

You're not my mother.

FINN

I'm the closest thing you have at the moment and the only one in the room with any medical training. (beat) It's okay to let people take care of you, y'know. (indicating their hands) May I see?

ANGEL gives a nod of assent and FINN examines their knuckles. FINN touches them gently, making ANGEL wince. FINN gets up and grabs their medical kit, then crosses back to ANGEL with materials to clean and bandage their hands, FINN begins cleaning them.

FINN

You doing okay?

ANGEL

Are you gonna punish me?

FINN

Depends on what you consider punishment. You're gonna have to help me fix this, of course and if it happens again, we'll have to work something out. That sound fair?

ANGEL

More than fair.
So you're not taking away anything?

FINN

Wasn't planning on it. Not like you got a whole lot to take.

ANGEL

So we're still on for Pride then?

FINN

Yeah, well about that-

ANGEL

So I am being punished?

FIN

No it's not like that. We're just short staffed and I'm just covering too many shifts. Got a couple troubled kids like you we gotta keep an eye on.

ANGEL

Oh.

FINN

But, you can go! Just, y'know, without me.
I'm sorry.

ANGEL

S'okay.

FINN finishes up wrapping up ANGEL's hands.

FINN

Hey.
I'm still proud of you.
Nothing you do is gonna change that.

ANGEL

I don't think I ever thanked you.

FINN

For which thing? I've lost count.

ANGEL

I don't think I ever thanked you for letting me stay with you.

FINN

No problem. I've never liked living alone.

Besides, what was I supposed to, just kick you out? Leave you on the streets?

ANGEL

That's what my family did.

FINN

Then they were a pretty piss poor family.

Now, come on. You need to go to bed.

ANGEL

Okay.

Hey.

FINN

Yeah?

FINN looks over at them. They struggle for a second, then decide against it.

ANGEL

Nothing.

FINN

Yeah okay,

I love you too.

ACT I: SCENE 8

The Closet. ASH is waiting. LUKE enters and is bombarded by affection from ASH.

ASH

Where have you been? I haven't seen or heard from you since graduation!

LUKE

I-
I kinda got grounded.
Can we not talk about it for now? Please?

ASH

Uh, sure?
Happy birthday by the way. I have something for you.
My mom got me a makeup kit a while back.

LUKE

Oh?

ASH

Yeah.
Basically wishful thinking.
Or maybe just a commentary on how ugly I am.

LUKE

You're not ugly.

ASH

I want to do your makeup.
You can do mine too, if you want.

LUKE

Why?

ASH

Why not?
It's just going to spoil in a cabinet somewhere.
You're an artist. This is just another medium.

LUKE

(conceding)

I'll murder you if you draw dicks or something on my cheeks.

ASH
Do you really think I'd be so immature?

LUKE
Yes.

ASH
(solemnly)
I hereby promise to abstain from the drawing of dicks and other such pictures on my boyfriend's face. Can I start?

LUKE
Sure.

ASH
Close your eyes.

LUKE
Do I have to?

ASH
Unless you want shit in them.

LUKE closes them and ASH applies makeup very gently to LUKE. It's clear he's inexperienced but enjoying himself nonetheless. He powders LUKE's face, then starts on the blush. He moves on to eyeliner, poking LUKE.

LUKE
Oww!

ASH
Sorry! I should've warned you. This might hurt a bit.

LUKE
A bit?

ASH
So, do you want a cat eye or a –

LUKE
You're basically speaking gibberish. I know nothing about makeup. I wasn't exactly allowed to learn. You know my parents. "Makeup is for girls" and all that..

If only we could swap places!

ASH

When he is finished, he moves on to eyeshadow. He selects the brightest and most glittery shade he can find and applies it to LUKE's eyelids. Then he paints LUKE's cheeks with the colors of the pride flag.

Open your eyes.

ASH

ASH applies a couple of coats of mascara to L's eyelashes.

Are we done yet?

LUKE

Almost. I promise.
Make a surprised face.

ASH

LUKE complies. ASH uncaps a vivid red lipstick and applies it.

All done!
Wanna see?

ASH

Sure.

LUKE

ASH holds up a mirror from the makeup kit.

What do you think?

ASH

It's-
Uh-

LUKE

You don't have to spare my feelings.

ASH

Suddenly LUKE breaks. He goes from fine to suddenly having a panic attack. He's scrubbing at his cheeks, trying to get the rainbow off. ASH tries to hold him but he scrambles back.

I can't do it.
I can't—

LUKE

Slow down—

ASH

I can't do this anymore.

LUKE

Do what?

ASH

I told them. I told my parents.
They sent me back to that place, to that camp.
It's worse than I remember-

LUKE

Luke, please breathe—

ASH

I can't!
I can't go back.

LUKE

You won't have to-

ASH

I'm only back for the weekend. Then I have to-
Ash that place is horrible. I can't survive it, not months of it. I'm never going back there.
I'm not going back with you.

LUKE

The scene becomes split, one side containing the hospital with the parents and FINN. The other side is The Closet, with ASH and LUKE.

FINN

Ash has been determined to be in stable condition. It will be a little while before she can handle visitors, but she will be okay. (beat) I don't mean to sound rude but you might as well return home for the night. It's late as it is and she won't be able to receive visitors for quite a while. I assure you we will take excellent care of her.

HEATHER breathes a sigh of relief and exits. FINN approaches PETER and MISTY.

ASH

You can't stay here forever.

LUKE

There is a way.

ASH

You can't know that for sure.

LUKE

I'll take my chances.

FINN

I'm afraid Luke wasn't quite as fortunate. He suffered severe blood loss and –

MISTY

Is he alive?

FINN

Yes and no. He's alive in the technical sense only. His heart beats, he has a pulse, but he sustained severe brain damage. He is on life support at the present moment. I'll leave you two to discuss how you would like to proceed.

ASH

Okay.

LUKE

Wait, you're not gonna- You won't try to stop me?

ASH

No.
I'm coming with you.

LUKE

Ash, no, this isn't-

ASH

I'm not leaving you alone, not like this.
If this is the only- If this is what you need, I'll do it.
I love you.
You're my whole world. I'm never gonna leave you alone. Okay?

LUKE

Okay.
I need to set something right.

ASH

A goodbye?

LUKE

Kind of.

ASH

You go.
I'll wait for you.

LUKE

Promise?

ASH

Promise.

LUKE exits as ASH watches him go.

(End of Act One)

ACT II: SCENE 1

ASH and LUKE sit together on a bench, working on homework in a sunny park. ASH is fidgeting, clearly nervous, while LUKE is steadfast in his work.

ASH

I need to tell you something.

LUKE

I'm all yours.

ASH

Don't laugh.

LUKE

Why would I?

ASH

It's going to sound stupid.

LUKE

No matter how stupid it sounds, I won't laugh. I promise.

ASH remains silent. LUKE waits.

LUKE

You planning on telling me before next year?

ASH

Can I write it down?

LUKE

Sure.

LUKE hands ASH a notebook and a writing utensil. ASH scribbles something and passes it back to him. LUKE reads it.

LUKE

"I'm a boy but no one knows it."
Oh.

ASH

I'm sorry I didn't tell you. I really like you and I just wanted you to know before –

LUKE

I promise it's okay. I still like you. It's just – this is so weird.

ASH

Why?

LUKE

You're the first girl I've had a crush on.
You made me think I was straight.

ASH

Oh.

LUKE

Guess I was wrong.

ASH

I'm sorry.

LUKE

Don't be sorry. You shouldn't be sorry if you've done nothing wrong.

ASH

Are you okay?

LUKE

I think.

You know, you're the first person I've ever told.

ASH takes LUKE's hand.

ASH

I'm really glad I met you.

It makes me feel less wrong.

A moment of silence.

LUKE

Does the world seem quieter to you?

ASH

Yeah.

Is that a bad thing?

LUKE

No.

Not at all.

ACT II: SCENE 2

Shortly after LUKE'S memorial/celebration of life at their mutual church. PETER and MISTY stand together. PETER reaches out to her but she shoots him a look and exits. HEATHER approaches him and gently touches him on the shoulder, rousing him

from his stupor.

HEATHER

I'm sorry.

PETER

Huh?

HEATHER

I'm sorry for your loss.

PETER

Oh.

HEATHER

And . . . for not telling you. About them and their relationship.
I thought I was protecting him.
I was worried if I told you anything about anything, you'd send him back —

PETER

Oh.
He told you?

HEATHER

Hinted more like. I happen to have some personal experiences with places like that.

PETER

Me too.

HEATHER

You?

PETER

Yeah. I thought it had worked.
But now —
Well —
I think I was wrong.

HEATHER

Oh.

PETER

That's why I sent him.
I mean, if nothing else, it made life easier.

HEATHER
Did it actually—

PETER
No, not really.
I just wanted it to.

HEATHER
I'm sorry.

PETER
No, I'm sorry.
This is all my fault.
I did this.

HEATHER
It's not just on you.
I could have done something.
I could have done something for both of them.

PETER
He wasn't your son.

HEATHER
I know.

PETER
I could've told him I was —
I could have —

HEATHER
Do you believe in heaven?

PETER
Yes.

HEATHER
In God?

PETER
Yes, always have.

HEATHER
Well, the God I believe in didn't make a mistake in making your son and he certainly wouldn't damn him.

PETER

I just wish I could tell him I'm sorry.

HEATHER

I bet he knows.

PETER

You really think so?

HEATHER

I do.

PETER

How's Ash?

HEATHER

Ash is healing. (beat) How's Misty?

PETER

Angry.

She thinks that if I'd been a better father figure he wouldn't have—
You know. So she blames me.

HEATHER

She doesn't think it was that place?

PETER

She's convinced it was working.

But now she's confused, wondering why he had certain images on his phone if he had a girlfriend. (beat) I think she kinda blames everyone. Me, you, Luke, Ash . . . This is the angriest I've ever seen her.

HEATHER

Ash?

PETER

She's convinced she corrupted him somehow. Talked him into this.

HEATHER

Do you believe that?

PETER

No. I think it's just easier to accept.
No one wants the blame.

HEATHER

But you seem to have put it on yourself.

PETER

It's my duty, as a father who outlives his son.
I need to be reminded of why that is.

HEATHER

Look, we both screwed up
And we can't undo it.
But we can do better.
And you don't have to carry the burden alone.

There is silence.

PETER

Thank you.
I have to go. Misty and I need to talk.

PETER begins to exit, leaving HEATHER
alone.

HEATHER

Wait!

PETER

Yes?

HEATHER

I never gave you this.

She rifles through her purse and hands him
the suicide note from before.

HEATHER

Luke left something too.
I'm sorry I didn't give it to you sooner, I was trying to- I'm sorry.
I think you should read it.

ACT II: SCENE 3

ASH is dreaming and sees LUKE, still dressed how he was for his eighteenth birthday

Ash!
LUKE

Luke?
ASH

LUKE
Oh thank God, I've been trying to get through for days!
Where are you?

ASH
The hospital. You're there too.

LUKE
Wait, you're alive?

ASH
I think so.

LUKE
What happened to our plan?

ASH
Your plan, and I can't control it.

LUKE
Please don't leave me. Please don't leave me again.

ASH
I'm here now, aren't I?

LUKE
For how long?

ASH

I don't know. I'm glad to see you.

LUKE

I've missed you.

ASH

I've missed you too.

LUKE

It's so empty here. I'm so lonely without you.

ASH

I don't — I can't —

LUKE

Please, I'm begging you, please don't leave me again.

Lights shift as ASH wakes up, visibly shaken in his hospital bedroom.

ASH

Luke!

Luke?

ACT II: SCENE 4

ANGEL knocks at the door, and FINN rushes to open it. They stumble in, dazed, having just been severely beaten.

FINN

Jesus Christ, Angel! I've been worried sick! I've been calling you for over an hour —

ANGEL
(dazed)

Finn?

FINN

Oh shit, you need to sit down.

FINN helps them to a seated position and worries over them.

ANGEL

Don't touch me!

FINN

What happened to you?

ANGEL

I went to Pride.

FINN

Yeah, I know that part.

ANGEL

Then I was – I walked home but I had to pee so I stopped. There were a couple of other guys in the bathroom. Got scared.

FINN

You or them?

ANGEL

Both. Shoulda taken it off (gesturing, meaning their makeup and outfit). I pissed 'em off.

FINN

(wearily)

What did you do?

ANGEL

They called me uh –
You know and I hit them.
Didn't like that.

FINN

And then?

ANGEL

Then. Got kicked. A lot. Think I passed out. Can't remember. Woke up and came home. To you.

They pass out.

FINN

Oh shit. Shitshitshit

Okay. It's gonna be okay. I've got you, love.

They pick ANGEL up as best they can, murmuring reassurances to them as they do so.

ACT II: SCENE 5

Lights up on the hospital, after LUKE's memorial. ASH is in the bed and HEATHER sits by his side. ASH wakes and sees HEATHER.

ASH

Mom?

HEATHER

Morning sweetheart.

ASH

How long have you been here?

HEATHER

Few hours, give or take. I wanted to be here, at least until my shift starts.
How are you feeling?

ASH

Kinda like I was hit by a bus.

HEATHER

I suppose that's good, considering.

LUKE appears. Only ASH sees him.

LUKE

Hiya babe.

HEATHER

Everything okay?

A knock at the door. HEATHER stands up to open it. MISTY and PETER enter.

ASH

(to all three of them)

What are you doing here?

LUKE

I want to find out what they're gonna say.

MISTY

Please excuse our intrusion. We really need to speak with Ashley.

HEATHER

I'm not sure Ash is up for guests —

ASH

I'll be fine.

MISTY

(to HEATHER)

Would you mind giving us some privacy?

HEATHER

I think I'd prefer to stay in here, thank you.

MISTY

So Ashley —

ASH

Ash is fine.

MISTY

Ashley, do you know what we wish to discuss?

ASH

I have my guesses. You wanna tell me?

MISTY

Essentially we want to know why. We had no idea you existed, and by way of introduction, you pulled these Romeo and Juliet dramatics.

I don't think we — (PETER coughs) I don't think I knew my son at all and I would like to.

LUKE

It's too late for that.

MISTY

Did he — Why did he do this? He was always a good boy, a good kid.

LUKE

Jesus Christ.

PETER

What did he tell you?

ASH

That he uh —

He felt —

LUKE

You hated me.

ASH

He felt alone.

LUKE

You hurt me and claimed it was for my own good.

ASH

He was hurting and depressed. I was too, and I guess we just fed off each other.

MISTY

But why was he hurting?

LUKE

Oh, I don't know, maybe because you were trying to shock the gay out of me?

HEATHER

Honey, you don't have to answer anything you don't want to.

ASH

I'm good, Mom. He uh — he told me you guys sent him to this camp thing.

PETER

(to MISTY)

What did I tell you?

MISTY

Not. Now.

You must be misremembering. There must be something else.

ASH/LUKE

No.

PETER

Do you remember what he said, specifically?

LUKE

You'd have rather had a dead kid than a queer one.

ASH

He felt like you might've preferred him dead over . . . what he was.

MISTY

What he was?

ASH

You know . . .

No. MISTY

Misty — PETER

I don't. Elaborate. Please. MISTY

I think you guys should — HEATHER

He thought you'd prefer him dead instead of gay. ASH

Why would you say something like that? MISTY

I'm just repeating — ASH

My son wasn't— MISTY
You of all people should know he couldn't have been. You were his girlfriend after all.
Ashley there's something you're not telling me.

PETER
Misty, Ash has clearly been through an extreme trauma. Perhaps it affected Ash's memory.

MISTY
Perhaps. Or perhaps she's been lying to us this whole time.

MISTY begins going through her bag,
producing LUKE's sketch book,

HEATHER
I think you two should leave.

MISTY

(ignoring her)

I've been going through my son's things. He was quite the artist but here (she flips to a certain page) there's writing. "I'm a boy but no one knows it." Clearly not referring to Luke. I haven't been able to make sense of it until now. That's you, right?

ASH

I-

MISTY

You're not a girl at all. You're some sort of shemale thing who deceived him and turned him into-

PETER

MISTY THAT'S ENOUGH.

MISTY

I'll pray for you, Ashley. For all of you.

She exits. ASH and PETER regard each other.

PETER

I am so sorry-

HEATHER

Get out.

PETER

She doesn't speak- Ash I'm so-

HEATHER

I don't care. I don't want your wife speaking to Ash again, okay?

ASH

Mom, I'm okay. He hasn't done anything wrong.

PETER

I wouldn't say that, but that's neither here nor there.
I am incredibly sorry Ash. Are you okay?

ASH

I think so.

PETER

I um — I wanted to ask you, well-
I'm no longer living with Misty. I have Charlie, but I can't keep him.
You know him, right?

ASH

I love him.

HEATHER

Your dog?

PETER

Luke's actually.
He needs a new home.
I was thinking maybe Ash could —

HEATHER

We can discuss it. I think Ash is done with visitors for the day.

HEATHER and PETER begin to exit.

ASH

I'm sorry for your loss.

PETER

It was nice to meet you, Ash.

HEATHER

Get some rest, honey. I love you.

HEATHER and PETER exit. ASH looks
around for LUKE .

ASH

Luke?

LUKE has disappeared. ASH realizes he's gone and lies back down.

ACT II: SCENE 6

The Closet. ASH is waiting. LUKE enters.

ASH

I thought you were never coming.

LUKE

I don't want you here.

ASH

Tough shit.

LUKE

Ash, I'm serious. Leave me the fuck alone.

ASH

You don't get a say in this. Not anymore. Not after everything.

LUKE

Well I hate to break it to you but you went along with this. We are in this shit together whether you like it or not

ASH

Why do you think I'm here?

LUKE

To piss me off?

ASH

I didn't want you to be alone. The guilt was killing me.

Boo-hoo.

LUKE

Why are you treating me like this?

ASH

Do I owe you something?

LUKE

No, of course not.
But I'm here for you. For us.

ASH

I don't want you here

LUKE

So what do you want?

ASH

I want to not be cold and dead and alone with an eternity to contemplate how fucking pointless my whole existence was.

LUKE

So let me stay. You don't have to be alone.

ASH

You know what your problem is Ash? You're constantly running around making yourself suffer for no good reason. Maybe you just want to be a martyr.

LUKE

I don't want you to suffer.

ASH

And how is you hurting yourself making anything better? How does that help me?

LUKE

I don't-
What do you want from me?

ASH

LUKE

I want you to take your second chance. Do you know what I would do for a second chance? How do you think it feels to watch you throw away everything like it's nothing? You have everything.

ASH

None of it matters without you.

LUKE

Bullshit.
You're alive.
That's everything.

ASH

I'm sorry.

LUKE

For what?

ASH

That I wasn't there. That I didn't do enough.

LUKE

You did your best.

ASH

I failed you.

LUKE

You weren't the only one.
I'm sorry. I don't blame you Ash.

ASH

Well maybe you should!

LUKE

Why?

ASH

I let you suffer alone for so long.
You deserve a second chance. You deserve so much more than you got.

LUKE

You can't change that. You can't grant me a second chance.

ASH

You're not happy.

LUKE

Yeah well who is right now?

ASH

I don't want you to be alone.

LUKE

But I don't want you here. You'd just be unhappy.

ASH

So let's be unhappy together.

LUKE

You need to stop that.

ASH

Stop what?

LUKE

Stop hurting yourself just because someone around you is. You can't go around fixing all the broken people of the world.

ASH

What am I supposed to do, just not help?

LUKE

Yes, if you're helping by hurting yourself. You don't don't owe anyone healing.

ASH

So I get to just go back and keep going and you get nothing? How is that fair?

LUKE

It's not.

ASH

That's even worse.

LUKE

I want you to keep living.

ASH

I can't leave you alone.

LUKE

You can and you will. I'll survive being alone. What I won't survive is you throwing away a whole future a second time on account of me.

You can't stay in the darkness for someone else.

ASH

But I'm abandoning you.

LUKE

Sometimes you can't save everyone. Sometimes, the best thing you can do is get yourself out.

They regard each other, wanting to embrace but unable to. ASH braces himself and walks out as LUKE watches him go.

ACT II: SCENE 7

ASH wakes up with a start in his hospital bed. FINN is besides his bed, taking his vitals one last time. He is visibly upset. FINN notices.

FINN

Morning, sunshine. You okay?

ASH

What do you think?

FINN

Sorry, guess that was a kind of stupid question.

Can I do anything to help?

ASH

Can you help me stop fucking up my life?

I have nothing and no one left.

FINN

That's kinda unfair. You got a mom who adores you. Can't say that for a lot of us.

ASH

Sorry.

FINN

Don't be.

It's okay if you feel alone. But you aren't, not by a longshot.

ASH

But she doesn't know me, not the real me.

FINN

Maybe. But people will surprise you.

You might not feel as alone if you let her in a little bit.

And- and if things go south, I'm sure there's spare room somewhere you can crash in.

Last day, huh?

ASH

I mean, I'm probably spending the next decade of my life in therapy if my mom has any say in it.

FINN

I'll be sad to see you go.

ASH

Really?

FINN

Of course. Don't get me wrong, it's definitely a good thing, I'll just miss you.

ASH

I'll miss you too. Kinda miss this place too, as depressing as it is.

FINN

Why?

ASH

Well the food sucks ass but everyone encourages you to stay in bed and you get to watch movies all day.

FINN

Because they feel sorry for you.

ASH

Maybe.

But the movies are good either way.

FINN

Whatcha watching now?

ASH

One of the ones where Captain America and the Jesus-y looking dude won't stop making heart eyes at each other. (FINN's look turns stricken) You okay?

FINN

(quicky composing themselves)

I'm fine.

ASH

You didn't look fine a second ago.

FINN

That's not for you to worry about. I'm supposed to be taking care of you, not the other way around.

ASH

Did I – Did I do something wrong?

FINN

No, of course not. You just reminded me of someone, that's all.

ASH

I'm sorry.

FINN

Don't be. You shouldn't apologize if you haven't done anything wrong.

ASH

I think I might've.

FINN

What are you talking about?

ASH

I think I failed someone. Someone really important to me. And like I know he's happy I'm alive, but at the same time I feel incredibly guilty for having the audacity to continue living. I feel like his blood's on my hands and –

FINN

You can't do that to yourself.

ASH

Do what?

FINN

Blame yourself for something like that. It's no one's fault.

ASH

But what if it's my fault?

FINN sits next to ASH

FINN

Ash, you're what, seventeen? Your whole job right now is to fail and screw up so you can do better as an adult. No one expects you to have your life together, let alone anyone else's.

ASH

But what if I expect that of myself?

FINN

Then you should've been in therapy a long time ago. Sometimes you lose people. Sometimes it might be no one's fault or maybe you could've done more. Maybe you could've done something but second guessing won't bring anyone back. You have to find a way to forgive yourself.

ASH

How?

FINN

I don't know, you just do. You keep living and one day it doesn't hurt so bad. Ash, If I blamed myself for every little thing that went wrong here, I wouldn't actually help anyone. And for what it's worth, I'm really glad you pulled through.

ASH

Can I – Am I allowed – Will I see you again?

FINN

I don't know. Maybe.

ASH

I hope so.

FINN

Me too.

I'll see you around, Ash.

ACT II: SCENE 8

A split scene. LUKE is with MISTY, unseen by her as she prepares to remove him from life support. In a different hospital room ASH just watched FINN go. HEATHER enters.

HEATHER

Hey sweetheart.
How are you feeling?

ASH

Like fucking shit.

HEATHER

Well, you still curse like a sailor.
I suppose that's good.
The doctor was worried about – (HEATHER gestures vaguely to her head) Brain damage stuff,
after Luke – Well.
You ready to go, kiddo?

ASH

Actually, Mom? I think I'm ready. To talk about it. If you want to.

HEATHER

Sure.

ASH sits on the hospital bed and
HEATHER follows his lead.

ASH

So I've been—
Uh I'm —
I'm not sure where to start.

LUKE

You actually gonna do it?

ASH

You met Luke's parents right?

HEATHER

Uh-huh.

ASH

They hurt him, really really badly.

HEATHER

I know sweetheart. How does this relate to you?

ASH

He didn't see a way out. And he was my whole world.
I thought that if I hurt myself too, he would hurt less.

HEATHER

Oh honey.

ASH

I just didn't want him to be alone.
He's all I had.

HEATHER

You always have me.

ASH

I know, but he was like me.

MISTY

I can't do this.

LUKE

You didn't have any trouble doing it when I was alive.

MISTY

I'm not ready to live without you.

LUKE

Should've thought of that before you did this to me, huh?

MISTY

I'm not ready for this (she pulls out the letter) to be all I have left of you.

ASH

Well you knew Luke was –

HEATHER

Yes, but what does that have to do with you?

LUKE

Go on. Read it.

MISTY opens the letter and reads its contents aloud.

MISTY

“Dear Mom and Dad,
By the time you read this, I will most likely no longer be alive. I have tried to tell you this many times over but I never succeeded in life. Perhaps I will finally be able to in death.”

ASH

I was like him.

MISTY

“ I'm gay. ”

ASH

I'm trans.

MISTY

“ I'm still your son.”

ASH

I'm still the same person, I promise.

MISTY

“I didn't choose this or want this but it's not an illness. Love is never an illness.”

ASH

I'm just a boy now.

MISTY

“I know this now because I found someone who I love and who loves me in return. I can no longer pretend to be cured from a disease when I was never sick in the first place.. “

ASH

I mean, I've always been a guy, I just didn't always know how to express it.

MISTY

“Ash and I have chosen to do this together. Alone, we may be invisible but maybe if we do this together, we will be seen.

Your son, Luke.”

HEATHER

Oh baby.

MISTY

Oh Lucas.

LUKE

You know it’s true.

MISTY

My poor boy.

LUKE

Mom –

MISTY

Baby you aren’t –

LUKE

Weren’t –

MISTY

(correcting herself.)

Weren’t. You weren’t . . . I understand now. It was that Ashley. She convinced you that you were something that you were not.

LUKE

You tried to convince me I was something I wasn’t.

MISTY

She deceived you.

LUKE

You deceived me every time you told me you loved me.

MISTY

I should’ve protected you from the likes of her.

LUKE

Why can’t you just listen to me?

HEATHER

Ash, baby, you're my child either way.
Why didn't you tell me?
You're my — Well, now you're my son. Did you think I wouldn't accept you?

ASH

I wasn't ready.

HEATHER

I understand.
I just wish you didn't feel like you had to do THIS to tell me.

ASH

It wasn't about —

HEATHER

I know.
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry I couldn't be the mom you needed.

MISTY

It's all her fault.

LUKE

It's your fault.

MISTY

Lucas please forgive me, I did my best.

LUKE

You hurt me.

MISTY

It was Ashley — She corrupted you —
And Peter set such a bad example — He was a bad father.
There's nothing I could have done.
I couldn't have — There's nothing —
Oh Lucas, I'm so sorry.

MISTY stands up to leave, having forced herself into composure. She begins to exit, then looks back at her son.

MISTY

I love you, Lucas.

LUKE

HEATHER

I'm proud of you.
That must've been difficult.

ASH

Honestly, considering some of the shit that's gone down, this was easy.

HEATHER

May I ask a question regarding some of the shit that went down?

ASH

Sure.

HEATHER

Luke, he *was* your boyfriend? Or-?

ASH

He was. I'm gay too.

HEATHER

How does that work? So you like-?

ASH

Boys. I'm a boy and I like boys.
You can be trans and gay.

HEATHER

I think it might take a little while for me to understand it all.

ASH

You don't need to understand it.
I just need acceptance.

HEATHER

You've got that from me, no doubt.
And I do, understand. I'm – I'm like you, kinda.

ASH

You're gay?

HEATHER

Kinda.

Bi?
ASH

I think so.
HEATHER

I FUCKING CALLED IT!
ASH

Well if that's true, why didn't you-?
HEATHER

HEATHER cuts herself off.

I wanted to! I just –
ASH

You don't need to explain yourself.
HEATHER

I am sorry.
For, you know –
ASH

Yeah. I know.
I'm just happy you're okay.
That's all that matters.
HEATHER

I love you, Mom.
ASH

I love you too.
HEATHER

HEATHER holds her arms out to ASH.
ASH happily accepts. Lights fade on their
embrace and rise on LUKE, alone and
abandoned. He's holding himself.

ACT II: SCENE 9

Lights up on The Closet. LUKE is still alone, curled in on himself. ANGEL wanders in and nudges him with their toe.

ANGEL
Am I- are we dead?

LUKE
Yeah.
Sorry to be the bearer of bad news.
Who are you?

ANGEL
Angel. You?

LUKE
I'm Luke.

ANGEL
I like your makeup, Luke.

LUKE
My-? (he remembers the makeup on his face) Oh yeah.
Guess we match.

ANGEL
Guess we do.
You get killed at Pride, too?

LUKE
No. Did that- Is that how you died?

ANGEL
Uh-huh.

LUKE
What happened?

ANGEL
I was on my way home. And then this guy called me a faggot and I was just so done with him and everyone like him that I just threw the hardest punch I could.

LUKE
Good for you.

ANGEL
Lot of good it did me. Apparently, he had a lot of friends.

LUKE

You're taking this whole being dead thing really well.

ANGEL

Yeah well, not like there's much I can do about it. There's no way out. And it's quiet here. Don't have to keep looking over my shoulder, watching my back. How'd you die then?

LUKE

Killed myself.

ANGEL

Why?

LUKE

There's only so many times your parents can imply you'd be better off dead before you start feeling that way too.

ANGEL

I feel you there. The whole nonbinary thing massively freaked them out. I mean they weren't prepared for a gay kid, let alone this. (LUKE smiles.) What?

LUKE

Just-for a second there, you kinda reminded me of someone.

ANGEL

A good someone or a bad someone?

LUKE

A very good someone.

ANGEL

(like a kid in middle school)

Oooh!

LUKE

He was the best thing in my life. I loved him. But I hurt him. I wanted to end the pain so bad I didn't even realize that I shoved it all onto him and now I'll never get to be with him.

ANGEL

I'm sorry.

LUKE

Why are you sorry? You've been through so much worse.

ANGEL

You're still allowed to feel sad. To be hurt.

LUKE

But you're just a kid.

ANGEL

So are you!

This stops LUKE. They sit in silence for a moment.

LUKE

What was it like, at Pride?

ANGEL

It was loud and bright and honestly kinda overwhelming.
But it was the most beautiful I have ever felt in my life.

LUKE

I wish I could have seen it.

ANGEL

We can try and recreate it.
I mean it's really just self love on a massive scale. It's just saying fuck you to a world that says you're wrong.
Tell me something you love about yourself.

LUKE

You first.

ANGEL

I love that I was brave enough to stand up to some assholes and go to Pride covered in rainbows and glitter.

LUKE

I love that too.

ANGEL

Don't change the subject. Your turn.

LUKE

I love...uh...um

This breaks him. It's never hit him before how much he hates himself. ANGEL scoots closer and squeezes his hand. ANGEL holds him and for the first time, LUKE allows himself to be held.

EPILOGUE

Five years later. FINN's apartment. FINN is asleep in bed. ASH is awake and bandages cover his chest. Everything is silent until ASH spots LUKE.

ASH

You're never gonna leave me, are you?

LUKE

Do you want me too?

ASH

I don't know. It'd be easier.

Most days I never think of you but every so often, it just hits me like a ton of bricks and it's like I'm a teenager again.

Do you think love ever truly disappears?

LUKE

Of course not.

Otherwise, how am I here?

ASH

No you're not. You're just a side effect of all the drugs they have me on.

LUKE

Pretty strong side effect, given I'm holding a proper conversation with you and all. That's highly improbable for a hallucination.

ASH

You sound like you.

LUKE

Because I am.

ASH

But everything fades. That's just life.

LUKE

Maybe.
But in this moment
I still love you.
And I say I'll love you when the next moment arrives.
And the next one.
And the next.
You may disagree.
But for now, and for as long as I can, I'll love you.
Are you in pain?

ASH

A little. Thank god for valium.

LUKE

Are you happy?

ASH

Right now? Absolutely. I wanted this for so long and now I finally look like me.
In general? I dunno. Happier than I was at least.

FINN has awoken. Both ASH and LUKE
turn to face them when they speak.

FINN

Asher?
You're talking to yourself again.

ASH

Oh.

FINN

You can't keep getting up at three in the morning, sweetheart. You're supposed to be recovering.
Come back to bed.

When ASH does not move, FINN carries
ASH back into bed. They hold ASH.

ASH

I don't think I can sleep.

FINN

I'll stay with you.

ASH

But I don't want to keep you up.

It's okay.

FINN

No, it's not. You have to work tomorrow.

ASH

I'll call in sick. I'd rather take care of you anyways.
Tomorrow, I'll make eggs and you'll cuddle with Charlie.
You're seeing him, aren't you? (ASH nods) I still see them too.

FINN

I can't tell what's real anymore.

ASH

I am.

LUKE/FINN

Shit.

ASH

Now I need you to listen to me, okay? Breathe in for four seconds.
Hold for four.
Okay, now breathe out for four seconds.
Everything's okay.
Take my hand.

FINN

ASH takes FINN's hand. FINN squeezes it.

Does that feel real?

FINN

Yes.

ASH

FINN grabs CHARLIE and puts him in ASH's lap. CHARLIE responds by covering ASH's face in kisses. ASH smiles, calming a bit. ANGEL enters, joining LUKE.

We should go.

ANGEL

LUKE

I don't want him to leave me behind.
What happens to me if I let go?

ANGEL

I don't know. But I'll be there too.

LUKE

But if I just disappear, what will be left of me?

ANGEL

The good you did, the joy you brought, your sacrifice for him, it will live on in him

LUKE

Do you remember your first love?
Where did they go?

ANGEL

They didn't go anywhere. He just grew up.
He has a life because you let him go.
That kind of good doesn't just disappear. Even if you- even if we do.

LUKE considers. Finally, LUKE offers his hand to ANGEL. ANGEL takes it and they exit together. As they do, ANGEL glances back at FINN. FINN holds their gaze and watches as they leave, staring off until ASH catches their attention.

ASH

I don't think I'm ever getting out of the dark.

FINN goes over to him and holds him.

FINN

That's okay. I'm in it too. And I'll be here.

ASH

Forever?

FINN

At least until the sun rises.

END OF PLAY