

the massage

a ten-minute play

Gordon Blitz



Characters:

Dave -Forty-year-old gay man

Tim -Forty-five -year-old gay man.

DAVE, a forty-year-old- gay-man, is laying on a massage table, Next to Dave, is TIM, the masseur lighting a candle, turning on some meditative music and putting lotion onto his hands that he will use on DAVE's body.

DAVE

Do you really have to go through this whole routine every time? I feel like it's wasting time. The only thing that matters are your hands and the deep tissue massage.

TIM

But I'm not just doing this stuff for you. It helps *me* get in the mood for the body work. Otherwise it's like I'm just working on a piece of meat. I like to ease into it.

DAVE

Well, then just speed it up!

TIM starts applying the oil to DAVE's chest. DAVE moans when TIM starts pressing his fingers against DAVE's stomach, rib cage, and chest.

TIM

I still can't get over the order that you like things done. Most people want me to do their back first, but you're just the opposite.

DAVE

I just want you to loosen up the front before you get to my back muscles.

TIM

You seem to be in a pretty good mood. Things must be going well with Garth.

DAVE

Yes. Garth had a breakthrough. His voice is coming back, finally. You know, since his stroke, he's had trouble communicating. All he could do was write notes. And that was only with his left hand.

TIM

And you told me that he was right-handed. Is there any chance that he'll regain movement on his right side?

DAVE

The doctors aren't hopeful. It was a bad stroke. Even though he's young, barely thirty, and in good health.

TIM

I know. He was your trainer, wasn't he?

DAVE

The doctors think he was taking steroids and *that* caused the stroke.

TIM

I just don't get it. I mean, the guy had a great body. - Why would he even be taking steroids?

DAVE

Does it really matter?

TIM stops the massage.

TIM

It's time for you to turn to the side so I can do your back.

DAVE turns to the side, but his face still can be seen by the audience.

DAVE

I feel so sorry for him. You know, none of his friends ever visit. It's like they don't want to see this vibrant guy become a shell of himself. It makes me think they were never his friends. All those gym rats! Showing off their bodies all the time. Running with no shirt. So full of themselves!

TIM

So many of my clients are like that. And talk about *vanity!* My goodness, if they have one ounce of fat or a pimple it's like the end of the world.

DAVE

At least Garth wasn't that way. That's why I fell in love with him. So good looking and so sweet. I mean he had that smile that made me melt. And so supportive of me. It was almost like in addition to being a body trainer, he was something like a life coach. I used to have such a poor body image.

TIM presses on DAVE's spine and DAVE screams.

TIM

Are you okay? You said you wanted me to be rough.

DAVE

Rough and torturing are two different things! I don't want to feel like I'm on the rack from the Inquisition!

TIM

Well, you are way beyond tight. No pain, no gain!

DAVE

Just ease back a little bit, okay? Otherwise I won't be able to see Garth this afternoon. I'm supposed to take him to the doctor.

TIM

You never told him how you feel?

DAVE

No. Even though he built me up, I knew I wasn't his type. He liked the bad boy trade.

TIM

Well, I just hope he's appreciative of what you've been doing.

DAVE starts crying.

DAVE

I don't know if it's your voice or those magic hands, but whatever you just touched got to me. It's like you've said about breaking down scar tissue when you give me a massage. But you're also removing that wall around me. You're better than my therapist!

TIM laughs.

TIM

I wish someone would touch *me* and make *me* cry. Are you still seeing Garth every day? I don't know how you do it.

DAVE

Yes, and when I look into his eyes, I think I can tell how thankful he is. He never wrote those words down, but I'm hoping that now that he can talk, he'll tell me. Enough about me! What's going on with you

and Bennett? The last time we talked, you said something was going to happen between you two.

TIM

Oh, I hoped you weren't going to ask me.

DAVE

Come on. I tell you everything.

TIM

Okay. Before I give you the sordid details, you know today is the anniversary of Caleb's death.

DAVE

Has it been a year already?

TIM

So, even though I'm not Jewish, I had been using this past year to mourn his death. I haven't dated.

DAVE

I didn't know grieving for a year is just a Jewish thing.

TIM stops the massage and DAVE touches TIM's hand. Tim starts to cry.

TIM

Are you trying to get back at me for making *you* cry?

DAVE

I just wanted you to know that I understand.

TIM

I hardly ever cry anymore. I think I burnt myself out when Caleb died, and I couldn't stop myself. It got so bad that I didn't want to *start* crying, thinking it would never stop.

DAVE

I don't suppose you have a therapist.

TIM

No. You know, sometimes when I hear these stories from my clients, it clears my head. Makes me think everyone has this pain that they're carrying around. And not just physical pain but emotional pain.

DAVE

That's exactly what you're doing when you give me these deep tissue massages. That's where you get to the root. And it helps me unwind.

TIM

My goodness, you should become a massage therapist yourself. You seem to know so much about it.

DAVE

Ha! No way would I want to spend all day digging into people's skin and muscles. Especially guys that smell!

TIM begins working on DAVE's feet. DAVE giggles, then moans.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Have I ever told you that when you touch my feet, I almost have an orgasm?

TIM

I should charge you extra.

DAVE

Even though I love when you do my feet, I hate the fact that it means the session is half over. Speaking about sex, weren't you planning on doing the deed with Bennett.

TIM

I thought that since I've been friends with Bennett for twenty years that maybe he should be the first person I have sex with since Caleb died.

DAVE

I remember you said you had a crush on him, but that it didn't work out.

TIM

When we met in high school, he was like the first guy that really turned me on. It wasn't just his looks, but he knew so much about music. I mean every kind of music, every genre. We would talk for hours listening to classic rock, pop, rap, country, r&b. And he was this *maven* about pop charts. How many weeks a song was number one. I just went nuts! I couldn't keep my hands off him! But Bennett was closeted.

DAVE

So you never had sex with him as a teenager?

TIM

No. We wrestled a little bit, but he wouldn't let me kiss him. And when I said I was in love with him, it really scared him. We didn't talk for almost a year. But once I got together with Caleb, we became friends again. Bennett probably felt safer that I wasn't going to make him gay.

DAVE

Did he ever come out?

TIM

Yes. I guess he was just taking his time. And Bennett has been so good to me since Caleb died.

DAVE

You know some of this stuff is new. You never really told me all of this. So what happened?

TIM

I was thinking about talking to him about trying sex, but then I thought, that's not very romantic! I mean, he was my first love. It took me almost six months to get over him during that year we didn't speak.

DAVE

And you probably knew that just because you were friends with someone that it didn't necessarily lead to getting romantic. But it sounds like you were willing to risk it?

TIM

I just kept thinking; I love this guy. And if Caleb hadn't come into my life and Bennett had come out earlier, I probably would have been lovers with Bennett. Anyway, I had him come over for dinner, and I set a romantic mood. Candles, and I set the table with my good china. Even crystal glasses for the wine. I thought maybe he would get the hint. I was going to play the song, "You Are Woman" where Nicky Arnstein seduces Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl*

DAVE

Please tell me you didn't do that!

TIM

No, I didn't, and we had a great time. Eating and drinking. Very relaxed. After dessert, I said why don't we sit on the couch? After we sat, I didn't speak and he was quiet, too. I love that we both aren't afraid of silence. I looked at him, and we kissed. This was the first time we'd done that. I could tell this wasn't something he did often. He's never talked about sexual conquests. He never lived with anyone, and no mention of a boyfriend. I often wondered if he had ever had sex with *anyone*!

DAVE

So after you kissed?

TIM

I took his hand and led him to the bedroom. I started taking off my clothes and then his. He giggled a bit, but he didn't stop me.

DAVE

My goodness, you're dragging this out.

TIM

Okay, okay! Once we were naked, I knew something was wrong. I couldn't get hard. I don't know why. Maybe it was because Bennett had gained some weight, or maybe because we'd been friends for so long. How is it possible that someone who I wanted to pounce on and was so into no longer did it for me?

DAVE

Was Bennett getting excited?

TIM

Yes. I thought so. I was getting embarrassed. Something that I had wanted for so long, and now it was like I couldn't even imagine having sex with him. Such a turn around.

DAVE

Well, at least you took a chance. Look at me, I'm afraid to even tell Garth how I feel. Afraid that he'll reject me.

TIM

I just wanted to get dressed and try to forget the whole incident. I really didn't want to talk to Bennett

about it, and he seemed okay with that. He just got dressed, too. We haven't talked about it. I mean, there's nothing to say about it anyway.

DAVE

I get it. Better to have a friend for life. Sex might have destroyed your friendship.

TIM

Seems like both of us are stuck. In the old days we would have been fuck buddies. I guess that doesn't happen anymore.

DAVE

You and I are almost in a competition for who can go the longest without having sex!

TIM

Wasn't that in a Seinfeld episode?

DAVE

Well, that was actually about masturbation.

TIM

Well, I'm definitely not giving *that* up.

DAVE

I agree.

TIM stops the foot massage.

TIM

Okay. We're all done. You can get dressed.

DAVE

Isn't it funny? I've been coming here every week for the last two years, and we tell each other everything that's going on in our lives. We should go out. I mean not like a date or anything, but as friends.

TIM

I thought you have Garth.

DAVE

And you have Bennett. Well, you can never have too many friends, right?

TIM

I'm not supposed to see clients outside of work.

DAVE

Oh, please! I can't believe anyone follows *that* archaic rule.

TIM

I do like you, and there is something about giving you a massage and the way you react. It's a real give and take. Not like my other clients. They don't really get into any heavy discussions like we do.

DAVE

I feel that, too. What could be more intimate than what happens here. Talk about being vulnerable! I know I feel like you've stripped away a lot of shit.

TIM

And when I touch you, there is some sort of vibration going on. I can't explain it.

DAVE

Don't question it. We should just go with the flow. Can I give you a hug?

They both hug each other.

Lights dim

THE END