



**THE MATHEMATICIAN AND
THE PHILOSOPHER**

a play by

Gordon Blitz

Cast of Characters:

Wade -- a closeted gay college graduate who is wound up tight and never smiles; a mathematician. Wears glasses.

Gabriel -- a gay college student who is a free spirit, and when the reader first meets him, he is dressed in a toga; a philosophy student. Wears glasses. A man who is physically larger than Wade.

Vincent (*Wade's father*)* - a seventy-year-old man in poor health

Madge (*Wade's mother*)* - a seventy-year-old woman who is overweight and burdened with major emotional problems

Philip (*Gabriel's father*)* - a seventy-year-old man exhibiting hippie qualities

Patti (*Gabriel's mother*)* - a seventy-year-old woman also exhibiting hippie qualities

*- Both fathers are played by the same actor

*- Both mothers are played by the same actress

Summary:

Wade is a somber, humorless college graduate who is a mathematician. Gabriel is a frivolous free-wheeling college student studying philosophy. They have nothing in common, but they end up meeting . . . trapped in a stalled elevator. Through his forced interactions with Gabriel, Wade learns that there is therapeutic value to expressing the full gamut of human emotions, and both find new meaning as they explore the full trajectory of their lives.

SCENE 1

As the lights come up, we see the back of a boy, WADE, who is sitting staring at a television. Sitting next to him is his father, VINCENT, who gets up and turns off the television.

WADE

No, Dad. Don't shut it off. You have to see the part after the commercial. I've seen it so many times, I've practically memorized it.

VINCENT faces WADE.

VINCENT

I don't want to watch it. I hate sitcoms. I don't know what I need to do to make you understand. What's so special about it?

WADE

In the show, Mary is telling the news crew about Chuckles, the Clown who is dressed up as Peter Peanut for a circus parade. During the parade, a rogue elephant sees Chuckles dressed as the peanut and tries to shell him which kills him. In the newsroom, everyone is laughing because of the absurdity of the death. Mary is offended and scolds them. 'How can you laugh when someone dies?'

VINCENT

This just proves my point. That's what's wrong with this world. Laughter should be discouraged. People are being made fun of. Nothing good ever came of laughing.

WADE

But wait a minute! The next scene takes place at the funeral where people are giving eulogies. Mary starts to laugh. At first, she tries to hold it in,

WADE

but her laughter keeps growing and growing until she changes the somber mood of the entire funeral.

As WADE says the last sentence, he bursts out laughing. The laughter turns to tears. He falls to the floor giggling and rolls toward the television set. When he contacts the television stand, he hits his chin and starts bleeding. VINCENT lifts WADE off the floor and throws him back into the chair he was sitting in. WADE is grinning in spite of his injury.

VINCENT

See what happens, Wade? You lose control. You could have been badly hurt, maybe even killed. Never again! I don't care if you think something is funny. It is forbidden! You hold it in, or I'll beat you. And wipe that grin off your face. That's just as bad. Go let your mother fix your chin. But don't cry! You know how she hates anyone crying.

Lights dim.

SCENE 2

Lights come up. The interior of an elevator with two men; one is twenty-one years old (WADE) wearing glasses and dressed in a sport jacket and tie, and the other is nineteen years old (GABRIEL) wearing glasses and in a costume that a Greek Philosopher might wear. After WADE pushes the elevator button, he looks up at the floor numbers.

GABRIEL

Oh, you're going to the same floor.
That must be a good omen.
What do you think?

WADE ignores the comment and then mumbles to himself.

WADE

I don't believe in omens. I would
more likely be figuring the *odds* of
that happening.

GABRIEL

I didn't hear what you said.

WADE sneezes. He looks embarrassed because he doesn't have a tissue.

WADE

Hey, do you have a tissue?

GABRIEL reaches into the shoulder bag that he is carrying.

GABRIEL

I always carry these around for
emergencies.

GABRIEL hands WADE a tissue.

WADE

Thanks.

GABRIEL

I have a whole array of items. Mints
and chewing gum; you should try one.
Leftover habit from when I smoked.
People used to complain about that
smoky smell. Now, they come in

GABRIEL

handy for bad breath. I also have this spray and cloth to clean my glasses.

WADE looks disgusted when GABRIEL mentions smoking. Then WADE blows into his hand checking his breath.

WADE

Okay. Let me try a mint. And while you're at it, I need to clean my glasses.

GABRIEL hands over a mint and glass spray and cloth.

GABRIEL

You look nervous. Do have some sort of special appointment?

WADE

I'm applying for a job as a tax accountant, and they're having the second round of interviews.

GABRIEL

Oh, god! A tax accountant! I'm no good with numbers, and that type of job sounds so serious. Don't take this the wrong way, but I would be bored out of my mind in that profession. You're so young to be having a job sitting behind a desk all day long.

WADE

That's why I want it. I'm thoughtful and pensive. *(pause)*

WADE looks up toward the floor numbers.

WADE (CONT'D)

This elevator is moving so slowly, and It's not stopping at any floors.

GABRIEL starts laughing. WADE looks angry.

GABRIEL

I can see by your face you're wondering why I'm laughing. I'm sorry I laughed. It's funny how I've

GABRIEL

given you so many things. What would have happened if I wasn't sharing the elevator with you? And I was thinking about how funny it is being in this elevator. I'm a philosophy major, and I'm always trying to make a coherent sense out of the whole.

WADE

Let me stop you there. What is it with this outfit you're wearing?

GABRIEL

Oh, you mean this getup? It's part of my final exam to not only think like a philosopher but to look like one. A debate is being held in this building between two philosophers, and we're each supposed to take the role of one of them. I'm a little bit early. Wanted to practice before the debate started.

WADE

I'm early too.

GABRIEL

See, we're both punctual. Nice coincidence, don't you think?

WADE

I suppose. But I'd still like to know how being in this elevator is funny.

GABRIEL

So, I realized that when the elevator door first opens, in a way we're taking a leap when we enter leaving the old reality behind as the door closes. And when we press the button, we activate energy to take us to our desired level. When this machinery moves, we can't influence the outcome. It forces us to let go. Then suddenly we get to our floor, the door opens, and we're at a different level; a different reality.

WADE

You make it sound like we're in a time machine. You know, I just realized that I don't actually remember entering the elevator. It feels like I've just been in it with you.

GABRIEL

Exactly! The whole thing seems humorous to me. Like we're here, two strangers, taking this trip together. Like a road trip movie. And come to think of it, I don't recall how I got into the elevator either.

WADE looks confused. GABRIEL is looking at the walls of the elevator.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

What do you think of these mirrors? They're supposed to reduce anxiety plus give a sense of space making it less cramped.

WADE

I don't like the mirrors. They make me feel self-conscious although I have to admit that being able to check my tie is helpful. I just don't want to see any of my flaws. When I was younger, I wished I was a vampire because they can't see their reflection.

GABRIEL

It's a blessing for me because I'm claustrophobic. Mirrors help me to avoid feelings of being trapped. Hey, have you heard of the *mirror rule*?

WADE

No, but I'm sure you're going to tell me.

GABRIEL

You *do* know about it. Where your right hand becomes your left in the mirror.

WADE

That's not the *mirror rule*. It's actually called the *left-right inversion*. The philosopher, Stephen Law, said it was an example of a problem science couldn't solve. Philosophers and mathematicians, of which I am one, have been debating this forever. It was decided that it might be a scientific problem, but it was a trivial one at that.

GABRIEL

I can't believe that you know about Stephen Law. You actually brought up an excellent point. By the way, I'm Gabriel, and don't call me Gabe. It grates on me. I love my three-syllable name. . . Doesn't it feel stuffy in here? Like there's no air circulating? You must be so uncomfortable. Who wears ties anymore?

WADE

My name is Wade.

GABRIEL

I can't remember ever wearing a tie. Does this somber attitude help with your job prospects? I don't know much about being a tax accountant. You must have been good in math.

WADE

It's important that I make a good impression.

GABRIEL

Do you want to have a debate about the mirror rule? It will be good practice for me, and maybe it will be good for your interview.

WADE

Uh, I don't think so.

GABRIEL

So if you're a mathematician, why aren't you doing research or teaching?

WADE

It didn't interest me. Research jobs are hard to come by, and I would hate to be a teacher. The money will be better as a tax accountant. But I love numbers. And I like puzzles. Solving a mathematical equation is no different than a puzzle. I could spend hours at it.

GABRIEL

Are you that nervous about this interview?

WADE

Yes. I heard it's like being cross-examined in court or feeling like you're facing a firing squad.

GABRIEL

I don't know why anyone would put themselves through that. It's like being in a torture chamber.

A strange sound is heard. WADE and GABRIEL hear the sound but try to ignore it.

WADE

How are you planning on getting a job without going on an interview.

GABRIEL

Well, I still have a few years to worry about that. And I *do* want to teach. I'm sure there's a shortage of philosophy teachers, and I've got a load of other choices.

WADE

Getting a degree in philosophy doesn't seem very practical. Despite what you say, I don't believe there are jobs out there.

GABRIEL

You are *so* wrong! I enjoy thinking through problems from multiple angles, and that's valuable to *any* organization. The name, '*Philosophy*', derives from the Greek, '*Philosophia*', meaning love of wisdom. That's why philosophers like to ask the big questions, like, 'What is Truth?'

WADE

I hope you find the truth.

GABRIEL

Hey, What's with the elevator? Our floor was lit up and it didn't stop. This is crazy! Why aren't the doors opening? Oh, god, the top floor says seventy! I didn't realize that this building was so tall.

There is a jolt. Both WADE and GABRIEL grab the bar along the walls of the elevator. The elevator stops moving.

WADE

Wow! That jolt reminded me of the Northridge Earthquake.

GABRIEL starts hyperventilating then collapses and curls up like a ball on the floor of the elevator. WADE pushes the red button on the wall of the elevator, but there is no sound. He opens a small door that says 'telephone,' but it is empty. He notices the elevator license.

WADE (CONT'D)

Well, this isn't a good sign. There's no telephone, and the elevator license has expired.

GABRIEL

I can't breathe, and I don't feel well!

WADE

Gabriel, just calm down. I'm so surprised that you're getting excited about this. You seemed like a pretty relaxed kinda' guy. That nothing phased you. Be careful; if you faint, you might hurt yourself.

GABRIEL

We're trapped! Why isn't the alarm working? Help! Help!

WADE

Look, someone is going to know we're in here.

GABRIEL

You don't know that! Why isn't anyone answering our calls for help?

WADE

You can't expect help to come that quickly. Give them some time.

The elevator starts moving, but then stops once again. The doors automatically open. WADE sees that they've stopped between floors. He examines the walls.

GABRIEL

Oh, god! Close the doors. I don't want to look at a bunch of bricks. If there's an earthquake, they might crumble, and we'd be crushed!

GABRIEL points toward the upper walls of the elevator.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Look at the crack in that mirror. Can you imagine if the mirrors got loose? We'd die from shards of glass.

WADE removes his tie and sports jacket, then unbuttons the top button of his shirt. GABRIEL remains on the floor. Then the lights go out and the elevator is in dimness.

WADE

It must be a power failure. Do you have an iPhone? We could use the flashlight function to see.

GABRIEL

No. But I think I have some matches in my shoulder bag. Just for an emergency. It's a habit from when I used to smoke, and I'd forgot to bring a lighter with me.

GABRIEL finds the matches in his bag. After he strikes a match, both become more relaxed. He has to keep lighting matches or they will be in darkness.

WADE

I just had this crazy thought. What if this was some kind of test? That the powers that be included a power failure and a broken elevator. If I pass this test, I'll get the job.

GABRIEL

You mean like a stress test? I doubt that. We've got to keep shouting for help. Someone is bound to hear us. Help! Help! Help!

The lights come back on followed by a sizzling sound.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Thank goodness the electricity is back on.

The lights flicker.

WADE

But wait a minute, do you hear that? Is there a live wire somewhere out there?

The door closes and the elevator begins moving.

GABRIEL

Thank god, we're moving again. And the lights are staying on.

Another strong jolt, and the elevator stops again. This time WADE falls to the floor and GABRIEL grabs hold of him. WADE is startled to be in the arms of GABRIEL. They are both silent for a few seconds.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Thank you. It feels good for us to be holding each other. I'm glad you didn't back away. I'm kind of a touchy-feely guy. It's instinct. What about you?

WADE

Totally the opposite. I can't remember the last time someone held me, let

WADE

alone a stranger. I don't know what I feel.

GABRIEL

I'm a harmless stranger; honestly, I am. Are you sure this cuddling is okay with you?

WADE

If I don't think about it too much. In a weird way, it actually feels okay. I'll let you know if I get uncomfortable.

GABRIEL

Well, if we're going to be trapped in this elevator for a while, why don't we tell each other something about ourselves. It would be a distraction and a way of getting to know one another.

They begin to feel comfortable and separate.

WADE

I don't have much to tell, Mr. Philosopher. Why don't you go first? I want to hear your truth.

GABRIEL

(whispering)

Okay. I was conceived and born in a library. So, I've been surrounded by books my entire life.

WADE

You don't have to whisper. I don't think anyone is going to hear us, and it's not going to cause an avalanche.

GABRIEL

My mother, Patti, was a librarian in The ADJ or The Adjacent Library. This was back when it was a small establishment before the current big, all-made-of-glass building was built to replace it. I think the city planners

GABRIEL

wanted something to compete with the 'Blue Whale.' My father, Philip, was a voracious reader. Eclectic taste, but always in the pop fiction category like Conroy's *The Lords of Discipline* or Michener's historical fiction; anything that was a top-ten best seller. Mom only read the classics like Dickens, Melville, and Twain -- had to be nineteenth century or before.

My dad walked my mom home from the library to her apartment every night. She lived a few blocks from the library. So, one night, just as my mom was supposed to lock up the library, my dad said. 'Hey, why don't we stay a little longer? I love the way the books smell, and we can play a new game I just invented. We'll each try to pick a book that the other one has never read, and whoever finds it wins.' So, just as they started the game, the lights went out.

WADE

Are you telling me this story because we were in the dark, too?

GABRIEL

Maybe. It's a nice coincidence, isn't it? Anyway, Dad picked Jane Austin's *Persuasion* and Mom picked Jacqueline Susann's *Once Is Not Enough*. This was a challenge physically also because they couldn't really see the books. The lights were on a timer so they couldn't even get turned on in an emergency. Neither of them won the little game, and to make matters worse, Mom dropped her keys on the library floor and couldn't find them in the dark. So they ended up being trapped. I guess just like us. But being confined in a library sounds like heaven, actually.

WADE

Yeah, a library would be way better than this elevator.

GABRIEL

So each of them was resigned to having to wait until morning. Thankfully, there were some places to sleep in the children's book room. So, that's what they did.

According to my mom, I was conceived that night. Thankfully, no one suspected that a library patron and a librarian would have sex in the children's book room!

You know, it was Mom who upped the ante in this whole thing. Even though they had been seeing each other for six months, my father had never made a move. Mom saw this situation as an opportunity. Not only for her to get pregnant, but to get him to marry her.

WADE

She trapped him into marriage? One of those shotgun weddings?

GABRIEL

No. It turned out that they really did love each other, but this just speeded things up. You never know what an impatient woman will do! And you know, they were a perfect match. Both were spontaneous, but also light-hearted. Seemed like they never got stressed out. And what a joy to have parents who were open and not judgmental.

WADE

Okay, Gabriel, that's quite a story, and I hope it's the truth, but how did you ever get *born* in the library? That seems farfetched.

GABRIEL

I'll tell you that tale another time.
What about you?

WADE

Well, I'm going to tell you something
that I've never told to *anyone*. But I
think it'll be easier to tell a harmless
stranger who I may never see again. It
feels safe.

Lights dim.

SCENE 3

The lights come up to the left of the elevator. A younger WADE is facing a frail older man, VINCENT, his father, sitting in a wheelchair.

WADE

Dad, when I was growing up, you wouldn't let me laugh or smile. You would get so angry when I laughed out loud. Like it was the worst sin in the world. I never understood why. All those years, I was so afraid of smiling or laughing that I've forgotten how to conjure up those emotions. It's become a habit.

All through high school and college, I couldn't laugh even if I wanted to. I completely lost my sense of humor. I was convinced that humor was a waste of time. I wore my seriousness like a badge of courage.

But all that time, I felt that you had your reasons. But now after two heart attacks, who knows how much longer you're going to live. I want you to tell me why. I don't want to have any regrets about not having asked you.

VINCENT

(angrily)

What difference does it make? I was protecting you, isn't that enough? I did it for your own good, for your own wellbeing!

WADE

(shouting)

That's *not* enough! It will *never* be enough! You *have* to tell me! I won't leave you alone until you tell me!

VINCENT

I'm an old man! Leave me alone!

VINCENT

Get away from me!

WADE

Never!

WADE and VINCENT stare at each other intently. There is a long pause. VINCENT finally breaks contact, looks down and begins to speak in a low resigned voice.

VINCENT

I was traumatized by something that happened to me, and I never wanted you to go through it.

When I was two years old, my father said I would grab his nose and pretend to throw it in the kitchen bin while laughing hysterically. My father was impressed that I was getting a sense of humor. My mother was jealous that I had this bonding experience with him. We both used to make funny faces at each other and play peek-a-boo. And when I got older, I would be making jokes about *poop* because I had conquered potty training and excrement was a big part of my life.

WADE

Oh, my god! So, you *did* have a sense of humor! What happened?

VINCENT

On the first day of third grade, I was having a laughing fit because it was the first time I had heard the word *booger*. And when I heard what it meant, I just couldn't stop laughing. I laughed so hard that I ended up peeing my pants. And I didn't even realize I had done anything wrong until the other boys pointed at my crotch which was damp. I was so embarrassed, and little did I know that this would happen every time I had uncontrollable laughter.

VINCENT

I couldn't bear to think of you being humiliated like I had been. It was worse than being called a *bedwetter*. At least bedwetters were only shamed in private. I had a double whammy of embarrassment. So I did this for your own good.

WADE

What? I can't believe what you're telling me. That's the reason I've been programmed to avoid these emotions? How did you know that this would even happen to me if *I* laughed?

If this was a medical condition, shouldn't your father have taken you to a doctor? And if it happened to me, you would have just taken me to a physician to check my bladder!

VINCENT

I was too embarrassed to tell anyone about it. I thought it would be easier to just not laugh. What was the big deal? If I had to give up one thing, why not make it laughter.

And you can see how offensive inappropriate jokes can be. Comedy shouldn't be making fun of people. That's not right.

WADE

This doesn't make any sense! There has to be more to it than that!

VINCENT

Leave me alone! You have your answer.

WADE

(shouting)

You stupid old man! Laughter is healthy. My god, it can be shared with other people. They say laughing can

WADE

be better than medicine. You've deprived me of this my entire life! I don't even know what *is* funny and what is *not* funny. I'm blocked!

VINCENT

I can't believe this! I've kept this to myself my whole life, and I finally tell you, and now all you can do is criticize me? I said I was trying to protect you. Don't look at me that way! Like you think I'm crazy! This is the way you treat your father . . . like shit?

And by the way, your mother never told you why she discouraged you from *crying*. Good luck with that! And while you're at it, make sure she tells you about the reason for her agoraphobia.

.

Lights dim.

SCENE 4

Lights go up. WADE and GABRIEL are both standing in the elevator. There are moments of silence before GABRIEL starts speaking.

GABRIEL

What a horrible story! What a horrible existence! I need to wrap my head around that! I feel like we're in an abyss, but it's not a bad thing. It will force us to confront this, to take action. Philosophy asks us to *take* action rather than just to *speak* about action. That's why we have these moments of silence.

WADE

Gabriel, this is nothing new. It's in silence where I solve my mathematical puzzles. That's why I hate small talk. I'm always on the prowl to use all of my energy for *purpose*. Never throwing anything away.

GABRIEL

Wow! You're starting to sound like a philosopher, wouldn't you say? Bravo! Our give-and-take is *so* important. We exchange ideas and we begin to understand one another. This is *so* interesting and *so* important . . . Wade, I've got to come right out and say this . . . I find you attractive.

GABRIEL brings WADE closer to him and starts to kiss him. At first WADE pushes him away, but then he stops himself and lets GABRIEL continue. The kiss lingers between them. As WADE becomes more relaxed, he kisses GABRIEL back with passion, but then he stops.

WADE

I can't believe that I'm doing this. I really don't know you, and here I am *kissing* you? That just doesn't make any sense!

GABRIEL

Does everything have to make sense,
Wade?

WADE

I'd like to think so.

GABRIEL

Why not try to believe that we've
known each other before today. I'm
trying to imagine that we are *not*
trapped in an elevator—that this is a
magic room where we can alter
reality.

WADE

How can I possibly believe that?

GABRIEL

I'm going to show you.

Slowly GABRIEL begins to undress. After GABRIEL is naked, he begins to undress WADE. Although WADE is trembling, he lets GABRIEL continue.

WADE

I've never done this before. I don't even
know what I'm supposed to do.

GABRIEL

Shhh! I'm not going to rush you. We
can just look at each other. I want to
visually feel you before we do any
more, even before we make any
physical contact. I want to feel your
essence. I don't want this to be rushed.
I want to examine all parts of you and
see how they interrelate with one
another.

GABRIEL scans all of WADE's body.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Where did you get that scar on your
chin?

WADE reaches up and feels the scar.

GABRIEL

Are those moles or freckles? I love that fuzz you have on your abdomen. When did you start getting hair there? Interesting how your penis was somewhat small, but now that you have an erection, it's gigantic. Are you ticklish?

WADE

This feels *so* weird, like I'm being subjected to a body scan. Like you're a doctor, and I'm your patient. You're so *intense*, but I'm enjoying your intensity. And now *I* want a turn. I want to feel what it's like to be the doctor and treat *you* as a patient. Let me examine you before I answer any of your questions.

GABRIEL stops to consider changing roles. He is reluctant to let go of his control but ultimately lets WADE begin his examination. WADE checks GABRIEL in the same way pointing out various spots on GABRIEL's body and touching each spot as he identifies them.

WADE

Why is that finger a little crooked? What about that scar by your eyebrow? Were you in an accident? And you have a chipped tooth. Why is that nail on your little finger black?

GABRIEL

Wow! You are so observant and so physical. It's turning me on!

Gabriel launches himself at Wade's naked body. Gabriel's fingers are everywhere. The two wrestle on the floor of the elevator with GABRIEL laughing out loud and obviously enjoying his mode of attack. But even GABRIEL's roving fingers on WADE's armpits do not make WADE giggle.

Now GABRIEL lashes out with his tongue, and he licks a trail up Wade's stomach until he reaches his chest. He surrounds first one nipple and then the other with his lips. He sucks each into his mouth and flicks at them unmercifully with his tongue. WADE begins squirming and suddenly starts shrieking uncontrollably, but this only encourages GABRIEL to continue.

GABRIEL moves down WADE's body and uses his tongue on the bottom of WADE's feet. Wade is totally out of breath and yelping for Gabriel to stop.

WADE

No! No! Stop! Stop! Gabriel! Don't!
Don't! No! No! . . . Don't . . . stop!
Don't stop! Don't stop!

WADE now encourages GABRIEL to continue. They continue rolling around on the floor of the elevator until they both reach orgasm together as the lights dim.

Moments later when the lights come up, WADE and GABRIEL are cuddled together on the elevator floor.

WADE

That was . . .

GABRIEL

Shush! Let's stay in the moment.
Absorb what's happened before we
talk. I find this to be the time when I
am most vulnerable, but that doesn't
mean we have to talk about it.

WADE

What do you mean by 'most
vulnerable'?

GABRIEL

A time to share difficult emotions like
grief, shame and fear.

WADE

Oh, god, that sounds frightening.

GABRIEL

Shush! Shush! You'll be amazed
at what you can do after reaching
orgasm.

WADE and GABRIEL are silent. They shut their eyes and drift off to sleep.

Lights dim.

SCENE 5

The lights come up. WADE and GABRIEL are now awake and sitting on the floor leaning against the walls of the elevator.

WADE

Oh, my god! Did this really happen? I'm no longer a virgin? And it *wasn't* just sex! It was *making love*! I never thought it would happen, and I'm *so* glad it was with *you*.

GABRIEL

So you're not kidding. This really *was* your first time. Were you afraid to have sex? Some people think that if they don't have sex with a man, that means they aren't gay.

WADE

I just never thought about sex.

GABRIEL

Is that because you were worried your parents would find out you were gay? They didn't bother you about dating girls?

WADE

No, it just never came up. Seems like if I didn't laugh or cry, my parents just left me alone. And in some ways it was beneficial. They never made jokes about gays. What about your parents?

GABRIEL

So strange. My parents didn't care about my sexuality. I came out when I was sixteen. They just said they wanted me to be happy.

WADE

In a way we were both lucky.

GABRIEL

Yes. We never had to deal with shame or any of that self-hate that many gays go through.

WADE

Hey, we better get dressed. I hope that we get rescued soon.

GABRIEL

Can we wait before we do that? I don't want things to return to the point where we had not made physical contact. I want us to continue touching each other and to have your hands on my body. At least, let's dress one another.

WADE

Yes, that's *perfect!* I want to go first.

GABRIEL reaches into his shoulder bag and hands WADE a pair of shorts and a t-shirt while stuffing his toga back into his bag.

WADE

I guess I won't need this toga anymore now that we're stuck here.

WADE begins by putting on GABRIEL's t-shirt, followed by his underwear, shorts and sandals. He points to GABRIEL's genitals.

WADE (CONT'D)

I hadn't noticed your underwear. I didn't think anyone wore Fruit of the Loom anymore.

GABRIEL

Well, at least they're bikini briefs and not your Jockey boxer shorts.

WADE chuckles good-naturedly.

WADE

Touché.

GABRIEL now begins dressing WADE, but as he puts each article of clothing on WADE, he smells it.

GABRIEL

If we don't see each other again, which I hope won't be the case, I want to remember your body scent and the smell and touch of your clothing.

WADE

You know I don't believe in science fiction. As a mathematician, I'm a realist. But this is beginning to feel like an episode of *The Twilight Zone* or *The Outer Limits*.

GABRIEL

I'm going to put on my philosopher's hat so I can respond to you. There is this thing called Mathematical Realism. Mathematics is supposed to be objective, independent from human activities, beliefs or capacities.

WADE

Yes. I thought that a mathematician's task was to *discover*, not *create*.

GABRIEL

So, maybe we're discovering a new world in this elevator. I don't even know what floor we're on. And why haven't we been rescued yet? It seems like it's been hours and there's been nothing.

WADE kisses GABRIEL to stop him from talking.

WADE

It's amazing that we've shared so much information about our past. Yet still, I feel like I'm not finished yet.

GABRIEL

We still have time.

Lights dim.

SCENE 6

The lights come up. WADE and GABRIEL continue to share.

WADE

I'm afraid to ask how I compared to other guys you've been with. Obviously, I'm not the first guy you've slept with.

GABRIEL

Correct. I can say that this was not my first time, but I will tell you this:

You're right; this wasn't just *sex* and surely wasn't *fucking*. It felt surreal to me. Maybe it's about being cooped up in this elevator. It's hard for me to explain. Who knows? Maybe this elevator has magical powers!

WADE

Whoa! A philosopher who can't explain a phenomenon?

GABRIEL

Anything is possible. Remember, you're looking at a man who was born in a library.

WADE

That's right! You never told me how that happened.

The lights dim and come up on the right side of the elevator. GABRIEL and his mother are sitting at a table. GABRIEL has a recording device on the table.

GABRIEL

Now, Mom. I want you to tell me the story about how I was born. I want this recorded in your own words because people might not believe that it happened just in this way. Just like Dad recorded how I was conceived.

PATTI

Okay. This feels a bit strange, but I'll do my best. So, I was still working in the library in my ninth month. It had been an easy pregnancy, so I didn't see any reason to stop working. Unfortunately, my water broke during lunch time. And you were desperate to come out. You didn't want to wait. I called your father, but by the time he arrived, I was already crowning.

The other librarian saw the head and started shouting, 'Is there a nurse or midwife or doctor in the library? I don't think Patti is going to make it to the hospital!' A midwife and an OB/GYN nurse were in the house, and they rolled up their sleeves, and that's where you gave your first scream after getting slapped. I think there's a plaque on the library wall commemorating your birth: *Gabriel Meskin born to Patti and Philip Meskin right here in the library!*

Lights dim as the lights come up in the elevator.

WADE

So you're a celebrity! Conceived and born in a library!

GABRIEL

Now you see why I went into philosophy. I mean how do I make sense of my conception and my birth?

Suddenly the elevator starts moving.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Whoa! The elevator is finally moving again, but look at how fast it's going! Wade, look at the elevator floors . . . they're flickering on and off! This is

GABRIEL

going too fast! Oh, my god! Wade,
we're going to crash!

WADE and GABRIEL reach out and cling to each other with their eyes tightly closed. They wait for the crash. Several beats pass, and the elevator loudly screeches to a halt. Everything goes completely black until the lights flicker on. WADE and GABRIEL are lying on the floor, and they are not moving. GABRIEL slowly sits up and checks himself for any injuries.

GABRIEL

Oh, my god, what just happened?
We're not dead, and I'm not hurt!
Wade, Wade, are you okay?

GABRIEL sees WADE lying at the other side of the elevator with his face down. GABRIEL rushes over to WADE and carefully nudges him until he wakes up.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Oh, good! I didn't know what to think
when you didn't answer me. What?
Why are you rubbing your head?

WADE is gently rubbing his head.

WADE

I don't know what happened. I guess I
passed out for a minute. I must have
hit my head. I have such a headache!

GABRIEL is so relieved that WADE is not hurt, he hugs him.

GABRIEL

Do you think someone is looking out
for us? We could have gotten hurt! We
could have died! It almost makes me
want to believe in God. What about
you? We haven't really talked about
our belief systems.

WADE

I *do* believe in God just like most of
the mathematicians I know. It all goes
back to Newtonian mathematics.
When you look at the calculations

WADE

needed to send rockets into space, you realize that mathematics isn't some kind of humanly contrived system but rather like a brilliant work of art, as if created by a higher power.

GABRIEL

That's almost the same way philosophers answer the question, 'Is there a God?' I can almost believe that God is the best explanation for the origins of the universe.

WADE

So we sort of agree.

GABRIEL

But there is one other thing we haven't mentioned. Was it fate or our destiny that we actually met?

WADE

That's *so* difficult. I don't want to believe that it was fate that brought us together.

GABRIEL

Me neither. But it happened. I actually don't think it matters.

The lights suddenly shut off leaving WADE and GABRIEL in the dimness.

GABRIEL

(looking up at the ceiling and shouting as if talking to someone)
I wish the electricity would make up its mind! If the lights don't come up soon, I'm gonna' panic! This is gonna' kick in my claustrophobia! Do you hear me?

WADE

Oh, wow! Why is that?

The lights come back on.

GABRIEL

Whew! I think I'm going to be all right now. I might as well tell you about my claustrophobia. Who knows how much longer we're going to be cooped up in here. Maybe the lights will behave themselves. I really thought that I was no longer claustrophobic, but I guess that condition never completely goes away.

Lights dim.

SCENE 7

The lights come up. WADE and GABRIEL continue to share.

GABRIEL

It all started when I was eight years old. My friends were on a *dare me* kick. On our block we had a dilapidated and abandoned house nicknamed *The Haunted Mansion*, and there were tons of opportunities for *dares*. Who could knock on the door; who could break a window; or who could go inside? And the eyesore had become a dumping ground for broken appliances.

On the first day of summer, I was told, 'Someone left a refrigerator in the backyard of the Haunted Mansion. Gabriel, you've never done a dare, and we've come up with a real doozy. If you want to keep hanging with us, it's time you accepted one. Get into the refrigerator and we'll close the door. After five minutes, we'll open it and let you out.'

I was a fearless kid so I thought nothing about doing this. But the creaky sound when we opened the refrigerator door and the vile odor almost made me not want to continue. But my friends kept goading me.

WADE

How did you even fit in the refrigerator? I mean, were you that small for your age?

GABRIEL

Well, they had removed all the shelves so it wasn't too difficult. Anyway, I had to hold my nose because of the smell. And I repeated to my friends,

GABRIEL

'Only five minutes, right?' And I heard a chorus of 'Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!' Those five minutes felt endless, and the darkness *did* really scare me.

I think I dozed off and woke up when I heard, 'Okay, the five minutes are up. We're going to open the door.' But the door wouldn't open, and I was starting to panic. It felt like I couldn't breathe. I tried opening the door from the inside, but that didn't work. The guys all shouted that they were going to find a neighbor to try and open the door.

Finally I heard a deep voice, one of the fathers, and he was saying, 'Okay, I'm going to get my tools so I can open the door.' Then I remember crying. But I didn't want the guys to see me, so I worked to stop before the door was opened, and I finally crawled out. Funny, the whole gang was crying, whimpering, laughing and giggling. And here I was not wanting to let them see me cry.

WADE

So did you become claustrophobic after that?

GABRIEL

Not right away. About a month after it happened, I started having nightmares where I didn't get saved. I would wake up screaming. I would think that my heart was going to jump out of my chest.

But as it turned out, this became another genesis of aspiring to be a philosopher. Getting locked in the

GABRIEL

refrigerator was like being in a black hole; a foreshadowing of what death would feel like. Thinking about this now, the consensus that in the dying process one feels like they are going toward a white light might be false.

WADE

Interesting. Darkness instead of light. Talk about having a fear of death!

GABRIEL

When I go after my master's degree, I'm thinking of doing my thesis on this subject.

The elevator begins moving again. WADE and GABRIEL apprehensively glance up at the ceiling.

Lights dim.

SCENE 8

The lights come up on the left side of the stage. WADE and his mother, MADGE, are sitting on a couch.

WADE

Mom, shouldn't you be visiting Dad in the hospital? The doctors don't think he's going to make it after this second heart attack.

MADGE

You know I can't leave the house. You don't know what it's like being me. You think I want to live like this? I hate this! I just don't have a choice!

WADE

But I thought you've made exceptions.

MADGE

I was younger then, but now I just can't do it! You *know* I'm agoraphobic. It's worse than having a panic attack. I'm afraid I'll wither away and die if I walk out the front door.

WADE

How could I forget that? But I just can't believe *this*! The man you've been married to for forty years is dying, and you can't visit him? You may never see him again. Can't you at least try? I'll hold onto you. I won't let anything happen to you.

WADE pulls MADGE off the couch and leads her toward the front door.

WADE (CONT'D)

Just take a few steps. That's all I'm asking you to do.

MADGE obeys WADE's command, but just as she is about to take her first few steps, the phone rings. When she hears the phone, she backs away

from WADE and runs back to the couch. The phone keeps ringing until WADE picks it up.

WADE (CONT'D)

Yes, this is Wade. I'm Vincent's son.
Oh, yes! I understand. Thank you for
letting me know.

MADGE

What happened? What's going on? Is
it the hospital? Something about your
father?

WADE

Dad woke up from his coma. They're
saying he is going to make it! They're
checking his vitals now.

*Instead of smiling, MADGE clenches her fists taking deep, shuddering
breaths.*

WADE (CONT'D)

What's going on Mom?

MADGE

I don't know. I should feel relieved.

WADE

Even though I've had such an
unhealthy relationship with him, he's
my father, no matter how fucked up he
was. Sometimes when I leave his
hospital room, I feel so defeated. I try
to cry. So sad that he had to wait until
he thought he was dying to explain his
craziness about not wanting me to
laugh.

MADGE

Did you say you actually cried?

WADE

No, Mother. I didn't cry, but I came
close! I had that sensation behind my
eyes. Remember, you *forbade* me to
cry! Are you going to tell me why
crying wasn't allowed?

Suddenly, MADGE begins to cry. WADE is shocked and tries to comfort her.

WADE (CONT'D)

Oh, Mom. I thought I would never see you cry. What just happened?

MADGE

Oh, my god! It felt like something burst inside me! Maybe it's a delayed reaction to Vincent being out of danger. I've heard of happy tears but never experienced them. Really, *any* type of tears.

WADE

I wish I had the same type of explosion that you just had.

MADGE takes a deep breath.

MADGE

I'm going to confess! I'm going way back to when everything started, and I'm going to tell you.

It was the first day of kindergarten. I had been looking forward to starting school because I was an only child. I wanted to have friends. Mom kept saying, 'My little girl is growing up.' Everything I wore was new . . . patent leather shoes, new dress and a Wizard of Oz lunchbox.

But on the morning of that first day of school, I had this feeling of trepidation as we left the house. It's funny how there were so many doors we had to pass through just to leave our place. We went through the kitchen back door which also had a screen door, but then there was an enclosed patio which had *another* two doors. Finally, we got to the garage door. It was like passing through all these different thresholds.

MADGE

Mom could tell I was nervous, and she told me, 'Madge, today you'll be going from the familiar to the unfamiliar. But you're my little Miss Independent, and I'm sure you can do it. You'll be just fine.' She treated me like an adult, and I tried to do that with you as you were growing up.

I remember when my mother dropped me off at school. She gave me a kiss, and I smelled her perfume, and I felt that if I just kept that smell in my brain, it would be like Mom was at school with me. I approached the door to the school, and a monitor pointed toward the kindergarten class. I suddenly felt ill. It was yet another door. I started thinking, 'I am leaving the known for the unknown,' and I was overcome with a combination of dizziness and chest pain. And that's when it hit me. My mother had abandoned me! I couldn't move, and when the teacher tried to get me to class, I cried. This wasn't just the regular kind of crying like when I would get hurt or feel sad. This was *screaming* as if my life was threatened.

My wailing echoed through the school. Teachers poured out of their classrooms thinking that I was being assaulted. Nothing was going to sedate me until my mother was called and came to pick me up. I actually bit a teacher's hand!

When my mother arrived, she seemed very calm even as we were driving home. Once we got inside, she sat me down and said, 'Madge, I hope you

MADGE

realize how you embarrassed me and embarrassed yourself. A polite little girl *never* does this. This can *never* happen again. I *won't* tolerate it! You are *forbidden* to cry! If you dare to do that, I won't come and rescue you; *nobody* will come and rescue you! I'm *not* going to baby you! *Do you understand?*'

WADE

How horrible that your mother would say that to you. What did you do?

MADGE

What could I do? I nodded in agreement. I would do anything to make her happy. I just accepted this. I had never seen this side of her, being stern. I couldn't remember her ever reprimanding me. I came to understand that crying wasn't going to solve anything.

I was taken back to school the following day, and I was able to dissociate myself, like there was another Madge who wasn't afraid of being abandoned. Luckily, no one looked at me in disgust or pity. And my mother was back to being proud of me.

All was good. But I still had to keep giving myself encouraging pep talks. That first step outside of the house; that was the *big* one. But I had a mantra, 'You can do this. There is nothing to be afraid of.' And this worked well for me clear up through college and even after I got married to your dad. But . . .

MADGE begins to cry again

MADGE (CONT'D)

Wade, I can't go on with this right now. It's too draining! Can we do this another time?

WADE

Yes, sure. That's okay. Just promise me that you'll find a way to finish this. I want to know all about your agoraphobia.

Lights dim as the lights come up in the elevator.

GABRIEL

Ah, so that explains why your mother forbade you to cry, and it might have had something to do with her agoraphobia.

WADE

Oh, my god! That might be the reason. Just like my father with the 'no laughing' rule. That it would lead to me wetting my pants in public. But it's so illogical. My parents were smart people, but they were being *so* irrational!

GABRIEL

I don't think that makes any difference. Both of them were so damaged by these incidents; they couldn't bear to pass them on to you.

WADE

And they had no idea how screwed up I would get.

GABRIEL

Oh, yes! Parents and their effects on our lives!

Lights dim.

SCENE 9

Lights come up. The right side of the stage is lit. GABRIEL's father, PHILIP, and mother, PATTI, are both pacing the floor talking to GABRIEL.

PHILIP

I'm sorry, Gabriel, but we have to leave the country. You're going to be graduating soon and going off to college. So, we're not worried about you.

GABRIEL

I don't understand why this is happening.

PATTI

We made a mistake and are having to pay for it now. We don't want to go to jail, and we wouldn't want you to see us in jail. It's better if we just go.

PHILIP

Your mother's right. We just took our philosophy of never taking anything seriously too far. We never thought about the future.

GABRIEL

But how could living in the moment be a bad thing? You taught me how to appreciate small moments. Not linger on mistakes. That I should use failures as learning tools. All the things that made me want to be a philosopher.

PATTI

That is so true. Look at how creative you've been. Always a playful child. No anxiety. You did follow our example of being relaxed. This helped you explore new ideas.

GABRIEL

So what went wrong?

PATTI

We've been caught up by identity theft. And those thieves committed crimes in our name.

GABRIEL

But you didn't commit a crime. How can they blame you?

PHILIP

That's correct, but the problem is that we've been too lackadaisical. There were letters addressed to us that we never answered. We figured it was just some mistake, so we threw them away. Those hackers had gotten into all of our personal information.

PATTI

Millions of dollars were stolen. We found out that it was called Vishing. I got calls from America Fraud Unlimited saying they needed our credit card information for an audit they were doing. And you know how trusting I am. So I gave them whatever they asked for.

PHILIP

And I think, because they found your mother to be such an easy mark, they went after me. In my case, they got into my financial information from my laptop. I clicked on a website and all my data got swooped up.

GABRIEL

But isn't it a bit drastic to leave the country?

PATTI

There is something else, and it explains why we're going to Europe. I've gotten diagnosed with stage four breast cancer, and there's a clinic in Switzerland that treats these cancers.

GABRIEL wraps his arms around PATTI.

PATTI (CONT'D)

I've come to terms with this, and so has your father. But we also wanted the option of assisted suicide, and that isn't possible in the States.

GABRIEL

I am so sorry, Mom.

PATTI

I hate to say this, but the doctor said that if I'd had my yearly mammograms, it would have been caught in time.

GABRIEL

Are you in pain?

PATTI

No, I'm just a little tender. I can't believe that this is happening to me. I guess that's the way most people feel when they get diagnosed with cancer. At least the doctor was honest with me saying that because it is stage four, I wouldn't benefit from chemo or radiation.

PHILIP

It seems that our not taking things seriously has ruined our lives.

GABRIEL

Don't say that! You've both had a good life. And you did a fantastic job bringing me up. None of my friends had parents like you.

The three hug.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

So this means I'll never see you again?

PHILIP

We don't know. Maybe in a few years when all this is forgotten. We don't want you to be tainted by this, and if

PHILIP

we aren't around, you won't be
burdened.

GABRIEL

It feels like you're part of one of those
witness protection programs where
people just disappear and get new
identities. Is that going to happen to
you?

PHILIP (*smiling*)

Best that you don't ask too many
questions.

GABRIEL

What am I going to tell people?

PATTI

No one is going to ask. When you're
off to college, no one will care if you
have parents or not. We've already
quit our jobs.

PHILIP

But listen, we don't want this to
impact you. You are resilient. And
you have so many tools to cope with
this; especially your sense of humor.

PATTI

Just use your lighthearted attitude to
your advantage.

PHILIP

And don't worry about not taking your
goals too seriously. I see where you
have commitment, discipline and
dedication. I predict you won't have
any unfulfilled ambitions. We love
you very much. You've always done
us proud. You're going to make a
great philosopher.

The three hug as the lights dim. Lights come up in the elevator.

WADE

Oh, my god! You've had family issues too! So there's been no word from your parents?

GABRIEL

Nothing. I had a scholarship, and they left enough money that I didn't need to work.

WADE

But still, they suddenly abandoned you. It sounds like they didn't give you much warning. Have you tried to find them?

GABRIEL

Right now, I want to graduate, get my master's and get a job. Those are my priorities now. And, of course, having fun reaching those goals. That's what my parents would want me to do. And maybe by then all their legal and financial troubles will have been resolved, and we can be a family again.

So what about you? Did your mother ever finish her story about being agoraphobic? And then there was your father; you felt he was leaving something out relating to his laughing obsession.

WADE

My parents were scared of their own shadow. They took the term *dysfunctional family* to the highest level possible. Wait until you hear my mother's story.

Lights dim.

SCENE 10

Lights come up. The left side of the stage is lit. WADE's mother, MADGE, is sitting up in bed and WADE is sitting in a chair by the bed.

MADGE

I'm sorry. I just haven't felt like getting out of bed. Your father has been on my mind.

WADE

I hope you're okay.

MADGE

(taking a deep breath)

I might as well finish my story. I want you to see how crying and agoraphobia are connected. I left off when I got married to your father. I liked his seriousness. It made me feel safe when I entered rooms with him. And even though he didn't have a sense of humor, we had a good marriage. We never believed that one had to be able to laugh at themselves. And then I got pregnant with you.

WADE

You've never talked to me about getting pregnant. It feels strange. Did I cause any problems?

MADGE

No. It was an easy pregnancy, and you were in no rush to come out. It wasn't until late in my ninth month that you decided you had enough with being in the womb. When it was time to go to the hospital, I was very calm. I had a little bag right by the door, ready to take with me, and just as we stepped outside the door, the phone rang. I didn't understand why your father decided to take the call when I should

MADGE

have been his first priority. And he had this odd look on his face while he was speaking. Not stern; it was something else that scared me. I remained frozen; one foot out the door, the other one still inside. I was starting to get cramps, and so I hollered, 'We need to get to the hospital!'

Then your father said, 'That was a hospital calling. Your mother had a heart attack. She's dead.' And that's what set off this thing about never wanting to go through a door. I wished your father had waited until after I had given birth, but from then on, I was convinced that something bad was going to happen whenever I came to a door. After that, every time I needed to go outside, it took prodding by your father to get me out of the house.

WADE

Does that mean you never left the house again? There must have been times you left?

MADGE

If there was an emergency I would go, but most of the time your father took my place. Oh, and I made one big exception. That was when you started school. I didn't want you ever to feel abandoned by me like what happened with my mother on *my* first day of school.

WADE

Thank you for telling me this. It explains so much. I know you loved me, but sometimes I felt like it was conditional. That if I didn't cry around you or I didn't laugh around Dad, that it was only *then* that I would truly be loved.

MADGE

I hate to say that we did the best we could because I think we could have done better.

WADE kisses his mother.

WADE

I have one other question, but it's about Dad. He told me why laughter was forbidden, but I felt that he was leaving something out. I can't believe it was just because he didn't want me to get embarrassed by wetting my pants. Do you know of any other reason?

MADGE

That's all I know.

Lights dim.

SCENE 11

Lights come up. The left side of the stage is lit. WADE's father, VINCENT, is in a hospital bed, and WADE is standing and talking to him.

WADE

Dad, I want to know the real reason you set down the 'no laughing' rule. I'm not leaving until you tell me.

VINCENT

Why do you need to know anything else? Why are you torturing me?

WADE

I'm not torturing you! I have to know! I want to be able to laugh and smile and cry. And unless I know all the reasons, I won't be able to move on.

VINCENT

There's nothing else.

WADE

Didn't you have a brother?

VINCENT

Yes, but we never got along. He left home and never contacted the family. The only thing I remember about him was that he was always laughing. It drove me crazy! And he would make these stupid jokes and think they were funny.

Why? What does *he* have to do with this?

WADE

I got some information about how he died that you must have known about.

VINCENT

I swear I have no idea what you're talking about.

WADE

He died from laughing too hard.

VINCENT

What? I swear I never knew that. How do you know anything about this?

WADE

A long-lost cousin of mine got in touch with me. He's your nephew. He sent me a letter about your brother. I have it right here. Let me read it to you.

Hi, Cousin Wade. I know you must be shocked to find out you have a cousin. I was working on a family tree, and that's how I came across your name. Your father had a brother, Myles. I don't know if they had a falling out which might explain why we never met. My father died when I was twelve. It was an unusual death.

My father was a producer/writer for the sitcom called "Jackson's World". At one point, there was a table read, and the lines were smart and funny. Everything made my father laugh, and as they read, he couldn't stop laughing. It got so bad that he couldn't breathe. They called an ambulance, but by the time they arrived, Myles was dead.

When I called your father, Vincent Beekman, to let him know about his brother and invited him to the funeral, he didn't show. I never heard from him. But in my research, I discovered that you existed. I would like to meet you. My number is 323-887-2389. Oh, and my name is Skip. I live in the Los Angeles area.

VINCENT

Oh, my god! See, I was *right* about not wanting you to laugh. That it would kill you. Just like it killed my brother.

WADE

But you didn't know how he died.

VINCENT

What does it matter now? What do you want me to do? Apologize that I saved your life?

WADE

No thanks to you! I'm so pissed! If my cousin had not reached out to me, I wouldn't have had any clues to solve this goddamn mystery! I guess I have to believe you; that you knew nothing. I don't have a choice, do I? God, you and Mom sure had your secrets, and *that* explains your parenting.

VINCENT

No matter what you think, we both loved you.

Light dim

SCENE 12

Lights go up in the elevator.

GABRIEL

Wow! Your whole story is a lot to process. I can see why you haven't shared your baggage with anyone else. But it helps me understand you.

You know, talking about death from laughing; do you worry that you're carrying that same gene as your uncle and that you could die the same way; if you laughed too much?

WADE

I hadn't thought about that, but I would do *anything* to be able to laugh out loud. When I see you smile and giggle sometimes, it makes me feel so empty because I can't do the same thing. I'm so jealous! I feel left out.

GABRIEL

In my beginning philosophy class, we were told about the Greek philosopher, Chrysippus of Soli, who laughed at his own joke and died. Some actually believe it was from laughing too hard.

WADE

My goodness. Somehow you manage to equate everything to philosophy.

GABRIEL

That's what's so great about it. But really, it's so gratifying that you told me your deepest and darkest secrets. You were *so* brave. I want to take it all in. I want to suggest that we be silent now. I want to treasure this time. I can't think of a better way than to envelop each other in silence. Let our

GABRIEL

essence travel back and forth through
our eyes and through our hands.

WADE suddenly starts to grin.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

Hey, look! That's the first time I've
seen you smile since we got on this
elevator.

WADE

Oh, my god! Is it really happening?

GABRIEL

Yes! You're amazing! Here you are
telling me why you can't laugh
or cry, and within a few moments,
you're doing it. I always liked your
looks, but now with you smiling, it's
an amazing transformation.

WADE

Because I finally freed myself from all
the crap that I've been burying inside
me!

*They hold each other and look deep into each other's eyes. Suddenly the
elevator motor starts to sputter, and the elevator starts to pick up speed.*

GABRIEL

Wade, the elevator is going faster!
But . . . why is the elevator going up
instead of down? Shouldn't the
elevator be going back to the ground
floor, to the lobby?

WADE

We're racing toward the roof!

GABRIEL

Is it taking us into outer space?

WADE

Oh, no, no! Are we going to
crash again? We need to protect
ourselves! We can huddle on the
ground and stay away from the
mirrors.

They get down and huddle together waiting for the crash. The elevator jolts to a stop, and the door opens between floors.

WADE (CONT'D)

Oh, god! . . . That was close . . . again!

GABRIEL points to the top of the elevator door.

GABRIEL

But look! This time there's a way out! Do you see? The elevator stopped just below the top floor. There's enough space up there for you to squeeze through.

WADE

Me? Why not you?

GABRIEL

I'm too big. You're smaller than me, and I can try to push you up through that crack at the top. At least one of us will have a chance to escape from this cage.

WADE

But I hate leaving you alone. I'm such a *klutz*. Let's just wait for them to rescue us.

GABRIEL

You've *got* to do this! My gut tells me there isn't any rescue team. None of this is making any sense. Once you get outside, I'm hoping you can get someone to open the doors and let me out.

WADE

I'm not liking any of this, but . . . all right. Now listen to me. If anything should happen, I want you to know how I feel about you. I know we've just met, but I'm going to say it. I love you!

They hug one another.

GABRIEL

I feel the same way, but I was actually worried about saying it out loud because it's happened so quickly. I don't want to have any regrets. I can say it too! I love you! Let's do this!

GABRIEL cups his hands so that WADE can step up and squeeze through the space.

WADE

I'm not going to get through! I'm too big!

WADE falls back to the floor.

GABRIEL

We've got to try this again! This time just keep your arms together, and I'll push you.

On this second attempt, WADE is able to get through, but when GABRIEL lets loose of WADE's foot, he stumbles backward, hits his head and is rendered unconscious. WADE sees what has happened and screams. Then he starts to sob.

WADE

No! No! Gabriel, I can't leave you like this. You mean too much to me! Hold on! I'm coming back! I'm coming back to you!

WADE falls back down into the elevator, rushes to GABRIEL and cradles his body. He sobs uncontrollably.

Lights dim.

SCENE 13

Lights come up. WADE and GABRIEL are sitting on the floor of the elevator. WADE is cradling GABRIEL who has now regained consciousness.

WADE

I thought you were dead.

GABRIEL

And you've brought me back to life.

WADE

I wish I really did have that power. It looked like you had woken up, but you were delirious. It sounded like you were speaking in tongues. And then you went unconscious again. I was convinced that you had a major concussion. I couldn't stop crying. And then you really *did* wake up. You were Gabriel! I didn't know if I was crying happy tears that you came back or sad tears that I was afraid I had lost you.

GABRIEL

Does it matter? You were able to cry, and you came back to me.

WADE

We have to figure out how to get out of here.

GABRIEL

Can we just wait a few minutes? We've already both missed our appointments, so we aren't in any rush.

Then WADE starts to laugh.

GABRIEL (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

WADE

It just came out of nowhere. This laughing is resonating through my body. I was starved for giggling, snickering, chortling. Just saying those words makes me laugh. And this combination of laughing and crying has brought about such a welcome release. I can't believe how much has happened while we've been trapped; how much I've changed.

GABRIEL

You're a triple threat. Smiling, laughing *and* crying, and all at the same time!

But I've changed, too. I understand more about being serious. That there is a time and a place for that. You showed me how to balance those emotions. Maybe I don't have to keep questioning our existence. Both of us have learned to move between head space and heart space. And think about all the boundaries that we've pushed!

WADE

What do you mean by boundaries? Isn't that a bad thing?

GABRIEL

Not always. You thought you had emotional boundaries, but together we walked through them. And for myself, I think I've finally gotten over my claustrophobia. And usually I'm in control. I feel *I* have to take care of myself, but in this elevator, *you've* been taking care of me!

WADE

And, Gabriel, because of you, I'm going to try not to take things so seriously. But if I do, I want you to slap me – well, not literally -- if I get too somber.

GABRIEL

And I'm going to make sure that you laugh every day!

WADE

And think about all the ways that we're alike. We don't judge people, we're accepting and we question everything!

GABRIEL

And after today, I don't think we'll ever have any regrets. You know, I just realized something. Before I met you, I never took *love* seriously. Surprisingly, you taught me how beautiful a concept that is.

WADE

Yes, of all the changes that took place, letting ourselves love each other has been unparalleled. Apparently, this elevator has magical powers . . .

They both laugh, and a Voice is suddenly heard.

VOICE

You guys really took a long time to figure all this out. Usually people don't spend this much time in Purgatory. And this is the first time we've had guests making love in the waiting room. Maybe that is an LGBTQ thing, but I guess you've earned the right to move on.

WADE and GABRIEL look nervously at each other. There is a flash of lighting and thunder, and there is total blackness. The lights come up and the elevator is empty.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Welcome to heaven, guys!

THE END