



SAMPLE PAGES

What does it mean to be male in the 21st century?

*Ask Rick, Ed, Trae, Kody and Skyler,
five men of different ages and varied backgrounds,
each with a unique way of looking at life:*

an actor who's harboring a secret...

an accountant who considers himself a real man's man...

a lanky Texan who's had more than his share of challenges...

a car mechanic with a 119 IQ who doesn't like to talk about himself...

and a coltish young dude who's still trying to figure out who he is.



Contact

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CHARACTERS:

RICK, 58+, Caucasian, Jewish, quick-witted, compact, attractive, balding, ex-jock: wears a Cleveland Indians cap.

ED, mid 40s–mid 50s, any race, burly, gruff, set in his ways: Minnesota Twins cap.

TRAE, mid 30s–mid 40s, any race, very tall, gay, feminine, ironic sense of humor: Texas Rangers cap.

KODY, early to mid 30s, any race, wrestler's build, "street-wise," not well-schooled but not dumb: San Diego Padres cap worn backwards, also wears a mechanic's work shirt with his name inscribed.

SKYLER, early to mid 20s, any race, sweet, androgynous, ingenuous, shy, questioning: Miami Marlins knitted cap.

(Sample pages begin on page 52 of script.)

ED

There were certain restaurants I was never allowed to go to when I was growing up. My mother said they weren't for children. This one, The Carolinian — outstanding place! It had this huge mural of a southern plantation covering the entire back wall. Not what you'd expect in Minneapolis. I was never allowed to step foot inside until my cousin's wedding when I was 16. Nowadays, kids go anywhere at any age. Three-year-olds banging their spoons on their 27-dollar bowls of pasta and the parents just sit there. Not my kids. We never did that with them. There's got to be some places that are "adults only." Just for the sake of my sanity. My mother was right.

My dad didn't say much of anything.

RICK

My daddy was a perfectionist.

SKYLER

Mine was a ladies' man.

TRAE

Mine was a con man.

KODY

Hard to reach.

ED

Ozzie Nelson.

RICK

I wanted so much to please him.

SKYLER

I'll never forgive him for deserting me and my mother.

ED

Just a nice, ineffectual man.

TRAE

He wasn't happy unless he was scamming someone.

KODY

Unless he was with his students.

He was a stallion. TRAE

A mouse. ED

A task-master. RICK

A charmer. SKYLER

All buttoned-up. KODY

I can still see his skinny little Don Ameche mustache. RICK

Those starched white shirts. KODY

That thousand-watt smile. TRAE

Smell his ever-present Old Spice. ED

Mixed with the smoke from those cheap El Productos. SKYLER

I adored him. RICK

I hated him. TRAE

I adored him, then I hated him. SKYLER

I liked him well enough. ED

I admired him, but from a distance. KODY

RICK

He taught me everything I know.

KODY

He taught me things I didn't know I didn't know.

TRAE

He taught me things I never should have known.

ED

Everything I know I had to learn myself.

SKYLER

My mother was my father. My sisters were my father.

TRAE

My old man abandoned me when I was 20.

SKYLER

My father abandoned me when I was 17.

KODY

My pops abandoned me when I was 15.

ED

My dad just turned 82. Does the Sudoku every day.

TRAE

When he went to prison.

SKYLER

When he walked out on us.

KODY

[a beat] When he died.

RICK

[a beat] Huh? Wait. Kody. Your father's dead?

Long pause, then KODY starts his story. His speech gradually becomes more refined, not as "street" as it's been up to now, as does his entire demeanor. The mask is slowly falling away.

Lights dim on the rest of the stage, stay up on KODY.

KODY

[to audience] I'm 15. I remember exactly where I am when Ma gives me the bad news. I've just gotten home from school, I've changed into my swim suit, and I'm at the patio door about to go outside.

"Your pops saw Dr. Chaikin today."

"Yeah? What's up?"

"He told him...he's a candidate for a heart attack."

I just stand there for about a minute. It's what I always was afraid of, what I always knew would happen, me being without my pops. I mean, we just moved into a new one-story house so he wouldn't have to climb those stairs no more. But this word from the doc makes it way too real.

Six months go by. Nada. Then, that awful evening in April. I remember it all: it's a Friday, it's after dinner, it's dark outside, the lamps in the house are glowing, cozy. We're watching "Sabrina, the Teenage Witch" when my pops starts complaining he's got pains from his left arm. Ma tells him to go lie down in the bedroom, go to sleep. The next morning he's still not feeling so hot, so she takes him to see the doctor. The doc tells him that he's had a mild heart attack, not too serious, but he wants him to go to the hospital. Pops agrees. No fight, no argument, he just says "Okay." Not like him. Not like him at all.

My ma takes over his classes. They both have biology degrees and she's taught before, so it's no biggie. We visit him in the hospital every day, right after school. I'm reading "Great Expectations" in English class and he likes me to read it out loud to him, a chapter at a time. Then we talk about it. I've read that book about 10 times since.

The following Sunday is Easter, and it's also the day before he's supposed to go home. Ma and I spend most of the day with him. We even go down to the hospital cafeteria for our sad little Easter dinner after he has his in his room. Then afterwards, I lie on the bed next to him and we watch the Easter special on channel eight: "The Wizard of Oz." Man, I love that movie! Then we make plans to take him home the next day. Pops asks my ma to lean down so he can whisper something private in her ear. I hear it anyways. He tells her what a great job she's doing with his classes and how proud he is of her. We say goodnight and leave.

By the time we get home, Pops is dead. We find out from my Aunt Lou. The lady from the hospital, the one who's supposed to make those terrible phone calls, tells Aunt Lou that she tried and tried to call Ma on her cell but it kept going to her voicemail. I don't

think she called her at all. You see, she knew Ma from church, and she just couldn't deal with being the one to have to tell her that her husband was dead.

A couple of days later, we find out what happened. Pops tried to drag one of the chairs from his room out into the hall after we left. I guess he was feeling lonely. But the chair was heavy, too much for his heart, and he suffered a massive myocardial infarction right then and there. Dr. Chaikin says he was probably dead before he hit the floor.

I'm a mess for a long time after that. Looking back, it seems like I was living in a black hole for the next three, four, five years. "How can a kid with a 119 I.Q. flunk out of college?" people would ask.

Beats the shit outta me.

Light up on the rest of the stage.

RICK

Oh, Kody...

RICK gets out of his chair/stool — for the first time all evening — walks over to KODY and puts his arm around him, hugs him...something.

I was 16. Lung cancer.

They have a moment together, then RICK goes back to his chair/stool.

TRAE

Well, you two lugs are big with the secrets, aren't you?

KODY

Hey! It's not easy to talk about, you know?

RICK

It was a long time ago, Trae. It's the worst thing that ever happened to me in my entire life, but...it was a long, long time ago.

TRAE

Well, you ask a ton of questions, mister, but there isn't a lot forthcoming.

RICK

What are you talking about? I'm a open book...

ED

Yeah, right.

TRAE

...written in Sanskrit with no footnotes or table of contents.

RICK

So, okay, what do you guys want to know?

TRAE

Have you even been married....

KODY

Do you have any kids....

ED

Who do you go home to at the end of the day....

SKYLER

[a beat] Which do you prefer: dogs or cats?

RICK

Okay: No...No...My partner...Dogs.

ED

Oh. What's her name?

RICK

Snickers.

SKYLER

I think he meant your partner, Rick.

RICK

Yes, yes, I know what he meant. Thank you, Skyler.

TRAE

And?

RICK

Name's Terry.

TRAE

As in Terry Louise...or Terry *Louis*?

RICK

Neither. Terrence Michael Patrick O'Brien.

ED

I had no idea.

RICK

I never told you.

TRAE

Terrence nabbed a sports fan!

KODY

Dang!

TRAE

It's a gay boy's dream come true!

ED

I mean, you don't SEEM gay. You know what I mean.

TRAE

Yes, Ed. We know.

SKYLER

Ed. Sir. Two-and-a-half of us here are gay. You think we're all the same person?

ED

No, but... *[to RICK]* you were a jock!

TRAE and SKYLER react.

RICK

Funny you should mention that. You know, Ed, Kinsey surmised that about 10 percent of all males are homosexual. Now, that may be a little high, but it stands to reason that what's true for the general male population is also true for its subsets. Including athletes.

So — there are 30 major league baseball teams, with 25 players on each team's roster at any one time. Except for September, but we won't go into that, that's way too "inside baseball." So, 750 men playing our national pastime at any single moment. Now, let's be conservative and say, for various societal reasons — I mean, they're jocks, after all — and because Kinsey might have been full of shit, that the percentage is half of what he said. Okay, that's still five percent, which comes to 37½ guys, which means: every major league team probably has at least one gay player.

So, Ed, you still surprised that a old, used-up ex-second-sacker like me is gay?

ED

You mean to tell me that you've never slept with a woman?

RICK

Well, I never said *that*....

KODY

Really! How was it, big guy?

TRAE

Yes. Do tell!

RICK

It was...a fucking disaster.

See what I did there?

KODY

We're waitin', dude.

RICK

Okay. It's the summer after I graduate high school. I'm driving a cab in Cleveland during the day to save up for college, and at night, I'm doing community theatre. "The Music Man" at the Shaker Heights Community Players.

KODY

Oh, man! I fuckin' love that movie!

ALL turn to look at KODY.

Lights dim on the rest of the stage, stay up on RICK.

RICK

[to audience] I'm the second tenor in the barbershop quartet. You know: *[sings]* "Lida Rose, I'm home again, Rose." The baritone is this really nice guy, Jim Kostopoulos, maybe 10 years older than me, upper body to die for, but with a voice like cream.

You ever meet someone and you have this instant connection? That's what happens with me and Jim: Day One of rehearsal, the second I sit down next to him, we become fast friends. Then we find out we're both rabid Indians fans, we both love books, classic films, Chinese food — the whole nine yards. I'm probably attracted to him, but I'm for sure not ready to admit it, most of all to myself. And anyway, Jim is straight. No — really!

So, one day I'm talking to our director, Naomi. We're discussing the show and Jim's name comes up, and Naomi says, out of nowhere, "So, you guys are having a 'thing,' aren't you?"

"No. We're just friends."

"Oh, come on!"

"No. No 'thing.' Really!"

"Really, Rick?"

Now I'm freaking out! She thinks Jim and I are sleeping together. She thinks I'm gay!

So, for the rest of the summer, I make it my mission to prove to myself — and the rest of the world — that I am not gay. I spend less time with Jim and more time with this real-life boyfriend/girlfriend, who also happen to be playing Harold Hill and Marian the Librarian. His name is Scott, and she's Kathleen: a real looker and a real... "shipooopi"!

Well, one night, late in the summer, a few weeks before I leave Cleveland to start my freshman year, the three of us are sitting around Kath's apartment, drinking tequila and smoking pot. Scott announces that he has to go somewhere for a couple of hours (who remembers where) but that I'm welcome to hang out with Kath 'til he gets back.

So...this is my chance! I can prove to everyone — especially me — that I'm as straight as...Steve McQueen.

Well now I'm really drunk and I'm really high, and I have a very unrealistic appraisal of my sexual prowess, so I start giving Kath my "come hither" look. And — surprise, surprise! — she gives it right back.

And then, just like Anne Baxter in "The Ten Commandments," she gently takes the tips of my fingers and leads me into her boudoir.

Oh, just don't say anything, Kathleen. Please. Let's just take off all our clothes, crawl into bed, and see what happens. But she is, after all, female. You know, 7,000 words per day.

"I have to say, Rick, I'm a little surprised. I always thought you were more interested in Scott than you were in me."

Boiiing! That does it! How can I possibly perform after *that* left hook to the jaw? We try...I try, but nothing's happening. Oh sure, I can walk around high school for three years with my shirttail hanging out trying to hide a persistent erection, but now that I need one?

Soft. Slack. Limp.

I try to think of all the guys who get me hot: Paul Newman, James Dean, Marlon Brando...Jim Kostopoulos.

Flaccid. Droopy. Floppy.

"It's okay, Rick. It's no biggie. I mean...It happens to everyone. Even Scott can't get it up once in a while."

[sarcastically] Well, that makes me feel better! I quickly pull my clothes on and get the hell out of there.

So. Now I have to face it: my gayness is a *"fait accompli,"* to quote my 12th grade civics teacher. Decided long ago. Nothing to be done.

Soon I'm off to college, where just about everyone thinks I'm straight. Which is laughable considering, a) I'm in the theatre department and, b) I'm a Gemini, for chrissake. Sophomore year I meet this playwriting major, Julio, who starts by offering to give me a neck massage and winds up being the first boy I ever kiss. Too bad he was such a douchebag.



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