

Click (Long Version)

by

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DESCRIPTION

When Marlin reveals to Pinto what he did in the park that night, it changes the whole nature of the moral universe they inhabit. A play about whether hate can ever be moral.

CHARACTERS

- Pinto
- Marlin
- Jonathan

SETTING

- A kitchen

MISCELLANEOUS

- Table, chairs, and other items, as described in the script
- Newspaper

Note: The actors should use a rough-edged British, Irish, or Scottish accent. The accents can be mixed, that is, one British and one Irish, for example, but it must not be done in American tones.

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Scene 1

Pinto sits at a kitchen table, ordinary and not IKEA, with three other chairs, wooden. A mint-green vinyl table cloth, on which sit salt and pepper shakers—clear glass, with silver metal tops—next to a sugar bowl. A half-height metal paper napkin dispenser, exactly like one on a diner counter, stands next to the sugar bowl. One broken-handled coffee mug holds pens, pencils, markers, and scissors. A second broken-handled coffee mug holds scuffed flatware: spoons, butter knives, forks.

A small cheap transistor radio is on the table, music playing.

Pinto is staring at article in a newspaper, intently.

Marlin, jacket on, stands by the back door of the kitchen.

SOUND: A back door opens, with the rattle of a window in its frame, then closes. Marlin is now in the kitchen. He looks at Pinto at the table.

PINTO

Is that you?

Pinto turns to look, turns back to the newspaper.

PINTO

It is you.

Marlin hangs his jacket on the back of a chair, straddles the chair at the table, turns off the radio.

Marlin taps the newspaper page with this fingertip.

MARLIN

I did that.

PINTO

You did not.

MARLIN

I did.

PINTO

What's listed here.

MARLIN

Yes.

PINTO

I don't believe it.

MARLIN

Believe me.

PINTO

I don't want to.

MARLIN

It's true.

PINTO

If you really did what's listed here, then kiss me.

Marlin kisses Pinto. Their faces separate an inch, nothing more.

MARLIN

Lock, stock, and barrel to his head. That's not in the article.

PINTO

The cause of death is not in the article.

MARLIN

Only a detail the perpetrator would know. Because I was there.

Pinto's finger traces around the edge of the photo in the newspaper.

PINTO

Then that means—last night I slept with—

MARLIN

Such a one that would do that, yes.

PINTO

—would do this—

MARLIN

You always knew I was capable.

With an inarticulate sound, Pinto shoots out of his chair, paces. Marlin pivots the paper so that he can read it. He takes a pen from the mug and scribbles around the edges of the photo.

MARLIN

No photo can ever capture, you know—two dimensions can't be three—the air, the brittle light—pixels cannot—

Pinto leans on the table into Marlin.

PINTO

Tell me. Why. Hard.

MARLIN

Of course. It's not without reason—a reason. I had my own business to mind—

PINTO

Faster.

MARLIN

—self-important, going through the park—

Pinto sits down.

MARLIN

—a mundane day.

PINTO

Then. What.

MARLIN

Not him—not at first. Jonathan.

PINTO

Jonathan?

MARLIN

I don't think he was there for you think he was there for. Hair slicked, teeth white—clean. No prowling-around for him. He had found a source.

PINTO

And of course—

MARLIN

We greeted.

PINTO

Innocent.

MARLIN

Jonathan is all done. I have told you that.

PINTO

You have told me that.

MARLIN

But still open, as befits friends—a kiss, an embrace. We are not in medieval times.

PINTO

So when did he appear?

Marlin positions the sugar bowl behind the napkin dispenser.

MARLIN

He must have been there, but maybe behind those concrete urns with the knackered flowers, one of those—niches—

Marlin picks up the salt and pepper shakers, now Jonathan and Marlin.

MARLIN

Jonathan and I, we talk—by now, dusk—the lamps splutter on—traffic, moist air—you know that garden—and Jonathan leaves.

PINTO

A big kiss.

MARLIN

You know his manner.

PINTO

Several—and him watching all.

MARLIN

And I am alone.

Marlin puts the salt shaker to one side.

MARLIN

I thought that that would be brief—that time of day—but the place stayed deserted. Only myself. I knew he was there, though I hadn't seen him. Ghost-nerves, you know, the ones that pick up on a breeze: they zizzed. Purple shadows, like ink.

PINTO

I have to know.

Marlin dances the pepper shaker in front of the napkin dispenser.

PINTO

You had no reason to stay.

MARLIN

I had no reason to stay.

PINTO

But you did.

MARLIN

Something stayed me. Danger—excitement—

PINTO

A center of gravity for you.

MARLIN

It's why you love me. I called out—"olly olly oxen free"—he didn't have to stay, either—but his voice came back: "I saw you." "I can't talk to a ghost," I say. And he, summoned, appears. Go on.

Pinto moves the sugar bowl from behind the napkin dispenser.

MARLIN

And when he did—I swear the air broke. Not shattered but—reconfigured.

Marlin gets up, goes to stare what would be the kitchen window over the sink.

PINTO

"I saw you."

MARLIN

"I saw you," he said, with a voice like ripped glass. "I saw you kiss him."

PINTO

A double-edge to that.

Marlin turns to face Pinto.

MARLIN

Doesn't it. "I saw you—I want" or "I saw you—I loathe." And then he brought it down to a single edge: "You faggot."

Pinto's voice changes slightly to take on a different character.

PINTO

I saw you, faggot.

MARLIN

Like that, yes.

PINTO

Because I need to know.

Pinto approaches Marlin.

PINTO

I saw you, faggot.

MARLIN

More hoarse, more outbreath.

PINTO

I saw you kiss him, you faggot.

MARLIN

And something—clicked. Brittle to brutal.

PINTO

I saw you kiss him. I did. I saw all of it.

MARLIN

“What of it?” I say.

PINTO

Do you want some for yourself?

MARLIN

I did say that, almost beat for beat.

PINTO

That’s why I said you said it.

MARLIN

“Do you want some for yourself?”

PINTO

Why do you always have to correct?

MARLIN

Because I knew what was next. I knew, even before the words I knew would come out of his mouth came out of his mouth.

PINTO

I hate you.

MARLIN

See, you know as well. The words lasering in, zeroing out. "I hate your kind."

PINTO

Your kind—

MARLIN

"I hate all of you—filth."

Pinto sits down. He holds the pepper shaker.

MARLIN

The air frags all around me—and something just—clicks.

PINTO

Permission.

MARLIN

Granted.

PINTO

Sit. Please.

Marlin sits.

MARLIN

Permission.

Marlin indicates for Pinto to pass him the pepper shaker, which Pinto does. Marlin pulls the sugar bowl toward him, faces the two items together.

MARLIN

"Filth," "sewage," "deserve to die" "loathe"—as these grenades come in, I am in this suspension, waiting for the permission to begin.

PINTO

Why didn't you leave? Avoid the temptation.

MARLIN

I had that choice.

PINTO

Sky failing, venom spilled—but you still intact—

MARLIN

Intact—

PINTO

The higher road to take—

Marlin laughs.

MARLIN

You are so delicious, you are! You would have left.

Marlin lifts the sugar bowl up like a chalice.

MARLIN

"I loathe you"—infection, viper—that long "o"—click.

PINTO

Click.

MARLIN

A voice in the dusk—no human tether—

Marlin drops the bowl, and it crashes onto the table, on top of the photo.

MARLIN

He had earned his passage out of the garden.

Pinto moves to clean up the mess.

MARLIN

Leave it alone—stop being who you are!

Marlin gets out of his chair and moves around the kitchen. Pinto doesn't stop cleaning up.

MARLIN

It was easy, actually. Stop it!

Pinto stops.

MARLIN

Come here. Come here.

Pinto goes to Marlin. Marlin takes Pinto's hands.

MARLIN

We share everything. This will out in our every touch from now on—these hands make you co-conspirator. Co-respirator.

Marlin puts Pinto's right hand around his throat.

MARLIN

I grab him—click, off go his words—the soft places to the sides of the larynx. Squeeze!

Pinto squeezes, which constricts Marlin's voice.

MARLIN

I ram him against the wall. Do it!

Pinto, pressing against Marlin's throat, slams him onto the table. Pinto's breathing is heavy.

MARLIN

He feels this vice tighten, tighten until—

Marlin slides out of Pinto's grasp to the floor.

MARLIN

He falls.

Marlin laughs. Pinto looks crushed.

MARLIN

At the foot of the wall, but still breathing.

Marlin imitates thick, rickety breaths.

MARLIN

Pick up that chair—pick it up! Over your head.

Pinto lifts the chair over his head.

MARLIN

The trash barrel.

Marlin sits up, leans back, his arms supporting him.

MARLIN

“Look at me.” Honestly, I can’t tell, but I hear him turn his head. “I want you to see what’s going to kill you”—and then I know.

Marlin snaps his fingers.

MARLIN

Click.

Pinto puts the chair down. Marlin reaches out his right hand. Pinto grasps it, pulls him to standing.

MARLIN

No good scare and give him a chance for penance—but with cold rage end his days. I hated him, friend, I hated every hatred he held for me, for you, for Jonathan—and it was no effort at all to let gravity judge.

Pinto lets go, moves to the table, sits.

MARLIN

Now one less hater in the world.

PINTO

They’re floating it as a possible “hate crime.”

MARLIN

How do these things get judged? How do you judge me? There is one less hater in the world.

Pinto takes a pair of scissors from the mug and cuts out the article and picture.

PINTO

Hate for hate.

Marlin sits at the table.

MARLIN

Hate for hate it was—but at least now a little bit cleaner, don’t you think?

Pinto cuts and finishes.

MARLIN

Yes? Cleaner?

PINTO

It is not without meaning. And I am scared.

MARTIN

If they find, they find, not likely, but—

PINTO

Not that.

Pinto turns the cutting face down, smoothes it.

MARLIN

Of me.

Pinto half-shrugs, half-nods.

MARLIN

But there is one less.

Pinto half-shrugs, half-nods again. He arranges the items on the table, putting them back into order.

PINTO

Could you turn the radio on?

Marlin doesn't right away, but then he does. CLAIR DE LUNE plays at a low volume.

Marlin watches Pinto, who stares at the turned-over article.

Lights to black as CLAIR DE LUNE plays up rich and full.

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Scene 2: The Next Day

Lights up as music fades down to coming from the radio. Pinto is in exactly the same chair, staring at the same article—this time, face up—but with a different shirt on.

Jonathan appears, standing outside the back door.

SOUND: Knocking on the back door, with the rattle of a window in its frame.

Pinto looks up, stares ahead, says nothing.

SOUND: Another knock.

It's open. PINTO

SOUND: Another knock.

It's open! PINTO

SOUND: The door opens and closes as JONATHAN enters.

He pulls up a chair and sits.

Pinto. JONATHAN

Jonathan. PINTO

Marlin about? JONATHAN

Pinto does not answer, stares. Jonathan fidgets but light-hearted, not anxious. He turns off the radio.

You look stung, bub. JONATHAN

Jonathan, using the edge of his hand, makes a chopping motion between his own eyes.

Two-by-four'd—pole-axed. JONATHAN

Jonathan angles himself around to see the newspaper in front of Pinto. He taps the picture with his finger.

Ah. Ah. JONATHAN

You know. Don't you. PINTO

Jonathan shrugs.

PINTO

I know. I was—informed.

JONATHAN

Now I know what I'd only suspected.

Jonathan makes the chopping motion again.

PINTO

Stop that! Lock, stock, and barrel to his head—I sit here knowing!

JONATHAN

Not doing you any good.

PINTO

Why are you here?

JONATHAN

A visit. Long time.

PINTO

You can have him, his lock, stock, and barrel –

Jonathan picks up the salt and pepper shakers.

JONATHAN

Not why I came.

PINTO

Because he has forfeited! Take him!

JONATHAN

I came by because he said he was happy.

Jonathan makes the shakers do a dance for Pinto.

PINTO

Happy.

JONATHAN

See myself to believe because I am happy for him. I am!

PINTO

Happy. Put those down.

Jonathan puts them down.

JONATHAN

Whatever Pinto wants.

PINTO

All night—

Pinto slams one palm flat on the table, then slams the other one next to it, parallel. Jonathan, for all his coolness, jumps.

PINTO

Like this.

Pinto then claps his hands together, palm to palm, and holds them together tightly.

PINTO

Not like this. All night—

Pinto slams both hands back onto the table.

PINTO

The ceiling steals my eyes all night. Drawn out there—the scene.

Jonathan makes the chopping motion.

JONATHAN

Barrel.

Marlin appears by the back door. He eases into the kitchen, unseen and unheard by either of them, newspaper under his arm. He watches the scene.

PINTO

Could feel his warmth next to me. And then the barrel—cold. And then his warmth. And then the—he slips away early—I'm glad! Never was before—but I am now! I have to do something—

Marlin slides in to the kitchen. Jonathan sees him. Pinto sees that Jonathan sees something and stops talking.

MARLIN

What? Hello Jonathan. Do what?

Marlin kisses Pinto on the forehead.

My love.

Pinto does not answer. Marlin throws his newspaper on the table.

MARTIN

So—are we all knowing all here?

JONATHAN

I didn't when I came in. Completely. Then when I came in, I did.
Completely. Him—

Jonathan makes the chopping motion.

Marlin pulls an empty chair next to Pinto. He clamps an arm across Pinto's chest, as much embrace as stranglehold.

MARLIN

Do what? Do some. Thing. Do what?

Pinto, in response, lifts Marlin's hand and clamps his teeth down on it, but lightly. Pinto slowly but intentionally increases the pressure of his bite.

Not showing any of the pain he feels, Marlin stands up. Pinto carries Marlin's hand in his mouth: a feral image. Then Pinto releases his bite. Marlin holds up his hand like a prize.

MARLIN

I'm not sure that that was unpleasant, given our present circumstances.

PINTO

Jonathan—a favor.

JONATHAN

By all means.

PINTO

Would you ask him what he expects of me.

JONATHAN

Through me to him?

Marlin holds up his hand.

MARLIN
Because contact is painful.

PINTO
Will you?

MARLIN
Do it, mate.

JONATHAN
Well—what do you expect of Pinto?

Marlin places the chair at the table, taking a few moments to place it precisely. Then he looks at them both.

MARLIN
I went back. To the scene.

JONATHAN
You punk.

MARLIN
This morning.

JONATHAN
Brass-faced.

MARLIN
The “crime scene.” The people milling about—and the secret lodged right there among them.

PINTO
Jonathan—

MARLIN
I was a battlefield of impulses.

PINTO
Jonathan, ask him again—

MARLIN
No idea how such a secret sizzles—

PINTO
Jonathan—

JONATHAN

Can you answer to him, Marlin?

MARLIN

I am.

JONATHAN

Not really.

MARLIN

Do you like being his solicitor?

JONATHAN

He asked what you expected, and, Christ, he even bit you to get it!

MARLIN

You like being his advocate?

JONATHAN

I like to know the future when I can.

Marlin laughs.

MARLIN

The officer in charge.

Marlin takes a page from the newspaper he brought in and folds an origami admiral's hat as he talks.

MARLIN

To him I say, "I did that." Eyes never flinched. "Did you, now?"
"Yes," I repeated, still, composed.

Marlin puts on the hat, models it.

JONATHAN

You look daft.

MARLIN

"Barrel to his head." A flick! of his eyes—we lock for a moment.
Then. "You should move along."

JONATHAN

You are daft as a brush.

Marlin takes another piece of newspaper and rolls it so that it becomes a sword.

MARLIN

“I’m trying to make your career. I need to be caught.” But he doesn’t bite. Moment’s gone. And off went I, a freed man. La di da di da di da.

JONATHAN

Moth and flame—as usual.

Marlin turns around an empty chair, straddles it, faces Pinto.

MARLIN

Two dark spots on the ceiling last night—your eyes drilling—the dust of judgment raining down—did you not gavel me all night long? By morning, Jonathan, I was encased in judgment. Muddled up, immured. Cask of Amontillado.

Pinto finally turns his face to Marlin.

PINTO

But did you just want me to dismiss it?

MARLIN

Yes.

PINTO

As if what had happened—

MARLIN

Yes.

PINTO

—did not happen.

MARLIN

Yes. Yes.

PINTO

How?

MARLIN

You mean, “why.” Why. Why? For love, of course. For love, love.

Jonathan rolls out of his chair, laughing but without any real humor behind it.

JONATHAN

Oh oh oh.

PINTO

If I did that for you—

MARLIN

Past tense, “did that for you.” The thousand-yard stare into the abyss. What?

Pinto gulps in air, as if he can't breathe.

PINTO

Nothing!

MARLIN

Advocate.

JONATHAN

Then—he would be like you—barrel held overhead, ready.

PINTO

Co-conspirator, you said. Co-respirator.

MARLIN

Can you love someone who did barbaric but who you know is not barbaric?

Jonathan bursts out laughing derisively.

JONATHAN

Oh, rich, Marlin! Don't you see it, Pinto? He's as deep as the guano on the cliffs of Peru! No doubt at this moment sorry—

Jonathan straddles his chair as well.

JONATHAN

—sincere—always good at moments—

Jonathan makes a series of faces.

JONATHAN

A little simper, droop of mouth, sad face of sorry—seen it all, Marlin. Pinto, it's played out.

Pinto turns an anguished face to Marlin.

PINTO

I want to believe you.

JONATHAN

Cherub! There are clues here! He confesses to a brick-brained officer of the court—he obviously does not care about you—

Pinto, whip-quick, grabs Marlin's paper sword and thrusts it against Jonathan's breast. Jonathan, with exaggerated daintiness, takes the crumpled sword out of Pinto's hand and smooths it out on the table.

JONATHAN

How easy these things have suddenly become.

Pinto tears out of his chair, caroms around the kitchen, his voice constricted.

PINTO

I have to—

MARLIN

I meant what I said—

PINTO

I can't—

MARLIN

I did it because—

Pinto picks up a chair and, for instant, seems capable of smashing it against one or both of them.

PINTO

I—have—to—tell—I—have—to—tell—

MARLIN

Who? Who?

PINTO

The—proper—authorities—

MARLIN

Proper authorities?

JONATHAN

So much for your love.

Marlin grabs Jonathan by the throat.

MARLIN

Shut up!

JONATHAN

I am commanded.

PINTO

I am tired of "Pinto, you can't do"!

Pinto throws the chair down.

PINTO

Something has to resolve! Human being wasted!

MARLIN

Not without meaning, you said—

PINTO

Meaning—Meaning—

Pinto snaps his fingers faster and faster, as if trying to find a word or words but cannot.

PINTO

Aaaaagggghhhhh! My head—smashed—My face—Ahhhhhhh!
One—less—hater—yes—but—even—he—deserved—

MARLIN

Deserved?

PINTO

Not—to—die—

Pinto smashes his fist into his other hand several times, hard. Pinto breathes heavily for a few beats, then calms himself and snaps his fingers once.

PINTO
(quietly)

I have to.

MARLIN

(equally quietly)

Then what has been unthinkable has become available to our thought.

JONATHAN

Marlin?

MARLIN

And if to thought, then to action.

PINTO

What could be unthinkable to you now?

MARLIN

Faced with betrayal—

Marlin snaps his fingers.

MARLIN

Faced with being walled away—

Marlin snaps his fingers again.

MARLIN

Nothing is unthinkable.

Marlin snaps his fingers a last time.

JONATHAN

Marlin. Marlin!

PINTO

We have cut each other loose.

JONATHAN

Pinto!

MARLIN

Equals, then.

PINTO

Equals more than we have ever been.

Marlin and Pinto stare at each other for a hard moment. Then Pinto reaches out to caress Marlin's cheek, and Marlin ever so slightly leans in to receive it. Jonathan suddenly moves between them.

JONATHAN

Marlin, come home with me—you two obviously need a break from each other. Come on—I'll take care of you.

Marlin does not move. He and Pinto continue to look at one another.

JONATHAN

C'mon, love—come on—you know—you know you've always wanted to come back.

MARLIN

Have I always?

JONATHAN

You can't really mean—

MARLIN

What a finger down the throat is to puking—that's you. Why would I?

Marlin takes off his admiral's hat and puts it on Pinto.

MARLIN

Real danger, worth courting.

JONATHAN

So I should leave?

MARLIN

You were never invited.

PINTO

No scraps for you here.

Jonathan hesitates, then goes to leave, but stops before leaving.

JONATHAN

I've got no pity for the broken bastard in the park—but who knows? Investigative dead end, walled in—then some—

Jonathan snaps his fingers.

JONATHAN

—tip, anonymous, that cracks the case, as they say. One can never predict how things will click.

Jonathan leaves.

SOUND: Back door opens and closes, window rattling.

Pinto takes off the admiral's hat, lays it on the table.

PINTO

Nothing is changed. Everything is changed. All possibilities. All wounds.

SOUND: Like gunshots, several heavy poundings on the back door.

SOUND: JONATHAN's laughter rings out, then fades as he moves away.

Their faces startle, then ease, as they continue looking at each other.