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by

Michael Bettencourt

67 Highwood Terrace #2, Weehawken NJ 07086

(201) 770-0550; 347-564-9998; m.bett@verizon.net;

<http://www.m-bettencourt.com>

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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 room

TIME

- Now

MISCELLANEOUS

- Table, two chairs
- 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 should not be done in American tones.

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Scene 1

PINTO is sitting at the kitchen table, looking at the newspaper.
MARLIN is there; he points to something in the paper.

	MARLIN
I did that.	
	PINTO
This?	
	MARLIN
Yes.	
	PINTO
This.	
	MARLIN
Yes.	
	PINTO
What's listed here.	
	MARLIN
Yes.	
	PINTO
You did.	
	MARLIN
	PINTO
I don't believe it.	
	MARLIN
Believe it.	
	PINTO
I don't want to. I don't want to believe you. Or this.	
	MARLIN
Believe me.	
	PINTO
Not any of it.	
	MARLIN
And that.	
	PINTO
If that's true, then kiss me.	

MARLIN kisses PINTO.

PINTO

You did it, then.

MARLIN

All. All of it.

PINTO

Lock, stock, and --

MARLIN

Barrel to his head.

PINTO points to the story.

PINTO

That's right.

MARLIN

Of course it's right -- I was there.

PINTO

Only a detail the perpetrator would know.

MARLIN

(overlapping at "perpetrator")
-- the perpetrator would know. Yes.

PINTO

Unless you've read the paper already --

MARLIN

That makes no sense --

PINTO

-- and want to scare me, sicken me --

MARLIN

You are reading the paper to me --

PINTO

Hot off the presses!

MARLIN

This is my first --

PINTO

Then that means --

MARLIN

Yes, it does.

PINTO
-- I sit here with --
MARLIN
Such a one that would do that, yes.
PINTO
(overlapping at "would")
-- would do this --

MARLIN
That did that, yes.

PINTO
Gah!

MARLIN sits.

MARLIN
How do you feel?

PINTO
I don't know what I know. So I don't know how to
know what to feel. How do you feel?

MARLIN takes the newspaper.

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

PINTO
Tell me. Tell me. Hard.

MARLIN
Yes?

PINTO
Yes.

MARLIN
I had my own business to mind --

PINTO
-- your own business --

MARLIN
-- thought here, a thought there, filling out
the day. I was going through the park --

PINTO
That park.

MARLIN
This one.

PINTO
To where?

MARLIN
Just through, passing through. Innocent, like
any percent of ordinary citizens on a mundane
day.

PINTO
Innocent.

MARLIN
I was tending my own business! Self-important,
bright with the day.

PINTO
Then what? Then what? Don't leave us in the
galleries hanging too long.

MARLIN
Not him --

PINTO
No?

MARLIN
Not at first.

PINTO
Then who?

MARLIN
I didn't see him at first.

PINTO
Who, then?

MARLIN
I saw Jonathan.

PINTO
Johnny Appleseed?

MARLIN
He was in the park.

PINTO
No doubt.
(sing-song)
Troll, troll, troll for my hole --

MARLIN

No, no, I don't think he was doing that. Coffee in hand, hair slicked -- he looked clean, to be honest. Teeth -- his teeth had been cleaned! No prowling-around for him. He had found a source.

PINTO

And of course --

MARLIN

We greeted.

PINTO

Innocent, I'm sure.

MARLIN

Jonathan is all done. Done, over, over, done. I have told you that. But still open, you know, as befits friends -- a kiss, an embrace. We are not in medieval times.

PINTO

So when did he appear?

MARLIN

He was there, in the park -- he must have been, but maybe behind those concrete urns with the knackered flowers, one of those -- niches -- he could see.

PINTO

So when did he -- what did he -- ?

MARLIN

Jonathan and I, we talk, exchange -- I ask him about his clean teeth, he laughs, mentions something about daddies of sugar, reveals no more. By now, dusk -- the lamps splutter on -- they're only good for making shadows anyway -- traffic, moist air -- you know the garden, you know the dusk there.

PINTO

Yes, I know it.

MARLIN

Jonathan leaves.

PINTO

After a big kiss -- of course.

MARLIN

You know his manner.

PINTO

Only one?

MARLIN

Several. And he must have been watching -- watching them all.

PINTO

You can do that from where he was.

MARLIN

If he was there at all -- but he was somewhere there -- watching.

PINTO

And now you're alone.

MARLIN

I thought that that would be brief -- that time of day, people needing to be where they weren't scuttling through -- but the place stayed deserted. Only myself.

PINTO

The air brittle, as you said.

MARLIN

Yes, it had turned that way. I don't know how, but it had. Somehow ready to break.

PINTO

And your mind -- was -- ?

MARLIN

You're probing, yes -- I understand.

PINTO

I have to know.

MARLIN

You do have to know.

PINTO

So --

MARLIN

I knew he was there, though I hadn't seen him. Ghost-nerves, you know, the ones that pick up a breeze: they zizzed. Purple shadows, now, as if ink were seeping in.

PINTO

I would have left.

MARTIN

You're like that.

PINTO

You had no reason to stay.

MARLIN

I had no reason to stay.

PINTO

But you did.

MARLIN

Something stayed me. Double-edged -- danger and excitement --

PINTO

(overlapping)

Excitement -- yes. Your center of gravity always.

MARLIN

So I called out --

PINTO

"Come out, come out, wherever you are." Such a game with you.

MARLIN

I called out. And when I did -- I swear the air broke. Not shattered but -- reconfigured.

PINTO

Brittle to brutal.

MARLIN

He appeared.

PINTO

Tag, you're it.

MARLIN

"I saw you."

PINTO

Nothing more formal?

MARLIN

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

PINTO

That with a double-edge.

MARLIN

Doesn't it. "I saw you -- I want" or "I saw you
-- I loathe." The double hung on the air.

PINTO

The reconfigured air.

MARLIN

The air we breathed conjoined.

PINTO

I saw you.

MARLIN

He said.

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

PINTO

I saw you.

MARLIN

Like that, yes.

PINTO

I need to know.

PINTO approaches MARLIN.

PINTO

I saw you.

MARLIN

More hoarse, more outbreath.

PINTO

I saw you.

MARLIN

"I saw you," he said. "I saw you kiss him."

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 invite assault --

MARLIN

Something clicks.

PINTO

-- this need to correct --

MARLIN

Something just clicks, that just pops the quick flip off -- not going to abide some toss-pot making like he thinks he can know me, control me. Take away the advantage, see? Besides, I knew the exits. But then -- then -- then it came: "I hate you."

PINTO

I hate you.

MARLIN

Like a dart in the eye.

PINTO

He said "I hate"?

MARLIN

The words lasering in, zeroing out.

PINTO

"Beg pardon" you might've said.

MARLIN

I couldn't even get that past. "I hate you," repeats, repeats this sissing mantra. And the air frags all around me, and I am verging -- I am verging on edges --

PINTO

You are alone.

MARLIN

The edge!

PINTO

Yes, all right. All right.

MARLIN

I am verging on the edge of permission --

PINTO

No one around to set the odds.

MARLIN

No one -- I feel like I'm in this suspension, the
fall of a baton -- waiting for permission, you
see -- "I hate your kind," he oozes --

PINTO

He said "your kind" --

MARLIN

"I hate all of you -- filth." I can quote him --

PINTO

Raptor and verse --

MARLIN

-- his words -- stir -- even now -- "filth,"
"sewage," "deserve to die" -- just there, lobbed
like grenades, as if I had no claims on the
living --

PINTO

Why didn't you leave?

MARLIN

What?

PINTO

Why didn't you leave? Just then? Pack up, pass
on the temptation.

MARLIN

I could have, couldn't I?

PINTO

Free will freely offered.

MARLIN

I had that choice.

PINTO

Garden sky failing, the venom spilled -- but you
still intact --

MARLIN

-- intact --

PINTO

-- you still with the higher road to take -- yes?
So why -- ?

MARLIN

I wanted to laugh -- I really did -- intact, you
said? yes, I suppose, still at that moment, yes,
though not available to it -- I wanted to pivot
and leave, let him air out on his own -- but --

PINTO

I am with you.

MARLIN

Like a dark bloom --

PINTO

A dark bloom --

MARLIN

A dark bloom, a dark -- permission -- blooms.
This infection before me, these viper words --
So this, the dark bloom: he -- need -- not --
remain -- in our company. He -- forfeits.

PINTO

What did you feel?

MARLIN

"I loathe you," he said --

PINTO

What did you feel when you felt anything?

MARLIN

Every detest crammed into that "o"!! -- "I loathe
you" -- that long "o" -- that released me. That
-- clicked.

PINTO

Click.

MARLIN

Click. Looooooooowth -- Click. Open. Forfeit.
Human. All I had now was a voice, now, in the
dusk -- detached, no human tether. And the voice
-- click.

PINTO

You had stayed too long -- click.

MARLIN

Click. I hated now -- but no rage.

PINTO

Enraged -- but cold --

MARLIN

He had earned his passage out of the garden.

PINTO

So -- so how?

MARLIN

We cringe and sicken but want to know it all!

PINTO

Go ahead and keep it, then --

MARLIN

Secret? We share everything. This will out in our every touch -- these hands make you co-conspirator. Co-respirator. You have no choice but to know.

PINTO

I will still choose what to know.

MARLIN

It was easy, actually. I grabbed him by the throat -- click, off go the words -- and there's that soft place just to the sides of the larynx where you know, if you squeezed hard enough, you could slice through and hold the throat in your hand like a runner's baton. I clamped my hand there and rammed him against the wall. Knee to groin, fist to solar plexus -- smoothly disabling, those -- and no choice of his but to feel this vice tighten, tighten, ratchet and torque, until -- He fell. He was crapped at the foot of the wall, all that pebbly stucco showered on him -- but still breathing. Thick, ratchet breaths. Maybe I'd crushed something.

MARLIN picks up a chair.

MARLIN

I picked up the trash barrel -- the wire kind, small but ballasted -- and told him to look at me. Honestly, I couldn't tell if he was looking at me or no, but I could hear him turn his head. I told him I wanted him to see what was going to kill him -- and it was then that I knew.

PINTO

Click. Permission granted.

MARLIN

No stop, no pause, no good scare and a rosary of 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.

MARLIN slams the chair down.

MARLIN

I don't remember how many times -- obviously enough. The first he tried to block, but on the second, I could hear the breath go out of him, and then I knew: no more words. A few more times for pulp, and then done. Now -- one hater less in the world.

PINTO

They're floating it as a possible "hate crime."

MARLIN

Truly?

PINTO

Lead sentence.

MARLIN

Was it?

PINTO

How do these things get judged?

MARLIN

How do you judge?

PINTO

I have no idea.

MARLIN

How do you judge me? There is one less hater in the world.

PINTO

They're looking.

MARLIN

They may find.

PINTO

They've put out a call.

MARLIN

There must be a nation's worth of fingerprints on the receptacle, I wore generic sneakers -- only Jonathan knows I was there, and I don't think he will trumpet.

PINTO

If they find?

MARLIN

They find.

PINTO

What do you want us to do now?

MARLIN

We have our whole lives ahead of us.

PINTO

Yes, that's true.

MARLIN

(pointing to the picture)

And a better world because?

PINTO

Through a glass darkly --

MARLIN

Hate for hate, it was -- But at least a little bit cleaner, don't you think? Yes? Cleaner?

PINTO

There is one less.

MARLIN

And one less of that counts for something.

PINTO

It is not without meaning.

PINTO begins slowly tearing the picture out of the paper.

PINTO

But I am still scared.

He tears methodically.

PINTO

And now. What?

Continues to tear, even perhaps tearing into equal shreds or confetti.
Lights to black as PINTO continues to tear.

* * * * *

Scene 2: The Next Day

Transition music. Lights up. PINTO with the same newspaper, torn page, staring, but sits in a different chair.

JONATHAN
(unseen)

Hello? Hello, hello, hello.

JONATHAN enters.

JONATHAN
Pinto. Well, hello. Pinto? Marlin about?
Pinto, Pinto -- you look stung, bub.

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

JONATHAN
Two-by-four'd -- pole-axed. Stunned. Cup of
coffee? Some caffeination inspiration?

JONATHAN sits, looks at the newspaper in front of PINTO, reads the date upside-down.

JONATHAN
Yesterday's. Compost. A fresh one, from the
kiosk, if you want.

JONATHAN pivots the newspaper around, sees the torn patch, realizes. Taps the empty space with his forefinger, nods his head, makes the chopping motion again.

JONATHAN
Ah. Ah.

PINTO
You know. Don't you.

JONATHAN shrugs.

PINTO
I know. I was -- informed.

Chopping motion again.

JONATHAN
Yes.

PINTO

Stop that!

JONATHAN
(sotto voce)

Always what Pinto wants.

PINTO

Lock, stock, and barrel to his head -- I know! I sit here knowing!

JONATHAN

Not doing you any good.

PINTO

Why are you here?

JONATHAN

I thought -- a visit. Long time.

PINTO

You can have him.

JONATHAN

That's not why --

PINTO

His lock, stock, and barrel --

JONATHAN

Not why I --

PINTO

All yours.

JONATHAN

Not why I came.

PINTO

Because he has forfeited! Take him!

JONATHAN

I came by because he said he was happy. Yes.

PINTO

Happy.

JONATHAN

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

PINTO

Happy. All night --

PINTO slams one palm flat on the table, then slams the other one next to it, parallel.

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

Barrel.

PINTO makes the same chopping motion that JONATHAN had made.

PINTO

Could feel his warmth. Like a magnet. And then the barrel -- cold. And then this warm -- coil from beside me. And then the --

MARLIN enters, unseen at first by either of them, newspaper under his arm.

PINTO

He slips away early -- I'm glad! Never was before -- but I am now! My eyes aren't mine anymore. To give to him. I have to do s[omething] --

MARLIN

What?

MARLIN enters into the kitchen.

MARLIN

Hello Jonathan. Do something -- do what? My love.

PINTO does not answer. MARLIN walks to JONATHAN and gives him a deliberate kiss. Then he does the same to PINTO, who accepts and recoils at the same time. MARLIN then looks at them both steadily.

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 puts an arm across PINTO's chest and slides into the chair behind him, holding him close, perhaps even close to a stranglehold.

JONATHAN

Should I go?

MARLIN motions for him to stay.

MARLIN

(to PINTO)

Do what? Do some. Thing. Do what?

PINTO, in response, clamps his teeth lightly on MARLIN's hand or wrist. Several beats as PINTO slowly but intentionally increases the pressure of his bite. At some point, not showing any of the pain he feels, MARLIN releases his arm so that it looks as if PINTO carries his arm in his mouth: a feral image. Then PINTO releases his bite and gets out of the chair.

MARLIN

I'm not sure -- I'm not sure that that was
unpleasant, given our present circumstances.
(holding out his arm)

Seconds?

PINTO

Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Yes, mate.

PINTO

A favor.

JONATHAN

By all means.

PINTO

Would you ask him what he expects of me.

JONATHAN

Through me to him?

MARLIN

Because contact is painful.

PINTO

Will you?

MARLIN

Do it, mate. These ears are all yours.

JONATHAN

Well -- what do you expect of Pinto?

MARLIN gets up. He takes the chair and pushes it against the back of PINTO's knees so that PINTO is forced to sit in the chair.

MARLIN

I went back.

JONATHAN

You what?

MARLIN

To the scene.

JONATHAN

You punk.

MARLIN

This morning.

JONATHAN

Brass-faced.

MARLIN

To -- verify. Authenticate. That, indeed, there had been a scene at all.

JONATHAN

And them looking to verify --

MARLIN

Authenticate --

JONATHAN

-- you!

MARLIN

Milling about, people -- the officers manning this barricade beyond which no millers shall pass into the now-named "crime scene." The new foreign country. Milling, milling, milling -- and the secret lodged right here among them. Like dynamite strapped under my coat. None knew! I had all these -- impulses.

PINTO

Jonathan, ask him again --

MARLIN

Giggle. Sing an aria. Take a souvenir.

PINTO

Jonathan --

MARLIN

Whisper into some gray-pated grandmama's ear, "I did that," to see her jaw slack and fear leak into her eyes.

PINTO

(sotto voce)

Oh yes.

MARLIN

No idea how such a secret sizzles --

PINTO

Jonathan --

JONATHAN

Can you answer to him, Marlin?

MARLIN

I am.

JONATHAN

Not really.

MARLIN

His solicitor?

JONATHAN

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

MARLIN

And you're just simply here being simply curious? Simply being his advocate.

JONATHAN

I like to know the future when I can.

MARLIN

Presto, then! An officer there, stout, official -- up to him I sidle and say to him, "I did that." Eyes never flinched -- used to crack-brains, I assume. "Did you, now?" "Yes," I repeated. I stood utterly still -- gave him a clear line of sight. "I did," I re-repeated to him. "Barrel to his head." A dart of the eye -- a flick! -- we lock for a moment. But still

skeptical. Then. "You should move along." "I'm trying to make your day -- maybe your career." Moment's gone. "Thank you for the offer, but now move along." "I do that, I will escape." But by then he had retreated in full, become official. "Have it your way," I said. "Watch me escape." And off went I, a freed man. La di da di da di da.

MARLIN takes pages out of the old newspaper and carefully folds an origami samurai hat that he puts on, an origami bird that he puts on his shoulder, and an origami knife: he becomes the pirate.

MARLIN
Jonathan?

JONATHAN
Yes?

MARLIN
Ask me why I did that.

JONATHAN
Moth and flame as usual.

MARLIN
Moth and flame --

PINTO
Push him.

JONATHAN
Why did --

MARLIN
Glad you asked me that, Pinto.
(referring to the folding)
Quite ingenious, these Or-i-en-tals -- intricate folds, hidden tucks --

JONATHAN
Just an origami bastard, he is. You are.

MARLIN
Glad you asked me. Two dark spots on the ceiling -- your eyes boring last night --

Fingers in a "V," moves from the eyes to the ceiling.

MARLIN
-- quite aware of your state. And the dust of judgment rained down on me --

JONATHAN

C'mon!

MARLIN

-- from those eyes drilling into the dingy plaster.

PINTO

What else could you expect --

MARLIN

From two such little holes an avalanche! Did you not gavel me all night long?

PINTO

I am trying to --

JONATHAN

(looking at the hat, etc.)

What are you doing?

MARLIN

Did you not? And I felt it -- the weight --

JONATHAN

You look daft.

MARLIN

How could I not -- my one and only lying there troubled.

JONATHAN

Daft --

MARLIN

By morning -- Jonathan! -- I was encased in judgment. Mudded up, immured. Cask of Amontillado.

JONATHAN

Cartoon pirate.

MARLIN

(cutting, to JONATHAN)

You always miss.

PINTO

I did not --

MARLIN

Did not slop the trowel, no, but --

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.

PINTO
How?

MARLIN
You mean, "why." Why. Why? For love, of course.

A silence.

MARLIN
For love, love.

JONATHAN
Oh.

MARLIN
Why else not bury me?

PINTO
If I did that --

MARLIN
Past tense -- hesitation. Fateful.

JONATHAN
Pinto?

MARLIN
The thousand-yard stare --

PINTO
Did that --

MARLIN
Abyss --

PINTO
Could do that -- for you --

MARLIN
Looking into the --

PINTO
For love?

MARLIN
Endless fall.

PINTO
Then --

MARLIN
Then. What?

PINTO
(forced)
Nothing.

MARLIN
Then what?

PINTO
(as if coming up for air)
Nothing!

JONATHAN
Then --

MARLIN
Solicitor!

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

MARLIN now has his hat, bird on shoulder, and knife.

PINTO
Co-conspirator, you said. Co-respirator.

MARLIN
And, judgmental dust sifting down, the two of us
in bed parallel lines unmeeting, I wanted not to
be like me that you would feel it barbaric to
love me.

JONATHAN bursts out laughing derisively.

JONATHAN
Oh, rich! Oh, rich as rich, Marlin! Don't you
see it? He's as deep as guano on the cliffs of
Peru!

MARLIN
At that moment, dawn --

JONATHAN
(to PINTO)
Do not buy this dreck!

MARLIN
Timeless moment --

JONATHAN
Don't --

MARLIN
-- listening to the unhinging --

JONATHAN
No doubt at that moment sorry --

Fingers in a "V," moves from the eyes to the ceiling.

JONATHAN
-- that moment sincere --
(to PINTO)
-- he was always good at those moments -- I am
going to have to protect you -- but what's a
moment?

JONATHAN starts making a series of faces.

JONATHAN
This, Marlin's kind of "moment": little simper,
droop of mouth, moue of sorry -- seen it all,
Marlin. Played out, Marlin.
(to PINTO)
Protection, at this point.

PINTO
(to MARLIN)
I want to believe.

JONATHAN goes to speak, but PINTO stops him.

PINTO
I want to. So [much] -- but I can't.

JONATHAN
Good.

PINTO
You mock me -- if you had really wanted to
absolve --

JONATHAN

Right! Confessing to a brick-brained officer of
the court -- like he'll bob to one knee --

JONATHAN gets up and enacts what he says. PINTO wants to speak, but
JONATHAN cuts him off.

JONATHAN

No, no --

(to MARLIN)

-- like he'll get you to bob to a knee -- both
knees -- lay his calloused proletariat hand on,
what?, your forehead, like those evangelistas on
television. Hand just so -- Wait, wait --
there are clues here, cherub.

JONATHAN holds the pose, but MARLIN, whip-quick, thrusts the paper
sword against JONATHAN's breast, crumpling it. JONATHAN, with
exaggerated daintiness, takes the crumpled sword out of MARLIN's hand
and smooths it out on the table.

JONATHAN

(to PINTO)

Told you so, cherub.

(to MARLIN)

Once done, easier to do, eh?

PINTO

(choking)

I have to --

MARLIN

I meant what I said --

PINTO

I can't --

MARLIN

I did it because --

PINTO upends the tables and chairs, newspaper strewn about, and ends
up picking up one of the chairs and smashing it down as if it were a
metal trash barrel. Moment of suspension as JONATHAN and MARLIN watch
him.

PINTO

I -- have -- to -- tell -- I -- have -- to --
tell --

MARLIN takes off the hat and parrot and throws them to the floor.

MARLIN

Who?

JONATHAN

Not some lumpen --

MARLIN grabs JONATHAN by the throat.

MARLIN

Shut up!

JONATHAN

I am commanded.

MARLIN moves back to PINTO.

MARLIN

Who? Who?

PINTO

The -- proper -- authorities --

MARLIN

Proper authorities?

JONATHAN

So much for your love.

PINTO picks up the chair again and, for an instant, seems capable of smashing it against one or both of them.

PINTO

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

PINTO throws the chair down.

PINTO

Something has to resolve!

MARLIN

You said --

PINTO

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
Even he?

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.

MARLIN
No longer attached -- even barely -- to the
common tether.

JONATHAN
Marlin. Marlin!

PINTO

And you -- have -- cut me -- loose.

JONATHAN

Pinto!

MARLIN

Equals, then.

MARLIN and PINTO stare at each other for a moment, realizing what they could do to each other if they wanted to. Then PINTO reaches ever so slightly to caress MARLIN's cheek, and MARLIN ever so slight leans in to receive it. JONATHAN suddenly moves between them.

JONATHAN

Pinto, don't give this poor sod over to the cops. They'll just take his fresh meat and gggrrrrrrrrr! all over the place with it. Marlin, 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

(to PINTO)

Think he's been your protector today?

JONATHAN

Him?

MARLIN

(to JONATHAN)

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

(indicating PINTO)

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

No pity for the broken bastard in the park -- but who knows how these investigations go? Dead end, walled in -- then some --

(snaps fingers)

-- tip, anonymous in flavor, that brings in fresh air. Cracks the case, as they say. One can never predict how things will click.

JONATHAN leaves. A few beats, then they both set the table and chairs right, pick up the newspapers and neaten them. MARLIN takes a step towards PINTO, but PINTO backs off.

PINTO

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

There is a pause of several seconds -- let the moments linger. Then, like an explosion, there is the sound of one heavy pound against the door. Then, rhythmically, more knocking: persistent, officious, deliberate. Lights fade to black as the knocking continues.