

ALPHA DOGS

a play
by Tom Baum

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Characters

MACE, 20, African-American

CLARK, 20, Asian-American

GRADY, 21, WASP

AUSTIN, 19, Jewish

The setting is a fraternity rec room. The time is the present.

Scene 1

(The basement of a fraternity house. Couch, chairs, weights and barbells, exercise bench, trophy case, stereo, bumper pool table, wet bar, and an ancient paddle hanging on the wall. Two doors, one to a closet, one to a bathroom. A flight of stairs up to the unseen main floor.)

CLARK, 20, Asian-American, is sitting on the couch, working at a laptop. *Alt rock is playing on the stereo.* MACE, 20, African-American, comes down the stairs.)

MACE: Hey, doucheface.

(CLARK doesn't hear. MACE pauses the stereo, plugs in his iPod.)

MACE: I said hello.

CLARK: Hey, yeah, what's up.

MACE: That's all you have to say to me? What's up?

CLARK: Yeah, no, what's the problem. Oh right. The game.

MACE: That's right, the game.

CLARK: Mace, I was planning to go last night. Then Grady stuck me with his stupid travel plans.

MACE: Yeah, well, you weren't the only no-show. I didn't see anybody there from the house.

CLARK: Well, you know, we're all that's left—you, me, and Grady. Everybody else went home already. So how did it go?

MACE: How'd it go? It was the single most important day of my whole career, that's how it went.

CLARK: Awesome. We won?

MACE: Yeah yeah, we won.

CLARK: How many did you have?

MACE: Twenty-nine.

CLARK: Rebounds?

MACE: Ten.

CLARK: Don't tell me a triple double.

MACE: I was one assist away. It was a massacre. They couldn't cope. I was on rollerblades.

(MACE inserts his iPod into the stereo. Jay-Z's "99 Problems" blasts out.)

JAY-Z *(on stereo)*: "If you're havin' girl problems I feel bad for you son...I got 99 problems but a bitch ain't one...."

CLARK: Was Mandy at the game?

MACE: What'd you say?

CLARK: I said, was Mandy there? *(no answer)* Could you turn the music down please? Mace?

(MACE turns the music down.)

MACE: Of course Mandy was there. Why wouldn't Mandy be there. Spot me.

(CLARK spots MACE as he does bench presses.)

CLARK: So what are you doing here? To the victor go the spoils.

MACE: I have General Math tomorrow. Otherwise, yeah, I'd be reaping the spoils tonight.

CLARK: What do you think you'll get? Realistically.

MACE: On the exam? B minus. Something like that. Enough to keep my scholarship.

CLARK: Mace, this is about more than your scholarship, all right? The Lawrence Medal? Our charter's up for review, we've gotta get at least a Bronze.

MACE: It's dealt with. We're getting the Bronze.

CLARK: Yeah, I don't know. The Sammies are gaining on us.

MACE: Fuck the Sammies. When is that genius getting here?

CLARK: I wish I knew. He's already half an hour late. So you'll put in some time on the math exam? Before you see Mandy?

MACE: I told you I would. You really know how to fart in my Jell-O, don't you, Clarkie?

(GRADY, 21, comes down the stairs. MACE stops doing bench presses.)

GRADY: Any word from that guy yet?

CLARK: I tried his cell. Didn't get a signal.

GRADY: Maybe he got lost.

CLARK: No. He's taken tests at this school before. He'll be here.

GRADY: All right, then call me a cab. I don't want to leave my car in the lot over Christmas.

CLARK: Whoa whoa, no. Grady, seriously, you can't leave yet. Somebody spots you at the airport while the exam is going on...not good.

GRADY: Well, did you find a later flight to Denver? In case this Austin guy doesn't show and I have to take the exam.

CLARK: Denver? I thought you were going home for Christmas.

GRADY: Not before I get to Denver.

CLARK: Then we got our signals crossed.

MACE: Clarkie. That is a serious fuckup. There is a major piece of celebrity ass waiting in Vail for our prez.

CLARK: See, I got turned around. I thought you were going home for Christmas and then to Vail for New Year's.

GRADY: First I'm going to Vail. With any help from the gods I'll be snowed in, and never make it home for Christmas. Cancel Logan, book me a flight to Denver.

CLARK: But Grady, hold on. Your dad's expecting guests.

GRADY: Yes, some moon-faced Congressman and his butt-ugly daughter that I'm supposed to romance. I will attempt to deal with my dad, just handle the plane tickets, all right, Clark? And quit tugging at your T-shirt. It's an unworthy habit. So Mace, how'd the game go?

MACE: We scorched them. It was beautiful.

GRADY: Mandy must have wet her knickers. You seeing her tonight?

MACE: Yeah yeah, after I put in a couple of hours on the math final.

GRADY: And then what? You're bringing her home for Christmas?

MACE: That's the plan.

GRADY: And she's down with that.

MACE: Yeah, why wouldn't she be?

(A doorbell sounds, upstairs.)

GRADY: Finally. Clark? Hello? The door?

CLARK: Mace, you mind getting that? I need to go over something with Grady.

MACE: Fuck you, I'm not the greeter.

GRADY: Today you are. Take him in the kitchen, give him something to drink.

CLARK: If he asks, tell him you're the dude he's taking the test for, and don't volunteer any other information.

MACE: Hey. This is me you're talking to. Not some fucking retard.

GRADY: And Mace? Try not to frighten him too much.

(MACE exits up the stairs.)

CLARK: I think he might be having problems with Mandy.

GRADY: Yeah, I'm getting that vibe again. Main thing, is he ready for his math exam? We can't afford to get nosed out by the Sammies.

CLARK: He knows about the Lawrence Medal. I told him we need the Bronze.

GRADY: No no, Clark. Not good enough. I need the Gold.

CLARK: Since when?

GRADY: Since those dickheads in the Dean's office threatened to shut us down. We get the Gold, they wouldn't dare.

CLARK: OK, I'm on it. You should hide.

GRADY: Why? This guy already knows my name.

CLARK: Yes, but I don't want him to connect it with a face.

GRADY: Good point. So you'll get me on a flight to Denver?

CLARK: You'll be on the slopes by tomorrow morning. Now disappear.

(GRADY exits. CLARK paces, tugging at his T-shirt, a chronic nervous habit. MACE enters.)

CLARK: Grady's gone, coast is clear. Go get him.

MACE: Just so you know. He's weird.

CLARK: Weird how?

MACE: First of all, he wasn't wearing a coat. Can't look you in the eye, but he made himself right at home. Started going through the cupboards. Said he was looking for Fig Newtons. Said he needed sugar.

CLARK: Get him down here.

(MACE goes halfway up the stairs, calls:)

MACE: Hey! Austin! Down here!

(AUSTIN, 19, Jewish, comes down the stairs. His clothes are close to threadbare.)

CLARK: Hi, Austin. Sorry no Fig Newtons.

AUSTIN: That's all right. There was Coke in the fridge.

CLARK: We expected you an hour ago.

AUSTIN: The bus was delayed.

CLARK: The bus?

AUSTIN: I had another client, at State. I-75 is all iced up. Three-car crash, going north. Of course the southbound traffic slowed up too, for no apparent reason. Well, the rubberneckerers. But that didn't account for all of it. These traffic systems are chaotic. They behave like busted springs.

CLARK: Yeah, noted. Why did you take the bus?

AUSTIN: Because I don't own a car. Is one of you Grady?

MACE: Yeah, I'm Grady.

AUSTIN: Hmm. I'd like to see the textbook.

CLARK: What, you haven't looked at it?

AUSTIN: Of course I looked at it. I want to make sure I had the right edition. Everything in Economics is true for twelve months.

CLARK: We don't really have time for this.

AUSTIN: Yes, you do. The textbook, please.

(CLARK *exits*. AUSTIN *checks out the trophy case*.)

AUSTIN: So tell me, what's your identity?

MACE: What do you mean, my identity?

AUSTIN: Not yours. The frat's. (*re trophy*) The Otis Selby Award. What's that for? Sounds humanitarian.

MACE: Yeah, that's right. Charity work.

AUSTIN: The Lawrence Medal?

MACE: Academic excellence.

AUSTIN: It's been a while. This was thirty years ago.

MACE: And that's why we're going for the Gold.

AUSTIN: Oh I see. And how's that working out?

MACE: We're in second place.

AUSTIN: Who's first?

MACE: A E Pi.

AUSTIN: And who's behind you?

MACE: The Sammies. Sigma Alpha Mu.

AUSTIN: Ah. You're the crabmeat in a Jewish sandwich.

MACE: What are you talking about—crabmeat.

AUSTIN: Biblical reference. What's your nickname?

MACE: My nickname? None of your business.

AUSTIN: You tend to take things personally, don't you? I mean Beta Upsilon's nickname. You all have them, isn't that right?

MACE: Bucks. We're Bucks.

AUSTIN: Bucks. OK. So what was his function? The fellow who just left. Is he an officer of the frat? He seemed pretty officious.

MACE: No, yeah, he's an officer.

AUSTIN: What are his duties?

MACE: What are his duties? We keep him around if we want our dick sucked.

AUSTIN: In other words, the court eunuch.

MACE: What? No. I was kidding.

AUSTIN: Should you be kidding about a fellow Buck?

MACE: You're kinda thick, aren't you. Clark's a stud. We're the stud house. Get laid twice a month or you're out.

AUSTIN: Are you on the honor system, or do you need proof of intercourse?

MACE: Yeah, pubic hair and a DNA test. Are you fucking serious?

AUSTIN: No, because you weren't. When in Rome.

MACE: When in Rome what.

AUSTIN: Never mind. I'm just getting your goat.

MACE: “Getting my goat”? What the fuck language are you speaking?

AUSTIN: American Colloquial. Goats used to be stabled with racehorses to keep them calm. To make his horse run badly you got a guy’s goat. “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” dates from the 4th Century A.D. It was St. Ambrose’s advice to St. Augustine—

MACE: Hey. I know what “When in Rome” means. Why don’t you shut your flytrap.

AUSTIN: Fine by me. I’m hating this conversation.

(CLARK enters, carrying an *Economics* textbook.)

CLARK: Here you go.

AUSTIN: No. This is a newer edition. You sent me the wrong link. How big is the venue?

CLARK: Durwood Hall.

AUSTIN: All right, that’s good—hundreds of seats. (to MACE) What’s your grade so far in the course?

MACE: Um, C plus.

AUSTIN: What’s the shape of a demand curve for an addictive good?

MACE: Um...a circle?

AUSTIN: C plus my foot. You’re flunking, aren’t you. That’s terrible. If I get you an A, it’ll raise a huge red flag.

MACE: Austin? Don’t worry about it.

AUSTIN: Oh but I do, so why aren’t you worried?

MACE: Because I’m not the dude you’re taking the test for.

CLARK: I’m him.

AUSTIN: No, you're not. You're not him. Somebody better start telling me the truth, or I'm leaving.

MACE: He's not in the house right now.

AUSTIN: That's lie number three. I need to see who I'm working for. That's my policy.

CLARK: Well, you're going to have to make an exception in this case.

AUSTIN: Fine. You owe me for the bus ride.

CLARK: Hey, don't get pissy. I'll get him.

MACE: Clark, you sure?

CLARK: It's up to Grady, isn't it.

(CLARK *exits.*)

MACE: Just relax, OK dude? It's all gonna work out.

AUSTIN: I have my doubts.

MACE: Yeah, you're a doubtful guy. So you're so smart, answer me this: how come our shit doesn't stink?

AUSTIN: Beta Upsilon shit?

MACE: Anybody's shit. Their own shit.

AUSTIN: How come we can't tickle ourselves?

MACE: That's not an answer, that's a question.

AUSTIN: It's about the boundary between Self and Other. You obviously have issues in this area.

MACE: Fuck you. You enjoying this, Austin?

AUSTIN: What we're doing? I just told you I don't. If you mean taking exams, yes, I don't mind subverting a stupid system and getting paid for it.

MACE: How much money you make a semester? Hey, look at me please. Quit darting your eyes around.

AUSTIN: I know you're here. I don't have to look at you.

MACE: It's a sign of dishonesty.

AUSTIN: Oh, is that right? And all those anchor people on TV, do you believe everything they say? They look straight at you all the time. So do politicians and car salesmen and every other money-grubbing hustler on the planet. What sport do you play, are you a wrestler?

MACE: Why do you assume I play a sport?

AUSTIN: Jocks always look older than other people. That's why they wear out sooner. That, plus the medical enhancements. You're too bulked-up for baseball, and you're too small for football.

MACE: Wrong again. I played football in high school.

AUSTIN: Yes, and now?

MACE: Point guard. That's basketball.

AUSTIN: I know that's basketball. Are you any good? Or just belligerent?

MACE: Am I any good? I had a triple double last night, in case you know what that means.

AUSTIN: How many rebounds?

MACE: Sixteen.

AUSTIN: Come on, sixteen?

MACE: And fourteen assists. A personal best and a school record. Mandy, that's my girlfriend, she wants to manage me. Get me on a Wheaties box.

AUSTIN: Good luck with that.

MACE: Yeah? Well for your information, there was a scout from Kellogg's at the game.

AUSTIN: Wheaties is General Mills, and they don't send scouts. They wait till you're famous, like LeBron James.

MACE: That shows how much you know. Mandy contacted them and they came.

AUSTIN: The Kellogg's people.

MACE: Kellogg's, General Mills, Cocoa Puffs, what the fuck difference does it make. *(takes out cell)* You want to see her picture?

AUSTIN: Not particularly.

MACE: Well, here she is.

AUSTIN: Pretty much what I expected.

MACE: Fuck's that supposed to mean?

AUSTIN: She looks a little butch.

MACE: She's not butch. For your information—I saved her from all that.

AUSTIN: Oh really. Saved her how?

MACE: She was gonna be gay for the stay. She was going with this girl, Teresa Lymon-Fuller. If I wouldn't have been persistent, she could've ended up being Mandy Jefferson-Harwood-Lymon-Fuller, how would that look on her business card?

(Pause.)

AUSTIN: What steroids are you taking, Mace?

MACE: I don't take steroids.

AUSTIN: Yes you do.

MACE: Not since middle school.

AUSTIN: Are you bipolar?

MACE: No! Why do you ask a question like that? Hey. Whistle-dick. You're getting on my nerves. I said look at me when I'm talking to you!

(MACE *grabs* AUSTIN *by the arm*. GRADY *enters, with* CLARK.)

GRADY: Whoa whoa whoa. Mace. What's going on?

MACE: This guy is so lunch, I can't even begin to tell you.

GRADY: Well, back off, OK? We're in a serious time situation. Hi, you're Austin?

AUSTIN: That's right.

GRADY: Austin what?

AUSTIN: No last names.

GRADY: Why not?

AUSTIN: For my own protection.

GRADY: OK. I respect that. And it so happens I have my own set of terms. Now that you recognize me. And don't bother denying it, it's written all over your face.

AUSTIN: I wouldn't deny it. It's these guys who were lying through their teeth. Of course I recognize you. From your father's campaign videos.

CLARK: Aw shit.

AUSTIN: I assume you're president of this fraternity?

GRADY: That's right.

AUSTIN: So was your dad, I'm guessing. He's got a tough election fight this year.

CLARK: You see? This is exactly what I was afraid of.

GRADY: Clark? Let's man up. Austin's not here to make trouble, are you, Austin?

AUSTIN: Not if you give me straight answers.

CLARK: (to GRADY) I'm just thinking you should give the test a shot.

AUSTIN: (to GRADY) Why is the price elasticity of demand always converted to a positive number?

GRADY: I haven't the foggiest idea.

AUSTIN: I thought as much. What's your current grade?

GRADY: B minus. I need that improved to an A. The reason for the B is the professor's a neo-Marxist asshole who's got it in for me on account of my dad. Do you mind if I ask you a question?

AUSTIN: Probably.

GRADY: Austin, that's a strange name for a Jew, isn't it?

AUSTIN: What about it?

GRADY: Maybe your parents didn't want to be Jewish. Were you bar mitzvahed?

AUSTIN: My mother couldn't afford it. Since you ask.

GRADY: I bet I've been to more bar mitzvahs than you.

AUSTIN: Probably. Why?

GRADY: Because that's who I am and that's who we are. The Bucks are creedblind and colorblind, as should be obvious from the talent in the room. Skin color doesn't matter to our generation.

AUSTIN: Nonsense.

GRADY: Nonsense?

(AUSTIN has begun digging anxiously in his pockets.)

AUSTIN: Other than gender, skin color's the first thing people notice about other people. Every study says so.

GRADY: Then the Bucks have transcended human nature. My maternal grandfather was Jewish, did you know that?

AUSTIN: I'll keep it under my hat.

GRADY: Don't bother. It's already done my dad a world of good. My dad is one of the best friends the Israelis have or ever will have. What's the matter? Where are you going?

(AUSTIN races up the stairs.)

MACE: What the fuck. Come back.

CLARK: Grady, I'm getting a really weird feeling. I'm thinking you should call in sick.

GRADY: Oh right. Twenty minutes before the exam. That's believable. *(to MACE)* Go see where he went. Drag him back here if you have to.

(MACE starts up the stairs. AUSTIN is coming down, hand in his pocket.)

GRADY: Where did you go? What's the problem?

AUSTIN: I thought I lost something.

GRADY: What, your wallet?

AUSTIN: No, not my wallet.

MACE: Hey, scroat, he wants to know what you were looking for

(MACE has grabbed AUSTIN's wrist.)

AUSTIN: Mr. President? You want to keep this honyocker out of my face?

MACE: What the fuck did you call me?

(MACE slams AUSTIN against the wall.)

GRADY: Mace, for Christ's sake back off!

CLARK: It's not a racial slur.

MACE: Yeah, what does it mean?

GRADY: It means a guy who's freaking out, which describes you at this moment. Easy does it. Let him go.

(MACE is digging in AUSTIN's pocket, comes up with a souvenir trinket—a horseshoe with a penny inside.)

MACE: What's this?

GRADY: It's his good-luck charm, obviously.

CLARK: Give it back to him, Mace.

(MACE hands the trinket back to AUSTIN.)

GRADY: Did your mom buy that for you?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so?

GRADY: You're very close with your mom, aren't you? Never mind. Your good luck has been restored to you. You need anything before you go? Something to eat, maybe? We want you fully nourished.

AUSTIN: I'll take some of those bar nuts.

GRADY: Clark?

(CLARK *tosses AUSTIN a pack. He tears it open.*)

GRADY: I knew it. The poor lad's hungry. And how about a Ritalin? Or an Adderall? Clark here can fix you up.

AUSTIN: I don't need to be smart for this test.

GRADY: I was hoping you'd say that. As far as this little meeting goes...you're neuralyzed. You didn't see anything. You didn't hear anything. You don't remember anything.

MACE: Otherwise we track you down and fuck you up.

AUSTIN: You don't know where I live.

MACE: We have our ways.

AUSTIN: Right, a phone call to the CIA.

MACE: Yeah, and that's nothing to smile about.

AUSTIN: Believe me, I wasn't smiling. Don't worry, Grady, your dad's going to be very proud of you. You might even take the Gold at the Greek Olympics, the dire necessity of which escapes me, but hey, I've never been a joiner. Mace, if I don't see you again, Merry Christmas. Peace out, gentlemen.

(AUSTIN *exits up the stairs, two at a time, cramming bar nuts into his mouth.*)

MACE: Jesus Harvey Christ.

(*Blackout.*)

Scene 2

(The same, four hours later. Lights up on GRADY and CLARK. GRADY is dressed for travel, but stylishly, in a suit with no tie.)

GRADY: —What do you mean, you're working on it?

CLARK: OK. Because of the snowstorm they've canceled a bunch of flights in and out of Denver? I'm waiting to hear from a couple of people.

GRADY: Let me guess. A charter flight.

CLARK: Only option I can see.

GRADY: Who did you call to arrange that?

CLARK: Somebody reliable.

GRADY: You called Abramson, didn't you?

CLARK: Yeah, all right, and he said he'd give it his best.

GRADY: I told you never to involve my dad. Ever.

CLARK: I didn't speak to your dad. Just Abramson.

GRADY: You expect Abramson to keep his mouth shut? That's not what my dad pays him for. It's not why I have you around. Christ, now I'm going to have to hear his wretched voice. How did Miss TMZ react when you told her I might be delayed?

CLARK: I only talked to her assistant. I said you were taking an exam, you'd be there as soon as you could.

GRADY: Yeah, so what's keeping that geek? It's over four hours, he should have been back by now. Where's Mace?

CLARK: He's in his room. He's got the Do Not Disturb sign up.

GRADY: So he's probably studying.

CLARK: Or jerking off.

GRADY: You sound despairing, Clark. I don't like it when you sound despairing.

CLARK: OK, here's the problem with Mace. I checked with the Delta Gammas. Mandy's not on campus. She hasn't been here since Tuesday, she flew home after her last exam, therefore she wasn't at the game, which means either Mace is ashamed to tell us they're having trouble or else he's flipping out again and that's the last thing I want to think about right now.

GRADY: Go bang on his door. Tell that crazy fucker I need to see him.

(CLARK exits. GRADY picks up a pool cue and a ball from the bumper pool table and tosses up the ball as if to hit it toward the fourth wall. He catches the ball instead when his cell phone rings. Checks the incoming number. He tightens. Can't bring himself to answer. From upstairs comes banging and shouting. GRADY silences the phone, puts down the pool cue, and starts for the stairs. MACE and CLARK enter.)

GRADY: So what's the story, Mace? Get any studying done?

MACE: Yeah, yeah, it's all good.

GRADY: Mace, let me remind you: If you trash General Math, our charter is toast.

CLARK: Did you speak to Mandy?

MACE: No, why would I need to?

CLARK: Yeah, well, that's what we're wondering.

MACE: Fuck's that supposed to mean?

CLARK: OK. I called Mandy's sorority? They said she went home after her last exam, three days ago.

MACE: They shouldn't have told you that, it's a private family matter. She had to go home, her dad had a stroke. I love the man, I'm totally torn up about it. You guys have enough to worry about.

GRADY: I thought you never met her dad.

MACE: Are you kidding? Last year on Parents' Day. We bonded instantly. He's this major jock. Played Triple A ball. Don't you remember, Mandy and me had sex in their hotel suite. While they were off visiting the campus. Total devastation. We made each other cry.

GRADY: I have no recollection of this.

CLARK: Mace, how much of this is true?

GRADY: It's getting worse, my friend.

MACE: What's getting worse. You guys aren't making any sense.

(CLARK's cell rings.)

GRADY: Who's that?

CLARK: I better take this. (*into phone*) Hello....Yes, sir, this is Clark....My dad? He's fine, sir....I'll tell him you said hello....Oh, really?...I'm sorry, sir, his phone must be turned off...

(GRADY is signaling he doesn't want to talk.)

CLARK: He had an exam this afternoon, that's why, and I'm not even sure he's back yet.... His Econ exam....No, sir, I think he's really up for this one....I can check if he came in, certainly, sir... Christmas, yes, there must have been a misunderstanding, because Grady thought he was going skiing first... Yes, sir, that's why I called Mr. Abramson, because the commercial flights were all booked—

GRADY: Hang up.

CLARK: (*sotto*) I can't hang up on your dad. Here.

(CLARK hands GRADY the phone. GRADY waves it away. He looks frightened.)

GRADY: I can't deal with this right now.

CLARK: Grady, you can't just ignore him.

(Pause. GRADY has started to pace. Then:)

GRADY: Give me the phone. *(into phone)* Hi, Dad....Uh-huh? What? I can't hear you, sir....You're dropping out, sir, this battery must be weak...*(imitates dropped signal:)* At...en... etter? Ant...eer...you....What?...What?....Sorry....Sorry....I oo ater...*(hangs up)* *(to CLARK)* Next time he calls, don't answer.

CLARK: He's gonna get suspicious.

GRADY: Just do what I tell you, please. I've got enough to worry about without listening to his rants. *(to MACE, who's heading out)* Mace, where do you think you're going? We need to get to the bottom of this.

MACE: The bottom of what? There's no bottom.

CLARK: Mace...this Delta Gamma I talked to? She said Mandy's been seeing a guy in her Lit class.

MACE: Who, that guy? I know all about that guy. He's not a student, he's a T.A. What are you guys trying to do to me?

CLARK: It's over between you and Mandy, isn't it.

MACE: Is what over? No. Back the fuck off.

(MACE gives CLARK a shove. AUSTIN enters, remains unnoticed for a moment.)

GRADY: Mace. Easy does it. Use your words, dude.

MACE: You've got this idea about me. It's bullshit. That T.A.'s taking his life in his hands.

CLARK: *(sees AUSTIN)* Mace? Chill. Welcome back, Austin. You're late again.

AUSTIN: What do you mean, late? I always stay to the end.
Standard procedure. Less chance of being singled out.

CLARK: And how did it go?

AUSTIN: Perfectly fine. As promised.

CLARK: Nobody pulled you aside.

MACE: Of course nobody pulled him aside. He's the kind of guy
nobody notices. You think you've seen him before, but you haven't.

AUSTIN: Make up your mind. I can't be invisible and familiar.

GRADY: Ah Mace, he's got you there. So Austin, what did I get?

AUSTIN: Something in the mid-80s.

MACE: Hey. You were supposed to deliver an A.

GRADY: Mace, hold on. *(to AUSTIN)* I needed an A. I thought I
made that clear.

AUSTIN: Yes, you made that clear, and now you can all relax. The
curve is going to be wicked. Mid 80s is on the high tail.

GRADY: In other words, an A.

AUSTIN: That's right.

MACE: Why the fuck didn't you say so in the first place?.

AUSTIN: Seriously, you want to shorten the leash on your Rottweiler?

MACE: Hey. Call me another name, you're gonna lose the power of
speech.

GRADY: Mace, he's right. Behave. *(to AUSTIN)* Who'd you hand
your bluebook to?

AUSTIN: Nobody. I waited for the bums' rush and put in on a pile.

GRADY: And you didn't see anybody check the name.

AUSTIN: Nobody checked the name.

GRADY: No hi's or goodbye's.

AUSTIN: Why are you so suspicious? No, not a word was exchanged.

GRADY: Clark, write this amazing lad a check.

AUSTIN: No no no. A check means a last name. I specified cash.
(to CLARK) I thought I made that clear.

CLARK: All right, what did we agree on, 400 dollars?

AUSTIN: No, not four hundred. Five hundred.

CLARK: That was for an A. We have to wait for the grades. We
can't just take your word for it.

AUSTIN: Well, you're just going to have to.

MACE: Or else what?

AUSTIN: Believe me, it was an A. Just give me my money and let me
go home.

MACE: Dude, what are you so nervous about? Did you get away clean
or not?

CLARK: Yeah, what were the T.A.s doing?

AUSTIN: What do they ever do? They prowled the aisles. One of them
lingered near my chair—

MACE: Oh Jesus—

AUSTIN: —but that was during the first hour, and that only lasted a few
seconds. My money please!

GRADY: All right, simmer down. How much do we have in petty cash?

CLARK: Not enough. I have to go to the ATM.

GRADY: Then go. And Mace? You have an exam to study for.

MACE: Yeah, but you guys were making some accusations.

GRADY: Later, my brother. Not in front of the help. Chop chop, Clark.

(CLARK and MACE exit.)

AUSTIN: Why do you talk to them like that?

GRADY: Because they expect it. Because they enjoy it.

AUSTIN: They enjoy being demeaned?

GRADY: It's a fraternity thing, you wouldn't understand. I'm going to have something to celebrate, can I offer you anything?

AUSTIN: No thank you.

GRADY: You sure? Something to eat? You're looking a little pale.

AUSTIN: That's all right. *(then)* Some potato chips, if you've got them. Or anything.

GRADY: Help yourself.

(GRADY tosses him a bag of pretzels from the bar. AUSTIN tears it open greedily. GRADY pours himself a drink.)

AUSTIN: How far away is the ATM?

GRADY: Shh, take it easy, you'll get your money. Sit down. Talk to me. What got you started with these tests? The money, I suppose?

AUSTIN: Of course the money.

GRADY: You're on financial aid?

AUSTIN: You like questioning people, don't you. Yes, I'm on financial aid.

GRADY: Full ride? Food? Housing?

AUSTIN: Not a full ride, no.

GRADY: I might be able to help with that. This test-taking, that didn't come easily, I bet.

AUSTIN: Not at first.

GRADY: You're a good boy at heart.

AUSTIN: Whatever that means.

GRADY: It means you're not a warrior. Doesn't mean I like you any less. But my Ev Psych professor would call you an outlier.

AUSTIN: I'm sorry, what has this got to do with anything?

GRADY: I guess Evolutionary Psych isn't your strong suit.

AUSTIN: I'm surprised it's yours. You mean the world is full of thieves and assassins, so it must be in our DNA to murder and steal. But most people aren't thieves and murderers.

GRADY: I think most of us are capable of anything.

AUSTIN: Yes, I'm familiar with that attitude. It leads to pre-emptive wars. The ones your dad is so fond of.

GRADY: Do us both a favor, Austin? Leave my dad out of this.

AUSTIN: And when was stealing ever conducive to survival?

GRADY: Stealing the other clan's food.

AUSTIN: Right, the Ev Psych people have an answer for everything.

GRADY: So do you, I've noticed. You fascinate me, Austin.

(GRADY's cell has buzzed. GRADY stares at the number, visibly upset.)

AUSTIN: Something wrong?

GRADY: Nothing you need to worry about.

(GRADY steels himself, then answers.)

GRADY: Hi, Dad....Yes, sir, I can hear you now....The Econ exam?....It was a bear...Why do you always assume that? Actually, sir, I aced it....Yes, about the holidays....Sir, I'm really sorry, some wires got crossed, because I definitely told Tut-Tut I couldn't be there until the day before Christmas....What charter flight? No, of course not, no, I didn't ask to go to Denver, where did you get that impression?.... Er ...ah ...eef... hap ing again... eek...ahk...erf. *(hangs up; to phone; involuntarily:)* Fuck you. *(realizes; to AUSTIN)* You didn't hear that.

AUSTIN: He doesn't seem to trust you, does he?

GRADY: *(abstracted)* Who? No. Never has.

(GRADY pours himself another drink, knocks it back.)

AUSTIN: Who's Tut-Tut? Is that your mom?

GRADY: My stepmom.

AUSTIN: And is Tut-Tut very disapproving?

GRADY: Is she what? No. That's just a name she got as a child. Her real name's Tabitha. That's how she said her name when she was a baby. Tut-Tut. It's a WASP thing.

AUSTIN: Yes, I know it's a WASP thing.

GRADY: You think it's moronic.

AUSTIN: No, just precious. Like most of your customs. Are you scared of your father, is that why you don't want to go home for Christmas?

GRADY: Austin, I said I was starting to like you. Don't push it.

AUSTIN: I didn't mean to hit a nerve.

GRADY: If you knew my dad, you wouldn't bother to ask that question.

AUSTIN: It's none of my business. I couldn't care less about your winter escapades.

GRADY: (*pause*) All right. Let's weigh the options. On the one hand, the Congressman's daughter. The first thing you notice about her is her philtrum...you know what a philtrum is, don't you, Austin? (*points to area above his upper lip*) Of course you do. A philtrum so distinct you might mistake it for a harelip. She wears her hair in a fauxhawk, you know those old drawings of people morphing into animals? She's halfway to becoming a squirrel...On the one hand, Squirrel Girl...versus, on the other hand, the flawless movie star. No, I take it back, not flawless. She has her animal aspect too—Miss Piggy leaps to mind. In the dim dark 80s she would have been considered ugly, but now she's on *Maxim's* all-time hottie list. Which means...all things considered... no contest, wouldn't you agree?

AUSTIN: Your dad would make the same choice.

GRADY: He doesn't know she exists.

AUSTIN: But he's had his share of movie stars.

GRADY: B-list. He claims that's ancient history. Utter bullshit of course. He still gets more pussy than Bill Clinton.

AUSTIN: Big shoes to fill, aren't they.

GRADY: I'm already filling his shoes. I'm wearing the sucker like a suit of clothes. I see him in the mirror, I hear him in my voice. I hear him when I'm doing stuff that doesn't mean shit.

AUSTIN: I know the feeling.

GRADY: I doubt that very much. You don't even have a dad, do you?

AUSTIN: Not currently, no, I don't have a dad.

GRADY: It's a simpler way to be. Saves you a great deal of friction. Me, I seldom lose my temper, but that's when I start to channel him.

AUSTIN: Not when you're having sex.

GRADY: No, not when I'm having sex. There we followed different trajectories.

AUSTIN: He wasn't born on third base.

GRADY: Dirt poor. Lost his virginity at 12.

AUSTIN: Whereas you waited?

GRADY: Not for lack of offers. All those high-school honeys, vying for my cherry. But if I gave in to temptation, then that little dance was done. And I was loving the dance. And the B.J.s of course. You know when I lost my virginity? Hell Night.

AUSTIN: You had two initiations.

GRADY: Exactly. Tell me, Austin, what other subjects have you taken exams for?

AUSTIN: Any 100-level course. Some 200-level.

GRADY: What's your day like tomorrow? Going anywhere special for Christmas?

AUSTIN: Yes, I'm going home.

GRADY: You celebrate Christmas? You and Mom?

AUSTIN: We have a tree.

GRADY: With a Star of David?

AUSTIN: No, just a star.

GRADY: It's General Math. I'll make it worth your while. A thousand dollars for the two exams. Plus a bonus.

AUSTIN: What kind of bonus?

GRADY: Ah, now he's interested. Tell me, Austin, have you ever wanted to be President?

AUSTIN: Of what, a fraternity? Hardly.

GRADY: How about the United States?

AUSTIN: Is that what your dad expects you to be?

GRADY: I asked you a question.

AUSTIN: No Jew will ever be President.

GRADY: Why not?

AUSTIN: Because human beings are hard-wired to distrust intelligence.

GRADY: Ah. So Jews are smarter than other people?

AUSTIN: It's why we're hated. It's why we hate ourselves. We've all got some Neanderthal DNA, and that makes us want to crush the Cro-Magnons.

GRADY: What about our 44th President? Didn't his I.Q. help him get elected?

AUSTIN: Only because he's black.

GRADY: Right. Well, I can't help you with your Jewish paranoia, but I can certainly improve your social life. Not to mention your financial situation.

(CLARK *enters.*)

GRADY: Did you get the cash? What took you so long?

CLARK: I had to go all the way to the Union. The one at Pathmark was out of bills.

(CLARK hands the money to GRADY, who takes out his money clip.)

AUSTIN: Um...can I have my money now?

GRADY: Patience, you'll get your money. *(refills drink; to CLARK)*
Did you book my flight?

CLARK: I haven't heard back. But I have good news.

GRADY: Clark, I spoke to my dad, he already knows you tried to book a charter, and he's fixing to rip me a new one. You knew it would get back to my dad, so why are you making my life so miserable?

CLARK: I was just trying to get you to Colorado.

GRADY: No, you weren't. And I'm starting to wonder why.

CLARK: I only said you were going skiing. I didn't mention you-know-who.

GRADY: No need to be so hush-hush. Austin knows all about you-know-who.

CLARK: Well, he shouldn't, OK? We shouldn't be discussing this in front of him.

GRADY: Clark, while you were running that errand, Austin and I bonded like long-lost brothers. I have no secrets from Austin. What was your good news?

CLARK: OK. I just ran into a guy at the Union, he told me A E Pi's star scholar, Grossbart, their big 4.0 gun? He just tanked his philosophy final, totally choked. Means we have a real shot at the Gold.

GRADY: I already have it covered.

CLARK: How?

GRADY: Take a wild guess.

CLARK: Wait, no way. We haven't gotten the results on your Econ test.

GRADY: We know the results. I have total faith in Austin. What Austin doesn't know, isn't worth knowing. Get Mace back down here and bring his math book.

(CLARK's cell buzzes.)

CLARK: This is really pushing our luck.

GRADY: Just do it, please. *(tenses)* Who's that? Is that my dad again?

CLARK: No, it's his guy. Abramson.

GRADY: *(to AUSTIN)* The Chinese Jew.

CLARK: Chinese Jew?

GRADY: Yes. *(re text)* It's a no-go on the charter flight. Am I right? Of course it is.

CLARK: What do you mean, Chinese Jew?

GRADY: Surely you've noticed the Chinese Jews. They look like a cross between you and Jabba the Hutt. Austin knows what I'm referring to.

AUSTIN: There were Jews in the Henan province. After the Babylonian Exile. Some of them made their way back to the West.

GRADY: *(to CLARK)* You see there? Wikipedia on two legs. I rest my case. Go! Get Mace! Now! Vamoose!

(CLARK exits.)

AUSTIN: Why is your father's assistant calling your assistant?

GRADY: Why indeed. Clark was asked to get me on a flight to Denver without alerting my father. So what does he do? He ignores my orders, tries to fuck up my movie-star plans, and guarantees that my dad comes at me with both barrels blazing. Maybe you can tease out Clark's deeper motives, it makes me ill to think about it. Now tell me about your missing dad. Was he abusive?

AUSTIN: Why, is yours?

GRADY: We're talking about you now.

AUSTIN: He left when I was three.

GRADY: Count your blessings. What does your mom do?

AUSTIN: She works in an office.

GRADY: What kind of office?

(Pause.)

AUSTIN: Travel agency.

GRADY: You're shitting me.

AUSTIN: No. She's a travel agent.

GRADY: Austin. You may have made a friend for life. Think she could get me to Denver by tomorrow?

AUSTIN: She might. Probably.

GRADY: Austin. *Mon frère*. Play your cards right, you'll never have to go hungry again. Just one more test, and after tomorrow no more moonlighting on these silly exams. You're desperate for money, I understand, but what if you get caught? They'll throw your ass to the wolves. No other college will take you, and you want that diploma. You need that diploma. It's your ticket out of poverty.

AUSTIN: What do I have to do?

GRADY: It's what I'm going to do for you. You know, Austin...it's easy to sneer at the Greeks, when you're not one yourself.

AUSTIN: Who's sneering? I couldn't care less.

GRADY: Austin. Don't lie to your benefactor. I like you, I want to help you, so listen to me. A fraternity isn't just a club.

AUSTIN: I never said it was.

GRADY: I have more in common with Mace, or Clark, than I do with my own brother. If I had a brother.

AUSTIN: "A stronger bond than blood."

GRADY: You see? You are sneering. You have a girlfriend, Austin?

AUSTIN: Who wants to know?

GRADY: I'll take that as a no. That's easily remedied.

AUSTIN: Right. You're the "stud house."

GRADY: The stud house? What gave you that idea?

(MACE and CLARK enter.)

GRADY: You're thinking of the Dekes. We don't call ourselves the stud house. We are the stud house. Mace, there's been a change of plans.

MACE: Yeah, Clark told me. It's bullshit.

GRADY: We have concerns about your ability to focus.

MACE: All I need is some Adderall. Clark can set me up.

GRADY: There's too much at stake, and you're way too distracted.

MACE: Fuck that, I'm ready.

CLARK: Girl problems, dude.

MACE: For your information, I just spoke to Mandy. She didn't dump me. It's all about her sick father.

GRADY: Right, we'll get to that. Did you bring Mace's textbook? Give it here.

MACE: Grady, this is ridiculous, I'm a known quantity.

GRADY: Mace...he's just writing your name on the bluebook. Same as he did with me. I'll tell you what. Answer a question from Austin and I'll let you take the exam. Austin?

AUSTIN: What's the inverse function of y equals 4 to the x ?

MACE: This is so fucked.

GRADY: Austin?

AUSTIN: Y equals $\log x$ to the base 4 .

GRADY: Austin, when you get Mace his A, I will get you a Beta U scholarship. No more worries for Mom.

CLARK: Grady, he doesn't even go to this school.

GRADY: That can also be arranged.

CLARK: No way. We have no authority to do that.

GRADY: As a Poli Sci major, Clark, you should know the fundamental principle of politics. The law's what the king says it is.

CLARK: You're high. This is like pledging the guy who fixes the toilets.

GRADY: And you know what else is going to happen? Once Austin is part of this house I may have a new second-in-command. Because for your information, Austin's getting me on a flight to Denver. Give him our credit card.

CLARK: This is insane.

GRADY: First-class, business class, whatever's available.

(CLARK *hands* AUSTIN *the credit card.*)

CLARK: I am totally opposed to this.

GRADY: Why, because he's Jewish?

CLARK: You know that's not what I mean. He wouldn't be the first Jew.

MACE: The first non-jock Jew.

GRADY: Austin, do you need to use my phone?

AUSTIN: No, I've got mine.

(AUSTIN *takes out his cell phone, keys in a number.*)

AUSTIN: Hi...Mom? Yeah, it's me, glad I caught you. Listen, a good friend of mine needs to get on a flight from, um, TDZ to DEN, tonight. Think you can help out?...Yeah, I know nothing's flying right now, what about one or two a.m.?....I wouldn't ask if it wasn't so important, isn't there somebody you can call? What about that Delta executive you were so cozy with?...Yeah, him....Coach, first-class, doesn't matter....Great...Let me give you the credit card number...It's a Visa....4261....7988...

(AUSTIN *moves upstage.*)

CLARK: Grady, what if your dad finds out about this? He'll murder you.

GRADY: You know what, Clark? Some day you're going to make some lucky man a wonderful wife.

(AUSTIN *returns.*)

GRADY: Success?

AUSTIN: She says not to worry, she'll get you there.

GRADY: Fantastic. When we're finished here, Clark, you will go to the ATM again. So—Austin—at the moment we owe you five hundred dollars. You can walk away with that. Or: you can stick around, take Mace's exam. That will earn you another five hundred dollars....plus a five hundred dollar bonus...a full scholarship...and a Beta Upsilon membership.

AUSTIN: What if you don't get the Gold?

GRADY: Then we owe you nothing. How about it, Austin? Deal or No Deal?

(Pause.)

AUSTIN: Why not? Sure. I'll play.

GRADY: Excellent. You won't regret it. That trash talk about my dad? As a Buck, that never passes your lips. Or anything else you've seen here today or will see in the course of this evening's events. Because we will be baring our souls to you and you will be baring your soul to us.

CLARK: Grady? It's too soon for any of that. He hasn't taken the test yet.

GRADY: And when he does, he'll be super-motivated. He'll be helping out a fellow Buck. Mace, when's your math exam?

MACE: Three o'clock.

GRADY: Plenty of time for Austin to recover. That is, unless he violates the sacred trust.

MACE: Which means I hunt you down and break your neck.

GRADY: Mace loves to exaggerate. Why are you smiling, Clark?

CLARK: I wasn't smiling.

GRADY: Yes, you were. You're jealous of this fellow and you want to see him suffer.

CLARK: Hear that, Austin? He said suffer.

MACE: Yeah, that's right. What, you thought Grady waves a wand and you're a Buck? It's not that simple.

GRADY: No, he knows. Austin's not stupid. Anything but. *(to AUSTIN)* I'm predicting you'll enjoy it. It will satisfy your boundless curiosity. Pass me that bottle, please.

(GRADY takes a long drink. MACE fires up a bong, passes it.)

GRADY: Now what are we going to call you? Mace, any suggestions?

MACE: How about "Nose"?

GRADY: His nose isn't that conspicuous.

CLARK: How about Supergeek?

GRADY: Which would make you Supergook. I like that. Supergook and Supergeek. Brothers under the skin. Pass him the bong.

AUSTIN: No, that's OK.

GRADY: Whoa. Austin. Let me explain something. There is nothing optional about any of these procedures. You've committed yourself to something sacrosanct and irreversible. Austin, listen to me. This is important. Tonight...Austin...my strangely named new friend...tonight is the bar mitzvah you've always wanted, the bar mitzvah you've been denied by virtue of your father's absence and your mother's lack of funds. At the end of the evening you will be poor no more, doors will open, the friendships you will make will last you the rest of your life and lead to fun, profit, and a permanent sense of male superiority. Take a hit.

(AUSTIN takes a token hit.)

GRADY: What's the matter, Austin? Afraid of releasing the demons? Take a real hit.

(AUSTIN takes a deeper hit. The bong continues to pass.)

GRADY: Now: I want you to tell us exactly what you think of us. We are committed to total candor. If you can't rag on your fellow Buck, it means you're harboring resentments, pulling punches, being nice to people in hopes they'll treat you with kid gloves, in other words, a pussy, a weenie, a wonk, a disgusting piece of lunch, and in all probability someone who was teased on the playgrounds of his sad and lonely youth and has forsworn all the good-natured bullying that binds together men of courage and accomplishment. Why are you laughing?

AUSTIN: No reason. I was enjoying your rhetoric.

GRADY: *(to CLARK)* You see how we appreciate each other?

AUSTIN: Can we please get on with this?

(Pause.)

GRADY: All right. What was your first impression of Supergook?

AUSTIN: My first impression? No impression.

GRADY: Precisely. Clark has the gift of invisibility. A voice without a body. As Clark emerged from the piss-colored fog that surrounds him, what did you perceive?

AUSTIN: I wondered what he was doing here.

GRADY: And what do you think he's doing here? Except pretending to carry out my orders while he conspires with my dad behind my back. We'll leave that aside for now. You thought he was out of his element. Not exactly human. One of the Insect People indigenous to the Far East.

CLARK: Grady, let's not start that shit, OK?

MACE: Clark, keep quiet, the man's working.

GRADY: What else, Austin?

AUSTIN: OK. He strikes me as a jock-sniffer.

CLARK: Oh Jesus—

GRADY: Right on the money. Clark was a baseball manager in high school. What about a girlfriend?

AUSTIN: I'm not sure he has one.

GRADY: He doesn't. He judges women by the shape of their ears, don't you, Clarkie?

CLARK: Come on. *(to AUSTIN)* That was a joke.

GRADY: A joke like his sex life. We do our best to fix him up, but the prospect of sitting across a table from a girl fills him with nausea. The more attractive the girl, the more he has to fight an urge to flee to the bathroom. Often he does flee. What else do you want to say about Supergook?

AUSTIN: I think he must be connected.

GRADY: Connected?

AUSTIN: Or you wouldn't have pledged him.

GRADY: There's where you're wrong. We are post-racial, Austin, or we wouldn't be having this conversation. But you're right about the connection. His dad is a major contributor to my dad's campaigns.

CLARK: Which you have a habit of forgetting.

GRADY: Quiet, Clark. *(to AUSTIN)* Continue.

AUSTIN: I think his IQ is probably up there.

GRADY: As high as yours?

AUSTIN: Possibly.

GRADY: But not likely. Anything else?

AUSTIN: I think that's a very distracting habit he has, tugging at his T-shirt like that.

GRADY: It is, it's very distracting. We can't seem to break him of it.

AUSTIN: I don't think he masturbates enough.

GRADY: Exactly what occurred to me. Clark, from now on I order you to jerk off at least twice a day. Now what about me? What have you figured out so far? And again, I warn you not to censor yourself, because I will know you're holding back and the consequences will be far from pleasant.

AUSTIN: I think you're an unhappy person.

GRADY: Today I am, that's right. I'm awash in frustration.

AUSTIN: Your father drives you crazy.

GRADY: That's hardly a secret. Around here it's common knowledge.

AUSTIN: He has ambitions for you, and he doesn't think you're living up to them. You'd like to turn your back on all that, hide out in some small town and lead an ordinary life.

GRADY: All exceptional people have that fantasy. So far, Austin, I have to say I'm underwhelmed.

AUSTIN: You think you might be God.

GRADY: OK. Now we're getting somewhere.

AUSTIN: And not just when you're stoned.

GRADY: Reckless youth thinks reckless thoughts.

AUSTIN: It worries you. You don't want the responsibility. Your dad bootstrapped himself out of poverty, and he wants you to reap the benefits. He's given you all these advantages and if you don't come through he'll hate you for it.

GRADY: He already hates me. What about Tut-Tut?

AUSTIN: I think you have a crush on Tut-Tut.

GRADY: She's such a silly woman.

AUSTIN: I know you don't mean that.

GRADY: I'm referring to her art collection. She's got a Frank Stella in their living room. My dad couldn't care less about painting, but Tut-Tut has a whim of iron. So there's this enormous striped monstrosity hanging above our fireplace where a perfectly handsome mirror used to be. You know how a car looks huge when it's in a showroom? That's the effect of that ridiculous painting.

AUSTIN: Like having a Corvette sitting in the living room.

GRADY: I think I just said that, didn't I? No need to paraphrase me, Austin. But yes, you're absolutely right, I've always had the hots for my stepmother. From the time I was very small. Starting with her ankles, and I worked my way up.

MACE: Aw fuck this.

GRADY: Mace, we're in a process here.

MACE: Fuck the process. If we're really gonna admit this guy, let's stop with the faggot Q & A.

CLARK: I agree.

GRADY: Clark agrees. I wonder why.

CLARK: This guy has a crucial exam tomorrow, and you have a plane to catch, and those are our priorities. Let's move on.

GRADY: Oh well. I think we were both enjoying this, Austin, but I guess I'm outvoted. Mace, your turn.

MACE: OK, scroat. Hit the deck and give me twenty.

AUSTIN: Jesus. Is he serious?

MACE: And you don't finish, I'm gonna make you wipe my ass and wash my car.

AUSTIN: Oh Jesus.

MACE: Hey. Another Jesus out of your mouth, I'm gonna really fuck you up.

GRADY: Austin, I'd take that to heart, it's his sensitive area. Go on, I'm sure you're good for twenty.

(AUSTIN starts doing pushups.)

GRADY: Meanwhile, what about Mace? We haven't heard from you about him.

CLARK: Yes, what can you tell us about Mace?

AUSTIN: He's in a very bad place.

GRADY: Go on.

AUSTIN: I doubt he has many black friends.

MACE: That's bullshit.

GRADY: Quiet, Mace. Why do you think that is?

AUSTIN: Because he chose to come here.

GRADY: We promised him a scholarship. Just like you. And we got him one. What else?

AUSTIN: He's got girlfriend trouble. *(finishes push-ups)* Twenty.

GRADY: Can you be more specific?

AUSTIN: She wasn't at the game. Which is just as well, because he tanked it.

GRADY: What do you mean, he tanked it?

AUSTIN: He got called for two technicals in the third quarter. I heard guys talking outside Durwood Hall. He was ejected. Maybe that's what he meant by a personal best.

GRADY: Is that true, Mace?

MACE: He wasn't there. He doesn't know what he's saying.

CLARK: Mace, that's so easy to check.

GRADY: That lie has no shelf life whatsoever.

MACE: I had a great game. Ask anybody. Go on-line.

AUSTIN: It's not Mace's fault. When a man gets dumped, it causes a surge of testosterone. Plus he's been on steroids since middle school.

MACE: Who told you that?

AUSTIN: You did. How many concussions did you get playing high-school football?

MACE: What concussions. None.

AUSTIN: Is that why you switched to basketball? It was a medical decision, wasn't it.

MACE: This is total bullshit. And nobody fucking dumped me.

AUSTIN: He's got a Football Brain. His glial cells are all messed up. That's probably why he can't tell true from false.

(MACE lunges for AUSTIN.)

CLARK: Mace, don't!

(GRADY holds MACE back.)

GRADY: I know you want to thrash him. Not allowed. There's a protocol here. Austin, please remove your clothes.

MACE: Watch. This is where he pussies out.

AUSTIN: All of them?

MACE: I told you. Tiny little dick. I knew it.

GRADY: Is that the problem, Austin? Are you afraid to get naked in front of your brothers?

AUSTIN: How much more of this? I've got an exam to bone up for.

MACE: You hear that? Bone up. He's afraid he'll get hard when the going gets rough. Show his true colors.

AUSTIN: (*to MACE*) Is that what happened to you?

MACE: Fuck no. I'm always hard.

AUSTIN: Really? Must be all those supplements.

(*MACE starts for AUSTIN.*)

GRADY: Mace, I said back off! Austin, come here a second. (*takes him aside*) Hang in there, you're doing beautifully. A model pledge. See this through, you may even achieve legend status. I'm serious. You have so little to lose, and everything to gain. (*pause*) Keep your boxers on. We don't want to get Clark all excited. Just a few more minutes, I promise. (*aside*) And then the job is yours.

(*AUSTIN starts to take off his clothes.*)

GRADY: That's better. If Jesus spent three days in Hell, you can certainly spare a few more minutes. Isn't that right, Mace? Didn't Christ spend three days in Hell before he rose?

MACE: That's what they taught me.

GRADY: Austin doesn't believe in the divinity of Jesus, do you? No, of course you don't. By the end of the hour you may feel different. Isn't that right, Clark? Weren't you epiphanized on Hell Night?

CLARK: Yeah, I don't know what you mean.

GRADY: Come on. You saw God. You couldn't take your eyes off me. You stroked my head as if you couldn't believe I was real.

CLARK: Whatever.

GRADY: I don't hold it against you. You were stoned.

CLARK: *(to AUSTIN)* This never happened. He's making all that up.

GRADY: Clark—you will not address the pledge unless I instruct you to, is that understood?

CLARK: Yeah, yeah. It's still not true.

GRADY: Are you calling me a liar now?

CLARK: I didn't say you were a liar, I'm saying you dreamed it. We're getting off track here.

GRADY: What? Are you giving me orders now? That deserves a serious rebuke, wouldn't you say so, Austin?

(AUSTIN is down to his shorts, shivering.)

AUSTIN: That's up to you. I'm tired of hearing you rag on him.

GRADY: You're right, enough verbal abuse. Thank you. Spoken like a true adviser. What's the matter, are you cold? Nipples getting hard? Well, this should warm everybody up. You see that relic hanging on the wall?

AUSTIN: What relic?

GRADY: The paddle. The universal symbol of fraternity life. We revere that relic, but it hasn't been used since my father's day. Now's a good time to revive it. Take it down from the wall.

AUSTIN: I pass.

GRADY: Austin, I'm sorry, that is not an option.

(GRADY unhooks the paddle from the wall, thrusts it at AUSTIN.)

GRADY: Give Clark here three good smacks across his buttocks.

AUSTIN: Forget it. I'm not going to do that.

GRADY: Don't tell me you never hit anyone before.

AUSTIN: That's right, I never did.

GRADY: Those demons again. You don't know what you're missing.
Assume the position, Clark.

CLARK: Whoa. You sure about this?

GRADY: Clark, you know the protocol.

(GRADY secretly signals "Don't worry" to CLARK. CLARK assumes the position.)

AUSTIN: No. Sorry.

GRADY: Why? Is it because you feel a certain kinship with Clark?
Would you rather Mace was the target? No, can't really tell how
he'd react. What about me? What if I assumed the position?

AUSTIN: You'd never do that.

GRADY: Remains to be seen. Let's start with Clark.

(Again GRADY offers the paddle to AUSTIN. AUSTIN stands frozen.)

GRADY: OK, let's review. There's two thousand dollars on the table,
plus an entire brotherhood behind you for the rest of your natural life. I
know you don't realize what that means. You've chosen to be a loner,
I'm beginning to understand why, and believe it or not, I can
sympathize. You're afraid of your impulses. Your inner Neanderthal.
You don't mind inflicting pain with your wit, but that's as far as you've
ever dared to go. Well, it's time to abolish your fears. Or not. In
which case, you leave here empty-handed. Up to you, Austin.

(Pause. AUSTIN takes the paddle. He whacks CLARK across the ass, then recoils.)

CLARK: Fuck! You didn't stop him!

GRADY: Austin! You did it. I'm impressed.

MACE: Grady?

AUSTIN: *(to CLARK)* I'm sorry.

GRADY: Are you? I got the feeling you enjoyed that.

MACE: Grady? Take a look at this.

GRADY: What? What is it?

(MACE, who has been going through AUSTIN's clothes, holds up AUSTIN's good-luck piece.)

MACE: What do we think about this?

GRADY: This? It's the Sign of the Dweeb. A relic of Austin's unhappy past.

MACE: Pagan symbol, right?

GRADY: Absolutely.

MACE: "When I became a man, I put away childish things."

GRADY: Exactly. Where's that from, Mace?

MACE: Corinthians.

GRADY: Mace, you should have majored in Religion. We'd be a shoo-in for the Gold. *(re trinket)* He doesn't need that crutch anymore. Lose it.

AUSTIN: Hey. Where are you going with that?

(MACE disappears into the bathroom.)

AUSTIN: What's he doing?

GRADY: Relax, Austin. From now on, we're all the luck you're ever going to need.

(SOUND of urination. Then flushing.)

AUSTIN: Oh Christ.

GRADY: *Corragio*, my friend. You're almost home.

(MACE emerges from the bathroom with a glass of yellow liquid.)

MACE: Bottoms up, scroat.

AUSTIN: And then we're done? No more bullshit?

GRADY: The finish line's in sight.

(Pause. AUSTIN grabs the glass, examines it, drinks it halfway down.)

MACE: Whoa. Look at this fucking perv.

GRADY: Austin, I'm more amazed by the minute.

AUSTIN: Why? It's Gatorade.

GRADY: Now what led you to that conclusion?

AUSTIN: Nobody's urine is this color. Or this temperature.

MACE: Wrong again. That's my piss and you just drank it.

AUSTIN: Have it your way.

MACE: No, I'm having it my way. You called me a name before.

AUSTIN: What name. I didn't call you a name.

CLARK: You called him a Football Brain.

AUSTIN: That wasn't a name, that was a diagnosis.

(MACE grabs AUSTIN in a chokehold. AUSTIN struggles to breathe. Lets out a loud groan, almost a scream.)

AUSTIN: [*screams*]

CLARK: (to GRADY) Do something. Stop him.

GRADY: Mace, let him go.

(MACE claps his hand over AUSTIN's mouth and applies more pressure.)

CLARK: For Christ's sake, we need him for the math exam.

MACE: No, we don't. He's not taking my test.

GRADY: Of course he is. Let him go. Now.

(MACE lets AUSTIN go.)

MACE: Tell him, scroat.

GRADY: Mace, what are you driving at?

MACE: I'll tell you why he's not taking my exam. Because I noticed something before and I filed it away and here it is. Just now you called your momma on your cell phone. Which means you could have called Clark to tell him you were late. Now why didn't you do that. Why didn't you set our minds at ease.

AUSTIN: Of course I tried. I couldn't get through.

MACE: That's bullshit and you know it's bullshit. What about what I found in your wallet?

AUSTIN: I don't know, what did you find?

MACE: Check it out, Clark.

(CLARK *picks up* AUSTIN's *wallet*.)

CLARK: What am I looking for?

MACE: His car registration. It's right there with his license.

GRADY: I thought you said you didn't own a car.

CLARK: Yep, here it is.

AUSTIN: That registration's out of date. I had to sell my car to pay my rent.

MACE: Bullshit. What are you doing here, asshole?

AUSTIN: Nothing! You hired me to be here!

(MACE *grabs* AUSTIN *again and tightens his grip*.)

MACE: You tanked Grady's test, didn't you?

AUSTIN: No. Why would I do that.

MACE: Yes, you did.

AUSTIN: I didn't tank it—

MACE: Admit it. Admit you tanked the test.

(MACE *chokes him harder*.)

AUSTIN: No....no...Yes.

MACE: Yes sir.

AUSTIN: Yes sir.

MACE: Yes sir what?

AUSTIN: Yes, I tanked the test.

(MACE *lets go of* AUSTIN.)

MACE: Grady, are you getting the same bad feeling I am? I think this guy's a Trojan Horse.

GRADY: Elaborate, please.

MACE: I'm betting he's already in a fraternity. Sigma Alpha Mu. He's a Jewish Trojan horse—sent by the Sammies to destroy us.

CLARK: Mace...you know how crazy that sounds?

GRADY: Let's see what Austin has to say. Is Mace crazy? Are you a Jewish Trojan Horse?

AUSTIN: I'm not a Sammy.

GRADY: A E Pi?

AUSTIN: No!

(MACE grabs him around the neck again.)

MACE: Admit it. Are the Sammies paying you to be here?

AUSTIN: Ow... OK... If that's what you want me to say...

MACE: No. No bullshit. Answer yes or no.

(MACE tightens his hold.)

AUSTIN: Yes.

MACE: Yes sir.

AUSTIN: Yes sir.

MACE: Sitting here, sucking up information. Calling me a liar to my face. *(to GRADY)* What more proof do you need?

CLARK: Grady, you're not buying this, are you?

GRADY: Where's his cell phone?

MACE: In his pants.

GRADY: Clark? Please get it.

(CLARK goes to the pile of clothes, takes out AUSTIN's cell phone, hands it to GRADY.)

GRADY: How do you redial on this thing?

(CLARK shows him. GRADY redials. Pause.)

CLARK: Who are you calling?

GRADY: I'm calling his so-called mom.

(Pause.)

GRADY: It's busy. How can it be busy. It's an office. It's a travel agency. Who did you call, Austin?

AUSTIN: My mother.

GRADY: Clark? Call this number.

(GRADY shows him the number he just called. CLARK calls it on his cell. AUSTIN's cell rings.)

GRADY: You called yourself. Why did you do that, Austin?

AUSTIN: There's some mistake. You must have pressed the wrong button.

GRADY: *(to CLARK)* Clark, get the cage.

AUSTIN: No. I've had enough.

MACE: See that? Now that I'm on to him, he wants to leave.

CLARK: And we're giving him that option.

GRADY: You realize you get nothing for your trouble now?

AUSTIN: Yes, I realize. Deal's off.

MACE: Or Grady, you know what I just thought? He could be an undercover cop.

GRADY: Are you, Austin? Is Supergeek your cover? Are you spying for the police? Mace here wants to know.

AUSTIN: Or he'll snap my fucking neck.

GRADY: Ah, the f-word from Austin. That's very out of character. Or no, maybe it's finally in character. Was I totally wrong about you, Austin?

(The doorbell rings.)

MACE: What the fuck.

GRADY: Everybody, shut up. *(to AUSTIN)* Could that possibly be for you?

AUSTIN: Of course not. No.

GRADY: Mace? You expecting company?

MACE: No. Unless—unless it's Mandy.

CLARK: How could it be Mandy.

GRADY: You said she was home with her sick father. Let's try and keep our stories straight. Clark, go see who that is.

(CLARK exits.)

GRADY: So Austin, I think I misjudged you. You've got some darkness in you after all.

AUSTIN: Fine, whatever.

GRADY: Relax. I mean that as a compliment. Why did you pretend to call your mom? Were you just trying to curry favor or what?

AUSTIN: For the money.

GRADY: That's understandable. But you realize what this means.

AUSTIN: You'll have to go home for Christmas. And face your father's wrath.

GRADY: That's exactly right.

AUSTIN: You're afraid of what you might do.

GRADY: I've learned to keep my mouth shut.

AUSTIN: That's cost you, though.

GRADY: It probably has. What does your mom really do?

AUSTIN: She's a waitress.

GRADY: College degree?

AUSTIN: For all the good it's done her.

GRADY: Why did your dad take off?

AUSTIN: Just couldn't hack it.

GRADY: Not every Jewish of him.

AUSTIN: No, it wasn't.

GRADY: We all have our cross to bear.

(CLARK *enters.*)

CLARK: Grady, you're wanted upstairs.

GRADY: For what? I'm talking to my friend.

CLARK: It's a campus cop. He's checking up.

GRADY: What about?

MACE: Aw fuck. *(to AUSTIN)* That T.A. The one who stopped by your chair. He dropped a dime on you.

CLARK: Mace, take it easy. He's here about the noise.

GRADY: Which campus cop?

CLARK: Yeah, the guy with the thing, the big mole on his neck. *(imitates voice)* "Hey scholar, how they hanging?"

MACE: That's Phil. He comes to all the games.

GRADY: Then you go talk to him.

CLARK: Hold on, Mace. He asked to talk to the president.

GRADY: Oh, like that rent-a-cop has any say in the matter. Get the cage.

CLARK: No. Enough. Game over. For your own good.

GRADY: Clark, isn't it clear as day by now? I don't give a shit about you, I don't give a shit about your dad, if he never gives my dad another dime, you are no longer advising me. You are my ex-Chief of Staff and the position is still open. Mace? The cage, please.

(MACE opens the closet, drags out a large dog cage and a roll of duct tape.)

GRADY: Get inside, please, Austin.

AUSTIN: No. I'm done.

GRADY: Mace, help Austin do the right thing.

(AUSTIN bolts for the stairs. MACE grabs him. AUSTIN squirms free, tries to club MACE across the face. MACE throws him to the floor, claps a hand over AUSTIN's mouth.)

GRADY: Mace, what are you doing?

MACE: Before he screams again.

AUSTIN: Let me go. I won't scream.

GRADY: What's the matter, Austin? Afraid of tight spaces? And I hoped you were conquering your fears.

MACE: Get in the cage or die. Those are your options.

(MACE hauls AUSTIN to his feet, hand across his mouth. GRADY duct-tapes AUSTIN's wrists.)

GRADY: This hurts me more than it hurts you. But it has to be done.

(MACE shoves AUSTIN into the cage, padlocks the cage.)

GRADY: *(to MACE)* Now go see what your friend Phil wants. Clark, go with him.

(MACE and CLARK exit.)

GRADY: Just to set my mind at ease: You didn't really tank my test, did you?

AUSTIN: Why would I do that?

GRADY: Why did you say you did?

AUSTIN: He was about to break my neck.

GRADY: Torture leads to false confessions.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's exactly right.

GRADY: My dad would assume you were guilty. Did you come here to cheat me, or did it just occur to you?

AUSTIN: Neither one.

GRADY: Oo, sorry. My bullshit detector just lit up.

AUSTIN: I was desperate. I owe three months' rent. You gave me the credit card, I saw my chance, and I took it.

GRADY: You have my grudging respect.

AUSTIN: Then let me go.

GRADY: Sorry. We have to see this through together. I know you'd probably like to hurt me, and I respect that. But I'm wondering if you really have the balls.

(Voices from upstairs—the sound of an argument. CLARK enters.)

CLARK: Grady, Mace is getting hot with the guy. You have to deal with this.

GRADY: *(to AUSTIN)* Are you going to scream again?

AUSTIN: No.

GRADY: You sure?

AUSTIN: I would have already.

GRADY: I like to think I still trust you, but just to be sure: Hold his head.

(GRADY unlocks the cage. CLARK holds AUSTIN's head as GRADY duct-tapes his mouth. GRADY padlocks the cage again.)

GRADY: Keep him entertained. I'll be right back.

(GRADY exits. Silence.)

CLARK: You know how much trouble you're in?

(AUSTIN nods.)

CLARK: Couldn't you tell he was bullshitting you? He was never gonna let you join this fraternity. Did he promise you girls?

(AUSTIN shrugs.)

CLARK: Yeah well, he did me. And by the way I don't judge them by their ears. One time I said something stupid and he pounced on it.

(More noise upstairs. Several voices.)

CLARK: You know you've put me in a very bad position. Anything happens to you, I'm an accessory. I'll be lucky to get away with an expulsion.

(AUSTIN is struggling to free his hands. Pause. CLARK unlocks the padlock. Undoes the duct-tape around AUSTIN's wrists. AUSTIN peels the duct-tape from his mouth.)

AUSTIN: Thank you.

CLARK: Don't thank me yet.

(AUSTIN starts dressing.)

AUSTIN: Is there another way out of here?

CLARK: The back door, through the kitchen. If they see you, and the cop's still there, just make a beeline for the front door. Either way, run for your life.

AUSTIN: I think you better too. He's been gunning for you.

CLARK: Yeah, don't worry, the minute I call my dad, Grady will be begging my forgiveness. Where are you going?

(AUSTIN has headed into the bathroom.)

CLARK: What are you looking for, that stupid trinket? He flushed it. Forget it, will you? Seriously....Oh fuck.

(Voices approaching. CLARK closes the bathroom door with AUSTIN inside. Shoves Austin's T-shirt and socks and shoes out of sight. GRADY and MACE come down the stairs.)

CLARK: What did the cop want?

MACE: Some turd on the Row, he claimed he heard a ruckus.
Probably one of his Sammie pals, spying on us.

GRADY: Where's Austin?

MACE: Aw fuck—

GRADY: Christ. What did you do?

CLARK: Yeah, listen, I can explain—

GRADY: You let him go, didn't you, Clark?

CLARK: I had to do it. What if the cop came down here. He sees a guy
in the cage, it's not pledge season, he wouldn't give us a pass.

GRADY: He had no right to come down here. That's why he left.

CLARK: OK, what if he comes back?

MACE: So what? We're clean.

GRADY: *(to CLARK)* You felt threatened by Austin, didn't you?
That's why you let him go.

CLARK: Yeah, fine, whatever you say.

GRADY: I'm disgusted with you. Both of you.

MACE: What did I do?

GRADY: It's what you're going to do, once you admit to yourself that
Mandy dumped you.

MACE: There's nothing to admit, and I'm sick of you saying there is.

GRADY: And I'm sick of you denying it. Put the cage away. And get
rid of that duct tape. Hello. Did you hear me, Mace?

MACE: Yeah, yeah, I heard you.

(MACE starts dragging the cage back into the closet, cursing to himself.)

GRADY: And then get ready for your math exam.

MACE: (*under his breath*) Yes, boss. I'm on it, boss.

(CLARK's phone rings.)

GRADY: Who is it?

CLARK: It's your dad.

GRADY: Fuck.

CLARK: It's all right. I'll let it go to voice mail.

GRADY: (*to the phone*) Leave me the fuck alone.

CLARK: Yeah, well, that's not his way.

(Pause)

GRADY: Give it here.

CLARK: Grady, are you sure? You're hammered.

GRADY: Give me the fucking phone!

(GRADY grabs the phone from CLARK. Summons his courage.)

GRADY: Hello....No, this isn't Clark, this is your son....I can't really get into that now, sir, I've got things to deal with here...Yes, I know you promised the Senator....I am sorry, sir, I really am...Why? OK, you really want to know, in all candor, I felt like you were pimping me out to his daughter....Well, why can't you tell him I'm snowed in?....It's not a lie, another hour it'll be the truth....No, there's nobody else in the picture, I'm practically celibate...I'm trying to level with you, sir, would you please take a good look at her? Check out the profile. She looks like a fucking rodent....Hello?Fine, if you think so, why don't you bang her instead, so she doesn't go home empty-handed.

(Startled at what he just said, GRADY takes the phone away from his ear. Then re-summons his courage.)

GRADY: No, sir. Stone cold sober....And by the way, I lied about the exam, I tanked it.

CLARK: Grady, for Christ's sake, hang up—

GRADY: —I'm a disgrace to your legacy. What's more, we've got a stripper here, she pulled a train and now we're going to immolate her ass and set fire to the frat house....

(MACE has spotted something—one of AUSTIN's shoes. Unearths his socks, his T-shirt, and the other shoe from under the couch.)

GRADY: ...I am being serious...Oh, I see...You knew all about Miss TMZ, you were just playing possum...Yes, she's in the tabloids, every week, your son's a player, apple doesn't fall far from the tree... It's not gonna cost you votes, that's ridiculous...A reminder? Of what, sir?....Oh, like anybody needs me to remind them of your exploits....What do you mean, what? I'm talking about those skanks you bring home whenever Tut-Tut goes out of town—

MACE: Grady? Take a look.

(MACE shows GRADY AUSTIN's clothes. GRADY shoots CLARK a look.)

GRADY: *(to MACE)* Check the bathroom. *(on phone)* If I can get to Denver, you bet your ass I'm going there...Well, if my face gets in the tabs, then that's your problem, isn't it? Give my love to Tut-Tut. And then go fuck yourself. *(hangs up)*

CLARK: What the fuck...I warned you. What was he saying?

(GRADY doesn't respond. He looks shell-shocked by his own outburst.)

GRADY: It doesn't matter what he was saying.

CLARK: Can I have my cell phone back?

GRADY: (*coming to*) No, you lying piece of shit, you can't have it back.

(*MACE is dragging AUSTIN out of the bathroom.*)

GRADY: Hello, Austin. I see you're still here.

AUSTIN: Hello.

GRADY: That was my dad on the phone, were you listening?

AUSTIN: Can I have my T-shirt please?

GRADY: Dad thinks he's about to be the victim of some opposition research.

AUSTIN: Involving you?

GRADY: Yes, involving me. And the movie star I was supposed to be fucking tonight.

MACE: You have anything to say about that?

AUSTIN: Make up your mind. Am I spying for the Sammies or the opposition? Or maybe Al Qaeda? You're all so paranoid it makes you stupid.

GRADY: That calls for retaliation. Mace?

(*MACE grabs AUSTIN, wrestles him to the floor.*)

GRADY: Keep him down there. Cover his mouth. Careful he doesn't bite you.

CLARK: Grady, can we all get a grip?

GRADY: Shut up, you fucking Benedict Arnold!—

CLARK: Yeah, OK. You know what, Grady? I've had enough of your crap to last me a lifetime.

GRADY: Hey. Talk louder when you're trying to be courageous.

(CLARK *starts for the stairs.*)

GRADY: Where do you think you're going?

CLARK: I'm done.

GRADY: No, you're not done. I need you to do one more thing for me.

CLARK: Forget it. Goodbye.

GRADY: I want you to fellate this Trojan Horse.

CLARK: You're out of your fucking mind. Grady? Your dad's gonna hear from my dad.

GRADY: And I'll tell you why you're going to do it. Because—
Clark, pay attention—because it will cure you of your problem.
There's nothing wrong with a cock in your mouth.

CLARK: I guess you would know.

GRADY: Oo. Bull's-eye. We're talking philosophy here, Clark. A *priori* principles. A cock in the mouth is just something in the mouth. Think of it as a corn dog. If you enjoy the taste, then you know more about yourself. If you don't, then one less source of pleasure in your life. Isn't that right, Mace?

MACE: What are you looking at me for?

CLARK: I'm not gay, OK?

MACE: Are you calling me gay?

GRADY: A man with an imaginary girlfriend? That's cause for suspicion in my book. If you're not gay, Clark, why try to break up my relationship?

CLARK: Because it's not a relationship. Because I'm supposed to keep you out of the tabloids.

GRADY: For my dad's sake.

CLARK: And yours.

GRADY: Bullshit. You're forgetting I know your parents. I met them on Parents Day. They weren't apart for a minute. Couldn't get a playing card between them. Of course you want to break people up. You've felt like a third wheel all your life. Austin, get up. Clark needs your "input" here. Kneel down, Clark. Mace, help Austin to his feet.

MACE: Do it yourself.

GRADY: Mace, do you want to keep your scholarship?

MACE: What's my scholarship got to do with it?

GRADY: I'll get Mandy back for you.

MACE: Who says I want her? Who says I want that bitch?

GRADY: Just do what I tell you! Now!

(MACE *yanks* AUSTIN *to his feet*.)

AUSTIN: Leave Clark alone. He was trying to help you, that's why he let me go.

GRADY: No bogus sympathy, please. Clark?

MACE: Come on, slut. You heard what he said.

GRADY: Don't you want to be cured? Know thyself, Clark.

CLARK: I know everything I need to know.

GRADY: Tell me. Tell me one thing you know and I don't, and you and Austin both can leave.

CLARK: When I was six years old, my sister curled my eyelashes. She didn't turn me gay, and neither can you.

GRADY: I feel like you're implying something, Clark.

AUSTIN: All this S&M crap, that's what he was going to say.

GRADY: Austin, you're not helping your cause. *(to CLARK)* Whether your sister curled your eyelashes, or dressed you in her panties, or sat on your face until you gasped for breath, none of that is at issue here. We're engaged in a psychological experiment. On your knees.

CLARK: Fuck you.

GRADY: I'm sorry?

CLARK: I've had it. I'm sick of being your coolie, you pervert piece of shit, is that loud enough for you, you motherfucking take-it-in-the-ass-from-daddy starfucker asshole? Never mind, I'm out of here.

GRADY: Ah well. Mace?

(MACE grabs CLARK.)

MACE: On your knees, slut.

AUSTIN: Stop him, Grady.

GRADY: Shut up, you fucking spy.

(CLARK squirms out of MACE's grasp, makes a break for it.

MACE grabs him again. AUSTIN starts for the door, stops when he sees MACE grab CLARK around the neck and force him to the floor.)

MACE: Where were you? Where were you?

CLARK: Where was I when?

MACE: I asked where were you? Were you with that guy?

CLARK: Mace? It's me, man.

MACE: I don't give a fuck.

AUSTIN: Grady, he's freaking out.

MACE: Fucking cunt. Teach you to cheat on me. Why weren't you at the game?

AUSTIN: Let him go, he'll break his neck. Stop him. Grady! Tell him to stop!

(CLARK is gasping for breath.)

GRADY: Go ahead. Break his goddamn neck.

*(AUSTIN picks up the pool cue and swings it at GRADY's head.
GRADY reels back. MACE lets go of CLARK.)*

AUSTIN: Stupid, stupid, STUPID.

(GRADY staggers back.)

AUSTIN: Aw fuck.

*(CLARK, having broken free, sprints for the stairs and flees.
MACE makes a grab for him. AUSTIN backs away, brandishing
the pool cue.)*

GRADY: Mace, leave him the fuck alone.

(MACE grabs AUSTIN, wrestles him to the floor.)

GRADY: Mace, dude, listen to me. Mace. I'm talking to you, you sick fuck. Let him up.

MACE: No way. She dies.

GRADY: I need you to get Clark. Mace, did you hear me? Let him go!

(MACE lets AUSTIN up.)

GRADY: Go. Find Clark. Before he sicks that cop on us.

MACE: You're the sick fuck. Not me.

GRADY: I SAID GO!

(MACE exits. AUSTIN picks up the pool cue.)

GRADY: Go ahead, hero. Try that again. Put me out of my misery.

(AUSTIN *grips the cue.*)

GRADY: Go ahead. You know you want to. You've been wanting to ever since you came here. Come on, bright boy. Bring it on.

(AUSTIN *tosses the pool cue aside, starts dressing.*)

GRADY: What's the matter, genius? Still scared?

AUSTIN: You might want to get to a hospital.

GRADY: Please. You can't hit me hard enough to hurt me. (*takes another drink*) It's Mace I'm worried about. Should I alert the Dean? Before Mace starts shooting up the Delta Gamma house? What's the matter, what are you looking for?

AUSTIN: My other shoe.

GRADY: You leaving me, Austin? After all we've been to each other? I still have to get to Denver. Think you can help me with that?

AUSTIN: Not a chance.

GRADY: No, poor little churchmouse, you'd just try to cheat me again. You know what, maybe I'll go home after all. If I know Dad, he's taking it out on Tut-Tut.

AUSTIN: And what would you do about it?

GRADY: (*uneasily*) If he wants a fight, he'll get a fight. I'll be carrying on a family tradition. Goes back nine generations. You wouldn't know about that, would you.

AUSTIN: No, thank God.

GRADY: Do you know, he almost broke my skull once? No, how could you, that didn't make it into the campaign video. I was ten years old, I didn't know any better. We're having dinner and I correct him on something, I don't remember what. He kept insisting he was right. And little innocent me, I kept insisting I was right. "You don't know what you're talking about," I said. So he whips off his belt and comes chasing after me. I go flying up to my room and lock the door and he kicks the fucking door in. I'm cowering in my closet and he's flailing at me with his ridiculous cowboy belt. Blood is shooting out of his eyes. "You fucking pipsqueak!" Tut-Tut's yelling at him at the top of her voice. "Stop, you'll kill him!" She's threatening to divorce him, but that doesn't stop him. Nothing can.

AUSTIN: And that made you what you are today.

GRADY: There's truth to that.

AUSTIN: Poor little rich boy. My heart bleeds for you.

GRADY: Don't waste your sympathy. He did me a favor. That's why, in spite of my gallant efforts, you'll always be a pussy. You never had a dad to put you to the test.

AUSTIN: There you go. Neanderthal Logic.

GRADY: It's a dangerous world, Austin.

AUSTIN: You bet it is.

GRADY: And always will be.

AUSTIN: Thanks to people like you.

GRADY: People like me.

AUSTIN: And your Dad. And the other seven generations.

GRADY: Like you even know what family is. You haven't a fucking clue.

AUSTIN: No, you're right, I never did.

GRADY: Oh, and that means you had it harder than me? You know the real truth, Austin? It's easier to be poor.

AUSTIN: Yes, you know exactly who to hate.

GRADY: Hey. If you really believed that, you'd have to kill us all.

AUSTIN: No. You're already dying. You and your dad and your whole vicious crew, all you war-worshippers and power freaks. You're the last of the dinosaurs.

GRADY: Maybe. But we'll still have you pacifists for lunch.

AUSTIN: I wouldn't count on that.

GRADY: Oo, I'm so worried. I'm quaking in my boots. What are you looking for now?

AUSTIN: My sweater.

GRADY: Your sweater? It's right there. Here, go buy yourself a new one. And an overcoat while you're at it.

(GRADY takes out his money clip, starts peeling off the ATM twenties.)

GRADY: Austin, you asked me do I ever think I'm God. I'll tell you what I do know. Good things happen to people who cross my path. If they have the good sense to take advantage of them. Which you obviously didn't. You had a chance to join the human race, Austin, and you blew it. You sealed your fate. The rest of your life, you'll be the same money-grubbing goy-hating sack of shit you are today. You think you're smarter than me? You're not even in the game. Nobody resents you. Nobody envies you. Nobody cares how many useless facts you know, except the people who are willing to exploit you, which is where you'll live out your life, scared of your own shadow, a total slave to your superiors. You're a weak sister, Austin, and that's why I'll always win, because you'll never be anything but a pathetic little fact-spouting turd. Christ, why did I ever think I could make a man of you. Go. You sicken me. There's your five hundred dollars. Get out of my sight.

(GRADY tosses the twenties on the floor. AUSTIN stoops to pick up the twenties. Stops. Pause. He picks up the pool cue instead. GRADY's back is turned.)

GRADY: Well, Austin? What are you waiting for?

(Pause. GRADY doesn't turn around. Waits. Behind him, unseen by GRADY and AUSTIN, MACE and CLARK are entering from the stairway. AUSTIN raises the pool cue. MACE and CLARK watch as AUSTIN swings the pool cue at the back of GRADY'S head. GRADY staggers. A smile crosses GRADY's face. CLARK and MACE continue to watch as AUSTIN bashes him again. GRADY falls. Blood flows out of GRADY's ear. The doorbell rings. And rings. Lights out. END OF PLAY.)