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The Redheaded Man
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ARTIFICIAL
by Sean Kenealy

2 Males

Synopsis: When Dan enters an empty cafe just after midnight on New Years, wielding a guitar case and razor sharp tongue, he sparks the ire of cafe manager Charles, who wants nothing more than to close up, albeit a bit early. What transpires between the two are conversations and stories ranging from the trivial to the tragic, almost bringing the men to blows, and definitely blurring the lines between the truth and the artificial.

Does The Body Good
by Patrick Link

2 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: A seductive housewife entices a young milkman his first day on the job. A depressed middle school teacher struggles to extract himself from a sexual affair with the precocious 8th grade girl who idolizes him. In *Does The Body Good* these two seemingly unrelated liaisons divide the stage into a distorted mirror image of the other, build on each other's intensity, and finally collide into a perfect storm of unfulfilled yearnings.

The Redheaded Man



a one act play

by Halley Bondy

The Redheaded Man was first produced at the 2008 Fringe NYC Festival at the Barrow Theatre. It was directed by Jessica Fisch; the producer was Brian Smith; the set was designed by Lara Fabian; the costume design was by Nicole Moody; the light design was by Paul Toben; the sound design was by Mira Leytes; the videographer was Jesse Garrison; and the production stage manager was Carrie Del Furay. The cast was as follow:

THE REDHEADED MAN:	Bruce Bluett
LYDIA:	Halley Bondy
BRIAN:	David Jenkins
JONATHAN:	James Edward Shippy
DR. JONES:	Michelle Sims

CHARACTERS:

BRIAN: A wry, hopelessly tortured individual who, by looks, seems normal. He is scruffy and unkempt as he is plagued by his illness.

REDHEADED MAN: A condescending imaginary character with a paternal edge. He wears a suit and tie.

JONATHAN: Brian's best friend and protector. He is African American.

DR. JONES: A self-involved psychiatrist, can be played by a man or woman.

LYDIA: Dr. Jones' secretary. Manipulative, mysterious, sexual.

NOTE: "PJ" = Projection

THE REDHEADED MAN

SCENE 1

(Lights up on BRIAN's living room in New York City. The set is minimal, with a few movable objects acting as a chair, a couch, and a coffee table. These same objects will be used in different configurations throughout the play, depending on the setting.)

(Enter Brian, he removes his coat, sits on the couch and pulls out a pastrami sandwich. He starts to eat it, but the REDHEADED MAN interrupts him mid-bite.)

REDHEADED MAN: *(offstage)* Hello Brian.

BRIAN: *(Startled, then irritated)* Hello.

REDHEADED MAN: *(From offstage)* I see you've been to the bodega.

BRIAN: *(Finally takes a bite)* Yeah.

REDHEADED MAN: You haven't been making many deliberate choices with your lunchtime, Brian. You're all wrought with preservatives. If you died today you wouldn't need an embalmer.

BRIAN: You're exaggerating.

REDHEADED MAN: That cashier is very nice. That's why you keep going back there. Friendly. He comments favorably on all your purchases and the language barrier keeps a comfortably false sense of friendship. He calls you the Captain. You love that. Captain. For no reason.

BRIAN: *(Drinks soda)* You know, if you're going to bug me while I'm eating why don't you just hang out.

(Enter REDHEADED MAN.)

REDHEADED MAN: So. How are things? *(Beat)* They've turned up the heat in your apartment out of nowhere.

(BRIAN keeps eating.)

REDHEADED MAN: The thermal variability is not good for your heart.

(Beat)

REDHEADED MAN: Neither is that sandwich.

BRIAN: Oh come on I'm 25 there's nothing wrong with my heart.

REDHEADED MAN: Blood is rocketing to your skin, Brian. Next stop, sweat.

BRIAN: You're bothering me just to bother me.

REDHEADED MAN: Your heart is working hard for this temperature. And that sandwich.

BRIAN: Oh for the love of god.

REDHEADED MAN: Let's take a look at is going on with that sandwich, shall we?

(Projection of digestive process. It is thoroughly graphic and disgusting.)

BRIAN: Come on!! *(Stands up, disgusted. Throws the sandwich to the ground.)* Stop it stop it stop it---
(Keeps saying "stop it" underneath the REDHEADED MAN's speech.)

REDHEADED MAN: It's going to take awhile for the cardiovascular effects to take fruition. But we have time. Watch as it... *(Follows graphic)* droops down the esophagus into that catalyst-ic pit, we might as well just chalk up some more damage along with your lack of exercise and... anger issues.

(BRIAN, ready to wretch and fed up, takes a full pill bottle out of his pocket and starts to open it.)

REDHEADED MAN: Uh uh uh, you don't want to do that Brian. You have so much *(Mocking)* art to make today. You need me.

(BRIAN caves and puts the pills back in his pocket. He sits down, defeated. Head in his hands. Beat.)

BRIAN: I'm so hungry.

REDHEADED MAN: I know. But it's motivating you. Do you want me to show you the motivation teeming in your brain?

BRIAN: No. *(Beat. Completely defeated. Brainstorms.)* The Foundation. They want me to make a theatre that doubles as an art gallery. Key is to draw as many trust fund hipsters as possible. But these people are insane. They say *(Imitating the Foundation)* 'we want deco-y avant-gard-y post-moderny...just make it you know, spherical or something.' In other words, a completely dysfunctional building with as few fire exits as possible.

(PJ of an old theatre.)

REDHEADED MAN: Oh look what the cat dragged in. That memory is from when you were a boy in Richmond! There's no way that place exists anymore. But...scan the halls for old times' sake.

(The PJs span the halls of the old theater.)

REDHEADED MAN: Why are you making it so dark and spooky? It was never like this you were a boy. How morbid your memory has become.

BRIAN: The sharp angles make everything look narrow. The space can't be more than ...

(Quickly PJ spins around the inside of the theater in fast motion.)

BRIAN: 7,589 square feet. If I open up this area and reserve the sharp angles to the doors, I can make it appear dilapidated and 'cool.'

(PJ animation sequence of the theater transforming to BRIAN's vision. BRIAN starts drawing the vision on paper.)

(Sound effect of two small children laughing.)

BRIAN: Ha! Do you hear that? It's me and Jonathan! We had to be what, 5 or 6.

REDHEADED MAN: 6 and three quarters.

BRIAN: *(Good humouredly)* I'm going to have to do something about the security.

REDHEADED MAN: Look. You used to laugh so much. Such a fun kid. You used to be so...fascinated by all my lessons.

(BRIAN is silent. Beat. He picks up the T-Square and continues drawing.)

REDHEADED MAN: You're lucky, you know. Jonathan doesn't have the insight. He'll never be an architect.

BRIAN: Well, probably because he's not an architect, he's an exterminator.

REDHEADED MAN: He's a loser. Plain and simple. He's simple pie.

(PJ of JONATHAN sitting on the couch, beer in hand, giving a very uncouth 'thumbs up' to the camera.)

BRIAN: *(Struggling with the image)* If I want him to leave *(Shakes the pill bottles)* all I have to do is ask. I don't have to get *(Reading pill bottle)* "nausea, explosive diarrhea, extreme drowsiness, loss of sex drive, discolored urine, and back pain."

REDHEADED MAN: Well that's because you go to a quack psychiatrist.

BRIAN: She's the only one willing to treat me privately without locking me up.

REDHEADED MAN: Apparently she didn't get the memo that you're not schizophrenic. You're insightful. *(Beat)* Speaking of your sex drive, that uh...mucus-dripping brunette in your fantasies will never come around if you have a sweating problem.

BRIAN: Mucus dripping?! God you ruin everything.

REDHEADED MAN: She looks a bit like...

BRIAN: My mother. I know. But only the hair.

REDHEADED MAN: I don't blame you. Your mother was beautiful. But lord, she never taught you anything. You were just a big zombie void, like everyone else, before I came into your life.

BRIAN: I don't remember a time that you weren't in my life. *(Beat)*

(JONATHAN bursts into the room.)

JONATHAN: Hey you have got to pay the rent, Jose's on some other shit right now....

(BRIAN sees him and the PJs turn to grotesque visions of blood racing. He covers his eyes.)

BRIAN: Ahh!!!

JONATHAN: Oh shit. Sorry. Sorry.

REDHEADED MAN: It's not my fault, he burst in here!

(BRIAN takes a pill and within seconds the vision disappears, and the REDHEADED MAN exits.)

JONATHAN: You were supposed to have taken your meds already.

BRIAN: You have to knock. You have to knock.

JONATHAN: Well for christ's sake I live here too! That is my bed you are sitting on *(Points to sofa)*. Don't get up, I'm about to make a point. If I was the loaded architect I would pay him the rent myself. But I'm the broke one, and when he's downstairs all *(Mock Hispanic accent)* 'I'll put you on the streets I'll do it I'll do it don't think I won't do it because I will' I get a little panicked. Just because you're the fucked up one, doesn't mean other people don't have natural reactions to things.

(BRIAN takes his checkbook from his pocket and writes out a check on JONATHAN'S back. He hands it to JONATHAN.)

BRIAN: Here. Will you bring it to him?

JONATHAN: Yeah. I don't understand how you make buildings all damn day and you can't remember to put a check in an envelope and slip it under the door. That's all. That's my point.

BRIAN: You know the repercussions of living with me. You've known since we were teenagers. *(Starts to look nauseous.)*

JONATHAN: *(Sees Brian)* Hey, hey. Man.

(BRIAN sits with his head in his hands, he is painfully sick. JONATHAN gets a blanket, wraps it around BRIAN'S shoulders and rubs his back. The infantilized gesture bothers BRIAN.)

JONATHAN: Alright. There you go. *(Trying to change the subject.)* So, the other day I was working in this lady's apartment, right. She had some roaches in her kitchen and I got rid of them all. I bet you didn't know that I'm good at what I do. But this woman was so into me. She kept looking at me and looking at me. You know, I'd be using her bathroom and she'd be waiting outside the door for me.

BRIAN: Maybe she thought you were gonna steal stuff.

JONATHAN: But you know. I was covered in pesticide so I couldn't really lay it down. I'm a gentleman. And the problem is I did such a good job on that apartment that she'll probably never make a call again. There was some naaaasty roach dung though all up in her stove. Crusting roach eggs, roach larvae, squished roach egg chunks...

BRIAN: I gotta go puke.

JONATHAN: Alright let's go. *(Helps Brian up, compassionately.)* Up you go. We ran out of toilet paper last time so you're gonna have to use the paper towels under the sink... *(Carries BRIAN toward the bathroom, which is offstage.)*

BRIAN: *(Runs to the bathroom offstage.)* Leave me alone!

(BRIAN'S cell phone rings on the couch.)

JONATHAN: Hey Brian your phones ringing. I'll get it.

BRIAN: If it's work give me the phone!

(Audience hears a disgusting wretch.)

JONATHAN: Hello? Yes this is his roommate Jonathan. *(Quietly, hiding it from Brian.)* Brian is, uh, out. Buying avocados. And mixed nuts. Yeah. I know it's a pretty weird blend of items but it's actually pretty good in a salad.

(BRIAN comes out of the bathroom, half-dead.)

BRIAN: Is that my supervisor? Give me the phone! Let me talk to him.

JONATHAN: Okay. I'll let him know, thanks. Bye-bye. *(Beat)* That was...your supervisor from the movie theater job. You never told me he was so effeminate.

BRIAN: What the hell? Why didn't you give me the phone? There's a benefit coming up for my new building I don't even know where the thing is.

(Walks toward JONATHAN, who shields the phone.)

JONATHAN: You've been working for that guy for six weeks and you've been a grumpy sick-ass toad every time you talk to him.

BRIAN: So? *(BRIAN is getting increasingly more fatigued.)*

JONATHAN: So? Brian. I don't want you to lose your job and screw us both. In case you haven't noticed you're not right in the head. And if you're going to a benefit you're gonna make sure I'm there with you.

BRIAN: *(Beat)* It's all true. Everything I see is true. It adds up. I'm not sick, I'm insightful.

JONATHAN: Well I'm sure your supervisor will understand that if you just explain it to him. 'Hey there, gay architect boss! Don't eat them beans because I have 'insight' into your bowel movement.'"

BRIAN: *(Laughing slightly)* He's never shown me anything about my boss, thank god.

JONATHAN: Who's never showed you?

BRIAN: No one.

JONATHAN: Alright. Let's get you to bed.

(JONATHAN helps BRIAN up and walks offstage, on the way JONATHAN looks suspiciously around him, as if scoping for someone.)

SCENE 2

(DR. JONES' office, which is just the living room couch turned to the side like a psychiatrist's couch. Her phone is ringing and she searches everywhere to find it. She stumbles through her bag, finds a pill underneath the couch that she stops to take. Then she finds the phone.)

DR. JONES: Hello? Yes. Yes this is Doctor Jones what can I do for you sir? Apologies, ma'am. Yes. Are you calling about the samples? Samples. Samples. *(Beat)* Oh. You're not calling about the samples. Oh. I will meet my end of the deal soon. Soon, you know, very soon. I have six patients prescribed to it already so that's, what, 2/3 of my quota? Oh. I must have misplaced a decimal point there. You know I've just been a little distracted around here sir. Ma'am. It's just that I have all these patients, and they come here every day. There's one woman who says she has scabies or bulimia. I don't know if it's just a cry for help or what, but if she's gonna be in my office with mites in her skin I'm gonna need some extermina— *(Knock on the door)* Oh. *(Proudly)* A patient is here, right now! I will take care of it really soon, you have my word. Okay. Who is it?

BRIAN: *(From offstage)* Your 4 o'clock.

DR. JONES: *(To herself)* 4 o'clock? 4 oclock....

(DR. JONES scrambles through her things, searching for her appointment book, she finds another pill on his search and eats it.)

(BRIAN enters, sees DR. JONES on her hands and knees eating a pill. PJs switch on. PJ of a pill being swallowed.)

BRIAN: Brian. The architect. Four o'clock, every week, for the last, oh, six months.

DR. JONES: *(Hasn't even swallowed the pill yet.)* Of course! I knew that. I was just cleaning up. Have a seat Brian. *(Sits on a chair with a pad and paper.)*

(BRIAN lies down on the couch.)

DR. JONES: So. How are things.

(Grotesque biological PJ.)

REDHEADED MAN: *(From offstage.)* That my friend, is this woman's ailing liver.

BRIAN: The same.

DR. JONES: No uh...changes?

BRIAN: Nope.

(Long, long pause.)

DR. JONES: Alright. So I'm just gonna write this prescription *(Starts writing)* and send you along your merry little way. *(Tears the prescription out of the book and hands it to BRIAN.)*

(BRIAN is about to just take the prescription, then the REDHEADED MAN appears and casually hangs out and watches.)

BRIAN: I was hoping to actually talk to you today. *(Lies back down.)*

DR. JONES: Oh.

BRIAN: I want talk to someone real besides Jonathan, that's all.

REDHEADED MAN: What, I'm not good enough?

DR. JONES: What's on your mind?

BRIAN: I just feel like Jonathan smothers me. I don't mind him being broke and sleeping on my couch and eating my Fresh Direct, but he also quarantines me. It feels good to be out of the house.

DR. JONES: Well this is a safe environment for escape. I hope you've noticed my new relaxing décor.

BRIAN: *(Looks around at imaginary walls.)* They're advertisements, for Filaxin.

DR. JONES: Well it's hot on the market Brian. I bought their new ringtone! *(Produces phone and plays ringtone, an 'Andrews sisters'-type jingle.)*

Do you hate wakin' up in the morning

Do you hate the smell of Springtime?

Do you wanna jump off of a bridge...And not to swim silly! Hahaha!

Filaxin, just relax n you'll see!

I'm the orange guy!

Do you hate wakin' up in the morn--- *(BRIAN closes her phone shut.)*

BRIAN: Yeah, it's cute until they list the side effects.

DR. JONES: That requirement is death to perfectly good medicine. Those only happen in extreme cases.

BRIAN: Like mine.

DR. JONES: Well let's not digress. Please continue. You were talking about Jonathan?

BRIAN: He makes me put the rent under the door in an envelope, so the landlord can't see me. Its little things like that that I used to accept. There was never a place for me anywhere. They thought I was a special ed kid they put me in special ed, then they thought I was a genius so they put me in home school, which made everyone so happy because Brian was nicely tucked away. But then when I got an architecture scholarship, people loved my work. They just figured that all good architects must be slightly...off. I felt appreciated, and like there was more to life than sitting around a safe house. Now I'm out of school and its back to square one.

DR. JONES: Hang on hang on this is a lot to write down. *(Had been eating yogurt the whole time.)* Jonathan...this is the black fellow?

BRIAN: This is the fellow whose family adopted me when I was seven. I just feel like I should be able to sort things out on my own now.

DR. JONES: *(Looks like she's about to say something profound.)*
Sounds like he's...overprotective.

BRIAN: Yeah.

DR. JONES: And how about the Filaxin?

BRIAN: What?

DR. JONES: How is the Filaxin going?

(THE REDHEADED MAN lets out a loud HA!)

BRIAN: The same.

DR. JONES: Hm. *(Writes it down.)* The same. That's funny. You should probably have an increased dosage. I'll just write out that merry little prescription and send you along...

BRIAN: No. I don't need any more meds.

DR. JONES: But don't you want things to change?

BRIAN: Yes. I do. My memories are in my face, and I see everyone's guts. And when I take your cure-all pill, my world turns gray and I can't work. I imagine that you'll inform me once that's all in the DSM-IV. But for now, no more fucking Filaxin.

(PJ of LYDIA in various poses, walking, random shots of her.)

BRIAN: And then there's this brunette girl. She keeps popping up everywhere.

THE REDHEADED MAN: Well she looks just like....

BRIAN: My mother, I know.

DR. JONES: Your mother?

BRIAN: No, no, it's not my mother; they just have the same hair color. I mean actually they're not terribly similar.

THE REDHEADED MAN: *(Defensively)* They are similar. She's clearly a manifestation of your mother in some form. She's a mishmash of associations; you're acting like you've never read Freud before....

BRIAN: Why do you keep insisting that it's my mother? Why do you care? She's been dead for seventeen years.

DR. JONES: Are you talking to someone, Brian?

BRIAN: Yes. The Redheaded Man.

DR. JONES: *(Looks around)* Ooookayyy....look, I uhh....time is up.

BRIAN: I've been here just over a minute!

DR. JONES: Well, there very well might be scabies on that couch Brian, I wouldn't hang around too long.

(PJ of skin with scabies bites on it. BRIAN leaps up and starts itching himself uncontrollably.)

BRIAN: What the fuck man, scabies?!

DR. JONES: Yeah, I'm pretty sure it's a cry for help though. But you can never be too sure nowadays. New York is one big unpredictable infestation, right.

THE REDHEADED MAN: Humanity is one big unpredictable infestation.

BRIAN: *(Taken aback by this statement.)* I. Fine. I'll go. I was going to invite you to my benefit.

DR. JONES: Hm?

BRIAN: A benefit for my new building. The foundation is throwing it. I was actually hoping...this sounds totally crazy...

DR. JONES: Do share...

BRIAN: They asked me to...to have a friend get up and say a few words about me. Jonathan thinks I should go for it to feign normalcy, but, he gets so nervous about public speaking that he gets uncontrollable boners. And as you know, I don't have any other friends.

DR. JONES: You want me to do it?

BRIAN: I guess. I mean, everything we do in here is confidential. I just need you to say a few good things. Lies really. To get me off the hook so I can go right back into hiding and doing my job over the phone.

DR. JONES: How many people you talking here?

BRIAN: Probably around two hundred. It's a multimillion dollar project. It'll get us out of that crummy apartment.

DR. JONES: Two hundred rich people. (*Eagerly*) Are they depressed do you think?

BRIAN: What kind of a question is that?

DR. JONES: I am a psychiatrist and I help people help themselves.

BRIAN: What?

DR. JONES: I help people help themselves---

BRIAN: I heard you. Please, no psychiatrist stuff. It's only like two minutes of, you know, "Brian is..."

DR. JONES: Always on time!

BRIAN: (*Beat*) Sure. I'll pay you extra.

DR. JONES: No need. I'm just happy to be there for a patient. And I haven't been to a party in god knows how long. Text the details to my Blackberry.

BRIAN: Thank you.

DR. JONES: And have that exterminator friend of yours soak your clothes in DDT. Just in case.

BRIAN: Why, thank you.

DR. JONES: Farewell Brian. And feel free to you know, mail me my payment.

SCENE 3

(Lights go out abruptly. PJ. There is a woman—the same actress who plays LYDIA—on the screen. The shot is from her neck upward.)

LYDIA: Oh my god, Brian, your cock, it's so big. It's so, so, so, so big.

REDHEADED MAN: *(From darkness.)* You love these compensatory fantasies don't you.

BRIAN: *(From darkness)* Stop talking!

(Biological PJ of sperm moving and activating, sound effects of mounting tension.)

LYDIA: Jesus Christ, it's so big I just; I have to take my clothes off, right now.

(PJs alternate back and forth between LYDIA removing her clothes, though the shots are just from the heads up, and biological shots getting more and more activated. The sound effects are getting louder and louder, LYDIA is getting louder too.)

LYDIA: Oh god, my shirt is off, my panties are off, the sheer enormity of your cock is making me lose control, I'm going to have an orgasm! Oh god! Oh god! Oh god!

(PJ of a bottle of varnish.)

BRIAN: What the....

REDHEADED MAN: Oops, sorry. God. I need to change this around. Uhhh

(PJs go from one unerotic shot to another like channels changing. A desk, a lampshade, a man with tumors on his face, random shots.)

BRIAN: Oh my god I hate you.

(Finally it's back to Lydia.)

LYDIA: *(She is spent. She is smoking a cigarette.)* That was amazing.

BRIAN: I missed it! I can't believe you made me miss it!!

(Abruptly, the stage lights come on. We are back in the living room. JONATHAN has just come home with his equipment on and has walked in on BRIAN masturbating. BRIAN pulls the blanket to his face in mortification, his pants are down, they have an awkward squeal together.)

BRIAN: KNOCK!

(PJ of blackened lungs.)

JONATHAN: Sorry.

BRIAN: Why don't you wear your mask at work anymore? Those pesticides are killing you.

JONATHAN: No more than the air we breathe in this city.

BRIAN: That's not true.

JONATHAN: Well. Good afternoon to you too Brian. I hope your day was pleasant too, Brian. I for one, had a shitty day. This man had a bedbug treatment, and the motherfucker didn't clean up his room beforehand. So I'm shaking his dirty ass underwear looking in his socks and shit and these bugs are just plopping, plopping, en masse, all over the floor!

The infestation was so bad that I had to flip through the individual pages of his entire book collection including his porn and he had the audacity to get mad at me and say 'hey, I didn't pay to whack off' and I said 'I don't wack off on this shit, I don't like little teen girls flouncing around in pigtails, I like my ladies to be ladies thank you very much'. He said 'you callin me a pedophile?' I said no 'I'm callin you a dirty motherfucker and the closest thing you will ever have to a girlfriend is an exterminator smelling your dirty-ass underwear.' I need to get drunk. *(Beat)* Wanna drink with me?

BRIAN: It's two in the afternoon. We have the benefit tonight.

JONATHAN: Well what can I say? I drink away my problems. Whiskey or Pabst?

BRIAN: I don't drink.

JONATHAN: Well right now, you do drink.

BRIAN: Call one of your friends.

JONATHAN: Call one of my friends.

BRIAN: Yeah.

JONATHAN: Call one of my friends. *(Starts laughing.)*

BRIAN: What's so funny?

JONATHAN: When have you ever met one of my friends, Brian?

BRIAN: I mean...I don't know...

JONATHAN: How the hell am I supposed to make any friends with you around?

BRIAN: What's that supposed to mean?

JONATHAN: Girlfriends and friends. Those were two sacrifices I made when we took you in.

BRIAN: Hey, you did that to yourself. I never asked for shit.

JONATHAN: Well maybe I'll just find another sugar daddy who I don't have to take care of. One drink. Are you gonna come or not.

BRIAN: I'm sorry, I just can't. I don't know what'll happen if do. And the benefit....

JONATHAN: Fuck the benefit. Do you even remember the last time you had fun? You were fun as a kid. *(REDHEADED MAN voice says this simultaneously.)* You used to laugh so much.

BRIAN: Stop. Stop.

(The PJs get very chaotic, frightening, random symbolic images.)

JONATHAN: (*REDHEADED MAN simultaneously.*) When your mom died you just, fucking died.

BRIAN: I need you to stop.

JONATHAN: (*REDHEADED MAN simultaneously.*) When is the day gonna come that you're gonna face that shit, Brian?

BRIAN: (*Resisting*) Fuck you! Fuck you!

(*REDHEADED MAN enters from stage right. BRIAN sees him and stares at him transfixed. JONATHAN sees BRIAN looking.*)

JONATHAN: What are you looking at? What are you looking at man?

BRIAN: I don't know. It think it's my father.

JONATHAN: Your father left before you were even born.

(*BRIAN is silent.*)

JONATHAN: I'm going to the bar. Maybe I'll make some friends there.

(*JONATHAN gets fed up. Grabs his coat and leaves.*)

SCENE 4

(*THE BENEFIT*)

(*There are hors d'oeuvres set in different places. Music and sound effects in the background indicate a full party.*)

(*DR. JONES enters with her secretary, LYDIA, who is holding DR. JONES' briefcase and all her papers. There are too many items in her arms and she can barely hold it up. DR. JONES is wearing a shirt that says "FILAXIN: STOP AND SMELL THE SPRINGTIME" on it. It is very brightly colored.*)

DR. JONES: (*Nervous and pale looking.*) Where is Brian? He was supposed to be here an hour ago.

LYDIA: I don't know, sir.

DR. JONES: We have to give our speeches soon. Where is my speech?

LYDIA: Right here. *(Presents a piece of paper from the pile.)*

(JONES grabs the paper and starts reading it while scarfing down hors d'oeuvres.)

JONES: Do I look okay?

LYDIA: Yeah.

JONES: I just get nervous at this kind of thing.

LYDIA: You look great.

JONES: There are just so many people. Is it hot in here?

LYDIA: Not really, the air conditioning is on.

JONES: I've got to go to the bathroom and open a window or something and wash and put my head out the window or something.

LYDIA: Here, go memorize it.

JONES: You. *(Looks at the pile of crap LYDIA is holding.)* Organize. Organize. *(Puts half-eaten hors-d'oeuvre on the pile of crap. LYDIA starts to organize, DR. JONES shoos her away.)* Away. Out. Out.

(LYDIA exits offstage cautiously trying to understand JONES' erratic, clearly drug-induced cues. DR. JONES walks in the opposite direction, and bumps into BRIAN who is entering.)

DR. JONES: Watch it! *(Exits.)*

(BRIAN heads toward the hors d'oeuvre table and starts to smile awkwardly at all of the 'people' at the benefit.)

(Enter REDHEADED MAN. Projection screen turns on, party scene, random images.)

REDHEADED: Some party. Where's the nose candy? (*BRIAN is deliberately ignoring him.*) (*Beat*) Nobody's talking to you. Isn't this supposed to be your event? (*Beat*) Look at everyone, choked by pretension, basting in the sweat of their rich daddies.

BRIAN: (*Trying to talk in a near-whisper so that nobody hears him.*) What's with the bitterness? Were you poor?

REDHEADED: Don't worry about what I was. Worry about what I am.

BRIAN: Why did you leave me and mom?

REDHEADED: How should I know? I'm just an ideal manifestation. Stately. Authoritative. Always there. Always young. I have friendly red hair. And I give you the truth.

BRIAN: The truth? The truth is a bunch of horrible, grotesque visions?

REDHEADED MAN: Humanity is one big horrible and grotesque vision, Brian.

BRIAN: (*Angry*) Where does that come from? What does that mean? Everyone knows about blood and guts. But they deal with it.

REDHEADED MAN: (*Getting worked up*) They don't see what they're doing to their bodies every day or where their stupid surface instincts come from. You are the most enlightened, psychologically sound individual in the world. The only problem is, you're the only one.

BRIAN: How did she die?

REDHEADED MAN: Cancer. It was quick. Terribly painful. Everyone hid it from you. Kept you in different rooms and said that mommy was on a loooong vacation. All of a sudden you had a new family and Jonathan was your brother.

BRIAN: Sometimes Jonathan tries to talk to me about it. But I can't get past the visions to hear about it.

REDHEADED MAN: I like to spare you the annihilation of your mother's body. What kind of a friend pushes that kind of thing in your face anyway?

BRIAN: I just feel so confused.

REDHEADED MAN: Naturally. Well once again you've managed to ruin a party for both of us. *(Beat)* Leave. What are you gaining by being here?

(Enter JONATHAN, a little scruffy.)

JONATHAN: Hi.

BRIAN: Hi.

JONATHAN: I'm sorry.

BRIAN: Don't be. I'm sorry.

JONATHAN: Cool.

BRIAN: Cool.

REDHEADED: Awwwww. Hey look, Jonathan, free food!

JONATHAN: Mmm! Stuffed mushrooms. Now that's what I'm talkin' about! *(Eats one)* Alright, now where are all the *(Suavely)* uneducated ladies?

(Enter LYDIA with a newly organized pile of crap, she is looking around for DR. JONES.)

BRIAN: *(Sees LYDIA. Random footage of LYDIA from scene III.)* Oh my god.

REDHEADED MAN: *(Sees LYDIA)* Let's go Brian.

(JONATHAN sees LYDIA and stiffens.)

JONATHAN: Oh my god. That's...that's the roach dung girl.

REDHEADED MAN: Brian, Brian don't don't don't don't don't---