

# *The Skin of Introspection*

**A short play by Leo Cabranes-Grant**

## **Cast of Characters**

Raymond, a white man, 25 years old. He has a beard.

Roberto, a brown latino man, 21 years old. He has a goatee.

José, a brown latino man, 45-50 years old. He is clean-shaven.

SETTING: Two chairs, facing each other. In front of each chair, a small table. On top of each table, a laptop. It is an abridged representation of a café setting: realistic enough, but reduced to its simplest forms and details. In the middle of the stage there is a narrow, empty space. A sliver of light will isolate that space from the rest of the stage later, creating the illusion of a more private location.

AT RISE: Raymond is writing on his computer. He is really focusing on his work. He is drinking his coffee absentmindedly. He wears a formal shirt, nice slacks and black shoes. After a few seconds Roberto comes in. He wears tight blue jeans, a casually elegant shirt, and leather boots. He is bringing his own coffee. He looks at Raymond. Raymond ignores him. Roberto waits. Raymond at last notices and looks at Roberto.

Roberto

(smiling) Thanks for keeping an eye on my computer.

Raymond

No problem. (he goes back to work immediately) It's okay.

Roberto

(while he sits and re-organizes his "desk") Sure. (pause) We seem to be here all the time.

Raymond

Yeah. (pause) It's easier to work here than in my office. (pause) (looking at Roberto) Fewer interruptions.

(dense silence)

Roberto

I see that. (pause) But the interruptions are- (pause) Interruptions can be interesting.

Raymond

(still writing) Sorry?

Roberto

(quietly) Interruptions can be intriguing.

Raymond

(still writing) Sort of.

Roberto

U know- (beat) I don't get any of those fancy mixes. (pause) (looking at his coffee) Just the dark, thick oil.

Raymond

(looking at Roberto at last) I like straight coffee.

Roberto

Yeah. Straight. (pause) Coffee. (pause) (he crosses the stage and stands in front of Raymond) I'm Roberto.

Raymond

(looking at Roberto) Nice to meet you. (he goes on writing)

Roberto

And you are- (pause) What's your name?

Raymond

(realizing his blunder, he stands up and shakes hands with Roberto) Raymond.

(They look at each other. They start kissing, frantically)

(José enters. He wears a red, faded T-Shirt, faded jeans and sandals. He is between 45 and 50 year old, and extremely huggable.)

José

(very slowly) Noooo. Noooo. (pause) You're rushing it again.

Raymond

Sir- (pause) This is a porn flick- not a documentary for the Sundance Festival.

José

I'm trying to do something different. Gay Sex -for married couples. Nostalgic couples. It's a new market- We are changing the standards. We need to produce more- more sensitive stuff. That's what I want to figure out. (pause) Anniversary sex. (pause) Go ahead. Improvise the whole damn thing again-

Roberto

José- (looking at Raymond) You know- As soon as I kiss him-

Raymond

(smiling) You get a hard on?

Roberto

It's not that specific. (pause) Kissing always takes me- into another location. (pause) A private room- Something like that. (pause) Gay men don't kiss in a café.

Raymond

C'mmon- this is America. Gay men are kissing wherever they want now-

José

Not in Utah!- (pause) The kiss. (pause) It creates a room-

Raymond

(trying to be funny) In a motel?

Roberto

In my mind.

José

I like that! (pause) Let's concentrate on that transition. From the real café - to that imaginary room inside your head. The kiss- (pause) What are you waiting for? I'm paying by the hour here! Let's rehearse-

(Raymond and Roberto kiss again. José supervises them)

José

Slow. Slow. Keep it simple. (pause) Taste each other. (pause) Not like that! I said "taste", not "bite"! (pause) Much better. (pause) Look into each other's eyes- Okay- (smiling) Now let's add some testosterone to my scene. (pause) Roberto- open his shirt. Go ahead. (pause) Now.

Roberto

(he starts to open Raymond's shirt) At. Last.

José

You have to make a decision. Once you unbutton his shirt- (pause) Let's say that- that your life will never be the same again. Think about that. Give me some- introspection.

Raymond

Sir- (smiling) This is ridiculous- (humble) I'm not that hot-

Roberto

(flirting with Raymond) Oh, yes- you certainly are!

José

(to Roberto) You are going to marry him. (pause) This is the moment- (pause) You are finding- your life partner.

Roberto

You never know that when you fuck someone for the first time-

José

You don't – but the camera does. (pause) It's all in the editing.

(Roberto unbuttons Raymond's shirt very slowly. He opens it. He looks at Raymond's chest, very carefully.)

Roberto

(to José) Is this what you want?

José

Look at him- discover him.

(Roberto studies Raymond's chest. He touches him)

Raymond

Watch out- (almost laughing) You're tickling me!

José

Raymond- it's your turn.

Raymond

For what?

José

Take a chance- (pause) Do something. Surprise me-

(Raymond grabs Roberto's genitals)

José

Raymond- Can you provide some –originality? Grabbing the genitals so quickly is like announcing “last call” at seven o’clock!

Raymond

What do you suggest?

José

Something that makes you- irresistible. A gesture- a detail.

(Raymond takes one of Roberto’s hands and starts licking the palm, quietly)

José

Yes. Read the lines of his hand. (pause) What is his hand telling you?

Roberto

(smiling) He’s not a gypsy-

José

Shut up! (pause) Sometimes we know. Right away. That it would be possible to love a person- (pause) Casually- you find it. (Almost angry) Do as I say!

(Raymond and Roberto stare at José, silently. Raymond buttons up his shirt. Roberto gets closer to José)

Raymond

(cautiously) Sir- (pause) What’s going on?

Roberto

(looking at José) Is this a movie - or a *telenovela*?

José

It’s a memorial. (pause) When my partner passed away –recently- (pause) Oh, fuck. I should have retired from this business then-

(silence)

Roberto

(serious) What was - his name?

José

(pause) Byron. (pause) Don't mock a widower- I can still ruin your careers as porn stars-

Roberto

Don't worry, daddy- (smiling, looking at Raymond) Ready?

Raymond

(looking at Roberto, flirting) I'm always ready- sir.

(Roberto and Raymond are now facing each other in the empty center of the stage. A sliver of light isolates them from the rest of the stage. José moves one of the chairs and sits, watching. Roberto unbuttons Raymond's shirt. He studies his chest, he touches it. Raymond takes Roberto's shirt off, and does the same. They touch each other with the attention of people that are falling in love - without being totally aware of it yet. They lick necks, shoulders, nips- sensually, slowly, deeply. They look at each other, quietly. Raymond takes one of Roberto's hands, and licks his palm. Roberto finds Raymond's lips. They kiss. Then they embrace. All these motions should be emotionally intense, but never sentimental)

José

(while Roberto and Raymond are doing all of the above) Byron- do you have a boyfriend?

(pause) No, José- not yet. I don't. (pause) I don't like this fucking café - anyway. Come to my

place. (pause) Okay. (pause) I live close by- (pause) I can only stay for an hour or two, Byron-

(pause) We'll see about that- José. We'll see- (pause) Who knows- (beat) Let's go.

**Black Out**

