

When The Men Come Around (STAGEPLAY) FINAL DRAFT

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When The Men Come Around Character Descriptions

Cristobal - teenage male (16-18 years), in good shape, slightly tall, MUST BE ABLE TO SING, MUST BE ABLE TO SPEAK SPANISH.

For the actor portraying him, be sure to capture his stiffness, but also portray how Cristobal is simultaneously controlling his body's shaking when things start getting too personal. In addition, during moments when Cristobal is really faking his happy attitude, the actor should portray Cristobal using exaggerated movements in a poor effort to come across as happy.

Cristobal is full of shyness and self-doubt. He is also really secretive, but is not such a good liar; it's obvious when he tries to hide something. However, the only thing Cristobal can mostly mask is his repressed anger, doing his absolute best to hide it from the world...even though the occasional glimpse of it might pop out here and there. Especially when he's frightened and his body goes into "fight" mode.

Cristobal is the type to put others before himself, even willing to sacrifice his own happiness and life for everyone else. Despite this, Cristobal is also weary of others, and tries hard not to let people learn the details of his personal life. Including the person who Cristobal is closer to than almost anyone else: Aaron.

Aaron - teenage male, a little skinny/thin, average height, MUST BE ABLE TO SING

For the actor portraying him, be sure to really capture his shyness and need for comfort. So have Aaron constantly twindling his fingers and stroking objects (especially his guitar and military uniform).

Aaron is a shy and secretive teenager, preferring to spend time on his own. Despite this, Aaron is better at pretending to be happy, and uses his shyness and anxiety to mask his repressed anger and repression.

Despite his anger and depression, Aaron very much cares about other people, but will not sacrifice his life or happiness for them. Aaron is also very weary of others, and doesn't let others in so easily. The only person Aaron has really allowed a glimpse into his deeper personality is Cristobal, and even then Aaron still keeps him at arm's length.

CHAPTER ONE: MOONLIGHT SONATA

It's completely dark. We hear kicking and grunting.

A spotlight shines a white light (represented by a moon in the sky) on centerstage, on CRISTOBAL angrily kicking a tree.

CRISTOBAL

¿Mi fe? ¿Mi autoestima? ¿Mi niñez? ¡Nunca podría tener nada de eso gracias a ti! ¡Los amigos que tengo no saben nada de mí! ¡Algo de dónde vengo! ¡Algo sobre quién soy en realidad! ¡No puedo seguir viviendo así! ¡Vamos! ¡Alguien! ¡Dios! ¡Jesús! Dame a alguien! ¡Alguien! ¡Cualquiera! ¡CUALQUIERA!

Cristobal tires and drops his body against the tree...crying tears.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

Cualquiera...

Beat.

Cristobal suddenly hears faint music coming from stage right. He looks up. The music starts coming closer, louder and louder; it's an acoustic version of Johnny Cash's "Hurt".

Cristobal sees closer into stage right, and he panics. He tries to wipe away his tears and comically runs around, trying to find somewhere to escape to or hide. Seeing no valid options, Cristobal hides against the side of the tree.

The music gets onstage, with AARON entering stage right, wearing an upper body military uniform and holding a guitar.

Aaron walks into the moonlight and sits against the tree, while Cristobal tries his best to smoothly hide and slide away from Aaron's potential sight. Cristobal hides behind the tree, away from the audience's view.

Aaron starts singing the first verse of "Hurt". While he sings, Cristobal slowly pokes his head out from behind the tree, mesmerized by Aaron's singing. He can hear the "Hurt" (heh) in his voice.

AARON

(Singing "Hurt")

*"I hurt myself today
To see if I still feel
I focus on the pain*

The only thing that's real
 The needle tears a hole
 The old familiar sting
 Try to kill it all away
 But I remember everything"

Aaron continues on to sing the second verse. At the first line, Cristobal sticks out more of his body into the audience's view. And when Aaron gets to the end of the verse, Cristobal slowly walks out from behind the tree, now in the audience's full view.

AARON (CONT'D)
 (singing "Hurt")

"What have I become
 My sweetest friend
 Everyone I know goes away
 In the end
 And you could have it all
 My empire of dirt
 I will let you down
 I will make you hurt"

Aaron briefly pauses to wipe away a tear, before resuming playing. However, he then turns around to see Cristobal. But funnily enough, Aaron does a double-take.

AARON (CONT'D)

Aah!

CRISTOBAL

Aah!

While Aaron instinctively jumps up, Cristobal instinctively clenches his fist.

Beat. Both boys standing up, each to a side of the tree, looking at each other.

AARON

Oh Cristobal...it's you.

CRISTOBAL

Yeah, it's me.

AARON

What are you doing watching me?

Cristobal unclenches his fist.

CRISTOBAL

Um, I was just out on a late night stroll y'know? To get some exercise in. Then I heard music playing and went to check it out.

AARON

Oh...

CRISTOBAL

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare you.

AARON

No no, it's okay. I've dealt with scarier...believe me, I've seen some frightening horror movies.

CRISTOBAL

(chuckles)

Yeah...so what about you?

AARON

What about me?

CRISTOBAL

What are you doing out here in the cold?

AARON

Oh, I'm just playing music.

CRISTOBAL

Yeah, but why out here in the cold?

AARON

Oh y'know,

(jokingly)

I figured if I caught a cold my voice would sound better.

CRISTOBAL

Chuckles.

You sound great enough.

AARON

I do?

CRISTOBAL

Yeah, no need to make yourself sick.

AARON

Heh, sometimes you gotta make the hard call.

CRISTOBAL

Whatever you say, but I think you should be heading back to your place right now. It's getting really cold.

Beat. Aaron sits down.

AARON

I can't.

CRISTOBAL

...Why not?

AARON

My mom is taking a...nap right now.

CRISTOBAL

At 6 o'clock on a Saturday?

AARON

Yeah, she's really tired so I rather not bother her.
(chuckles)

A cranky mother can be pretty scary y'know?

CRISTOBAL

Oh you don't have to tell me, there have been moments when my mom just got up in the morning, and she just looks like she hates me...and the whole world!

AARON

Ha, you mean like this?

(imitating a cranky mother)

I'm not talking to you until you do this!

CRISTOBAL

Ha! Yeah, like that.

(imitating a cranky mother)

Just leave me alone! I wanna get some sleep for a change!

AARON

It's an attitude like that that makes me glad I'm a morning person.

CRISTOBAL

Same here...but, it's getting colder.

AARON

No, it's fine. I'm used to the coldness.

CRISTOBAL

Are you sure?

AARON

Yeah.

Aaron smiles at Cristobal, before looking up at the moon. Cristobal looks at him, only at Aaron and not the moon.

Beat. Cristobal hesitantly walks closer to him, laying against the side of the tree. However, even though he is closer, there is still distance between them.

Aaron continues to look at the moon.

AARON (CONT'D)

Wow.

CRISTOBAL

Huh? What is it?

AARON

The moon is beautiful, isn't it?

Cristobal looks up at the moon.

CRISTOBAL

It is.

AARON

It's part of the reason why I'm out here.

CRISTOBAL

What do you mean? Just to look at it?

AARON

Well, it can be scary sometimes to walk in the dark night, but when the moon shines, it makes it less scary to be here. It's like the world's largest nightlight.

Cristobal smiles at the moon, and then at Aaron.

CRISTOBAL

Yeah, I see what you mean.

Beat. Aaron chuckles.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

What is it?

AARON

When I was little kid, I thought the moon was always following me.

CRISTOBAL

Well, I think everyone thought that as a kid.

AARON

But I always wondered why. Whenever it was dark and I looked out the window, the moon was always there. At one point I thought the moon was my secret friend.

CRISTOBAL

(chuckles)

Secret friend? But it's huge. Everyone could see it.

AARON

I know, I know, I was a kid. You think these things; why would the moon be there for you when...um...when you're supposed to be alone sleeping in your room?

CRISTOBAL

Well, as a kid, I thought it was God's way of watching over us.

AARON

Really?

CRISTOBAL

Yeah, how He was supposed to watch over His children and protect us.

AARON

Do you still think that?

CRISTOBAL

Not really.

AARON

How come? I mean, do you mind if I ask why?

CRISTOBAL

Oh...um...I...I don't really believe in God anymore either to be honest.

AARON

Oh...is there a reason for that?

CRISTOBAL

I just...grew out of it.

AARON

...do you mind me asking why?

Cristobal sits down against the other side of the tree.

CRISTOBAL

I'm not happy about it, but He just became someone harder and harder to believe in.

AARON

I get it.

CRISTOBAL

You do?

AARON

Yeah.

Aaron clutches onto his military uniform.

AARON (CONT'D)

I was brought up religious, but I couldn't keep believing in him.

CRISTOBAL

Do you mind if I ask why?

AARON

Like you said, he's hard to believe in. I mean, he's a giant sky genie who can make anything happen. But we never see him and just wants us to believe in him. It's almost a fairy tale.

CRISTOBAL

I see what you mean.

(beat)

Do you think there is a God?

AARON

Maybe...maybe not. A lot of bad things happen out there in the world, but...

(looks at Cristobal)

there can be a lot of good too.

Cristobal smiles.

CRISTOBAL

Yeah, I say focus on the good people in your life, the friends and family you'd give your life for.

Aaron clutches onto his military uniform.

AARON

Yeah...

Wind starts breezing. Cristobal and Aaron, mainly Cristobal start shivering.

CRISTOBAL

Oh no, it's gotten even colder.

AARON

(shivering)

It's not too bad.

CRISTOBAL

Oh please, you're shivering.

AARON
This clothing is keeping me warm.

CRISTOBAL
Yeah, but for how long?

AARON
(smiling)
I'll be fine, please, don't worry so much about me.

CRISTOBAL
Dios mío, it's practically become the North Pole!

AARON
It's alright.

CRISTOBAL
Please, you really ought to be getting home.

Aaron looks up at the moon, and then at Cristobal.

AARON
(softly)
No.

CRISTOBAL
(softly)
No?

AARON
I'm happy here.

CRISTOBAL
?

AARON
I may not look it,
(sniffles)
but I can handle a little coldness.

CRISTOBAL
(chuckles)
Okay, okay, I believe you.

Beat. Aaron scoots slightly closer to Cristobal.

Beat. Both boys shiver. Cristobal turns to see Aaron looking at him.

Beat. Both boys are looking at each other.

Cristobal gets slightly uncomfortable, and turns away.

A sad Aaron also turns away. Beat.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)
Hey um...Aaron?

AARON
Yeah?

CRISTOBAL
I know that you may not want to and all, but...you can go to my house if you want.

AARON
(surprised)
!!!

CRISTOBAL
...if you want to. It's totally fine if you don't want to, y'know.

AARON
...

CRISTOBAL
...I can make us some hot chocolate too.

AARON
...

CRISTOBAL
I think you should at least still have some hot chocolate.

AARON
...

CRISTOBAL
It'll warm you up! I know you say that you don't need it, but, um, a little warmth can't hurt can it?

AARON
...

CRISTOBAL
It's really good, I swear! I can make it really good!

Aaron snaps out of it.

AARON
You seem really eager to give me this hot chocolate...
(cracking a joke)
it's not poisoned is it?

CRISTOBAL

What? Ha, no! It's just, what kind of person would I be if I didn't share my delicious hot chocolate with you?

AARON

(chuckles)

Delicious? I doubt hot chocolate could be that good.

CRISTOBAL

Well, maybe if you're a little more open, you might like it.

AARON

Hey, it's not that I don't like it; I just don't see what could be so special about it.

CRISTOBAL

Well, this hot chocolate is really warm and sweet.

AARON

Pfft, that's it?

CRISTOBAL

Sometimes, that's all you need.

AARON

(cheeky)

Whatever you say...

CRISTOBAL

...So...you don't want some?

AARON

...Well...

(twirling his fingers)

I'm not necessarily saying "no".

CRISTOBAL

...Yo creo, I think...I think it would be great.

AARON

Are you sure?

CRISTOBAL

...Yeah. I am.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

So what do you say? In the mood for some hot chocolate?

AARON

...Yeah. That would...be nice actually.

CRISTOBAL

Wanna go now?

AARON

Huh? Oh, yeah, yeah!

Aaron and Cristobal get up.

AARON (CONT'D)

Y'know Cristobal, you don't have to do this for me.

CRISTOBAL

I know, but I want to.

Both boys smile at each other before Cristobal leads Aaron to stage right.

END OF CHAPTER ONE

CHAPTER TWO: CHOCOLATE AND CINNAMON

Lights turn on to reveal a kitchen. However, the light is dimming. While Aaron is sitting at the table, Cristobal is at the stove, getting the hot chocolate ready.

Again, both boys are at a distance from each other.

CRISTOBAL

So sorry again about the light; my mom and I keep forgetting to buy new light bulbs for the kitchen and living room.

AARON

(smiling)

It's okay, I don't mind.

The lights keep dimming.

AARON (CONT'D)

Although...I do have to question how you guys keep forgetting when they're flashing on and off like this.

CRISTOBAL

Hey, well, we can be busy with other things. My Mama's got...work, I got school. Light bulbs aren't the first thing in our mind.

AARON

I'm sorry, "mind"?

CRISTOBAL

What?

AARON

(chuckles)

You said you and your mom's "mind", as in just one mind. What? Do you guys share a mind?

CRISTOBAL

Alright, alright, "minds". Geez, for the supposedly shy kid in our school you can be a smart Alec.

AARON

Ha, well, I'm only able to be one with the people I feel comfortable with.

Beat. Both boys smile at each other, before awkwardly turning away. While Cristobal focuses on the hot chocolate, Aaron whistles and plays around with a fruit from the fruit bowl.

AARON (CONT'D)
(trying to change the
subject)

So...how is school? Everything going alright? How are Jonah and Arleen?

CRISTOBAL
Fine, fine. Jonah's at his Grandpa's, and Arleen's at her cousin's house.

AARON
Oh...is that why you're on your own tonight?

CRISTOBAL
Eh. I like to spend time by myself too.

AARON
Oh yeah, so do I...

CRISTOBAL
...But you know, you're still always welcome to have lunch with us. Or even just hang out, y'know?

AARON
Heh heh, "hang out".

CRISTOBAL
(chuckles)
What?

AARON
For some reason, I didn't really picture you saying "hang out".

CRISTOBAL
What? Why?

AARON
I dunno...just...I guess you're usually more...you have a different dialect from the other students.

CRISTOBAL
Part of that is because I speak Spanish.

AARON
Yeah, but, you also just speak in a more...advanced, professional dialect?

CRISTOBAL
Eh, I haven't really thought about it.

AARON
But you do' I don't usually hear other kids talk the way you do.

CRISTOBAL

Well, I can say the same thing about you.

AARON

Ha ha, what?

CRISTOBAL

C'mon. You use the word "dialect". How many kids in our school even know what that means?

AARON

Jonah probably would.

CRISTOBAL

(laughs)

Yeah, you're right. One minute he's reading John Steinbeck, the next he's reading Aristotle, the next he's suddenly reading Dr. Seuss.

AARON

(laughs)

Hey, I guess that's how you make it to the top of class.

CRISTOBAL

Well, I got him beat in art class.

AARON

True, but you're also the most talented artist I've ever seen!

CRISTOBAL

"That you've ever seen."

AARON

Oh please!

CRISTOBAL

I'm not that good.

AARON

You know you're being modest.

CRISTOBAL

I'm just being honest.

AARON

That painting of Frankenstein you did, that was amazing! It looked like it could be hung in a museum! How did you manage to do that with all of those colors?

CRISTOBAL

I don't know how to explain it exactly, it just...it just sort of happened. We were told to paint something, and I just...did it. I don't know why, but it happened.

AARON

Do you have it anywhere, can I see it?

CRISTOBAL

Sure thing! Oh wait, let me turn on the hot chocolate?

Cristobal turns on the hot chocolate, and walks towards stage left.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

Okay, I'll be right back, just hold on please.

AARON

Of course.

Cristobal exits stage left.

Aaron sits patiently, holding onto his military uniform. Beat.

He leans slightly forward, clasping his hands together, almost like he's praying.

AARON (CONT'D)

(silently singing Johnny
Cash's "When The Man Comes
Around")

"And I heard as it were the noise of thunder.
One of the four beasts saying "come and see"
and I saw, and behold a white horse.
There's a man going around taking names
And he decides who to free and who to blame.
Everybody won't be treated all the same.
There will be a golden ladder reaching down
When the man comes around.
The hairs on your arm will stand up
At the terror in each sip and in each sup.
Will you partake of that last offered cup?
Or disappear into the potter's ground
When the man comes around?"

Aaron hears footsteps, and quickly resumes his original position (when he was originally waiting for Cristobal).

Cristobal enters stage left with his painting of Frankenstein.

CRISTOBAL

Hey, here it is. Sorry it took so long.

AARON

It's fine.

Cristobal shows it Aaron.

AARON (CONT'D)

You see? Look at all of this. It's so well done.

CRISTOBAL

Well, I think lots of people can do this.

AARON

Are you kidding? No one can do it the way you do. And who in the class would've even thought to make Frankenstein, well, Frankenstein's monster, look more like a deformed monster?

CRISTOBAL

Well, even though I love how he looks in the movies, I wanted to try something a bit different.

AARON

Well, it looks great.

CRISTOBAL

Thank you, but it could be better-

AARON

It looks great, okay? Don't tell yourself any different.

CRISTOBAL

(surprised and flattered)

...

AARON

Do you mind if I ask you something else?

CRISTOBAL

...Um...yeah, yeah...sure.

AARON

What made you wanna do Frankenstein's monster?

CRISTOBAL

Huh?

AARON

Frankenstein's monster, was there a particular reason you wanted to write about him?

CRISTOBAL

Oh, um, I just like the character is all. And his movies. And the book.

AARON

...What do you like about all of them?

CRISTOBAL

The monster, even though he's called that...he's just...innocent y'know?

AARON

How so?

Cristobal starts walking around the kitchen.

CRISTOBAL

Think about it, he was made from dead parts, born deformed, but...he wasn't born evil or anything. He was just born a certain way.

AARON

Yeah...

CRISTOBAL

But everyone hated him, didn't even give him a chance to be treated like a normal person...you just feel sorry for him. Everyone either attacked him, or ran away from him. Even his own dad, well, creator.

AARON

Yeah...and then the monster became so sad and angry at the world.

CRISTOBAL

When he couldn't even get together with a bride born the way he was.

AARON

...yeah.

CRISTOBAL

All he wanted was someone to love him, but the world was just so hateful.

AARON

Yeah. It stinks. You could be born a certain way, and people just hate you for that reason alone.

CRISTOBAL

Yeah...it could be the color of your skin, or if you have a deformity, or heck, even if you're too smart. Because let me tell you something, I can people hate Jonah just because he's smarter than them.

AARON

It's disgusting, honestly. How could anyone hate someone else for something they didn't even ask for?

CRISTOBAL

Tell me about it.

AARON
She's brave by the way.

CRISTOBAL
Huh? Who?

AARON
Arleen.

CRISTOBAL
Arleen?

AARON
Yeah, Arleen. To have come out of the closet the way she did, I can't imagine it must've been easy.

CRISTOBAL
Yeah, it was a big decision. But ultimately, she decided she didn't want to hide that part of herself anymore, and was ready to face any hate that came her way.

AARON
Wow. I'm not sure if I could do something like that.

CRISTOBAL
Me either...

AARON
But, a lot of people also supported her. It wasn't as bad as I would've imagined it to be.

CRISTOBAL
Yeah, well, still...it's such a big decision. To reveal such a big part of yourself to the world...there's no telling how much hate you can get. Sometimes it's still better to just be quiet about things.

AARON
Well...you're right...

Beat.

AARON (CONT'D)
But still, that hope that you will be accepted is still there.

CRISTOBAL
...Not for the monster.

AARON
...

CRISTOBAL

...If he was able to hide who he was, everything would've been better for him...

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

...

Beat.

AARON

Hey Cristobal?

CRISTOBAL

¿Si?

AARON

Your mom...where is-

CRISTOBAL

(trying to avoid the question)

Oh, look! The hot chocolate is ready!

Cristobal turns off the stove and starts pouring the drink into two mugs.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

You're gonna love it!

AARON

(trying to be as cheery)

Oh really? Well, I'll be the judge of that.

Cristobal hands Aaron a mug, while placing his own down on the table. Cristobal then sits at the table, but all the while keeping his distance from Aaron.

CRISTOBAL

There you go.

AARON

Thank you.

Things are more tense between Aaron and Cristobal, a larger aura of hesitation. It's as though they are breaking away from each other. Yet, both continue on, trying their best to maintain something.

CHAPTER THREE: HIDDEN HONESTY

It's dark. But then a lit candle being held by Cristobal enters stage right. We are in a living room with a couch and table in center stage. The table has Cristobal's mug of hot chocolate on the left (stage right)

Aaron is sitting on the right of the couch (stage left), with his guitar by his side. He continues to drink his mug of hot chocolate.

Cristobal puts the lit candle on the table, before sitting down on the left side of the couch (stage right).

CRISTOBAL

Sorry about this. Who would've thought both the kitchen and living room would go off on the same day?

AARON

It's okay.

CRISTOBAL

...No, it's not.

AARON

Cristobal, it is.

Beat. Things are awkward between them. Neither are sure if they want to be here any longer.

CRISTOBAL

I invited you over, but I didn't even think to get light bulbs before doing so.

AARON

Don't worry, it's fine. These things happen.

CRISTOBAL

But still.

AARON

Hey, at least you have candles to light up the place when you don't have light bulbs. If my house were to go out, all I would have to rely on is the light from the moon!

CRISTOBAL

(chuckles)

Oh, you and the moon.

AARON

What can I say?

(cheeky)

It's always been there for me when I most need it.

CRISTOBAL

Funny, I didn't really take the time to appreciate the moon like you have. If it got dark, it got dark, nothing you could do about it.

AARON

Nothing...except candles.

CRISTOBAL

Alright, alright, we had candles.

AARON

Not as good as the moon though.

CRISTOBAL

To each his own. I prefer the warmth from the candlelight.

AARON

What about the sun? That's like God's candlelight.

CRISTOBAL

Um, too bright sometimes. I prefer a balance between the dark and light. Nothing too dark, but nothing too bright and blinding.

AARON

(cheeky)

So you're going to turn down "Our Lord and Father's" ultimate candlelight for us all?

CRISTOBAL

(cheeky)

Yup. Lo siento Father, pero your "ultimate candlelight is too bright for me."

AARON

But what God's ultimate nightlight?

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

...Not so sure to be honest.

AARON

How come?

CRISTOBAL

I, I don't know. I guess I prefer the candlelight; it gives me the right amount of warmth, and I can put it out whenever I want, so it's not trying to follow me everywhere.

AARON

But...what if the candlelight was able to follow you? And you weren't able to put it out?

CRISTOBAL

I guess...I guess then...I would have to hope to God everyday that it doesn't burn me.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

...I thought you said you didn't believe in God.

CRISTOBAL

Sorry, I didn't mean it like that. It's just an expression.

AARON

Yeah, sorry, I know it is. I just got a little lost there. Sorry.

CRISTOBAL

It's fine.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

Do you feel...do you feel there is god out there watching over us?

CRISTOBAL

I don't know. Maybe there is, maybe there isn't. Maybe instead of a god there's multiple gods secretly taking care of us. Or instead of gods, there are only angels.

AARON

What about the flip side to all that?

CRISTOBAL

The flip side?

AARON

Instead of a god, maybe there's only a devil. Or instead of multiple gods, there's multiple devils. And instead of angels, there are only demons.

CRISTOBAL

...I don't know. I hope not...

Cristobal drinks more of his hot chocolate.

AARON

Me too.

CRISTOBAL

But...the Devil...

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

The Devil was a fallen angel. For him to exist, than other angels would exist with him right?

AARON

I...I believe so.

CRISTOBAL

Sp that means, if they exist, angels can go bad despite being agents of God right?

AARON

Perhaps.

CRISTOBAL

And even God...he's been known to get angry at his own creations, even he's not perfect. Even he can lose it, lose his temper I mean.

AARON

Yeah.

CRISTOBAL

So, if they existed, that means even holier beings meant to spread good can go bad, and meaning that...even God can go bad.

AARON

...Yes.

CRISTOBAL

So that means, there's always reason for someone to go bad right? You're not just born to be evil? You can be born a monster, but that doesn't mean you're bad.

You could still, no. Are good. Or at least innocent. So if you wind up hurting others, there can still be a chance to turn good.

AARON

Cristobal...

CRISTOBAL

Think about it. Remember Jarvo?

AARON

Of course, how could I forget my old bully?

CRISTOBAL

I know he did bad things to us, but later on he apologized to us. He changed his ways.

AARON

After you beat him up...

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

...Yeah, but that's not the point. The point is, even someone who makes mistakes like he did can be redeemed.

AARON

Including God?

CRISTOBAL

Huh?

AARON

God. He flooded the whole Earth. Killed almost all of the animals and humans. Almost all life...

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

If he is real, I would hate him. That is unforgivable, and unworthy of redemption.

CRISTOBAL

...i...UM...

AARON

And the worst part is, he's all powerful. No one can stop him, and we're forced to bow down to him.

We would have to live the rest of our lives to an evil, unforgivable dictator who can kill us at the drop of a hat.

CRISTOBAL

...So what are you saying?

AARON

I'm just trying to say, some people are so bad and have so much power, that they can't be redeemed and will only go on to hurt even more people.

CRISTOBAL

...What about the good God has done?

AARON

Huh?

CRISTOBAL

I mean, he created life. Doesn't that, in a way, excuse his wrong actions?

AARON

Not to me.

CRISTOBAL

Oh...

AARON

If he created life, he should've been prepared to face all of the consequences that came with it. Not just kill everything and everyone because he lost his temper and knew he had the power to act out on his anger.

CRISTOBAL

(really sad)

You're...you're...right...it is unforgivable isn't it? I mean, how could he just treat the ones he gave life in such an extreme matter?

AARON

It's just part of the world I guess. Sometimes people just want to hurt others just because they have the power to do so.

CRISTOBAL

Y'know...I think we should be good to people, to never treat anyone different because of how they were born.

AARON

Yes, you do. And I love that about-

CRISTOBAL

But it's hard to.

AARON

Huh?

CRISTOBAL

It's hard to be nice to others sometimes because they're being bad to you. Like Jarvo.

AARON

Jarvo?

CRISTOBAL

Remember? I tried being nice to him, peacefully talk to him to get him to stop fighting you. But instead, he just started bullying me. And went even harder on you. How are you supposed to be nice when the other side just wants to be mean to you? When they start attacking you?

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

How are you not supposed to stoop down to their level when they keep pushing you?

AARON

...You-

CRISTOBAL

(really fake chuckling)

It's funny really? What do you do? If you fight back, you're just as bad as them.

AARON

Well, I don't think you're bad.

CRISTOBAL

(scared)

Huh?

AARON

When Jarvo crossed the line, you fought him back, even beat him up. But it didn't make you any less good.

CRISTOBAL

Are you sure?

AARON

Absolutely. You had to fight him back.

CRISTOBAL

But I shouldn't have had to fight him.

AARON

You're right, you shouldn't have had to...but you needed to. If you hadn't, he wasn't going to stop hurting you.

CRISTOBAL

Or you.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

I had to fight him or else he was going to keep bullying you...

Aaron and Cristobal look into each other's eyes, still at a distance from each other.

Beat. Both boys realize that what they're doing, and shy away, drinking their hot chocolate.

Beat. Both awkwardly whistle.

AARON

So...

CRISTOBAL

So...

AARON

...Did Arleen tell you she was a lesbian before or after she publically came out of the closet?

CRISTOBAL

Oh! Actually, um...I found out on my own.

AARON

Oh.

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

Hey, do you want anymore hot chocolate?

AARON

Huh? Oh no, I have plenty.

CRISTOBAL

It's no problem really, I can go make some more if you want.

AARON

No, no, it's fine. I have more than enough.

CRISTOBAL

Are you sure?

AARON

Yeah, besides, I'm sure your mother wouldn't want me drinking all of your milk right?

CRISTOBAL

...Yeah, she wouldn't.

AARON

...

Aaron watches Cristobal look over at his hot chocolate, suddenly not in the mood to drink it.

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

Cristobal?

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

Cris?

CRISTOBAL

Huh? Did you say something Aaron?

AARON

I...uh...

CRISTOBAL

What is it? Do you want more hot chocolate after all?

AARON

(chuckles)

Actually, I...I had a question, if you don't mind.

CRISTOBAL

(nervous)

What is it?

AARON

Where's your mom?

CRISTOBAL

Um...well...she's at a friend's house right now...

AARON

How come?

CRISTOBAL

Um...hey, even mothers need to spend some time away from their sons y'know?

(chuckles)

They can only put up with us for so long before going crazy.

AARON

(chuckles)

Yeah...boy do I know.

(beat)

But still, I don't think we get enough credit; as troublesome as we can be, mothers can also be such a hassle.

CRISTOBAL

(chuckles)

Don't I know it. Ha ha.

Beat.

AARON

How about your da-

CRISTOBAL

(trying to avoid the question)

Y'know? I had a question too, but I got interrupted by the lights going off.

AARON

Oh?

CRISTOBAL

Yeah.

AARON

...What is it?

CRISTOBAL

When we were having hot chocolate, and you said that you wished you had my hot chocolate as a kid. I was trying to ask you...what did you have as a kid?

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

...What did you have as a kid?

AARON

Um...this guitar.

CRISTOBAL

Wow, you've been playing guitar for that long?

AARON
Why so surprised, am I that bad?

CRISTOBAL
(nervously)
Nonono. I just...um...it's a big guitar for a kid.

AARON
Well, actually it was my dad's guitar.

Beat.

CRISTOBAL
Your dad?

AARON
Yeah, my dad used to play songs on his guitar all the time.

CRISTOBAL
Oh, must've been cool.

AARON
Yeah, he was.
(chuckles)
He would make me sing songs with him. I was so embarrassed.

CRISTOBAL
(laughs)
How's your dad like? I'd love to meet him.

AARON
...

Aaron clutches onto his military jacket.

CRISTOBAL
Aaron?

AARON
My dad...he's...

Cristobal notices the military jacket and a tear forming in Aaron's eye.

CRISTOBAL
Oh...I'm sorry...I didn't mean to...

AARON
No, don't, it's quite alright.

Beat. They awkwardly sit in silence, not looking at each other.

AARON (CONT'D)

Cris?

CRISTOBAL

Aaron?

AARON

Your dad...I've never seen him either. You haven't even mentioned him. Is he...y'know?

Cristobal remains silent for a moment. His hands which were once holding the hot chocolate suddenly start trembling. Aaron notices his jittering hands somehow withstanding the pain of the heat from the hot chocolate.

Cristobal suddenly returns his hands into place before he smiles at Aaron.

CRISTOBAL

No...actually, I don't know.
He and my mom...they split off years ago, before I was even born.

Cristobal's eyes can't even bear to look into Aaron's. He just keeps looking into the hot chocolate. And Aaron can't help but notice all this extra hesitation and avoidance.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

I don't know where my dad is. Or if he's even alive.

AARON

Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have asked.

CRISTOBAL

No, no it's okay. But now I guess you can see why I don't talk about him.

(smile)

Heh, not exactly much to say for a dad you've never met.

Beat. Things get uncomfortable before both boys turn away from each other.

Cristobal drinks a little more of his chocolate, but the warmth isn't enough. He puts it down onto the table.

Beat. Aaron watches Cristobal's body begin to shake, as though he had just gotten some sort of cold or illness.

AARON

Hey, it looks like you need some hot chocolate there buddy.

CRISTOBAL

Huh? Oh, don't worry. I just, sometimes hot chocolate just isn't enough y'know?

Beat. Aaron watches as Cristobal continues to shiver.

AARON

But what about the candlelight?

CRISTOBAL

Sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't. And right now, it doesn't.

Cristobal continues to shiver.

AARON

I think you should get closer to the fire.

CRISTOBAL

(smiles)

Nah, I'm fine. Just fine.

AARON

Cris-

CRISTOBAL

I'm fine Aaron, just fine.

Beat.

Aaron scooches over to Cristobal. But Cristobal doesn't even notice.

Beat. Aaron takes off his military uniform, revealing his thinner frame.

Aaron puts it over Cristobal, sort of like a blanket.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

Aaron?

AARON

It's okay.

CRISTOBAL

But, wasn't it your-

AARON

I can tell you need it right now.

CRISTOBAL

Um...thanks.

Cristobal slightly clutches onto the uniform just as Aaron had done so earlier. Meanwhile, Aaron sets up his guitar. Cristobal's eyes widen as his shivering quickly lessens, his body finally at ease.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

Aaron?

AARON

Yeah Cris?

CRISTOBAL

Do you remember any times when you and your parents did stuff together? Like, go to the zoo, ride the roller coaster, or something?

AARON

(guilty)

...Yeah.

CRISTOBAL

Can you tell me one?

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

Or even just watch a movie together?

Beat. Silence. Except for the sound of the candle's flame.

AARON

...

Beat. Aaron's hands start trembling, struggling to hold onto his guitar. However, Aaron quickly takes control of his hands before Cristobal can properly assess the situation as Aaron had done with him.

AARON (CONT'D)

...Y'know what? There was this one time.

CRISTOBAL

?

AARON

It was winter, Christmas time was near, and the dirty streets were hidden with a blanket of snow. My dad and I went out for a snowball fight...he usually won but's that beside the point.

(chuckles)

Looking back on it the snowball fights I won were because he was letting me win. That sly dog.

Cristobal smiles.

AARON (CONT'D)

But that night, when it looked like he was gonna beat me again, my mom came rushing outside. Normally, Mom couldn't stand the snow, but something in her that day made her want to join me and my dad. She was all smiling and rushed in to my "defense", "saving" me from him.

(chuckles)

She just started pelting him with so many snowballs like a mad woman! She had so much fun throwing stuff at him, and I swear, she somehow landed ever single hit! And my old man wouldn't dare fight back! And then she had me join in and we were just assaulting him with snowballs like they were cannonballs!

(laughing)

By the end, he was covered with so much so snow he practically became Frosty the Snowman!

Both Aaron and Cristobal laugh together. It's the happiest both boys have been through the entirety of this play.

CRISTOBAL

Man...must've been something.

AARON

Yeah...just wish he put up more of a struggle with her y'know?

(chuckles)

I mean, my dad was tough, but he let her beat him so hard in that snowball fight!

CRISTOBAL

Sounds like your dad really didn't want to risk hurting her.

AARON

Can't imagine why anyone would let themselves be so humiliated.

CRISTOBAL

Well, if I was married, I'd probably do the same for my wife.

AARON

(trying to hide his disgust)

Hmm...

(smiles)

you would wouldn't you?

CRISTOBAL

What do you mean by that?

AARON

For a big guy, you could be so soft.

CRISTOBAL

(chuckles)

I don't really know why people say that about me.

AARON

C'mon, you don't wrestle, you speak so low, I've hardly even heard you curse, and

(holding the mug and cuddling
the blanket Cristobal had
given him)

you're always thinking about others before yourself.

CRISTOBAL

Well, when it comes to that last one, I'm just doing what a man's supposed to do.

Aaron's eyes slightly widen.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

With all our strength, what good is it if we don't help those in need? Especially those we swore to love and protect? It's just the right thing to do y'know.

Aaron is completely engrossed by Cristobal's words.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

If I got married, I would do everything in my power to protect my wife and make sure she lives happily.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

Even if it meant losing my own happiness.

AARON

(angry)

...

CRISTOBAL

And I would give up my life for her if I had to.

Aaron looks at his dad's guitar.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

But...I'm not sure if I'm gonna get married.

Aaron's eyes grow wide, before a slight smile forms on his face. He then turns to look at Cristobal.

AARON

(hiding his happiness)

Really? How come?

CRISTOBAL

Well, what if I can't? What if I'm not meant to have a someone because I can't take care of her? What if I fail as a husband because I don't know how to properly be one? Lord knows there isn't a teacher for that type of stuff.

AARON

...

CRISTOBAL

And maybe...I just don't deserve one.

AARON

What?

CRISTOBAL

Hey, you've heard the phrase right: "I don't deserve you."

AARON

Oh no, don't tell me...

CRISTOBAL

Just imagining it...someone who loved me for me, and would actually spend the rest of her life with me...I would be so lucky to find that person...but it would bother me for the rest of my life because ultimately I know that's it's someone I just don't deserve.

AARON

(clutching onto the military uniform)

You really believe that don't you?

CRISTOBAL

...Yeah.

AARON

Why?

CRISTOBAL

(nervous)

...Um...I just...

(fake chuckling)

Heh. Just look at me. I'm being greedy, fantasizing about what I want in a wife.

AARON

(angry look on his face)

...

CRISTOBAL

...I just don't think I have the right kind of heart to cherish, let alone earn the love of that special someone y'know? I'm practically-

Aaron places two of his fingers on Cristobal's heart.

Beat. Aaron smiles at a surprised Cristobal.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

...?

AARON

Your heart's too pure for this world you little marshmallow.

CRISTOBAL

...

AARON

Believe me...

(clutches onto his military jacket)

it doesn't make you any less of a man to think about you want. About what makes you happy.

Cristobal's face slowly turns into shock, as if no one's ever told him that before.

AARON (CONT'D)

And this...companion you dream about. Whoever that special someone is...

(looks down at the floor)

...you're not gonna find it via marriage.

(looks back up at Cristobal and smiles)

Your true love will live or die by your side without some dumb, law-abiding contract.

CRISTOBAL

I...I...

AARON

And enough about not "deserving" that special someone. If you ask me...it's clearly the other way around.

CRISTOBAL

...

Beat. Silence. Aaron's smile quickly drops as the awkwardness kicks in and both boys turn away from each other. However, they don't scoot away from each other.

AARON

...Um, well...

CRISTOBAL

...Yeah?

AARON

That's what I wanted to say.

(chuckles)

Don't get so worked up over that stuff y'know? It's so embarrassing.

CRISTOBAL

(chuckles)

...Okay.

Both boys are still turned away from each other. But Cristobal smiles while Aaron blushinglly drinks more of his hot chocolate.

Aaron puts it down.

AARON

So...any requests?

Cristobal then turns to see Aaron's guitar.

CRISTOBAL

...Huh?

AARON

Any requests?

CRISTOBAL

Um...I don't know, whatever you want.

AARON

I rather play what you want.

CRISTOBAL

Huh?

(smiles)

Are you sure? You don't have to y'know.

AARON

Yeah I'm sure.

Aaron eyes the military uniform.

AARON (CONT'D)

Heh, you've always been so quick to care for me and other people...I'm sure it's about damn time you focused on what you want for a change.

Cristobal's face slowly turns into shock, as if no one's ever told him that before.

AARON (CONT'D)

(smiling)

So for the love of Pete, will tell me a song you wanna hear already?

CRISTOBAL

Well...

(chuckles)

is there any particular song your father used to play for you?

AARON

Oh yeah. The song's "When the Man Comes Around"; it was my dad's favorite song.

CRISTOBAL

No way, I love that song.

AARON

(chuckles)

It always drove my mom nuts when he played it. And not in the "head over heels" kinda way.

Beat. Aaron pauses.

CRISTOBAL

What is it?

AARON

I'm not gonna play it...

CRISTOBAL

(confused)

...

AARON

(sly smile)

Unless you sing it.

CRISTOBAL

What? I can't sing!

AARON

Heh. Didn't stop my dad from making me sing.

CRISTOBAL

C'mon...

AARON

Nope. You're singing.

Cristobal drops his head down.

CRISTOBAL

You just wanna see me embarrassed don't you?

Cristobal smiles, face hidden from Aaron, before lifting his head back up.

CRISTOBAL (CONT'D)

(mockingly serious tone)

Okay, fine. Just start playing.

AARON

(jokingly)

As you wish sir...

Aaron prepares himself to play the guitar. But before he can start, Cristobal has something to say.

CRISTOBAL

You know what? I'll take the moon instead of the candlelight.

AARON

Really?

CRISTOBAL

Yeah.

AARON

How come?

CRISTOBAL

Well, it's like you said...the moon is beautiful.

AARON

The moon is beautiful, isn't it?

(beat it)

But y'know what?

CRISTOBAL

What?

AARON

The candlelight is beautiful too.

Both boys smile at each other, now next to each other, slightly touching.

AARON (CONT'D)

(beat)

(speaking the opening verse of "When The Man Comes Around")

"And I heard as it were the noise of thunder. One of the four beasts saying "come and see" and I saw, and behold a white horse."

Aaron starts playing "When The Man Comes Around" on his guitar. As he nears the second verse, Cristobal smiles and sighs before he starts singing

After a while, Aaron joins in and the rest of the song together.

Curtains close.

END OF CHAPTER THREE AND THE WHOLE PLAY.