

SECOND WAVE
By Isabella Iasella

Commissioned by Plan-B Theatre Company and Utah AIDS Foundation. Read as part of Plan-B's Script-In-Hand Series on April 6, 2011 with the following cast:

Andrew	Andy Rindlisbach
Abby/Men	JJ Peeler
Zach	Lane Richins

Directed by Jason Bowcutt.

Stage Directions read by Heidi Hackney. Stage Managed by Marcine Lake.

Places

Salt Lake City and Beyond.

Time

Present.

Two spots suddenly up: A cold blue light on Andrew who speaks directly to Abby; a warm bright light on Abby who speaks directly to audience.

ANDREW

Don't fuck with me. I mean it, Abby. And in the words of my personal savior, Eric Rofes, the Almighty Homo Jehovah, "Don't fuck with gay culture".

ABBY

He thought that if he could make me hate him, I would let him vanish, unmissed. This was Andrew's plan.

ANDREW

Fuck Brigham Young, and fuck his namesake school and his status quo flock and his busy-bee, buzzing, Beehive spies and everything that stinks of the safe, spick-and-span, eternal promise of life. Make mine burn fast and furious and filthy. Then put it out.

(Blows a puff of air.)

Coup de grâce.

ABBY

Here.

(Pulls a small picture out of her wallet, too small to decipher.)

Can you see? I wish you could see. In all of our photos, growing up, I look as if I'm ready to cry, but Andrew is beaming with the most glorious trickster smile. And if you could hear him sing. He has the voice of a sweet spirit. When we were five, we used to sing that thing from *The Parent Trap*: "Two is twice as nice as one...."

ANDREW

Fuck *that*. Everything and everybody then and now. Fuck it all.

ABBY

Andrew and I are each other's blood chimeras, fraternal twins who share one source of blood in the uterus. Before birth, we fused together and swapped stem cells and blood-forming tissue. We are both blood type A. And we are both blood type B. We each have *two* sets of embryonic stem cells, each set with its own distinct DNA. Blood chimeras...very rare among fraternal twin pairs. "Exceptional," mama said. "You are each other's guardian angels. Nothing can ever split the two of you apart."

ANDREW

"Nothing"? We'll see. Look, Abby. Look at what your blood chimera has just posted on a barebacking site: "Hot hard-body neg bottom looking for some raw gang action. Charged cum? Russian Roulette? Let's barter. Let's *dicker*." I included a photo of myself, me on campus in a Y hoodie. Show *that* to Baker and his Honor Code Office. And tell him I went easy; he should see some of the other queers' profiles.

ABBY

Sometime to face the frightening, you need to, first, remember the safe and secure. Andrew and I have always had a sixth sense, an unspoken code, for bailing each other out. He rescued me when I was eleven, almost twelve, drowning in my own prepubescent sweat, my hands cold and clammy and dripping nonstop. Picture this: Me and my soggy hands, forced, *every* month, to go to these compulsory coed school dances. “Reject” might just as well have been stamped on my forehead. But Andy, like the Caped Crusader, donned his cape and saved me from shame, just in time. Without a word, like magic, he freed my eleven-year-old soul.

ANDREW

So? Big deal. No big deal.

ABBY

All I know is that *every* single month, his best friend, Tay, dutifully took my clammy hands and danced me onto the floor. At the end of the year, Tay whispered into my ear, “Not a bad trade. Your dumb brother’s been doin’ all my Saturday morning chores, the whole year.” *All* Tay’s chores? The *entire* year? Unlikely. Andy’s no fool. But he’d paid *some* kind of price in exchange for my happiness.

ANDREW

So? Abby makes a big deal out of every goddamn little thing.

ABBY

Andy’s my peace dove...filled with peace. Only maybe, to mix it up, he carries a firecracker instead of an olive branch between his lips.

ANDREW

Or maybe, instead of a firecracker, it’s a stick of TNT.

ABBY

We never think our ordinary world will end, that the plates will shift. And then things tumble out of control, make no sense, and tumble some more. Like last spring, in his junior year, when Andrew was brought before the Honor Code Office and——

ANDREW

And the blast of the Angel Moroni’s voice descended from high and filled the room, “You, Andrew, are being charged with living ‘an unchaste life’. You’ve been seen dancing gay-like, in a gay club, with a gay-type guy. We’ve got photos.” Then the gilded guardian of the golden plates—that weird dude in the gold-plate dress—he threw the book at me.

(Gives a small, taunting smile.)

The Book of Mormon. It seems...my little gay goose was cooked.

ABBY

Andrew listened to the options and came to the decision——

ANDREW

I told them to fuck off.

ABBY

——to walk away. From the school and the Church.

ANDREW

I didn't have to put up with their little spy ring, their gay stakeouts, and their anonymous boogeyman tip line. They pulled my scholarship. What else? No way was I going to swallow their one-year suspension and all the rest of their crap——all of it topped off with the pledge: *No* gay contact. Hear no/see no/speak no/touch no, nothing G-A-Y. Jesus, Almighty, what if I accidentally bump some queer on a crowded street? There's the broken pledge. How do I live with *that*?

ABBY

Sometimes Andrew is too smart——

ANDREW

(Laughs.)

That's right. Smart. *Really* smart.

ABBY

——too smart-alecky for his own good. And too hot-headed.

ANDREW

I could've lied. Who could tell for sure that it was me dancing in the photos? But...I went for the truth. And *that's* how being too stupid, being "too honorable to lie", gets your ass slapped in the Honor Code Office.

ABBY

Andrew has an IQ of 180, genius territory——same as Michelangelo and Leonardo.

ANDREW

High IQ...the little secret of the closeted crazies.

ABBY

It's such a fine line, the line that defines each of our lives. One moment, Andrew is this guy...a paradigm, a musical phenom.... And, then, the next minute——

ANDREW

And then he's just a freakin' freak. He'll fuck anything that carries an XY pair.

ABBY

Almost everybody else thinks that something snapped inside, that his soul cracked into a million pieces. They're furious that he left it all, scattered, and disappeared into thin air. I just miss him. Plain and simple. His only contact was when he forwarded his profile

ABBY (Cont'd)

to me, to try to puncture my soul. "Hot hard-body...."

ANDREW

(Overlaps Abby as she continues to recite the internet profile.)

Abby is the most tenacious, determined, single-minded, never-say-die person I know. Her calls and e-mails wouldn't let up. She's a butterfly on the outside and a bulldog inside.

ABBY

I'll find him.

ANDREW

I knew I had to put up a wall.

ABBY

He thought he had to put up a wall.

ABBY

I love you, Andy. We're not nearly done.

Both spotlights out.

*Ascending sound of planes taking off.
Full lights up on airport waiting area.*

Andrew sleeps, sitting upright. Seated next to him is Zach who intensely observes Andrew and leans in so closely that the two men's lips almost touch.

ANDREW

(Suddenly wakes——startled.)

Christ!

ZACH

No.... Not quite.

ANDREW

(Leans away; tries to create distance.)

What?

ZACH

Do you know you barely breathe while you sleep? And your "barely-there" breath isn't warm at all. It's ice cold.

(Extends his hand.)

Zach. Missionary, of sorts.

ANDREW

Missionary.

ZACH

Well, technically, maybe more of an emissary. Missionary. Emissary. Courier. Carrier.

ANDREW

Okay....

(Starts to stand.)

Good luck with all that.

ZACH

(Stops Andrew from leaving.)

She doesn't screw around. She sent me to track you down and get in your face. I've been running—three days and three nights, no break—on instinct alone. Even if I'd wanted, I couldn't have stopped. Really, Andy, it was like being pulled forward by ten thousand Swallowtail butterflies while being pushed from behind by ten thousand rabid dogs. Both at the exact same time. Know what I mean?

ANDREW

You sound like the kind of missionary Abby would send.

ZACH

She wants you to see the big picture before you decide. Before you choose to——

ANDREW

Look, I've got some things to take care of before I——

ZACH

I know, I know, ten minutes before you board. We've got to talk fast. So, it looks like you're going.... *Where* are you going?

ANDREW

Top secret. Classified. Hush-hush.

ZACH

You don't know where you're going, do you, Andy?

ANDREW

(Smiles.)

Between you and me.... The stratosphere.

ZACH

And, then, after that?

ANDREW

“One of these days, Alice... Bang! Zoom! Straight to the moon!” But let’s not look that far ahead, Mr. Missionary/Emissary/Courier/Carrier. Okay, Zach, my friend? For right now, I’m lifting off...into thin air.

ZACH

(Looks at his watch.)

Nine and a half minutes...cut to the chase.... So you *never* use condoms? It’s always bareback?

ANDREW

Christ!

(Looks around to see if anybody in the waiting area is listening.)

What the fuck do——

ZACH

Look, I know how good it feels. Skin-to-skin. That’s exactly how it was done, the de facto norm, back in the day. Polyester may have been in, but rubber was out. I remember in ’72, Benny used to say:

BENNY

(Enters. Sits on the other side of Andrew.)

No shirt, no shoes, no pants, no condom——just the way God always intended.

(Gives a tiny tap under Andrew’s chin and a gentle, friendly slap across his cheek.)

Sorry about my hand. Still a little cold and clammy, isn’t it?

ZACH

God knows, I’m the last one to judge. Before AIDS, I think I sampled every bar, bathhouse, dance club, and sex club——on both sides of the Mississippi. Look, before you take off, let me do some quick intros. You need to know whom you’ll be flying with tonight. The entire plane, a Boeing 747, is filled with guys I know. All 417 seats. It’s a four-engine Jumbo Jet, called *Queen of the Skies*. There’s Frank. *François, mon petit bijou!*

FRANK

Chère jolie poupée, ça va? Seeing you right now, I’m feeling all “sentimentally” inside. How I miss the Golden Age of our liberation, after the ’69 Stonewall riots.

ZACH

Way before Andy’s day. I suppose he wouldn’t know that up until a few years before the riots, sodomy still carried a lifelong prison sentence.

FRANK

Don't be a downer, *chéri*. I'm talking about the Golden Age of cruising and fucking. And cruising and fucking. Anytime, anyplace, anywhere, without a care. Our little willies stood tall in the breeze. Bare and beautiful.

ZACH

No latex.

FRANK

No, *no* "zucchini wrapped in plastic." No, no, *mon Dieu*, no. We would've been laughed out of the bathhouse.

ZACH

Those were the days. The clap was our only concern.

FRANK

Minor detail, *mon chéri*. You know what I mean?

ZACH

Gonorrhea, Andy. I'm sure you *think* it's all ancient history.

FRANK

I used to pop the antibiotics like candy. *Delicieux!* The price of the clap, back then, seemed small. Sex was more than sex. It was beautiful freedom. *C'était la liberté. Parfait.* The last thing we desired was to photocopy their middle-class, monogamous, matrimonial "joie de vivre."

ZACH

And we fired our shrinks.

FRANK

Oh, *pardonne-moi, ma jolie poupée*. My group seems to be boarding. *A bientôt, André*. You know, Andrew, you have the most glorious little trickster smile.

ZACH

Frank. He always sits in first class. He knows how to swing, even today.

ANDREW

I hate to break it to you, but I'm not into old queers from the '60s and '70s.

ZACH

Sure, you weren't even born till '88, so nothing much else is relevant. Right? I know how it goes. Hey, Michael.

MICHAEL

Zach! Long time.

ZACH

Let me introduce you to Andrew.

ANDREW

Enchanté. So...Zach...another buddy from the Golden Age? From your glory days?

ZACH

Not exactly. It was a little later. We hooked up in 1980. And Michael was always horny as hell. A big cock, but an even bigger heart.

MICHAEL

Could we, *maybe*, keep the emphasis where it counts?

ZACH

You were a big Teddy Bear.

MICHAEL

Schmaltz does *not* become you. And this is *not* the kind of epitaph I'd hoped for.

ZACH

Then, in '82...a really shitty year. Michael was the first I knew to go. It seemed to happen overnight.

MICHAEL

Not from where I was. It was an eternity.

ZACH

One minute he had the most gorgeous muscles and the most flawless skin, and the next, these lesions all over.... I couldn't believe how his muscles shriveled up into nothing and dropped from his bones.

MICHAEL

What an introduction. Don't mind *him*, Andrew.

(Pauses.)

I mean, at your age, who can relate? So many of us dying.... 1988, the Village looked more like a morgue. But you and Abby hadn't even started cutting your teeth.

ZACH

Goddamn the stench of AIDS. I burned my Little Book—all the names and numbers and incredibly great times. Gone. Before long, it was all just sickness and death.

MICHAEL

Remember Ed and Jeff and "Baby Doll" and everybody else who hunted down apricot pits in Tijuana? Or energy vortexes in Sedona?

ZACH

I want to forget. The fortunes they spent, and they didn't live any longer than the rest.

MICHAEL

You know, a whole lot of us were squeaking by, under a tinfoil lucky star. How much does it take to finally get smart?

ZACH

Remember Walt? After his scare, he said, "Fuck. I'll never give up sex."

MICHAEL

And he didn't. Instead, he gave up a twenty-year cigarette habit so he could afford cases and cases of Trojans. Generous, throwing them around like confetti.

ZACH

Come one! Come all!

MICHAEL

And shrewd, too, buying up tons of Trojan stock.

ZACH

The condom. All hail the king. All hail our ever-fuckin', ever-lovin' life preserver.

MICHAEL

Even Benny came on board. He called it——

ZACH AND MICHAEL

His "special rubber raft".

MICHAEL

Hell, we only had each other, and, at the same time, we were all terrified of ourselves.

ZACH

A spineless shithead. That's what I am. I couldn't look, let alone touch, when you finally told me how scared you were of dying. I took off and didn't look back.

MICHAEL

Don't beat yourself up. AIDS. Fuckin' ugly stuff.

ZACH

So...Andy. This all seems like the Middle Ages to you. Doesn't it?

ANDREW

Nobody's dying now. *Nobody*. Nobody I know.

MICHAEL

Awesome. Lucky you.

ZACH

Andrew, have you ever heard of Larry Kramer? That fabulous, controversial, love-him-or-hate-him faggot? Back in '78, he was asking, why do "faggots have to fuck so fucking much?"

ANDREW

Maybe...because it's so fucking fun?

MICHAEL

(Laughs.)

There we have it, fairies and fags. 2011. There it is...after more than thirty years of contemplation. And now, Andrew, we've all got a plane to catch. Toodle-oo. Remember...we're each other's guardian angels.

(Starts to exit.)

See you soon?

ZACH

Andy. You think you're flying low, under the radar?

ANDREW

Virtually invisible.

ZACH

Maybe. Maybe not. You know, there are plenty of blue suits that have us all under a big ol' microscope. They don't get the bareback sites. They don't get you, Andy. This smart, good-looking kid, HIV negative, *choosing* unprotected sex. Choosing, maybe, to play Russian Roulette. Choosing, maybe, to end up with an HIV positive fuck in the ass. The blue suits' brains are exploding.

ANDREW

Good. Let them knock themselves out trying to put two and two together.

ZACH

I don't need to know the "why". There are probably more reasons than anybody can know.... Some good. Some bad. Sandburg gets some of it right:

Why did the children

put beans in their ears

when the one thing we told the children

they must not do

was put beans in their ears?

ANDREW

I don't need to explain myself. Not to *that* world there that kicked me out or to *this* world here, this freaky plane-load of queers, from forty years back.

ZACH

It's tough. Half the time I don't get myself——let alone anybody else. Weird shit. Know what I mean?

ANDREW

Sometimes I feel like it's *all* weird shit. Crazy-shit stuff.

(Laughs.)

As far as I know, it *all* might be part of some LDS-LSD-ice cream-high gone really, *really* wrong.

ZACH

Plus, you're 22.

ANDREW

Plus, I'm 22. Abby thinks that sometimes I might be too smart-alecky and too hot-headed for my own damn good.

ZACH

Might not be a bad idea to listen to her, maybe once in a while.

ANDREW

She thinks it's a firecracker in my mouth. But I know it's TNT. Any moment, KAPOW! I could self-destruct.

SPENCE

(Enters.)

Don't I know. How many psychiatrists, or is it *psychics*, have told me that?

ZACH

Hi, Spencer. Spence, Andrew. Andrew, Spence.

SPENCE

You should hear the psychobabble shit that shoots out of their mouths. It flows like gold. And it's like a type of JEOPARDY! hell——all in the form of a question. “This barebacking thing, Spence...is it some kind of erotic cyber fantasy?” “Is it infantile bluster and shock catharsis, Spence?” “Are you searching for a kind of ‘Porn Star Pathos’?” “Or maybe transgression, rebellion, and defiance aimed at being stigmatized, Spence?” “A *desperate* attempt to belong?” “Or, maybe, a *romantic* notion to belong?” “Search for intimacy?” “Fear of intimacy?” “Low self-esteem?” “No self-esteem?” “Some kind of Superman complex? You think you're invulnerable? Invincible?”

ZACH

(Sings a version of Reddy's lyric.)

You are strong.

SPENCE

(Laughs while echoing chorus.)

Strong.

ZACH

You are invincible.

SPENCE

Invincible.

ZACH

You are——

SPENCE

Give pity, dude. I'm there burning up like a bug in the sun, under each shrink's magnifying glass: "Condomless sex...is it just a daredevil high, Spence?" "Is it a death wish?" "Apathy? Complacency because of all the new meds? You think you can just down a few antiretrovirals?" "Is it tedium? Ennui?" Sure, I say, I'm flat-out tuckered out. Pooped out. Fagged. That actually makes the Poindexters look up and smile. For a millisecond. Then they continue. "Spencer, this barebacking thing...is it some kind of gay guilt?" "Anxiety and phobia mixed with fatalism?" "Denial?" "Insanity?" "Stupidity? Are you just plain stupid, Spence?" "Or are you simply cheap when it comes to condoms?" You know, they're Condom Nazis, one and all.

ZACH

Two years ago, didn't that Research Park therapist call you a political activist? Something about how you're reclaiming pre-AIDS pleasure for the entire Millennial Generation. For all of Gen Y.

SPENCE

Yeah. I'm the gay community's Abbie Hoffman.

ZACH

Supposedly, you're reappropriating "semen's rich symbolic meaning". You're taking skin-to-skin sex out from behind the "veil" of fear and shame and into a rebirth, a 1970 regeneration.

SPENCE

That was before I descended into hell. Want to come along, Andrew? You see... a while back, I "jumped off the cliff", from barebacking to...

(Whispers.)

...conversion parties. You know, bug chasing and gift giving.

SPENCE (Cont'd)

(Pauses.)

666!

(Breaks into laughter.)

They *really* don't know what to do with me now. They don't know how much is bullshit and how much is truth. "So, Spence, this 'bug chasing' thing.... You're searching for... for someone positive to 'father' your infection?" A daddy, I say. A SUPER daddy, not on any meds, to give me a BIG viral load. "So, Spencer, you call this a 'gift'?" Yeah, I say, I sat on Santa's lap and asked for it, for Christmas. "Is this a reach for transcendence? Some sort of celebration, a glorification, of the virus? Huh, Spence? Huh?" "Is this a matter of finding relief?" Yeah, I say. Give me AIDS; give me ROLAIDS. Just get it over with. Done. "So...once you've got the bug, there's nothing more to fear? What *do* you fear, Spence? What?" I think to myself, maybe a whole lot of icky STDs. Anyway, Andy. Anyway, Zach.... Be careful what you wish for?

(Pauses.)

BOO! Scared, Andy?

ANDREW

Christ. You're....

SPENCE

Want to be my blood chimera? Share some blood?

(Taunts.)

Don't be scared. "Membership has its privileges."

ZACH

Last call, Spence. They're boarding.

SPENCE

I dare just *one* of those Poindexters to come out and say what he thinks: "You, Spencer, are simply sick in the head."

(Smiles.)

At last, *not* in the form of a question. Headshrinkers. Was it Benny who said, "All any shrink needs is a good old-fashioned fuck"?

ZACH

That's Benny.

SPENCE

We're boarding, Andrew. Save you a seat? Family rate.

(Sings as he exits.)

"Two is twice as nice as one...."

ZACH

Andy?

ANDREW

He looks about my age.

ZACH

He is. Not one of those “old queers from the ’60s and ’70s”.

ANDREW

Although...they’re not looking so bad right now.

ZACH

So where are we, Andy? Is this THE millennium, the one of supreme joy and human transcendence? Or...are we just going in circles?

ANDREW

In some societies, the circle is sacred. It’s perfect.

ZACH

So is that what we’ve got? A divine, infinite sphere? Or a stupid loop that goes nowhere? And another thing, does it “include”? Or does it “exclude”?

(Waits.)

Circling back to liberation? Or back to more sickness and death? *Is it a circle?* Or some twisted downward spiral? Help me out, Andy. Where are *we* in all of this?

ANDREW

Shit.... Like you said, I’m 22.

ZACH

Where are *you* in all of this?

ANDREW

Sit tight. Okay? Didn’t Spence warn us about all the goddamn questions?

ZACH

Last call. They’re ready to close the gate.

ANDREW

You know, I always wondered about hang gliding. All on my own. No pressure. Floating. Taking my time.

ZACH

Yeah?

ANDREW

Or maybe going up 13,000 feet and taking a free fall, just to feel what it’s like.

ZACH

Yeah, I've been there...just falling...before figuring out where to land.

(Pauses.)

So?

ANDREW

Stand by. I'm thinking, my friend.... Still thinking.

Lights fade. Slowly. Then black.