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## A Park Story

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## A PARK STORY:

### "The Park"

*(Opens on the park empty. It is late morning/early afternoon and sunny. Music begins; Mom enters and breathes in the scenery and the day)*

#### **MOM:**

The park: a silent refuge of those lost in their thoughts; a safe place where the outside world gives way to the sounds of nature. The trees and running water serve as interference; they block out the cars and the voices of the ones you really just can't stand to listen to.

*The artists come to contemplate,  
the children come to play,  
you come for just a minute  
but you end up here all day*

*Young lovers play and giggle  
while their elders reminisce  
and a few chance meetings here and there  
provide a little bliss.*

*Yes people fall in love here,  
they laugh and cry and play here,  
they sit and listen well here to their  
quieting rioting heads.*

*And people fall out of love here,  
they sit and meditate here,  
they come and seek a shelter from the  
storms out in their lives.*

*The turmoil, the secrets, they all play out.  
Our joys and fears are dancing all together  
and here in the park, by this tree, on this bench  
our story will be told.*

*(Chris enters and sits on the park bench. He is eighteen years old and unbeknownst to the audience he is gay. He has come to the park to meet his Mother who also does not know yet. This troubles Chris because his mother, though very loving, is very religious and he is unsure about her stance on the whole homosexuality thing. As such, he almost feels bad for being gay and is thus presenting every part of himself that he believes makes up who he is. During the recent turmoil of the decision to come out to his mother, he finds these other portions of his identity becoming more and more significant, even though it really plays a small factor in*

*regards to his character. He is trying to console himself, and he also doesn't want to hurt his mother with his "confession". Mom introduces us.)*

**"This is Chris"**

*(lights in this scene gradually dim to sunset colors in time for the next scene)*

**MOM:**

*(swings around to the back of the bench, behind Chris)*

This is Chris.

**CHRIS:**

*(beams)*

**MOM:**

Chris is a boy.

**CHRIS:**

*(correcting)*

Man..

**MOM:**

mmhm, Chris is a young man

**CHRIS:**

That's better

**MOM:**

*Confident, bright and charming.*

*But his style's a little alarming*

**CHRIS:**

Mom!

**MOM:**

*(giggles)*

Bye sweetie

*(winks and walks away)*

**CHRIS:**

*(shakes head – looks annoyed)*

*Well I guess I should thank her for starting this off*

*but she did get a few things wrong*

*Confident maybe but not bright nor charming*

And Hey! I look just fine

*(stands up)*

*I am eighteen and something*

*I like tennis and reading,*

*I'm a huge fan of eating oh and do I eat a lot*

*I like coffee and books*

*I love making funny faces*

*Finding quiet little spaces and letting thoughts run wild*

*I like to come to the park*

*When the sun is full and bright*

*To think about life with my eyes closed tight*

*I wonder where I'll be*

*Who I meet and what I'll see*

*And sometimes I think about how scary life could be*

*I come here to think about  
Life quite a lot and  
Lately I've been here more often  
There's been so much to think about  
I'd really rather not...  
I just don't want to deal with it.*

*(Rubs back of head, disgruntled. Wanders back to the bench and sits slumped)*

*It's nice the park doesn't judge you  
doesn't blame and try to lecture you  
it couldn't care less what you are  
It's a place to get away sometimes  
Life can be a little much at times  
The air is so much cleaner, it helps to think things through  
Here I don't need to know  
who I am, where I'll go  
I just get to be free....*

*I used to come here to play awhile,  
Now all I do is stay awhile,  
And ask question after question in succession  
One concession:*

*I have no idea what I'm doing*

*I come here to think about  
who I am quite a lot and  
lately I've been here more often  
You express one little thing, suddenly  
nothing else matters  
Why should that change what you think of me*

*I still like coffee and books  
I'm still good at funny looks  
I still don't like to cook but that's me..*

*Really nothing has changed  
But my life's been re-arranged*

*I come here to ask now  
is this all people see  
what happened to the rest of me  
Aren't I still Chris...  
what will mom say...  
I'd rather not deal with this...*

*It wouldn't be such a problem  
if God weren't in the way...  
he's such a pain even if you don't buy it...  
Oh I'm just being stupid  
she's my mother anyway*

*I'm sure she'll be fine with it.*

*(Mom runs on to the scene, happy and very unaware of anything Chris was just singing. Chris, upon seeing her, is of course concerned about how much she may have heard and is initially very nervous about her sudden appearance. She is early, usually she's coming back from work and would not be expected for a little while. The time is sunset now.)*

**MOM:**

Chris!

**CHRIS:**

*(startled)*

Hey!

**"A Lovely Day"**

**MOM:**

*What a lovely day isn't it?*

**CHRIS:**

yeah

**MOM:**

*oh it is with all the birds singing away*

**CHRIS:**

Where did you--?

**MOM:**

*Oh they do! What a day! and don't the trees look pretty as they sway*

**CHRIS:**

I mean I guess

**MOM:**

*Oh it's wonderful now I think I'll just sit back, in the sunset in evening*

**CHRIS:**

*(looking confused)*

*...So I guess your day was good?*

**MOM:**

*Oh it was, work was fun*

**CHRIS:**

Fun?

**MOM:**

*Surprisingly, I got so much done*

**CHRIS:**

That's fun?

**MOM:**

*I got out early, my afternoon free, ooh, are you hungry?*

*(takes out food item and hands it to Chris who begins to eat it.)*

**CHRIS:**

Yes!

**BOTH:**

*Now we'll just sit back, in the sunset in the evening*

**MOM:**

*Do you remember when you were young?*

**CHRIS:**

*I'm not that old*

**MOM:**

*You'd come here and play in the trees*

**CHRIS:**

*What about it?*



**MOM:**

*oh nothing I just like to think of these, memories*

*And reveries.*

*(pause)* It's a mom thing

**CHRIS:**

Right, like forgetting where you put your keys every 5 minutes

**MOM:**

I do not...now where did they go...\*shuffles about her person\*

**CHRIS:**

*Do you remember when I was young?*

**MOM:**

*Of course I do*

**CHRIS:**

*You used to teach me all sorts of things, the golden rule,*

**MOM:**

*and then you drew, on my bible*

**CHRIS:**

*I was seven give me a break, and then you'd say*

**MOM:**

*put down the crayons*

**CHRIS:**

*(grunts and holds head)*

*(Mom giggles and the lights begin to shift. All lights dim as Chris puts on something that allows us to identify him as 7 or 8. Spot comes up on the pair, the Mom reading from a Bible and Chris spacing out as she reads. And end table or something is carried onto stage)*

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*(flashback to Chris being seven, Mother is reading Matthew 5 with him)*

**MOM:**

Blessed are...with me Christopher

**CHRIS:**

*(groans)*

**BOTH:**

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy

**CHRIS:**

But what if they're mean to me!

**MOM:**

You know what it says if anyone strikes you on the cheek

**CHRIS:**

Turn the other one *(eye roll)* but...

**MOM:**

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, for me makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good”—

**CHRIS:**

It's not fair, why don't all the mean kids get punished...

**MOM:**

Oh here, we skipped my favorite one. “You are the light of the world”. *(tickles affectionately)*

**CHRIS:**

Heyy—

**MOM:**

*(starts singing this little light of mine)*

*(Mom places the Bible on the table as she begins to tickle Chris, his identifier falls off and is cleared with the table as the lights black out and quickly fade back in to sunset—the present)*

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**CHRIS:**

*(bats hands away)*

Mom, mom stahp it I'm 18!

**MOM:**

Oh no, you're still my little Chris

**CHRIS:**

*(gives a sassy look)*

**MOM:**

My very tall, little Chris

**CHRIS:**

I can live with that

**BOTH:**

*It's nice to think back, in the sunset in the evening*

*when the sky is reminiscing about the colors*

*it has been.*

*And here we are again, on this park bench just remembering*

*all the somethings that we've shared oh how,*

*did that one start again?*

**MOM:**

You weren't good at coloring

**CHRIS:**

Hey at least I paid attention

**MOM:**

But you could never sit still in church

**CHRIS:**

Can you really blame me?

**MOM:**

Of course!

**CHRIS:**

Well you'd always take me here afterwards and that was much more exciting.

**MOM:**

*(smiles, rolls eyes and shakes head)*

**CHRIS:**

*There was the time we had lunch by the lake*

**MOM:**

*There was the time that we had by the lakeside*

**CHRIS:**

*and all the ducks were quacking about*

**MOM:**

*And the ducks were all around us and then*

**CHRIS:**

*We didn't know they'd all be hungry*

**MOM:**

*And then we had to run away!*

**BOTH:**

*Oh It's fun to think back, in the sunset in the evening  
when the sky is reminiscing about, the colors it has been  
and here we are again, on this bench just remembering  
All the somethings that we've shared, oh how*

*did that one start again?*

*(same lighting sequence. A blanket and a pillow is discovered and prepared as Chris, now 10 or 11, is being tucked in by his mother and consoled about his day)*

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*(Chris is being tucked in and recanting a story from today)*

**CHRIS:**

But he's so weird

**MOM:**

Hey now, don't you get upset when people call you names.

**CHRIS:**

Yeah but-

**MOM:**

No buts! You two are alike you know,

**CHRIS:**

How!

**MOM:**

He probably feels the exact same way when the other kids make fun of him.

**CHRIS:**

*(pouts)*

**MOM:**

Remember, "love your neighbor as yourself".

**CHRIS:**

"For love does no harm to your neighbor and thus is fulfillment of the law". Sorry..

**MOM:**

You're okay sweetie. Now time for bed.

---

*(same reverse lighting sequence, the blanket and pillow are cleared and we're back to the present, but the sun is setting now and we're fading slowly to night by the end of this scene)*

**CHRIS:**

*There were the times you used to tell me  
you would love me no matter what and  
that you'd always be here, when I needed you*

**MOM:**

Chris what brought this up?

**CHRIS:**

*And you always taught me that I shouldn't  
judge somebody else because God loves  
everybody, please know*

I love you, Mom.

**MOM:**

Honey what's wrong

**CHRIS:**

Mom...

**MOM:**

You're scaring me Chris

**CHRIS:**

*(long pause)*

**MOM:**

Chri-

**CHRIS:**

I'm gay.

**“Interlude I”**

*(front lights go out and backlights come up, Chris and Mom should be silhouettes here, but not too bright. They pantomime a discussion that escalates into a fight, this is all translated by body motion. In the end Mom indicates that she has just shouted very aggressively and Chris walks off angrily)*

**“Shouldn’t God Have Answers?”**

*(It is night now. There’s some ambient light from a lamppost nearby, but not much else. Mom sits alone on the bench fidgeting, slowly breaking into a panic.)*

**MOM:**

*Where did I go wrong?*

*How did this happen?*

*How did he get this way?*

*Did I miss something?*

*How do I fix this?*

*In the park on such a beautiful day*

*And suddenly he decides he’s gay?!*

How is this happening?

*Oh it’s just a phase*

*Gotta be a phase*

*What if it’s not a phase*

*Oh he will grow out of it*

*Fine it’ll all be fine*

*And if it isn’t fine oh*

*Please God come help me...*

*Why would he choose this?*

*What will people say?*

*Doesn't he know what comes next?*

*I've got to do something*

*Anything...he's still my son..*

*There must be something...*

*Anything...*

*What do I do?*

*What does anyone do?*

*What did anyone do to deserve all this?*

*Does he need therapy,*

*Does he need time,*

*Should I tell Pastor,*

*What would he say?*

*Shouldn't he have answers...*

*Should God have answers??*

*He used to be so little, so happy, just adorable*

*His smile could still light up the room*

*He was young, he was innocent, so loved the flowers*

*When they were in full bloom*



*He would play, he would laugh, he would run to the park*

*every afternoon*

*And I could join him, I could tease him, I could hold him till dark*

*when bed time would come too soon.*

*All my life, I've been taught*

*I've been warned, against this evil*

*now it's here right in front of me*

*But it's in the shape of my son,*

*Whom I care for, whom I Love,*

*And I want to save him!*

*And I yelled at him, I'm sorry*

*It's to protect him, I swear it's true*

*I don't want him hurt, I don't want him burned*

*But he'd bring home his boyfriends,*

*Does he already have them,*

*Is he already sinning*

*My head is spinning*

*The devil is winning over my son...*

*Isn't this the right thing*

*What would be the right thing,*

*Do I choose between God and my son?*

*Can I be faithful to only one?*

*Is it wrong to just love my son...*

*Love the sinner not the sin that's what they say...*

*(lights go out as Mom leaves the stage, optional cue for rain noise here during the transition)*

**"Sometimes I Close my Eyes"**

*(It is sometime in the later morning now (next day). Chris is in the park alone mulling over the events of the night before, and preparing to plead his case to the audience. He is either skipping rocks or just sitting on the bench, smiling)*

**CHRIS:**

Sometimes I wish, just for the sake of life being simpler, that I wasn't gay. Then I wouldn't be lying, Mom wouldn't be crying...That's one of the reasons I become irritated with religion anyway. What did I ever do to them? Nothing, I was born with a chemical formation in my brain that said I am attracted to other men. Forgive me for not adequately arranging my molecules when I was born.

What really gets me though...I am so much more than this. I'm good at Tennis; I've got lots of friends; I'm pretty smart; and I'm a pretty decent person—or, at least, I like to think so. But suddenly this tiny little sliver of me that I've never had any control over becomes all that I am...even to my mother. How can it be *that* important....

*Sometimes I close my eyes*

*And picture what it's like to be*

*somebody happy and free*

*No judgements cast or labels thrown*

*No quirks to deal with on my own*

*Just simple and happy and me*

*I put on a smile everyday  
But you can't just hope the pain away  
This isn't how it was supposed to be...*

*But I will start a new chapter  
I will find my own place  
I will laugh and cry and dance and sing  
I'll find peace, I'll find strength everything  
I will make my own purpose  
I will just be me*

*Sometimes I close my eyes  
And picture what my life would be  
In a world where it's okay to be me*

*No more hiding, no more lying  
No more trying to just fit in  
To be comfortable in my own skin*

*And to feel the warmth of the sun around me  
to hear the calm of a breeze  
Just to sit here without fear, without doubt  
Without wondering what everyone's talking about...*

*To be with someone I care about,  
To sit quietly with them and be without  
The glares of the passersby...*

*We would start a new chapter  
We would find our own place  
We would laugh and cry and dance and sing  
And find peace and beauty in all things  
We would make our own purpose  
I'd be loved for being me...*

*(bows head, stares at the ground for a bit, and then slumps down on the bench)*

*Sometimes I close my eyes  
And wish somehow that she could see  
How beautiful that life would be...*

*(Lights stay up, Chris silently looks at the ground. Mom comes up silently to the bench. They  
make eye contact but don't say anything, and both take their seats)*

**“The Conversation”**

*(Chris and his Mother are sitting on opposite sides of the bench, pensively. Chris never really makes an effort to talk, but his mother occasionally makes an attempt to start. She second guesses herself when she sees Chris, who is chewing his cheek and staring at the ground)*

**MOM:**

*(softly, almost begging)...*Chris

**CHRIS:**

*(he doesn't move, but turns his head slightly away)*

**MOM:**

Chris

**CHRIS:**

hm? *(does not look--)*

**MOM:**

Chris I'm sorry I yelled..It's just...so sudden and..and it's hard for me to process it all I mean—

*(pause)*

**CHRIS:**

*(sigh of frustration, shifts in his seat and folds his arms, looks somewhere else)*

**MOM:**

Part of it's that I just don't understand *(nervously fidgets)* I mean you know that it's wrong and I just—*(cut off by Chris' glare)*

**MOM:**

It's just..are you..you know are sure this is for you?

**CHRIS:**

*(blurts out)* That's not a question, Mom, and what does it matter?

**MOM:**

Honey..

**CHRIS:**

There is nothing you could possibly sa-

**MOM:**

It's wrong!

**CHRIS:**

I can't be wrong for being born

**MOM:**

God made us a certain way

**CHRIS:**

And if he doesn't make mistakes, doesn't that mean he made *me* this way?

**MOM:**

*(mouth open but unable to find a word immediately)*

you chose—

**CHRIS:**

Nothing, I chose nothing, Mom, this isn't a choice

**MOM:**

But you don't have to act on it.

**CHRIS:**

Act on what? How I feel about other people?

**MOM:**

No you're...predispo..sition *(trying to be diplomatic)*

**CHRIS:**

*(strink eye, shakes head in a "what?" fashion)*

**MOM:**

I mean couldn't you just be with a girl anyway? What's wrong with them?

**CHRIS:**

Nothing is *wrong* with girls...that's not how this works—how are you not getting this?

**MOM:**

It's just a preference isn't it?

**CHRIS:**

It's not an acquired taste!

**MOM:**

Well what about abstinence

**CHRIS:**

Mom...

**MOM:**

There's more to life than sex Christoph-

**CHRIS:**

There's more to love than sex, why does this even need to be made physical?

**MOM:**

Because that's what's wrong!

**CHRIS:**

It's not even a concern right now

**MOM:**

It will be

**CHRIS:**

Unbelievable

**MOM:**

You know what it says

**CHRIS:**

Well if I can't be in a loving and supportive relationship with another human being who happens to share my *(mockingly) predisposition....* the one God handed me, then I'm not sure I care what he says on the subject

**MOM:**

*(trying to spin it)* It could be a test

**CHRIS:**

Not interested

**MOM:**

Honey think about it—

**CHRIS:**

I've thought about it, I've paid attention. I've attended that stupid church every Sunday for the past 18 years of my life and I have heard and read everything they have to say about it. After I knew I was this way, I listened to week after week of condemnation for something I had no say in and wondered why it's so wrong for me to seek the warmth of another person. Why does it matter what they are?

**MOM:**

Because God says so-

**CHRIS:**

THAT'S NOT A GOOD ENOUGH REASON...haven't you ever stopped to ask why?

**MOM:**

*(avoiding the question)* I've been taught the good book all my life and I know that he cares for me and I know that he was a reason

**CHRIS:**

Then what is it

**MOM:**

Sex is for making a union Christopher; it's about making a family

**CHRIS:**

If family is so important than why are you going to let this tear ours apart?



**MOM:**

*(nothing to say)*....think about the consequences

**CHRIS:**

What consequences?

**MOM:**

What will people think about you

**CHRIS:**

I don't care

**MOM:**

I'm just trying to protect you honey

**CHRIS:**

From people like you?!

**MOM:**

*(nothing to say again)*

**CHRIS:**

What about all the others, the Christians and non-Christians that don't have a problem with me, they don't care what I am *they* would welcome me all the same.

**MOM:**

*(silent)*

**CHRIS:**

I've you're so convinced that I'm doomed and you would like to let my sexuality dominate our family then I could just go somewhere else

**MOM:**

*(pleading look, nothing to say)*

**CHRIS:**

You've let some portion of my identity over-ride your nearly two-decade relationship with me. Every other dimension of my being, conveniently shoved out of the way because I happen to find men attractive. Suddenly that's all I am to you. You may as well just refer to me as what you see, just call me gay; that could be my name as far as you're concerned

**MOM:**

That's not true

**CHRIS:**

Isn't it?

**MOM:**

I'm trying to save you

**CHRIS:**

There's nothing to be *saved* from. If there is then, it's from what your God made me, and this hell of a sick prank he's pulling on us.

**MOM:**

Do not talk like that

**CHRIS:**

Why not? This is how I feel, this is what your religion is doing to us

**MOM:**

You are doing this to yourself

**CHRIS:**

What happened to being a Mother, what happened to being a family?

**MOM:**

You're the one putting your...preferences before us

**CHRIS:**

I don't *care* about that, I care about being who I am, and not being ashamed of it. I care about—

**MOM:**

Well you should be ashamed

*(silence)*

**CHRIS:**

...I care about being happy

**MOM:**

*(again, unable to find words)*

**CHRIS:**

but since you're so disgusted with the son you've raised...I guess that's it then.

**MOM:**

Chris-

**CHRIS:**

*(cuts her off...starts to say something, but doesn't. Turns and walks away)*

**MOM:**

*(anxiously fidgeting with her hands...she doesn't know what to do)*

*(shouts) What if I let you be happy? (Chris stops)*

What if I just say 'anything goes' and let you live the way you want and throw God out the window. What happens then? How am I supposed to allow you to do this when I know what you'll be put through in the end; when I know that when you and I are sent to eternity you will be punished and left in the dark and I have to stand on the other side and watch you suffer? Knowing that could happen, knowing that *will* happen if you walk away, will turn heaven into a hell of my own. What kind of mother would allow her child to suffer through so much? Tell me what kind of mother would I be then?! If I could do anything to keep you from this I would, I'd give up God and salvation to see you change your mind...so please...Chris...I can't change the way things are...

**CHRIS:**

*(silently huffs at the irony, doesn't look back, continues walking)*

**MOM:**

*(mutters while fidgeting with hands)*

Christopher ...

*(crumples on to the bench, looks around, unsure what to do now)*

*(begins to pray, music fades in, lights fade out)*

**“The Park”**

*(Chris walks out alone, hands in his pockets, with a calm but rejected look about him. It is night time now, but there’s a glow about the park—by the lamps or by iridescence.)*

The park. Where everything changes and everything ends. The leaves will fall off the trees and these flowers won’t come up again until someone plants the seeds. In a couple of months this place will be covered under the white blanket of the snow and yet, even when painted with bare trees and frozen lakes it will remain just as peaceful as it is in the summer.

*Memories both dark and sweet,*

*And so many of our tears*

*Will be here when you return*

*To visit in your later years*

*And they’ll embrace you just for who you are*

*They know the things you’ve said in the dark*

*But they know there’s more to you than your weakest hours...*

*Yes people find themselves here*

*They learn to love themselves here*

*Where they’re safe from all the world*

*If only for a little while*

*And people lose themselves here*

*They grow, mature, and change here*

*And when they leave they’ll know they’re ready*

*For that they’ve left behind*

*And they learn things won't always be fine*

*It can rain for quite awhile*

*Somedays it feels never-ending*

*But that's okay*

*And people will grow apart here*

*That's just a part of life, here*

*But I hoped you and I would defy it*

*Like many before I had tried it*

*I thought you of all people would see...*

*I guess this is how it has to be...*

*(Chris has moved to one side of the stage at this point, Mom will enter and occupy the other, singing the last part of the song as a duet)*

*I'll be fine by the way, so you don't have to worry*

*I'll be happy, I'll be kind, I'll be free.*

*I can't promise I'll forgive you*

*But somewhere I'll always hope that you will*

*Turn around and welcome All of me*

**(MOM)***I'll be praying for you,*

*I hope life will be kind to you in a way,*

*And I know that you may never forgive me*

*But somewhere I'll always hope that you will*

*Turn around and come back home to me*

*The turmoil, the secrets, are all played out  
Our hopes and our fears (are) still dancing all together  
And here in the park, by this tree, and this bench  
The story has been told.*

**THE END**