

Linger
by
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12-15-09

Act 1, Scene 1

The stage is a living room. JON is sitting on a couch reading "MAO: The Unknown Story" by Jung Chang and Jon Halliday. CHAUCER enters SR.

Jon.

CHAUCER

CHAUCER gives JON a head nod and throws a book bag on the ground. He sits next to JON. JON puts the book down by his side.

What's up Chaucer?

JON

I'm done.

CHAUCER

What?

JON

My review's over. I just finished.

CHAUCER

Riiight. How'd it go?

JON

Eh... Okay.

CHAUCER

You got back pretty late last night. I figured you had somethin' big today.

Um, yeah...

CHAUCER

What?

JON

Nothing. It's just... I was almost late.

CHAUCER

JON

To the review? (CHAUCER nods) Dude, you're always, like, an hour early to everything.

CHAUCER

I know.

JON

You're the only guy I know who has a "shit happens" category on his budget.

CHAUCER

I'm the only person you know who has a budget.

JON

Exactly. So what happened? You go out last night? (CHAUCER doesn't say anything but instead they exchange looks and CHAUCER looks guilty.) Haha. The night before a review and you went out? You're crazy man!

CHAUCER

Ahh... J.P. dragged me and Drew out. I didn't wanna go. (JON's not buying it) Seriously man. J.P. just wanted to hook up with the girl throwing the party and he took us along with him. (Pauses and then crack a smile) I think it was worth it.

JON

So he hooked up with her?

CHAUCER

What? No. I mean...I don't know. But I met a girl.

JON

What? Shit, man. What's her name?

CHAUCER

Emily. She's... (He mimes breasts in front of his own chest) pretty. Tall. Blonde. She's on the lacrosse team.

JON

Haven't you already gone out with, like, 3 girls or something on the lacrosse team?

CHAUCER

That's not the point.

JON

Whatever. You nail her yet?

CHAUCER
No, man. What's wrong with you?

JON
You said she was a blonde.

CHAUCER
Not that kinda blonde. She's in engineering.

JON
(Sarcastically pretentious) La de da.

CHAUCER
She's nice. Really.

JON
Awww.. Still doesn't mean she's not a freak in bed—

CHAUCER
Jon, seriously.

JON
Alright, alright. You gonna see her again?

CHAUCER
I dunno. It kinda ended weird.

JON
Weird. What the fuck's that mean?

CHAUCER
Well, I was a little drunk and so was she, so...

JON
So?

CHAUCER
I tried bring her back here last night.

JON
Guess that didn't happen?

CHAUCER

No.

JON

She probably wasn't drunk enough.

CHAUCER

Shut up.

JON

Move on.

CHAUCER

I can't.

JON

Why not?

CHAUCER

I just got a feeling about her.

JON

Did you get her number?

CHAUCER

No.

JON

Anything?

CHAUCER

No.

JON

Forget her then.

CHAUCER

I found her screen name online.

JON

You send her a message and you're a fuckin' stalker.

CHAUCER

It's not like that.

JON

You don't even know if she likes you.

CHAUCER

...

JON

She probably doesn't even remember you.

CHAUCER

I'll just send one message.

JON

She's gonna think you're creepy, man.

CHAUCER

(Making a number one with his hand) One message.

(CHAUCER gets up and exits SL)

JON

(Yells offstage) STALKER!!!

End Scene

Act 1, Scene 2

Just after CHAUCER's 3rd birthday party. DSL The phone rings. MRS. JAMES goes to answer it. She mimes talking on the phone. MR. JAMES enters SL.

MR. JAMES

Who's that?

MRS. JAMES

(To MR. JAMES) Doctor's office. (Into the phone) He'll be there. Thanks for the call. (She hangs up the phone.)

MR. JAMES

Did she get the results?

MRS. JAMES

Yes. She wants you to come in at 9:00am tomorrow to talk about your blood work.

MR. JAMES

I have it.

MRS. JAMES

You don't know that.

MR. JAMES

Of course I do. Why the hell wouldn't she just tell you over the phone then?

MRS. JAMES

They always bring you in. It doesn't mean you have it.

MR. JAMES

Like hell it doesn't. It's like college acceptances. You get a huge folder, you're in. But if it's an envelope you're rejected!

MRS. JAMES

No. Not true.

MR. JAMES

I'm tellin' ya. Doctor's don't want you in their office even when you're coughing up a lung. You really think they'd wanna bring me in to say, "Mr. James, congratulations. You do not have Huntington's Disease." And give me a pat on the back?

MRS. JAMES starts tearing up.

MR. JAMES

Don't do that— Don't. Don't cry about this.

MRS. JAMES

Chaucer's only three. It's only gonna get worse for him. And what if he gets it too? What if --

MR. JAMES

Calm down. We have no idea how this thing works.

MRS. JAMES

But your mother?

MR. JAMES

It doesn't mean Chaucer's definitely going to get it.

MRS. JAMES

It's just gonna be so hard for him now. I don't know if I can do this.

MR. JAMES

You can't do this?

MRS. JAMES

Don't look at me like that.

MR. JAMES

Why not?

MRS. JAMES

I'm not being selfish... I really don't know if I'm going to be able to handle this.

MR. JAMES

We can get through it. You need to keep positive. For him.

MRS. JAMES

You've always been the optimistic one. But that attitude's going to fly out the window once this takes over.

MR. JAMES

How the hell am I supposed to be positive when you're talking like that? We don't even know if I have it.

MRS. JAMES

A second ago you knew you had it.

MR. JAMES

It doesn't matter. Either way, I'm not going to give up on everything.

(Pause. MRS. JAMES drops her head. MR. JAMES walks downstage fondling a plastic thumb in his hands. He turns back to MRS. JAMES)

MR. JAMES

Do you want see a magic trick?

MRS. JAMES

No.

MR. JAMES

I promise. It'll cheer you up.

MRS. JAMES

(She forces a smile and gently laughs) If you say so...

Mr. James takes a \$1 bill and makes it disappear.

End scene.

Act 1, Scene 3

CHAUCER and EMILY are lying in bed together. CHAUCER is shirtless and EMILY is in a bra and underwear only. They are kissing during most parts of this conversation that follows. EMILY spots a plastic thumb on CHAUCER's dresser.

EMILY

What is this?

CHAUCER

My dad gave it to me. You wanna see something?

CHAUCER jumps out of bed as EMILY nods. CHAUCER spins around a bit after grabbing the plastic thumb. Once he starts talking he is flailing his hands about.

CHAUCER

Well...for my next trick I will need a \$5 dollar bill...

EMILY laughs at him and briefly forgets about the fake thumb. She leans over to his wallet on the desk and takes out a \$5 bill. Then she teases him a bit and puts the \$5 bill in CHAUCER's boxers as if he were a male dancer. He laughs and then turns back to being very serious. He is still flailing his hands about and he takes the money into his hands.

CHAUCER

I will make this \$5 bill disappear. (After a magic act, he makes it disappear) The money is gone!

CHAUCER leans over and kisses EMILY. He shows his hand to her up close. He is wearing the fake thumb and she pulls it off to see the \$5 bill under it. She laughs.

CHAUCER

My dad taught me that.

EMILY

Neat trick. Aren't magicians never supposed to reveal the secret.

CHAUCER

Eh. I figured I could take a risk with you.

EMILY

Your dad seemed like a funny guy.

CHAUCER

He was a character.

EMILY

I wish I could've met him.

CHAUCER

Me too, hun.

EMILY

I don't want to be insensitive or anything, but how'd he die?

CHAUCER

(Curt) He died in his sleep.

EMILY

Oh... (Pause) Was he sick or something?

CHAUCER

Emily. (Pause) I don't want to talk about this.

EMILY

Okay. Forget I brought it up.

Long Pause.

CHAUCER

We should take a vacation together.

EMILY

Where'd this come from?

CHAUCER

Doesn't matter if it's just a weekend...

EMILY

Where are we going to go?

CHAUCER

Not sure yet. But we need to travel together.

EMILY

Oh yea?

CHAUCER

You learn a lot about someone when you travel with them.

EMILY

What do you want to learn about me?

CHAUCER

I'm don't know.

EMILY

Cause, you can ask me anything.

CHAUCER

I know.

EMILY

We're pretty open with each other, right?

CHAUCER

(Hesitantly) Yea.

EMILY

So then why do I need to go 1000 miles away to learn something new about you?

CHAUCER

There's more to it than that. Things become a lot clearer when you travel.

EMILY

Is that why you're going on that trip with Jon?

Pause. JON uncomfortably stares at
EMILY.
End scene.

Act 1, Scene 4

MRS. JAMES and CHAUCER are in their
home DSL.

CHAUCER

I want to marry Emily.

MRS. JAMES

How long have you been dating?

CHAUCER

Does it matter?

MRS. JAMES

I'm just curious, sweetie.

CHAUCER

3 months.

MRS. JAMES

How much do you know about this girl?

CHAUCER

Everything.

MRS. JAMES

Then what else is there to know, right? (She smirks.)

CHAUCER

Forget it. Forget I mentioned it.

MRS. JAMES

I'm sorry. Ignore me. But this isn't about my blessing, is it?

CHAUCER

No.

MRS. JAMES

What is it?

CHAUCER

I can't marry her.

MRS. JAMES

And why not?

CHAUCER

You know why, mom.

MRS. JAMES

We've talked about this. You already know how I feel.

CHAUCER

I can't stand the idea of dragging her through this illness with me.

MRS. JAMES

You don't need to do that.

CHAUCER

I need to know.

MRS. JAMES

Why do you need to know?

CHAUCER

How could I marry someone I love as much as her, knowing in a few years she'd have to just sit by and watch me deteriorate?

MRS. JAMES

Honey, she would love you regardless. You need to just tell her. Then you go as long as you can without getting tested.

CHAUCER

When I tell her, I want it to be because I know I don't have it.

MRS. JAMES

No, Chaucer. If you want to be with Emily, be with her. Don't use this illness as an excuse to be sad and alone.

CHAUCER

It's not like that, mom.

MRS. JAMES

Yes it is.

CHAUCER

I'm protecting her.

MRS. JAMES

No, you're sheltering her. And you're not even giving her a chance to choose.

CHAUCER

Why don't you want me to get tested?

MRS. JAMES

Because you don't want to know. Not now.

CHAUCER

Yes. I do.

MRS. JAMES

Listen to me, dear. I've been there. You should get tested. *But not now.* Wait for as long as you can. It's the worst thing to live with.

CHAUCER

I know what it's like to live with.

MRS. JAMES

No, you don't Chaucer! Not really. Your dad's been sick your whole life. You never saw him before the disease took over. You didn't have to watch him go from being independent and free spirited to not even being able to control his own movements. But how would you feel knowing that you could have spent your life with Emily and instead you decided not to; out of fear.

CHAUCER

It's not fear.

MRS. JAMES

Then why do you have to know? The truth is worse than not knowing.

CHAUCER

So what are you saying...You wouldn't have married dad if you knew about the disease?

Pause.

End Scene.

Act 1, Scene 5

The stage is living room. JON is sitting
USR on a couch again reading "MAO:
The Unknown Story" by Jung Chang
and Jon Halliday. CHAUCER enters SL.

JON

She file a restraining order yet?

CHAUCER

The opposite, smartass!

JON

What?

CHAUCER

The opposite.

JON

I heard you. What the fuck is the opposite of a restraining order?

CHAUCER

She wants to get dinner with me this weekend.

JON

That's just not right.

CHAUCER

You're jealous.

JON

Hell yeah. If I tried that, the girl'd come over and slap me.

CHAUCER

I haven't gone out in a while.

JON

I didn't think people dated anymore. Keep chivalry alive dude!

CHAUCER

What if this works out?

JON

That's usually the idea.

CHAUCER

I mean if this gets serious, I'm gonna have to tell her.

JON

About what?

CHAUCER

You know.

JON

The disease? You've never told anybody.

CHAUCER

I told you.

JON

Not any chicks, though, man. You still haven't been tested?

CHAUCER

No.

JON

I thought you already knew.

CHAUCER

Why's that?

JON

Skydiving. Bungee jumping. Traveling everywhere.

CHAUCER

Seriously?

JON

Yeah. Sounds like someone who doesn't have too much time left. Or at least thinks he doesn't.

CHAUCER

That's beside the point. Should I tell her?

JON

First, you've only known her one day.

CHAUCER

It doesn't mea—

JON

Second, why the sudden urge?

CHAUCER

I'm tired of hiding it.

JON

I understand, but how do you know how people'll react.

CHAUCER

(Pause.) I don't.

JON

You could ask your mom.

CHAUCER

She doesn't tell me the truth. Not about that.

JON

It'd be sweet if you could just ask people who have it.

CHAUCER

Yea. Don't know anybody who does though.

JON

Don't they have, like, a group for it?

CHAUCER

Yeah. Oh. Oh. I've got an idea.

JON

Yea?

CHAUCER

I contact the group. I could get volunteers from them; People who wanna be interviewed. I could say it was for a documentary or something.

JON

And what if they live in, fuckin' Ohio or some shit.

CHAUCER

Then I go to Ohio. I make it into a road trip.

JON

Yea? And when ya gonna do this?

CHAUCER

This summer.

JON

By yourself?

CHAUCER

You wanna come?

JON

I mean. I dunno yet—

CHAUCER

Yea. Yea. If you came, I wouldn't even have to tell my mom about it. I could just say we wanna take a road trip before we graduate.

JON

I don't know if I'll have the cash—

CHAUCER

We'll do it cheap. Camp in tents. Sleep in the car.

JON

I dunno.

CHAUCER

We've got 7 months. I'll set up the interviews. You work on saving the money and we'll talk about it in a couple months.

JON

What the hell. Why not?

CHAUCER

Sweet.

JON

Hey, what if things actually pan out with this girl?

CHAUCER

I just won't tell her anything 'til after the trip.

JON

You think you could do that?

CHAUCER

I have to.

End Scene 5.

End Act 1.