

# A BEAUTIFUL MAN

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Joe Jennison

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### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 MEN, 1 WOMAN)

**ANDREW**.....An assignment editor, he's a lifer at Propaganda Wire. (140 lines)

**BENJI**.....The new guy, BENJI is an entry-level wire editor. (68 lines)

**ALEX**.....The red-haired senior editor at the wire service, ALEX is quite gay. (53 lines)

**BEATRICE**.....A young professional woman, BEATRICE is successful both at home and at work. (24 lines)

### SYNOPSIS

*A Beautiful Man* is a contemporary comedy about unrequited love in the workplace. The play is written in a loose, unstructured style that allows for the actors to interact with the audience.

Andy J. is an assignment editor at a major financial news distribution service in downtown San Francisco during the height of the dot-com boom. He appears to have the perfect San Francisco life, including a great job, nice apartment, and a large circle of friends. His only regret at the play's opening is the fact that he has no one special to share his life with.

Enter Benji, an entry-level wire editor and new arrival to the city from a dairy farm in Kansas. Andy J. is instantly attracted to the tall, dark, handsome newcomer. But is Benji also gay, and does he feel the same way about Andy J.? The play follows both the reality of Andy J.'s professional relationship with his new trainee and the wild fantasy life that takes place only in Andy J.'s head. Although Benji is totally unaware of Andy J.'s true

feelings, the audience is given full access to Andy J.'s elaborate imaginary schemes to seduce his new hire. Clueless Benji unwittingly plays a part in leading his new boss on by pouring on the Midwestern charm and remaining coy about his sexuality. Both straight and gay audiences will be able to relate to the play's basic question: Is it love at first sight or just a terrible misreading of sexual signals?

### SCENE

In and around the San Francisco Bay Area.

**TIME:** Just before and just after the dot-com crash.

### PROPS

1. Three office phones with several lines and three headsets
2. Six pages of press releases for the newsroom table
3. One microphone with PA for Andy J. to use while working
4. A copy of "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" for Benji
5. One rosebud for Benji to hand to Andy J.
6. A bag or knapsack for Alex as he leaves downtown for home
7. Towels for the gym scene
8. Cheesy Santa hat
9. Cordless phone for Beatrice
10. Cab fare
11. Bottle of cheap wine, flowers, cookies baked into the shape of seagulls and a handful of fresh basil
12. A pair of rubber gloves and a scrubbing utensil
13. A rose bush in a 5-gallon plastic pot suitable for planting
14. Rose petals and a veil for the wedding scene

### SOUND CUES

1. A harp is heard when Benji makes his entrance and again when Alex kisses Andy J.
2. During the work scenes, there should be the sound of ringing phones, etc. in the background
3. Several phones should ring on cue throughout the piece
4. The sound of a car honking its horn for the scene in front of the downtown skyscraper
5. The sound of the creaking of a bathroom medicine cabinet opening as Andrew pantomimes same

6. The sound of a dog barking
7. A female voice singing “Ave Maria” for the wedding scene

### NOTES

The play is written to be performed on a bare stage or performance space with very few set pieces or props. Ideally, there should be simply three sturdy chairs and a desk placed in front of a black curtain. The chairs and desk are meant to be manipulated by the cast, with additional simple props to create the illusion of multiple sets. The play can be done with four performers and a limited set of colorful props and sound cues.

From the play’s opening to the end, Andy J. is meant to be having an ongoing conversation with the audience. Throughout the script, there are several references to a specific audience member. For purposes of script creation only, I’ve named this audience member “Walter,” but would expect the actor playing Andy J. to actually get to know one of the members of the audience and address him (it should definitely be directed at a male member of the audience) by his first name throughout the piece.

As the play should have the feel of an improvised comedy, it is quite all right to make minimal changes to the dialogue to suit the current actors or audience. However, major changes, including the addition of lines of dialogue or creation of extra characters, are not necessary. Please contact Heuer with any questions as to the adaptation of the piece to fit your needs.

—Joe J.

**AT RISE:**

*Two desk chairs and a table, painted white, sit on an empty stage. When the lights come up, ANDREW is standing in front of the table, with BENJI and ALEX on either side. ANDREW lets out a loud, long and painful scream as he slowly falls to the floor.*

**ANDREW:** *(To ALEX and BENJI, exploding.)* Ahhhhhhh! I can't take it anymore! Back off! *(Louder.)* Back off! *(ALEX and BENJI move away.)* I can't do this, not even one more second. I quit. I quit! *(ALEX and BENJI look at each other, shriek in unison, and exit. ANDREW speaks directly to audience, quietly.)* I quit. *(Embarrassed.)* Oh. Hello. Yes, I'm speaking to you. Yes, me. There's no fourth wall. There's never been a fourth wall. In fact, you know the actors in that last play you saw who were all speaking as if there were a fourth wall? They were lying to you. *(Looks into front row.)* What's your name, sir? Yes, you. *(Repeats name of theater patron. For our purposes, we'll use...)* Walter. Nice name. See, if there were a fourth wall, I wouldn't be able to do that, would I? Thank you, Walter. The story I'm going to tell you tonight happened to me during the heyday of the dot-com boom and almost exactly as I'm going to tell it here. Of course, I've changed the story a bit so that the real Benji will be oblivious when he shows up to see it. And, of course, Benji is not his real name. I'd tell you his real name, but then, well, he wouldn't be oblivious, would he? My name is Andrew. My colleagues at work call me Andy J. My work? Yes, let's start there. I work for a major financial news service in downtown San Francisco. Basically, my job can be summed up in two words: press release. *(Shudders.)* Whenever there's a new product, earnings, trade show, management change or lawsuit that involves a Bay Area/Silicon Valley high-tech publicly traded company, the company's high-level communications staff – read, PR Hacks – will type up a press release, *(Shudders.)* send it to my newsroom, follow up to verify receipt, and ask me and the crew here to distribute said press release *(Shudders)* over the financial news wires. For our purposes, we'll call this service Propaganda Wire. Its real name, well, remember, I want Benji to be oblivious. Relax. You'll meet him soon enough, Walter. And, believe me, you won't forget him.

**ALEX:** (*Enters and sits at one of the chairs, picks up a ringing phone.*) Propaganda Wire.

**ANDREW:** (*To the audience.*) His name is Alex. He's not Benji. You know, if this were a Hollywood movie, I think you'd get a better idea of what I do and where I work. In the Hollywood movie, the opening shot would pan across a warehouse-sized workspace on the 47<sup>th</sup> floor of a downtown San Francisco skyscraper. The view would be spectacular. I mean, it is spectacular - breathtaking vistas that include both the Golden Gate and Oakland bridges, Coit Tower, TransAmerica Pyramid, and the beautiful Yerba Buena Gardens. More on that later.

**ALEX:** (*On phone.*) I can connect you, darling. (*Mimes transferring call.*)

**ANDREW:** (*To the audience.*) Unfortunately, for this production, I need everyone, including you, Walter, to use your imaginations a bit more than usual. You saw the lobby. You know we have no money, right? So tonight, imagine a room full of 17 editors, all 25-35ish, typing away, working the phones, monitoring the other services - the Dow Jones, the Reuters, the Bloombergs - their respective blood pressures going up and down with the fluctuations of the market, all right here inside this gargantuan newsroom on top of the world. Now, in the movie, we'd have a budget for extras and subplots and, I'm sure, a role for Freddie Prinze, Jr. But for our purposes today, you get one editor, Alex here, and a black curtain.

**ALEX:** (*A bit bitchy.*) Don't bother me, Andy J., I'm typing.

**ANDREW:** Alex, say hello to the audience.

**ALEX:** Very funny, Andy J., glad you have time to laugh. I've got an earnings report to process. You know, everyone else may love the Andy J. Show, but I get enough of it at home. Thank you.

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) Alex and I are best friends and roommates, and it's common knowledge that he has a huge crush on me.

**ALEX:** Do not!

**ANDREW:** (*To ALEX.*) Do so. (*Scolding.*) My play, remember? Mine. (*To audience.*) The editorial crew calls what I do for PW "The Andy J. Show." Basically, this is what it entails. (*He puts on a headset and stands in front of the desk, answering imaginary phone.*) Propaganda Wire, how may I help you? (*To crew, via microphone.*) Just received a live typer from Varian. Need a

typist. Hello? Is this thing on? (*ALEX groans.*) Come on people. It's growing hair! (*Then back to phone.*) I can connect you, one moment. (*With his hand over receiver.*) Alex, please! (*ALEX stomps up to pick up the release and moves back to his chair to begin typing. ANDY J. transfers him the call. To audience.*) It wasn't always this way. When I first started working for PW, the system was in complete chaos. I remember Lisa, the woman who trained me, telling me that you really do get used to hearing seven people screaming out over the newsroom at once. Something like this...

**OFFSTAGE VOICE 1 (PLAYED BY BEATRICE):** (*On imaginary phone.*) Propaganda Wire. (*Calling out to crew.*) Who's got HP's earnings? They need to tweak a number.

**OFFSTAGE VOICE 2 (PLAYED BY BENJI):** (*On imaginary phone.*) Propaganda Wire. (*Calling out to crew, overlapping OFFSTAGE VOICE 1.*) Anyone seen the third page fax of the McKesson release? It was supposed to be out ten minutes ago.

**ALEX:** (*On imaginary phone.*) Propaganda Wire. (*Calling to crew, overlapping OFFSTAGE VOICE 2.*)irate lady on line two, says her CEO's name was mistyped in the headline. Anyone recognize a B-U-T-T release?

**OFFSTAGE VOICE 1:** Oh, that's mine. Just sent it out.

**ALEX:** Well, it's supposed to be B-U-S-S.

**OFFSTAGE VOICE 1:** Oops.

**ANDREW:** (*Phone rings.*) Propaganda Wire, how may I help you? (*To audience.*) Welcome to my world. (*Mocking customer on phone.*) "Andy J., it's Alice calling on behalf of Duncan, Duncan, Weintraub, and Kent. We've got a press release here about a product that's going to reinvent the Web as we know it. Give it a priority, will ya, kid?" Alice, this is your third product this week to do the same thing. "Oh, really? Well, this time I mean it." (*To audience.*) My title in all of this is Assignment Editor. Benji is an entry-level wire editor. And remember, he's the reason we're all here tonight. He's the reason you came, Walter. He's hot. (*Benji steps onstage. Harp music sounds.*) This is Benji. Benji is the most beautiful man I've ever met: 6'4", well-built, dark-complected, quiet, sensitive, shy. He was raised on a farm in Kansas, enjoys reading, writing, volunteering for his church, and speaks often of old garden roses and the finer points of Jonathan

Livingston Seagull. When he walked into the newsroom, I knew that my life would never be the same. In my head, I heard this:

**BENJI:** (*Sweetly.*) You're him, aren't you? You're the man I've been waiting for my entire life, the one I was promised by the gods, the one I'm meant to be with, forever. May I just sit here for awhile and tenderly hold your hand?

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) Of course, in reality, it went something more like this: (*To BENJI.*) You Benji?

**BENJI:** Yes, sir.

**ANDREW:** Welcome to PW. I'm Andrew. You can call me Andy J.

**BENJI:** You seem like an awfully busy person, Mr. Andy J. Let me know what I can do to help.

**ANDREW:** Thank you.

**BENJI:** I've moved here only recently. From Kansas. Grew up on a dairy farm. Went to school at K-State. I like San Francisco. But sometimes the people I meet here are very rude.

**ALEX:** (*Rudely.*) Enough chit-chat, boys. The flippin' phone is ringing off the hook. (*Into phone.*) Propaganda Wire.

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) I was very professional. (*To ALEX.*) Lay off him, Alex! (*To BENJI.*) You'll have to forgive Alex. He's from New York, senior editor with senior attitude. I'm not like him, though. I'm from the Midwest as well – Iowa, (*Batting his eyes.*) the tall corn state. (*To audience.*) Outside, I was very calm. Inside, however, I was feeling something I had only heard of before. I believe this was the first time I'd ever experienced love at first sight. I actually saw the Bugs Bunny cartoon fireworks and felt the rapid heartbeat, sweaty palms, and embarrassing childish blush streak across my face. He smelled nice, an odd mixture of chamomile bubble bath and designer aftershave, and I knew on a deeply spiritual level that this man was more than just another young hunk. This man was my (*Slowly.*) perfect fantasy lover. I didn't tell him how I felt. He probably never even knew. I was very professional. But from that moment on, I was secretly in love with my new trainee, Benji.

**ALEX:** Get to work, boys!

**BENJI:** Let me know what you need from me, sir. I just want to do a good job for you, earn my way. Yes, sir, I wish only to please you today.

**ANDREW:** (*ANDREW does a double-take, then to BENJI.*) So then, Benji, I run the newsroom from right here. From this spot, I

process the press releases (*Shudders to audience, then back to BENJI.*) and get them ready for the editors to take back to their desks for editing and eventual distribution over the financial wire. The phone is entirely my responsibility. However, if I'm on the phone or with a client, the editors have to pick up the call and follow through. Pay attention.

*Phone rings.*

**BENJI:** (*Answers the phone.*) Propaganda Wire. I'll look into that. Please hold. (*To ANDREW.*) Who's got Oracle?

**ANDREW:** Jeannine. Line 231.

**BENJI:** I can transfer you. (*Transfers the call, then to ANDREW.*) I hope you don't mind, sir. I love organization, and I love the phone. I believe in hard work and jumping in, as it were, when it's warranted. (*BENJI very dramatically turns to the audience.*) "Most gulls didn't bother to learn more than the simplest facts of flight – how to get from shore to food and back again. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For this gull though, it was not eating that mattered, but flight."

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) Richard Bach. Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

**BENJI:** I hope you don't mind. I have an odd attachment to JLS. (*ANDREW explains the reference by mouthing "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" to audience.*) I sometimes break into random quotes. People think it strange. People think it an odd fascination.

**ANDREW:** Say no more. "If you were meant to fly in the dark, you'd have the eyes of an owl."

**BENJI:** (*To ANDREW.*) Richard Bach. Jonathan Livingston Seagull.

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) This was going to be the beginning of a beautiful relationship.

*ALEX exits. BENJI crosses to the lip of the stage and sits.*

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) When all the fires had been put out that first day and everyone had left for the evening, I transferred my duties to the overnight supervisor and started the long trek across the city for home. At the base of our building in downtown San Francisco, just before I made my way to the underground Muni

train, I saw him sitting on the curb in front of the bicycle rack, his nose in a book, looking extremely sexy and approachable, with one lone hair dangling across his soft forehead. (*BENJI tosses the hair off his forehead. ANDREW sighs.*) I was his boss, his trainer, his colleague now. I'm sure it violated several moral, ethical, and company guidelines. But I did the unthinkable anyway. (*ANDREW boldly sits next to BENJI.*) I sat down next to him. (*To BENJI.*) So, what did you think of your first day?

**BENJI:** I think I'm gonna like it here. It seems like an okay job, Andy J. Almost as fun as my last job, with "the guys." (*ANDREW inches closer.*) I spent the last few months working as the recreation coordinator at an all-male Senior Citizen Center. I liked the fact that I was making a difference and it was okay, but I've learned that I much prefer to work with the handicapped. I volunteer in the Mission in the mornings before I come down here.

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) Throw in an interest in roses and a concern for the environment and this man would become more than just a crush. A few tweaks with the fantasy lover sculpting tool and this man would appear as if he were genetically created to be my ideal mate. In my head I was hearing "The Wedding March" and wondering who from PW would make the best-looking bridesmaids. In reality: (*To BENJI.*) I volunteered once for Meals on Wheels.

**BENJI:** (*Laughs.*) You know what? PW's okay. But I really like you, Andrew. You really seem to have that newsroom knocked into shape. It's obvious that the crew has a lot of respect for you, a lot of respect for the work you put in. It's refreshing. You treat everyone on the crew with the gentle intensity of a drill sergeant with a sense of humor. Yes, sir. I'm very impressed. Here. (*He pulls a rose out of his coat pocket and hands it to ANDREW.*)

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) Screw every rule in every book, every guideline, everything I'd been taught about sexual harassment in the workplace. At this point, I didn't care. I was determined to ask him out, ready to rip off his clothes and have my way with him right there on the curbside of San Francisco's Financial District. I'm sure if God could forgive me for that little white Meals on Wheels lie, then he would surely forgive me for having my way with my new trainee, right? In reality, of course, I was very professional: (*To BENJI.*) Say, since you're new here and all,

perhaps I can give you a tour of the neighborhood. We can start at the bar down the corner.

**BENJI:** No, thank you. I've got a friend coming to pick me up.

**ANDREW:** (*Impatiently.*) Friend?

**BENJI:** Yes, sir.

**ANDREW:** Is that a friend male or a friend female?

**BENJI:** Female.

**ANDREW:** I see. Is that a friend friend or a girlfriend friend?

*A car honks its horn.*

**BENJI:** Oh. There she is. I keep telling her to get rid of that car. It's so bad for the environment. (*ANDREW does another double-take.*) At least we're carpooling. See you tomorrow, yes, sir. (*Runs off to catch his ride.*)

**ANDREW:** (*To BENJI as he runs off.*) Carpooling? You live near her? With her? Wait! What is it? Hello! (*Car drives off.*) Do I have a chance here? (*Pauses, then to audience.*) I know what you're thinking, Walter. I must seem pretty damn desperate to you people. So what? So, maybe I was desperate. Who wouldn't be desperate? I had the perfect San Francisco life. Decent job with good benefits, great friends, a killer Victorian garden apartment rental in the Castro for less than \$400 a month (*A double-take.*) and a responsible roommate who liked to do dishes. I lived in the most beautiful city in the U.S., perhaps in the world, and I had nothing to complain about... But the one thing that eluded me, the one thing I dreamed of, was a partner to share it with. Oh, Alex was my roommate, but he was just a friend, a good friend with flaming red hair and an attitude to match.

**ALEX:** (*Entering, to imaginary offstage passersby.*) Staring? Is that staring? (*Sits next to ANDREW.*) How was the new guy tonight?

**ANDREW:** I think he'll be good.

**ALEX:** Cute enough. Is he gay?

**ANDREW:** I haven't been able to figure that out yet.

**ALEX:** It's his first day. Give it time.

**ANDREW:** You came out to me on Day One.

**ALEX:** I come out to everyone on Day One. Saves time later.

**ANDREW:** There's something about this guy, Alex. And it's not just a crush.

**ALEX:** Tell me about it later, sweetheart. I need to soak. (*Indicates his fingers.*)

**ANDREW:** I want to tell you about it now.

**ALEX:** Very well. (*Pause, he sits.*) Talk.

**ANDREW:** I think I've just experienced love at first sight.

**ALEX:** A trainee? C'mon, you can do better. (*To audience.*) In my head, I was saying, "Come on, notice me already! What do I have to do to get your attention? I love you, Andy J. I've always loved you! Now, pucker up and give me a big wet kiss."

**ANDREW:** (*Put off.*) Uh, I can hear you.

**ALEX:** Oh.

**ANDREW:** There's a fourth wall in front of you, remember? I'm the only one who can talk to the audience. My play. Mine. Besides, I thought we'd already gone over this. You're a nice man and all, but you're just not my type.

**ALEX:** (*Says with ANDREW.*) Not my type. I can dye my hair, Andy J.

**ANDREW:** That's sweet, but I think I'm seriously falling in love with Benji.

**ALEX:** After one day?

**ANDREW:** It's just like my mother always told me, "When it's right, you'll know." How else would it happen?

**ALEX:** I'll tell you how it happens. It happens after years and years and years of knowing someone, working with them, living with them, seeing them at their best and their worst. (*He grabs ANDREW's hand.*) This is love, Andy J. This is what you've been waiting for. (*Then, to imaginary tourists.*) What? Come on, sweetheart, grow up! This is San Francisco. (*To ANDREW.*) Clueless Midwestern tourists. Where is this guy from anyway?

**ANDREW:** Kansas.

**ALEX:** Just be careful. Muni train leaves in 15 minutes. Looks like another gorgeous moon, it'll look great from the garden.

**ANDREW:** You go ahead. I'll meet up with you. I need to address the audience.

**ALEX:** Always playing performer. When are you going to realize that there's no one there?

**ANDREW:** When the show's over and everyone in the audience has left for the evening. That's when.

**ALEX:** I hope you left me your breakfast dishes. (*ANDY nods.*) Aren't you sweet? (*ALEX exits.*)

**ANDREW:** (*Turns to audience.*) As the days wore on, it was obvious that Benji was really enjoying the Andy J. Show. (*On phone.*) Yes, I am the same guy you spoke with yesterday. I work here every day. I come in, I answer the phone, I get really stressed out, and then I leave. It's a very busy job. I don't have a lot of time to talk. Funny about work, it's not called play. Now then, how may I help you? (*ANDREW transfers the phone call.*)

**BENJI:** You crack me up, Andy J.

**ANDREW:** It's all part of the service I provide. Think you can get to work on this Sun Microsystems dividend release? Been sitting here since Madonna's last tour. And it's just as sweaty.

**BENJI:** On it. (*Notices.*) Hey! What about this Cisco?

**ANDREW:** I'm saving that one for Alex.

**ALEX:** (*Sarcastic.*) Oh thanks, Andy J. New kid gets to type up a three-graph dividend release, and meanwhile I get stuck formatting nasty 10-column tables just because I'm the experienced one. Why is it always the queers that get the dirty jobs?

**ANDREW:** C'mon, Alex. It's his second week.

**ALEX:** My second week I was doing corrections. Ugh. (*Stomps back to desk.*)

**BENJI:** Don't let him bother you, Andy J., you're doing a great job.

**ALEX:** (*To BENJI.*) Teacher's pet. (*He sticks his tongue out at BENJI, then to ANDREW.*) I know something you don't know.

**ANDREW:** What?

**BENJI:** (*Answers phone.*) Propaganda Wire. (*Completes call out of earshot of the others.*)

**ALEX:** Your "boyfriend" there, was seen last weekend at Gay Pride. He was drinking heavily, naked from the waist up and singing, "I Will Survive."

**ANDREW:** No! Are you sure?

**ALEX:** I was there, girl. Your imaginary boyfriend is a player.

*A spotlight falls on BENJI. He rips off his shirt and sings: "At first I was afraid, I was petrified..." before ANDREW speaks and spoils the fantasy.*

**ANDREW:** (*To audience.*) How could this be? How could my beloved Benji have gone out to San Francisco's Pride Festival without first coming out to me, genuflecting in front of me, and

proclaiming his love for me? My theory, of course, was that Benji wasn't yet out himself, having just come from Kansas, and needed my help. I was certain that when Benji was ready to come out, he would do so by asking me to join him at Pride. In my fantasy, it would have gone something like this:

**BENJI:** Hey! I've been meaning to ask you.

**ANDREW:** *(On phone.)* Propaganda Wire. I'll connect you. *(To BENJI, batting his eyes.)* Yes, Benjamin.

**BENJI:** I hear a lot about this Gay Pride Parade that's supposed to happen this weekend. I was wondering if I could go with you. Was hoping we could take off our shirts and walk around arm-in-arm, catch some Mardi Gras beads, get some free condoms, and eat some barbecued gay chicken on a stick.

**ANDREW:** *(To BENJI.)* Excuse me? *(To entire crew.)* New Product release complete on the table. Lady in a hurry. *(Back to BENJI, batting his eyes.)* Whatever do you mean?

**BENJI:** You're the absolute hottest man I know. I would turn down a date with Bruce Willis or Pierce Brosnan for the chance to hang out with you. Who else would I ask?

**ANDREW:** *(To BENJI.)* I can't tell you how happy that would make me. *(Harp music sounds. Into phone.)* Propaganda Wire. *(To audience.)* Sure, it was a fantasy, but you heard it, Walter. He said, "Who else would I ask?" In gay terms, that means we're practically engaged. In my head, my beloved Benji had finally asked me out. *(To phone.)* Propaganda Wire. *(To audience.)* But that's not what happened. In reality: *(To BENJI.)* Hey, Benji. I heard you were at Gay Pride this weekend.

**BENJI:** Oh, yeah. Had a great time. That is some party.

**ANDREW:** *(To audience.)* I was dying to ask the hard questions: What did you wear? What was your favorite float? Who did you go home with? But all I could get out was... *(To BENJI.)* Did you have a pleasant time?

**BENJI:** Oh, yeah. Fabulous. Hung out with my brother. He's had it rough since he broke up with his lover.

**ANDREW:** *(Groans, then to audience.)* The good news? The word "fabulous" was used. Straight men don't use that word. Very often. Also, the fact that he went at all works in my favor. Straight men very rarely are seen at Gay Pride, especially shirtless and singing Gloria Gaynor tunes. The bad news, of

course, was that he has a gay brother. In my - albeit limited - experience, very rarely does being gay run in families.

**ALEX:** Andrew, come on. Grab the flippin' phone.

**ANDREW:** *(To phone.)* Propaganda Wire. Benji's on that. I'll connect you. *(BENJI picks up his phone.)*

**ALEX:** That ain't all, girl. I also saw him at 24-hour Fitness in the Castro. If he's straight and works out there, then he is one clueless Midwestern straight boy. The only straight person that has ever worked out there... (pause) Well, there has never been a straight person that has worked out there. Ever.

**ANDREW:** *(To audience.)* This is when I started to go overboard. *(ALEX and BENJI exit the stage.)* At the risk of sounding positively certifiable, I'll spare you all but the juiciest of the details. Let's just say that my obsession soon began to resemble the plot of an old "I Love Lucy" episode. I was seen following Benji around The Castro as Lucy would have followed John Wayne or William Holden or Van Johnson around Hollywood. I guess I could have just as easily asked him flat out, "Hey Benji, are you gay?" *(BENJI enters and turns to look toward him.)* But then, what would all of you be doing here? I mean, that's what we came for, right? You have to admit, Walter, that there is a certain sort of pleasure in watching me work for Benji's affection. It brings an element of suspense into the story, and it gives us all an expected outcome to root for – stay tuned and see if Lucy gets her chance to dance with Van Johnson. I did eventually run into Benji at the gym.

*Thank you for reading this free excerpt from A BEAUTIFUL MAN by Joe Jennison. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:*

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