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Ben/Leo/
Mel

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

ACT ONE

Scene 1

June 1999.

Vera's apartment on West 10th Street, early evening. The mood is ebullient, though everyone is tired.

Start

BEN. So it's this program, kids from the projects in Roxbury are bused out to our school, there's grant money in it for us and it allows our superintendent to pat herself on the back but she doesn't actually take / any responsibility for —

MEL. It's a scandal, it's / really —

BEN. So these kids get a bus ride, but they don't get help buying textbooks, or paper, they don't get computers — they're supposed to use our computer lab but then they'd miss their / bus home —

MEL. And then they're penalized / for —
BEN. And then it's a big surprise they aren't passing their classes. Our principal calls a meeting, all these kids and their parents, half the parents don't show, / big surprise —

LEO. Right.

MEL. They're working three jobs, they're gonna come out to the suburbs because their kid's not passing math? I mean this is / their biggest —

LEO. God.

BEN. So the principal is standing up there / lecturing —

MEL. This guy is — he should *not* be in education, he has this / punitive —

BEN. The sense is *we are giving your children this opportunity and they are / squandering it* —

MEL. Which is —

BEN. And you can see these parents, the ones who have missed their shift at — Rite Aid or — to be here, they're just glazing over; I mean, they're so / alienated —

MEL. So Ben stands up, / I wish I was there.

BEN. I had been kind of hiding in the — so I stand up and I say my name is Ben Joseph, and I teach history and social justice here, and I'm a Marxist, and I don't think the problem is your children, I think the problem is our society the product of which is this school. I'm sorry that we have failed you, and I want to work with you and your children for change.

MEL. I *wish* I had been there.

LEO. And the principal?

MEL. Forget / it.

BEN. Furious. Goes white. Tries to bring the conversation back to personal responsibility.

MEL. But in the meantime Ben has them working on a list of / — what was it?

BEN. I said this meeting shouldn't be about us telling you what we need, you should be doing the talking, what do you need?

LEO. Good for you, bro.

MEL. What Benji's not telling you is that he told these kids at the beginning of the year that if they wanted extra help after school and they missed their bus, he would *drive them home*, you know, forty-five minutes to — and a lot of them took him up on it. *(Brief pause.)*

BEN. And what about you, how were your classes this semester?

LEO. My — I was on sabbatical, I didn't tell you that?

BEN. But you didn't travel...?

LEO. Nah, just stayed home to work on the book.

BEN. The same one?

MEL. Don't say it like that.

BEN. Like what? I said / it neutrally.

MEL. It takes a long time to write a book. It takes me a long time to *read* a book.

LEO. The answer is yes. Same one. *(Brief pause)* Same one been

having a big season, you know, with the baseball, so it's been good to be around for that, especially since Beth is working again.

BEN. Well. Standing offer. Trade for a day. Anytime you want to come to Brookline and teach six periods a day I'll swing over to Tufts and do one of your sociology lectures. *(Vera has entered. She is sprightly at eighty-two, but fragile and maybe a little off-balance.)*

VERA. Has the graduate arrived?

MEL. Not yet.

VERA. What do you think is taking her so long?

LEO. Well, the subways were a mess getting / downtown.

BEN. Nah, if I know my daughter, she's on the phone with a journalist, or a / senator —

MEL. She really can't stop working, I think it's a / problem.

BEN. It's not a problem for all the people she's helping, I'll tell you that.

VERA. Well, will somebody come taste my eggplant?

LEO. Your eggplant is perfect, take a load off, join us.

VERA. Well —

MEL. Sit, Vera!

LEO. Here, take my chair.

VERA. I guess I'll allow that.

BEN. We were telling / Leo —

VERA. Louder.

BEN. I was telling my big bro about that meeting, with the parents / of the —

VERA. Oh, about the black kids. *(To Leo.)* Isn't that outrageous, what passes for a, whaddayacallit. / A social program.

BEN. They're actually — they're about seventy percent African-American, / thirty percent Latino.

VERA. What?

BEN. They're not all black! *(Brief pause.)*

VERA. Who? *(Ben laughs and shakes his head.)*

LEO. *(To Vera.)* Doesn't he look more and more like Dad?

MEL. *(To Leo.)* Oh god, I know, it's uncanny.

BEN. What?

MEL/LEO/VERA. You look like Joe/Dad. *(Leo says "Dad" where Mel and Vera say "Joe.")*

VERA. And you sound like him. And your politics are like his. And I think all in all it's pretty wonderful, but that's just what I think. *(Brief pause)*

End