

"CAN I KEEP YOU?"

Written By

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FADE IN:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON

WE OPEN on a playground, a warm spring afternoon. Children are sliding down the slides. Some are playing tag with one another. Their parents sit on benches, watching their little ones enjoy life.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - AFTERNOON - CONT'D

A fair skinned twelve-year-old boy wearing glasses is gleefully digging in the dirt, hoping to find a moving treasure beneath. His eyes widen, feeling something within the soil.

FAIR SKINNED BOY

I found one, I found one!

Just then, an ethnically ambiguous eleven-year-old boy with a tanned complexion wearing a baseball cap comes into frame. He sits down next to his friend, one hand behind his back. His face is excited to see what his friend has discovered. However, he also carries a nervous energy...today is the day.

FAIR SKINNED BOY

Look! This one is HUGE!

He pulls his hand from the dirt, showing an earthworm, he's found.

TANNED SKINNED BOY

That's even bigger than the last one!

FAIR SKINNED BOY

I know, right?!

The excitement in Fair Skinned Boy's face turns to curiosity when he notices his friend is hiding something.

FAIR SKINNED BOY

What's behind your back? Did you find one too?!

Tanned Skinned Boy sighs slightly, mustering the courage to do what he's been wanting to do for some time now.

TANNED SKINNED BOY

Ummmm...

He reveals the hand he's been hiding and what it possesses. A small purple flower he's found to present to his first childhood crush.

TANNED SKINNED BOY

It's a flower. I got it for you! Cause purple's your favorite color.

Fair Skinned Boy takes the flower, grateful for the gift his friend has given him.

FAIR SKINNED BOY

Thanks! I'm gonna show my mom, she loves flowers.

He likes it! The Tanned Skinned Boy can't believe it but is thrilled. Without thinking, he plants an innocent peck on his friend's cheek. The Fair Skinned Boy smiles shyly at the gesture. To him, the kiss on the cheek isn't anything out of place...he also has a crush on his friend, so the display of affection feels nothing other than natural. The Tanned Skinned Boy takes a moment, trying to put together the words to express his desire to have his friend around forever.

TANNED SKINNED BOY

Can I...
(sighs)
Can I keep you?

The Tanned Skinned Boy may be young, but these words are the only ones that express the affections he feels for his friend. The Fair Skinned Boy wants to keep his friend too because it means they'll always be friends...they'll always be together.

FAIR SKINNED BOY

Ummmm...sure! I can keep you too!

TANNED SKINNED BOY

Awesome!

The two boys smile brightly. Fair Skinned Boy leans over and kisses his friend on the cheek, reciprocating Tanned Skinned Boy's earlier gesture. It becomes the happiest day of their lives. Until...

MAN'S VOICE (O.S)

Hey, hey, what are you doing?

Unbeknownst to them, Tanned Skinned Boy's father has just caught the ending of his son's affectionate exchange with...a

BOY...and is none too happy about it. The father comes over to them.

TANNED SKINNED BOY

You told me I should...give the person
I like, something they like so...I
did. And he liked it, dad!

Realizing the "crush" his son explained to him the other day is on a boy, and not a girl, leaves the father shocked. Confused. Most of all, angry.

TANNED SKINNED BOY'S FATHER

Come on, let's go. We're going home.

TANNED SKINNED BOY

But I...

TANNED SKINNED BOY'S FATHER

Let's go!

The father pulls his son from the ground by his arm and begins walking away with him. Fair Skinned Boy looks at the scene unfolding in front of him, confused and also sad, oblivious to the crime they've seemingly committed...what did they do wrong?

TANNED SKINNED BOY

But what did I do, daddy?

TANNED SKINNED BOY'S FATHER

You don't *kiss* other boys. Boys *don't*
do that, you hear me? You are *not* like
that.

As his father continues to tell him the "do's and don'ts" of being a man, Tanned Skinned Boy looks over his shoulder at Fair Skinned Boy, waving goodbye to him. Fair Skinned Boy waves back, hoping to see friend tomorrow on the playground...not knowing this is the last time the two will ever see each other.

TITLE CARD FADES IN

"CAN I KEEP YOU"

FADE TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - DINING ROOM - EVENING

DECEMBER 31, 2022

CLOSE UP on the face of XZANDER SKYE (26) as he looks out the window at countless New Yorkers littering the streets of the East Village, preparing to ring in 2023. A handsome ethnically mixed man sporting a stylish haircut. His baggy cropped sweatshirt and fitted sweatpants show he hits the gym just enough to be "straight skinny but gay fat". His eyes dart between the various couples, bundled up and holding hands...something he wishes he could have for himself.

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - DINING ROOM - EVENING - CONT'D

Xzander continues to live vicariously through those who pass down below. And then...

CLOSE UP ON A PAIR OF ARMS SLIDING AROUND XZANDER'S WAIST

The camera pans up slowly, revealing who these arms belong to, Xzander's best friend, TRISHA MCCRAY (26). Her blonde bob haircut is impeccable and compliments her brown eyes. The Chanel earrings she wears screams money and well off.

XZANDER

They suck, don't they? With their "Oh, look at us! We're *freezing* but we're still happy because we have each other" act. Is it wrong to wish frostbite on people?

TRISHA

Not if you let them keep their fingers. Most people have ugly feet so amputating their toes? Might get you into Heaven. Or at least VIP in the waiting room.

The two laugh, their ten-year friendship has been a constant in both their lives and there's a comfort they share with each other that no one else can touch. Trisha walks to the living room, standing near the coffee table, pointing at a tray full of shots.

TRISHA

Come on, the ball's gonna drop soon and I *will* take your pre-twelve o'clock shots if I have to.

Xzander sighs, turning around to take one last look at the happy couples below before pulling the curtains closed. When he looks back at Trisha, she's in the middle of downing one

shot and has another shot glass in her hand.

TRISHA

What? They've already had New Years in Australia! I'm just trying to catch up!

CUT TO:

INT. CATALINA FELIZ'S APARTMENT - EVENING

DECEMBER 31, 2022

CLOSE UP on DOOR FRAME. We hear music playing and voices chattering. The doorbell rings. A Latina woman in her late 50's, CATALINA FELIZ, comes to the door and opens it.

CATALINA

Teo, where the hell have you been?! I've been waiting for these grapes forever! I swear if you weren't my son...

MATEO

(mimicking her)

"I swear if you weren't my son, I would disown you." Mami, how many times I gotta tell you? That doesn't make any sense. And yes, I love you too.

MATEO FELIZ (28) an attractive Latino man is standing at the door. His white t-shirt hugs his muscular body; the flannel wrapped around his waist along with his skateboard shows his interest and style. He kisses his mother on the cheek and hands her a plastic bag.

CUT TO:

INT. CATALINA FELIZ'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

Mateo walks into the living room, seeing his family milling around in various spots.

MATEO

Party people! What's up?!

A Caucasian man walks out of the bathroom, ANDREW PACE (27). Handsome enough, dressed business casual with stylish hair that says, "business in the front, party in the back".

ANDREW

So, how'd the "date" go? You going into the new year with a wifey?

MATEO

The usual way.

Teo makes an explicit gesture insinuating sex.

CATALINA

The day that my son gets a wife is the day that I wear a catsuit and call myself Cher.

MATEO

Aye mami, a catsuit?

CATALINA

Your father used to love it, don't try to play me.

(thinks)

I just didn't call myself Cher. He liked it more when I called myself "Mistress de la Noche..."

MATEO

Mami! TMI, por favor.

(to Andrew)

Soooo, what's up with that sale? Did they like the piece?

Mateo crosses his fingers.

ANDREW

No go, bro. They said they went with something more "new age Van Gogh", whatever that means. You ever think about cutting something off? Cause I could sell the *hell* out of that.

MATEO

You know what? I think this year my resolution is gonna be to get a new manager *and* a new best friend.

CATALINA

Aye, no! I *cannot* do resolutions, being a bad bitch? Is hard *enough*.

Mateo makes a face and sips his coquito, obviously his mother is drunk.

MATEO

Too much rum in the coquito, Mami.

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

Xzander and Trisha are sitting down on separate couches. Trisha is picking at the charcuterie board on the table. The excitement of Times Square can be heard coming from the television.

XZANDER

I don't care what you say, it is *not* wrong for me to *not* wanna have one-night stands!

TRISHA

Yes, it is. The gays judge you. Hell, I judge you. You need stop to looking for "Mr. Right" and *start* looking for "Mr. Right Now". Or "Mr. Tie Me Down" cause *those* are fun too. You need to start dating to have fun, Zan. Not every dinner has to end with a marriage proposal. Life? Not a rom-com.

XZANDER

I'd like to think of my love life as more of a... Shakespearean tragedy. And I do! Date...to have...fun...sometimes. I don't *always* jump straight to the altar.

Trisha makes a face like "really, bitch?".

TRISHA

You know what? It's the end of the year, I will let you live in your delusion for the next fifteen minutes.

XZANDER

(looks up)

I know Christmas is over but *please* Santa...send me some new friends.

Trisha playfully throws a piece of cheese at Xzander who catches it in his mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. CATALINA FELIZ'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

People are milling around, eating and talking. Mateo, Andrew, and Catalina are sitting in the living room. They each have a bowl of purple grapes they're eating as part of a Latin New Year's Eve tradition.

MATEO

Oh please, Drew! You could *not* go twelve months without eating meat. You would *never* be able to keep that resolution, you can't even turn down Mami's oxtails.

ANDREW

What are you talking about? I have *amazing* willpower.

Catalina picks up a bowl filled with oxtails, holding it out to Andrew.

CATALINA

Do you want some more oxtail, Andrew?

ANDREW

Extra.

MATEO

I rest my case.

CATALINA

Well, I think *Teo's* resolution should be finding a *novia*. Dating with a purpose. I'm *tired* of remembering all these girls' names every other month! I am *old*, Teo. My memory's not what it used to be.

ANDREW

Mateo? No way. Won't happen. He's been this way since college.

MATEO

Hey, I can't help it if women find my struggling artist aesthetic irresistible and attractive! And I do date with a purpose. It's not my fault if it ends up with sex afterwards, that's all on *The Man Upstairs*.

CATALINA

More like the man *downstairs* who lives
in your pants.

Mateo shrugs...he can't help the life he lives.

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

CLOSE UP on Xzander holding his drink, looking at Trisha
across from him, a sly grin on her face.

XZANDER

Why are you looking at me like The
Grinch?

TRISHA

Because I just got a brilliant idea.
Resolutions. Let's make em'.

XZANDER

Aw come on, Trish, you know people
never keep those things.

TRISHA

And that's why we're gonna prove the
people wrong.

(thinks)

Oh! I'm gonna go viral! And...sleep
with your boss. But not at the same
time...unless that makes me go viral.

XZANDER

Your obsession with Mr. Dawson is
still...ick.

TRISHA

It's that salt and pepper hair thing,
I am *all* about the seasoning. And mark
my words, this time next year? I *will*
be bent up like a paperclip on Wyatt
Dawson's desk.

XZANDER

More shots please.

TRISHA

And I think *your* resolution should be
to hoe it up for the first time in
your life! Drop it like a thotty, boo!

XZANDER

No, no, *absolutely* not. I can...learn how to crochet or...learn how to speak another language.

TRISHA

Thot-a-nese is a very popular up and coming language. Shots up.

Xzander and Trisha raise their glasses then down their shots.

CUT TO:

INT. CATALINA FELIZ'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

MATEO

So, are you telling me that once Papi met you, he *instantly* stopped seeing other women?

CATALINA

Well, I got pregnant with your sister, so he had to but that's neither here nor there. But Teo seriously, you are two years away from being thirty. Don't you wanna have somebody to kiss at twelve o' clock next New Year's Eve?

ANDREW

(teasing)

I think he's scaredddd.

MATEO

Scared of what?

CATALINA

Falling in love.

Mateo shakes his head, that is so far from the truth.

ANDREW

Maybe you should give it a shot, man. I mean, what have you got to lose?

CATALINA

And it's not like you'd be doing it alone. Drew is *also* gonna stick to his resolution, right Andrew?

ANDREW

(thinks)

I *hate* being the supportive best friend.

(sighs)

I gotta put myself into a meat coma before 2023 hits, pardon the caveman behavior you're about to witness.

Andrew begins to eat the food on his plate rapidly. The countdown to the New Year can be heard on the television. The clock reads 11:59pm.

CATALINA

Oh, oh, oh the ball's about to drop! Everybody, get your glasses!

Everyone at the party picks up their champagne glasses.

ANDREW

Twelve months without meat. I can do this. I can do this.

(thinks)

I can't do this. I wanna back out.

CATALINA

If you can actually keep this resolution Andrew, I will make you a pot of oxtails every week in 2024.

ANDREW

(pause)

I'm sold.

CATALINA

That's the spirit. Teo? What do you say?

Mateo sighs, looking at the expectant faces of his mother and best friend as the countdown on the television begins to finalize.

SEVEN...SIX...

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

Xzander and Trisha are standing up in front of the television holding champagne glasses as well, watching the ball drop slowly in Times Square.

FIVE...FOUR...

TRISHA
 (smiling)
 Soooo...are we gonna see a new Zan in
 2023?

Xzander looks at Trisha, thinking. His love life hasn't gone the way he's hoped all these years and even though this is something he's never thought of doing...maybe a little change wouldn't hurt? A small smile creeps onto his face. Xzander nods nervously.

TRISHA
 Uh uh. I need to hear a full sentence.

XZANDER
 (sighs)
 Fine. My...New Year's resolution...

INTERCUT ON MATEO'S FACE

MATEO
 Will be to...

INTERCUT ON XZANDER'S FACE

XZANDER
 Date...just...for fun.

INTERCUT ON MATEO'S FACE

MATEO
 To date...to find someone.

ONE!

The crowd on the television erupts as the ball reaches its destination. 2023 has arrived! Everyone in Mateo's home screams "happy new year", drinks their champagne and starts giving out hugs and kisses to one another. Catalina hugs her son, kissing him on the cheek.

CATALINA
 I really hope you try, mijo. You are an *amazing* man, and some lucky girl deserves to see that. But remember? She *also* has to go through me first. They don't call me "The Chancleta-nator" for nothing. I love you.

MATEO

Ummmm, you better lady.

The two of them look over at Andrew, who tries to finish his plate of oxtails as quickly as possible. Catalina takes off her sandal and raises it, making her way to Andrew, who runs into the kitchen.

CATALINA

Give me that plate! MEAT TIME IS OVER,
GODZILLA!

CUT TO:

INT. OUT MAGAZINE - WYATT DAWSON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

JANUARY 2023

THREE WEEKS LATER. WE OPEN on WYATT DAWSON (40), Xzander's boss, and we see why Trisha has the hots for him. Chiseled jaw and smoldering good looks. Salt and pepper hair but also nicer than his intimidating physical appearance makes him out to be. He moves his laptop to the side, having just read Xzander's latest article.

WYATT

You're *better* than this, Skye. I keep telling you that.

XZANDER

Mr. Dawson, I...

WYATT

Hey, hey now how many times do I have to tell you? Call me Wyatt. When I hired you, I told you I like for my employees to call me by my first name like we're friends. Because we are. And I'm *also* your boss. Which means I can fire you. And I will...if you don't start writing something that gets us more than twenty likes on Facebook.

XZANDER

Mr. Daw...Wyatt. You told me to write about places around the city that would be good for "gay dating" and that's what I've been doing.

WYATT

There are more interesting places for two people to go on dates than the newest restaurant or rooftop cafe.

XZANDER

But we're talking about gay men, here! They really don't care where they go on a date as long as it doesn't lead to commitment or a long-term relationship.

WYATT

And that is where you're supposed to come in. You do great writing for me, Skye but your editorial is called "Out N' About". And this was your concept, that's why I hired you. Your...job is to...open people's eyes to the beauty of the city and make them want to *share* that beauty with another person. You're supposed to be making people want to fall in love with each other while they fall in love with all the Big Apple has to offer.

XZANDER

Well, is it my fault if this city doesn't have anything to offer?

Wyatt tilts his head. He realizes Xzander's problem.

WYATT

You suck at dating.

XZANDER

I don't...suck...at dating.

WYATT

I've never walked in on you wasting company time "boo-loving" on the phone or having Facetime sex with a boyfriend.

XZANDER

That's because I...*don't* wanna get...fired?

WYATT

Or maybe that's because...you're not good at dating. Didn't say suck.

XZANDER

Have you been talking to my best friend?

WYATT

Xzander, look. All I'm asking for is for you to write stuff that generates engagement on your post when you drop an article. One or two comments isn't enough, give these men something to dream about, something to aspire to! Give *yourself* something to aspire to!

Xzander sighs, absorbing his boss's words. He knows he's been lacking in inspiration.

XZANDER

Well...I do have a date Thursday night. It's actually my first one since I agreed to see men without the "expectation of something more".

WYATT

(excited)

You got a dick date?!

XZANDER

A new year's resolution.

WYATT

Youuuuuuu got a dick date!

XZANDER

That is...*very* inappropriate.

WYATT

You guys gonna do some flip flopping or are you strictly one way? Top? Bottom?

XZANDER

That is even *more* inappropriate.

WYATT

Well listen, that's great for you. And what's even greater? You can work and play. There is a winter art exhibit Thursday night at this gallery near Columbus Circle, I want it to be the next "Out N' About" venue for your column. You can take your dic...I

mean, your *penis* appointment. Didn't say dick date.

XZANDER

Dear God.

Xzander starts to walk out of the office.

WYATT

I'm rooting for you, Skye! And I'm also googling the address to the unemployment office because here at OUT magazine? We are multi-taskers!

CUT TO:

EXT. ART GALLERY - PATIO - COLUMBUS CIRCLE - EVENING

TWO DAYS LATER. Xzander is on the phone with Trisha, standing on the patio of the art gallery. There are caterers walking around handing out h'orderves to other visitors of the gallery.

XZANDER

(sighs)

Why am I here again? It's not like I can actually even get to know this guy.

TRISHA (ON PHONE)

The same reason I'm talking to you in what I *think* is the downward facing dog position while getting made fun of on TikTok...

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - EAST VILLAGE - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Trisha has Xzander on speakerphone while practicing her yoga techniques in front of her laptop.

TRISHA

(straining)

Because new year's resolutions are *stupid*...

(grunting)

And...*painful*. So have you relapsed and started picking out floor plans yet?

XZANDER

No, I've just been trying to keep our conversations very "cas"...I feel like a pod person.

TRISHA

Well, keep up the good work, babe. Remember? This year is about fun, *not* finding the one.

(thinks)

Unless Wyatt finds me and realizes that I'm *his* one, then you can help me pick out floor plans.

XZANDER

Let me get back inside, I don't want Brian to think I'm leaving him high and dry. I'll see you later.

CUT TO:

INT. GALLERY - SHOW FLOOR

Xzander walks back inside the venue, passing by others who are attending the gallery showing...one of those people happens to be Mateo who is looking at a painting with a pretty woman next to him. WE PAN to Andrew, talking to a caterer holding a plate; they're trying to maintain their composure but look very annoyed.

ANDREW

So, what's in this again?

CATERER

Me repeating the ingredients *isn't* gonna change them.

ANDREW

I'm sorry, it's just that um...well, I can't eat meat for the next eleven months...new year's "res" and all.

CATERER

Then you can't eat these.

ANDREW

And...what are those...again?

CATERER

(sighs)

Ribeye with crab and asparagus

crostini topped with a...

ANDREW

Can you...go back?

CATERER

Right now, I would love to go back to the kitchen. Or the *womb*.

ANDREW

I meant can you just...say the name of the h'orderve again?

CATERER

Sir, we do have vegetarian options. And we have sushi, seitan...

ANDREW

Hey, hey just because I don't go to church does not mean I play with The Devil.

The caterer rolls their eyes and begins to walk away from Andrew, who begins to follow him.

ANDREW

I'm just gonna follow behind you and get the smells.

CUT TO:

INT. GALLERY - SHOW FLOOR

Mateo is staring intently at the painting in front of him, examining it, talking to the woman next to him who happens to be his date, LAYLA.

MATEO

There's so much to see in this. I mean...the way the artist used the colors and the line strokes...it's got *really* deep dimension.

The woman is looking at the painting but appears to be uninterested. There are other things on her mind...

LAYLA

Ummmm yeah, totally! Totally get that...so...how are *your* strokes?

MATEO

It depends on what I'm painting
honestly, or the subject...

The woman's hand goes to his crotch, grabbing it! Mateo jumps
in shock.

MATEO

Oh, oh! You mean...*those*...strokes.
Uh, yeah. Yeah, we can um, we
can...where is the nearest bathroom?

Mateo looks around the room trying to spot somewhere the two
can go for a quickie. Suddenly...he remembers his resolution.

MATEO

Uh, ya know what? I...my agent's here,
actually and um, he wanted me to come
out and get some inspiration, so...I
don't want him to see me slacking off.

LAYLA

Oh, he can see, I don't mind. My
profile says I'm "adventurous".

MATEO

I just thought that meant you liked
sky diving.

LAYLA

Well, I did do it with my sky diving
instructor once.

Layla gets very close to Mateo, going to reach for his crotch
again but he stops her, trying not to make a scene while
resisting temptation.

MATEO

Consent goes...both ways, ya know.

LAYLA

(whispers)
And so, do I.

MATEO

(biting his lip)
Aye dios mio.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALLERY - OUTSIDE

Xzander and his handsome date, BRIAN, are standing outside the gallery while Brian vapes.

BRIAN

I've never been to a gallery before,
this is a pretty cool event.
Exclusive.

XZANDER

Well, thank you for coming. I'm sorry
for changing our plans last minute.

BRIAN

Hey, it's cool. Plans don't matter
when the company's good, right? And it
was for your job so, I understand.

Xzander smiles, appreciating Brian's sly compliment and easy-going nature. He also isn't bad on the eyes.

XZANDER

Speaking of my job...what did you
think about this place, a gallery
opening, for a first date?

BRIAN

Me? I loved it. I've never really been
into art like that but it's a nice
change of pace from the usual dates I
go on. Makes you stand out amongst the
commoners.

XZANDER

Really? I guess I should thank my boss
for making me come here then.

BRIAN

If I remember correctly, you said you
work for Out magazine, right? That's a
pretty reputable publication. How long
you been writing?

Xzander is taken in by the interest Brian has seemed to take in him.

XZANDER

You know what? It's still pretty
early...why don't I answer that
question over some hot chocolate?

BRIAN

(smiles)

Prolonging the date? I'm game.

Xzander smiles happily, the date going better than he expected. Then his smile fades, realizing he's doing the exact opposite of what he's supposed to be doing per his resolution.

XZANDER

Actually, ya know what...this was fun, Brian. *Really*. But um, I need to head back inside and interview some people, ask them some questions for my article...I hate to cut this short but...

Brian is caught off guard by Xzander's change in attitude but decides not to push.

BRIAN

Work comes before play. I get it. I gotta get home anyway, walk my dog. I'll call you?

XZANDER

Sure! Or...*I'll* call you. Noooo pressure.

BRIAN

Okay. Well...have a goodnight, Xzander. I hope we can do this again sometime.

XZANDER

Never know what the future holds, right?

BRIAN

Right.

Brian walks off, heading to the train station. Xzander watches him walk away, mentally kicking himself.

XZANDER

(looking up to the sky)

Really? The *first* date I have in a *while* where the guy seems to *actually* be interested in me and I can't pursue him because I'm supposed to be "having fun"? You are a *vengeful* and *mocking*

God, lady.

The door to the gallery opens. Mateo walks out, looking back quickly to see if Layla is following him. He puts his hands over his face, not believing what he just turned down.

MATEO

(looks up; laughs a little)
You are a *funny*, funny man, you know that? Or funny...woman. Or...funny they.

XZANDER

You're talking to God too? Get in line.

MATEO

Just lamenting on my luck. You...look like a buyer.

XZANDER

You would be mistaken. I'm just here for the show. Work assignment.

MATEO

Oh, me too. Mateo.

Mateo extends his hands. Xzander shakes it.

XZANDER

Xzander. Are you an art buyer?

MATEO

I am an art *maker*. Bar manager by day, Picasso by night. Or...the other way around, actually.

XZANDER

A painter. Do you know the person whose show this is?

MATEO

Not personally. My best friend slash manager represents this artist too and thought it would be "inspirational" if I came to see their work. I've been having a little bit of trouble selling my stuff lately.

XZANDER

I'm sorry to hear that. I haven't been

too much of a success story at my job
either.

Realizing, they both could use a pick me up, Mateo gets an
idea.

MATEO

Seems like you could use a drink.

Xzander gives Mateo the once over...should he risk the
stranger danger? Well, he is supposed to be having fun, after
all.

XZANDER

Just...hold the roofies.

MATEO

Hm. Funny. I was gonna tell you the
same thing. I mean, I *am* the hotter of
the two of us.

Mateo walks past Xzander, heading to the bar.

XZANDER

(looks into camera)

Did he just come for me?

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - BAR - THE VILLAGE - EVENING

A FEW HOURS LATER. Music is blaring. People are dancing and
drinking. Bartenders are taking orders, smiling and having a
good time. Xzander and Mateo are sitting at the bar, talking
and having a drink.

XZANDER

I *still* can't get over the fact that a
straight man runs this bar. It's
so...so...

MATEO

Gay?

XZANDER

Well, I am *all* about progression
but...yes. Gay. And...

(looks up)

Naked.

Xzander reaches up and tips one of the go-go boys who's

dancing on the bar.

MATEO

Well, surprisingly gay bars? Pay more. But it *is* a lot to handle, ya know, the dancers, the clean-up, you gays, you--you party hard.

XZANDER

The gays do. We do party hard.

MATEO

And also, a gay bar? Great place to pick up women.

XZANDER

Ugh, you mean the women who come in and invade *our* space with their bridal parties because they don't wanna be harassed in straight bars?

MATEO

Those be the best ones!

XZANDER

Yeah, for you and your kind. For me? It feels like some form of...cultural appropriation. There are a lot of clubs and bars that women can go to and be drunk while *also* being safe. They *do* not have to come to my bars and throw their marriages in my face.

MATEO

Sounds like someone's a little bit bitter.

XZANDER

I'm not bitter...I'm chronically single and sick of it.

MATEO

What?! Being single is the best thing since...since slip-on Vans and vagina.

XZANDER

I can only relate to one of those. And if the "vadge" is so good than why did you run from your date at the gallery?

MATEO

Oh, believe me, if it wasn't for this *stupid* New Year's resolution I made? She *definitely* would've been introduced to my paintbrush.

Xzander looks intrigued.

XZANDER

What...resolution?

MATEO

My best friend *and* my mother, yes, I was ganged up on...they seem to think I should start looking to "settle down" since I'm edging toward thirty. So, I am..."dating to find someone".

XZANDER

Wow. I thought you were gonna say you committed to celibacy but in this climate what you're trying to do seems even harder.

MATEO

Tell me about it! I had to like, *literally* peel that woman off me back at the gallery!

XZANDER

(sarcastically)

Oh my God, you poor thing.

They both laugh.

XZANDER

Well, I do always say that it's easier for the straights to settle down than it is for my people so maybe it'll work out.

MATEO

I just don't see *why* I need to change what works for me. I mean, if it ain't broke, don't fix it, right?

XZANDER

Tell me about it. My best friend made me resolve to "date just for fun" because seeing as how I'm sitting here with a nympho hetero instead of an

actual man, my way of dating?
Apparently doesn't work either.

Mateo looks at Xzander with a sense of intrigue, realizing something. Suddenly, Mateo gets a very "great" idea.

MATEO

Xzander...

XZANDER

You've been supplying me with free alcohol for the past two hours, we're passed formalities. Call me Zan.

MATEO

Okay then. Call me Teo...I think we might've met for a reason, Zan.

XZANDER

(clueless)

And what *reason* would that be?

CUT TO:

EXT. NYC STREET - AFTERNOON

FEBRUARY 2023

A WEEK LATER. Cars fill the street with the familiar sound of horns blaring in the New York City traffic. The crowded sidewalks are littered with people going about their business on this cold February day.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - SUBWAY STATION EXIT

Trisha is walking up the stairs, her stiletto heels click clacking as she speaks into the phone.

TRISHA (ON PHONE)

Wow, so you're really taking this whole "fun dating" thing seriously. I leave to go visit my parents for a few days and you what? Score a straight guy? What's his name?

Trisha stops at the top of the stairs, seeing Xzander standing there holding his gym bag. Trisha hangs up the phone and they began walking.

XZANDER

We're not having fun or dating. And the straight guy's name is Mateo...but...I'm supposed to call him Teo now.

TRISHA

Oooo, Teo, sounds sexy. Like one of the guys on the Spanish soap operas who gets slapped all the time. But what exactly are you guys doing again? I didn't really pay too much attention when you were explaining it, there was this woman in my subway car reading bible scriptures wearing a clown costume and I had to get it for my Tik Tok.

XZANDER

You and that damn Tik Tok.

TRISHA

You're not the only one "resolut-ing", this viral thing? *Is* happening. I know I could get so many sponsors if I just caught the right thing on a live stream.

XZANDER

Trisha, you don't need money, your parents are *loaded*.

TRISHA

Just because my parents are wealthy *doesn't* mean I don't wanna make my own money.

XZANDER

Then get a job.

TRISHA

I have one. Being the number one subscriber to the catastrophe you call your life. Now...what's going on with you and "Teo"?

XZANDER

Well basically, we're gonna...be each other's tutors. He's hoping to find a suitable girlfriend through the art of actual dating so I'm gonna help him

smooth out his rough edges when it comes to that. You know, show him where to take someone on a date, what topics he should bring up during conversation, what to wear...

TRISHA

Okayyyy. And he's going to...

XZANDER

Teach me how to...seize life by the balls and date without expectation while enjoying the pleasures the gay world has to offer.

TRISHA

So, the straight man is gonna teach the gay man how to be a...gay whore?

XZANDER

In nicer words...yes. I mean, the more I think about it the more I realize I've never really had that...Mya "single, sexy, and free" phase, ya know?

They arrive at a building and Xzander opens the door for Trisha.

TRISHA

You know, Zan, gay whores don't open doors for women. They open their legs. You're already failing.

Xzander gives Trisha a face and walks into the building behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. YOGA STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Trisha and Xzander are in different yoga poses, still having their conversation.

TRISHA

So, what's he like? Teo?

XZANDER

Um, regular? I guess. He's a painter. Oh, and he manages Foxxxxy.

TRISHA

That gay bar where I still hold the
karaoke queen title?

XZANDER

They actually crowned a new queen on
New Year's Eve, apparently.

TRISHA

Unacceptable. Soooo, is Teo cute?

XZANDER

I don't know.

TRISHA

What? Did your eyes just stop working?

XZANDER

I'm just not into that whole hipster,
shirt around the waist, Van membership
holder type of guy. You know I like my
men...

TRISHA

Shirt tucked in, dress shoes on. Sadly
yes...I know.

XZANDER

(thinks)

But he is...funny. And he does smell
quite nice.

TRISHA

Well, it's nice to know your nose
still works.

XZANDER

Sometimes I wish your mouth? Didn't.

TRISHA

And deprive Wyatt of the best blowjob
he's ever gonna have? Unacceptable.

CUT TO:

INT. MATEO & ANDREW'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Music is playing in the apartment. Mateo is standing in front
of a mirror trying on a tie and doesn't look the way he
normally dresses. The door opens. Andrew walks in holding a
bag.

ANDREW
Honey, I'm home!

Andrew sees Mateo and is thrown by his new look.

ANDREW
Okay. I've seen "Invasion of the Body Snatchers", both versions, so I know my next move should be to get on the first plane outta town because *who* are you and...are those my clothes?

MATEO
Shut up, Drew. How do you...
(struggling with tie)
How do you even do this *stupid* thing?

ANDREW
Well, if you're trying to tie a noose?
You are *right* on point but...

Andrew puts his bag down and goes over to Mateo, helping him with the tie.

ANDREW
If you wanna tie a *tie*...be glad
you're able to phone a friend.

Andrew finishes the tie and sits down on the couch, digging into his bag of food.

ANDREW
(takes a bite of his food)
God! Who *eats* this?!

MATEO
What is it?

ANDREW
Tofu. And it tastes like...toes-fu.

Mateo sits down next to Andrew while his friend continues to try and eat his "food".

ANDREW
But no, really, what's going on? Why
are we playing dress up?

MATEO
Well, if I'm gonna do this whole
"stand up dater" thing I figured I

should uh...change it up a bit.

ANDREW

Meaning we're gonna have to start sharing a closet. I *knew* going to the gym with you would bite me in the ass cause now we wear the same size.

MATEO

(laughs)

And hopefully with Zan's help I'll be able to meet a nice girl and get all lovey dovey and find some "inspo" to make us some money. If I had a muse, I know I could just...blow the top off this city.

ANDREW

Can we backtrack for a sec? Who's Zan?

MATEO

Oh, Xzander. I met him the night we went to that gallery opening.

ANDREW

Oh ok. Another artist?

MATEO

Writer, actually. And...gay.

ANDREW

Gay? Like *really* happy dude or Boy Butter buyer?

MATEO

What's...Boy Butter?

ANDREW

Lubrication. You know...for the butt sex.

MATEO

How do you know that?

ANDREW

You know my little brother's gay! And in order to be a good big brother, I had to do my research so we could still relate and let me tell ya, the reviews? Say use gun oil instead.

MATEO
 (confused)
 Way above my paygrade.

Andrew and Mateo laugh.

ANDREW
 So...Zan. He's gonna do what? Turn you
 into some kind of "serious
 dater...savant"?

MATEO
 Correctamundo. And I'm gonna turn him
 into a...fun, single loving, dating
 expert.

ANDREW
 Whatever works, man.
 (thinks)
 Do you think he knows any vegetarian
 places with meat options?

MATEO
 That would kinda kill the purpose of
 the place being...vegetarian.

ANDREW
 Hey, the gays know how to find
 loopholes! I mean, they're all getting
 into Heaven somehow.

Mateo laughs and Andrew continues eating.

CUT TO BLACK:

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERS SLIDE ACROSS THE SCREEN

LESSON ONE: MEET CUTE/SINGLE & SEXY

MATEO/XZANDER (V.O.)
 So...here we go.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CHELSEA - MORNING

MARCH 2023

Xzander and Mateo are sitting down at a table. There's a Frappuccino in front of Xzander and a cup of coffee in front of Mateo.

XZANDER.

Now *this...is* the perfect place for a "meet cute".

MATEO

Meet cute?

XZANDER

Quintessential to finding your special someone. It can't look planned or...stalker-ish but also has to be...random and serendipitous.

MATEO

That's a lotta components for one step.

XZANDER

Hm. I don't do complainers. They're not sexy.

MATEO

(clicks tongue)

Speaking of sexy...

CUT TO:

INT. GYM - AFTERNOON

FLASH FORWARD

MATEO (V.O.)

A lot of people in relationships don't have the privilege of being as hot as they wanna be cause sometimes the person you're with? Can't handle all the attention you might be getting.

Xzander is on a treadmill, running and sweating, practically dying.

MATEO (V.O.)

Single people? Don't have that problem. Because the point is to look as good as you want without the baggage of someone else's insecurities holding you down.

Xzander looks over, seeing Mateo running effortlessly. Mateo smiles at him brightly, distracting Xzander who ends up falling off the treadmill while Mateo laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GYM - AFTERNOON - CONT'D

Some days have passed. Xzander and Mateo are running on the treadmill again, however this time, Xzander is keeping up. Mateo notices, giving him a small and nod of approval.

MATEO (V.O.)

*And do not be afraid to hit on someone
in the gym.*

XZANDER (V.O.)

I am not a creep.

MATEO (V.O.)

*People wanna be looked at in the gym!
Why the hell do you think we're there
in the first place? Just don't make it
too obvious.*

As Mateo is focused on his stride, Xzander looks over at him, noticing Mateo's physique which is very attention grabbing thanks to his perspiration. Looking for a moment too long, Xzander loses his momentum and once again...hilariously falls off the treadmill.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - AFTERNOON

FLASH FORWARD CONTINUES

XZANDER (V.O.)

*Meet cutes need to be...happenstance.
You both get into the same Uber pool.
You...get stuck in an elevator
together. But however, you meet, that
first glance? Is pivotal.*

Mateo is standing outside the coffee shop. He checks his watch, where the hell is his Uber? Mateo feels something on his leg, he looks down, seeing a dog peeing on him.

MATEO

Oh my...Jesus Christ!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Lily, no! Bad! Bad Lily! Oh God, I am
so sorry.

Mateo continues to try and shake the dog off his leg. When he looks up, he sees SASHA, a beautiful red head wearing a puffy

coat and furry hood that envelopes her face.

SASHA

Ugh, are those expensive? They're probably expensive.

MATEO

Ummm...my jeans? Uhhh, no. No, they're not. That jacket though, that looks pretty...

SASHA

Thrifty? It looks thrifty, doesn't it? Ugh, I *knew* I should've gone with something different.

MATEO

No! It looks...you look good.
(pause)
Hey...would you and...

Mateo looks down at the dog.

MATEO

Lily...like to get some coffee?

SASHA

Um, yeah. Yeah, that'd be nice.

FLASH FORWARD ENDS

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - TABLE - MORNING - CONT'D

Xzander and Mateo are still talking.

MATEO

Got it. Anything else I should know?

XZANDER

Yeah. Switch to fraps. You're already kinda short and I would hate for that whole "coffee stunts your growth" thing to hinder you any further in life.

Mateo laughs and sips his drink...Xzander is pretty cool.

XZANDER

So, I'm curious, what got you into

painting? You could've chosen sculpting, ceramics, tagging the city with graffiti art...

MATEO

I can't even build Legos so sculpting? Definitely not for me. But um...I don't know. I used to...draw a lot as a kid. Kinda the way I used to express myself. I always thought pictures could say a lot more than I could.

XZANDER

I get that. As a teenager, I would write these letters to my parents, telling them that I was gay, and I'd put them in these envelopes to slip under their bedroom door after they went to sleep but...I would always chicken out. The letters though? Very well written.

MATEO

And *that's* how you got into writing. Did you ever end up giving them one?

XZANDER

No. I actually came out during my high school graduation speech. My best friend told me that I needed to "let the world know who Xzander Skye *really* was because they would love him"...the same way she did.

MATEO

Did they?

XZANDER

It was touch and go with my dad for a little bit but eventually he came around. But being that I am twenty-six and single? The other men in the world apparently *don't* love me as much.

MATEO

Enter Teo!

(thinks)

After I'm done with you, maybe I can help the rest of the gays turn their dating lives around, start a *whole* business. Wanna be my mascot?

XZANDER

And sweat out this hair? Please.

MATEO

You're such a diva.

XZANDER

Just like Mariah, darling.

Mateo and Xzander laugh, continuing to talk, enjoying their evening together.

CUT TO:

INT. OUT MAGAZINE - WYATT DAWSON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A WEEK LATER. Wyatt is in his office, doing pushups. His laptop is in front of him, he's reading Xzander's latest "Out N' About" article. Someone walks into the doorframe, it's Trisha. She stops, admiring "the view" of Wyatt working out.

TRISHA

Am I...interrupting?

Wyatt looks up from the laptop, seeing Trisha. He stops mid pushup.

WYATT

Trisha! Hi.

Wyatt closes the laptop and stands from the floor, putting the laptop on his desk.

WYATT

What can I do for you?

TRISHA

Oh, you could do a lot.

(catches herself)

In...regards to...telling me if you knew where Zan was? I went to his cubicle but he's not there. I thought we could have lunch together.

WYATT

Should've known you were looking for Skye. To my understanding, he said he was going to do research for his next article.

TRISHA

Oh...well, that sucks. Who am I gonna have lunch with now?

WYATT

Well, I was just about to order some food, it's "Feed The Staff Friday".

Trisha's heart melts.

TRISHA

You feed your staff?

WYATT

Since I don't have kids, don't have a wife, I like to think of my staff as my "extended family". Kinda like the "Old Lady In The Shoe". But with veneers and better...shoes.

TRISHA

Just...outta curiosity...what size shoe do you wear?

WYATT

Fourteen wide.

Trisha holds her stomach.

TRISHA

(swallows hard)
Dear God.

WYATT

Uh, so what do you like? Meat? A nicely tossed salad?...

Wyatt turns around and starts walking around his desk.

WYATT

Jenna in accounting really likes these hot crossed buns for some reason.

Trisha takes a deep breath, admiring Wyatt's ass in his pants.

TRISHA

(swallows hard)
Yeah. Yeah, I like the buns. A lot.

CUT TO:

INT. SANDWICH SHOP - MANHATTAN - AFTERNOON

A WEEK LATER. Andrew is bent down, staring at the deli meats in the case. Just...staring.

EMPLOYEE

Sir, I don't wanna rush you but you've been here for a quite a while and you haven't chosen anything. Are you...*sure* you want a sandwich?

ANDREW

You know what my favorite movie was as a kid? "Charlotte's Web". I loved Wilber, the pig. And I just...I couldn't believe people were eating them. The pigs. And then you know what happened?

EMPLOYEE

(nervous)

I...really just...wanna make a sandwich.

ANDREW

Pork belly. Pork...belly happened. God's slab of happiness.

EMPLOYEE

Oh, I love pork belly! We actually have a bahn mi...

ANDREW

(disdain)

And then *youuuu* happened.

Andrew's eyes focus on the lettuce, tomatoes, and onions in the display case.

ANDREW

Lettuce. Do you know lettuce is mainly just water? If I wanted water on my sandwich? I would just *dunk* it...in a cup of *Fiji*!

EMPLOYEE

Well, you don't *need* to have lettuce. There's always spinach, endive, arugula...

ANDREW

Ohhhh, the *fancy* lettuce. You're on their side, aren't you?

EMPLOYEE

(confused)

Whose...side?

ANDREW

The lettuce! You just want me to be a big ol' koala bear, don'tcha? Stuffing my *carnivorous face*, with NON-FOODS!

EMPLOYEE

Ummmm...we *also* have an eggplant, portobella mushroom, and sundried tomato wrap with hummus?

Andrew doesn't like the sound of all the vegetables. His head turns and sees a stray cat sitting on the sidewalk, in front of the front door.

ANDREW

(pause)

What about him?

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN HOUSE - BROOKLYN - AFTERNOON

Mateo and Xzander are standing outside of a beautiful house.

XZANDER

This is very beautiful. Which means that colonial children are probably buried under it.

MATEO

Or an Indian burial ground. It *does* look like a pretty good catch though. Much like me.

XZANDER

Hey, you did *not* snag Sasha on your own. I'd like my credit.

MATEO

Tiny bit. *Lil* bit of credit.

Xzander laughs slightly.

XZANDER

Thanks for doing this, by the way. I know it's a little unorthodox, but your opinion is really gonna help me with my article.

MATEO

Rescuing damsels in distress tis' what I do. And open houses as a first date is *actually* a pretty cool idea.

Suddenly, a car parks behind them, jerking to a stop. An African American woman in business attire, HAYLEY, gets out of the car, breathing hard.

HAYLEY

Whew, baby, lemme tell you, the way I just sped through that highway you woulda' thought my ass was driving Miss Christine!

Mateo and Xzander both look very confused.

HAYLEY

Stephen King? The demon car? Was just killing up *everybody* and their mama? Ya know what, that's not important...
(to Xzander)
Let's go make sure your fiancé buys you this house!

Hayley hastily walks past them. Mateo looks like a deer caught in headlights.

MATEO

Say what, now?

INT. OPEN HOUSE - HALLWAY

Xzander and Mateo are walking slowly, speaking in low voices.

XZANDER

In order for me to make the appointment, I *had* to tell her you were walking me down the aisle. They don't show single people houses; single people are *broke*.

MATEO

(pause)

Okay. Can't argue with that. But you

could've at least *told* me, I would've worn something more "future husband-like". I look like you pay the bills.

CUT TO:

INT. OPEN HOUSE - BEDROOM

Mateo and Xzander walk into a spacious bedroom where Hayley is waiting for them.

HAYLEY

Sooooo, this is the master suite. The previous owners actually re-modeled this *entire* room themselves. Even knocked out this wall to put in that lovely terrace to overlook the backyard.

XZANDER

Oh, and summer's right around the corner. That would be so nice when I wanna go out and...have tea...and take in the air or...spy on the neighbors.

Hayley laughs slightly but it's apparent she has different feelings about Xzander's potential terrace activities.

HAYLEY

Just don't do it at night. You *might* catch your neighbor dancing with the dead wife he's been keeping in *his* bedroom for the past two years.

MATEO

Excuse me?

HAYLEY

Oh! I don't mean for *real*, I made a new year's "res" to watch horror films by myself cause they freak me out so I'm trying to get over my fear, *that* was just something I saw in this old movie...but I *have* met your neighbor and that scenario *did* seem very plausible because he's a little...

Hayley makes the sound effect from the shower scene in "Psycho" while making stabbing gestures.

CUT TO:

INT. OPEN HOUSE - KITCHEN

Hayley is walking Mateo and Xzander around the spacious kitchen. Mateo and Xzander look genuinely amazed.

MATEO

Oh, this is *hot*! There's enough room in here for an indoor grill.

XZANDER

That would *definitely* work. I *think* I would want to change the color of these cabinets though.

HAYLEY

Are you...sure...you wanna do that? I mean *sometimes* houses can get a *little* bit pissed when you just come in and change the place like you own it. Don't be like them Lutzes.

XZANDER

The Lutzes?

HAYLEY

That family from Amityville! Came in all bold with decorative ideas and ended up running out of the house in the middle of the night screaming bloody murder! Just left *all* their shit, boo.

MATEO

(scared)

Oh my God, we were right, people really died here.

HAYLEY

Nooooo! This house has *no* comparisons to *that* house.

(thinks)

Just...*a lotta* similarities.

(listens)

Y'all heard that?

CUT TO:

INT. OPEN HOUSE - BASEMENT

Mateo and Xzander are now with Hayley in the basement.

MATEO

A *fully* renovated basement? I see a man-cave. I see...a wall of Mateo originals.

XZANDER

Man-cave? No, this is *definitely* an in-house club. Disco ball, homemade bar...

MATEO

Of course, you'd want a disco.

XZANDER

And what's that supposed to mean?

MATEO

Nothing, babe. Oh, check this out!

Xzander stays quiet for a minute as Mateo checks out another part of the room...that "babe" sounded a little too natural. Or is it just his imagination?

HAYLEY

You can never go wrong with a fully renovated basement. It can be a man cave, your disco, a space for a second income, a deranged stranger could be living in a secret room behind the walls waiting to kill you and your man in your sleep, serves *all* kinds of purposes.

MATEO/XZANDER

WHAT?!

HAYLEY

As a realtor, I am *contracted* to give you *all* of the options a room in your home can offer.

(whispers)

Don't buy a house, y'all. They are *evil*. As a matter fact? I'm getting the *hell* up outta here.

(starts walking out)

Y'all don't feel that? Baby, no!

Hayley walks up the steps, leaving the basement. Mateo walks back over to Xzander.

XZANDER

That was an...experience.

MATEO

That lady has watched one too many scary movies.

Suddenly, they hear a knocking coming from the walls.

XZANDER

But ya know, *just* to be safe...

MATEO

You are *not* moving fast enough for me.

Mateo and Xzander scurry out of the freaky ass basement.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - TABLE - AFTERNOON

A WEEK LATER. Xzander and Trisha are sitting down eating salads. Xzander looks at his phone and laughs.

TRISHA

Did you get a funny looking dick pic?

XZANDER

No! It's just Teo, he...he sent me this picture of him painting in his studio.

Xzander shows Trisha photo; Mateo is shirtless and has paint on his face, sticking his tongue out at the camera. Trisha snatches the phone from Xzander, looking at the photo again.

TRISHA

I haven't met the man, but this seems kinda...flirty. Are you sure you're just "working" together and not tryna' "work it"? Cause I would be.

XZANDER

First of all, Teo? Not my type. Second of all? I am *actually* having fun on these dating apps. Getting funny dick pics, blocking weirdos, talking to faceless men with torso profile pictures, it's all been very entertaining. And third of all? Teo? Is *straight*.

TRISHA

So, you're telling me...you've *never* looked at *that* man with *that* body in any other way than platonic?

XZANDER

Oh, I'm not just telling you. I am *screaming* it from the rafters in a Mariah high-C.

TRISHA

What is with you and Mariah Carey?

XZANDER

Don't do Mariah, she is *perfect*. Except for that whole Nick Cannon lapse but every Christmas the gays and Billboard? We forgive her for that.

Trisha and Xzander laugh and continue talking and eating.

CUT TO BLACK:

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERS SLIDE ACROSS THE SCREEN

LESSON TWO: LOVE LANGUAGES/THE MORE, THE MERRIER

CUT TO:

INT. MATEO & ANDREW'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

APRIL 2003

Xzander is sitting on the couch and Mateo comes out of the kitchen holding two beers, he sits down and hands one to Xzander. Xzander's phone pings.

MATEO

Is that the infamous Grindr chime I hear?

XZANDER

That is...
(checks phone)
Peter. From Grindr.

Xzander's phone chimes again.

XZANDER

And...Alex. From Tinder.

MATEO

Look at you. Four months in and you're dominating the dating apps. Seems like you've already mastered the second lesson I had for you, "the *more the merrier*".

XZANDER

Well, I was always a step ahead of the class. And that's great because that means we can move on to *your* second lesson. So, you and Sasha...about thirty days in now...how's that going?

MATEO

Good, actually. *And* without sex which is...different. For me. I mean, in a way it's great because I'm actually getting to know more about her each time, we go out but...I also don't want her to start thinking that I'm not into her...ya know...physically.

XZANDER

Don't worry, I got you! Because *you* my friend are going to learn the art of...love languages.

MATEO

(oblivious)

You mean, like French?

XZANDER

(sighs)

Love languages are how you show someone you care about them without sticking your penis into one of their orifices. There are five and-- everyone has a certain, one or two they really appreciate.

MATEO

Okay. What are the five?

XZANDER

(thinks)

You look really good in that tank top.

Mateo looks down at himself, caught off guard by the compliment.

MATEO

I knew you were checking me out when you opened the door.

XZANDER

(rolls eyes)

That? Was an *example*. "Words of affirmation". Building your partner up with affirming statements.

MATEO

Ohhhh! Nice one.

Mateo rubs the back of his neck, feeling a cramp.

XZANDER

Neck problems?

MATEO

Yeah. I've been working on this piece and it's hanging on my wall, so I've been having to constantly look up to finish it...guess it's just...

XZANDER

May I? I was voted "Most Likely To Become A Masseuse" in the yearbook.

MATEO

Am I gonna get a happy ending?

XZANDER

If you read a *children's* book. Turn around, please.

Mateo laughs and then turns around. Xzander begins massaging his neck, slowly. Mateo moans slightly, feeling some relief. Xzander's hands move to Mateo's shoulders...feeling the muscles in Mateo's body tighten slightly at the feel of his touch.

MATEO

Wow. You *are* really good at this.

XZANDER

Yeah well, I used to give Trisha massages after her volleyball games in exchange for her doing my English papers in college.

MATEO

Lucky Trisha.

Xzander continues to massage Mateo's neck and shoulders for a few more moments, taking in the smoothness of his skin...feeling his muscles loosen...taking in each of Mateo's deep breaths with each pressure point he hits. Suddenly...Xzander feels himself getting physically aroused. He quickly stops, disappointing Mateo slightly.

XZANDER

Okay! So that was number two. "Acts of service". You see that your partner is in need of something that can lighten their load or ease them, and...you...you just do it.

MATEO

Alright so, "words of affirmation" and "acts of service". What are the other three?

XZANDER

We have "receiving gifts" and "quality time", both pretty much self-explanatory. And lastly..."physical touch".

(thinks)

Are you okay with a little...platonic physical demonstration?

MATEO

Aw, look at you being all Gen-Z and asking for my permission before you fondle me...if it's part of my "training"? Fondle away.

XZANDER

Actually...

Xzander turns around and leans his back onto Mateo's chest. Mateo looks surprised, Xzander's cavalier approach at bridging the distance between them putting him on edge slightly. Xzander looks over his shoulder at Mateo.

XZANDER

You're gonna do the fondling.

MATEO

(pause)

I need more drinks.

Mateo reaches over and grabs his beer, taking a big swig.

XZANDER

Calm your hetero nerves, this is strictly for learning purposes. Now...pretend I'm Sasha. What would you do?

MATEO

Usually? We'd be kissing already.

XZANDER

That's not happening. You're an artist, be creative. Show me you want me without...making me feel like I have to get naked.

MATEO

(sighs)

Okay. I guess...

(thinks)

I would um...put my arm...here...

Mateo's right arm wraps around Xzander's waist.

XZANDER

(unimpressed)

Basic.

MATEO

Look, this is really...

(laughs)

Weird, alright, just...gimme a minute.

XZANDER

It'll be over before you know it.

Continue.

Mateo takes his left hand and starts to run it slowly down Xzander's arm and continues the motion. Up and down. Up and down. Xzander's body tingles. The feeling of being in Mateo's arms striking something in him. Instinctively, he leans more into Mateo's body, feeling comfortable.

XZANDER

Not...bad. Soothing gesture. Gentle.

(pause)

Comforting.

MATEO

Thank you. Then...I would um...lean

back...

Mateo inches himself back, laying onto the arm of the couch. Xzander follows, laying on Mateo's chest slightly, his arms crossed around his own chest.

MATEO

To let her...lay on my chest and...get comfortable...so she could feel...how fast...my heart is beating.

XZANDER

That's a...a good way to...let someone know that...

MATEO

That they make you feel a little nervous...

(takes deep breath)

Um...then...because I know she likes music...to relax...and even though I don't have the *best* voice...I would um...sing. One of my favorite songs.

Mateo takes a moment to steady himself...he feels "off" but also...he feels comfortable.

MATEO

(begins singing "Nervous" by William Lipton)

*You caught my eye, and you're not,
letting go. You pulled me in so fast,
now we're dancing real slow, I don't
know the last time that I felt this
way...let this moment last
forever...hope
the...feeling...stays...so are you
nervous...*

Mateo notices Xzander hasn't said anything for a few moments. He looks down, seeing that his eyes are closed...he appears to have dozed off.

MATEO

(softly)

Until she fell asleep.

Mateo stares at Xzander. Watching his steady breaths. His right arm still wrapped around his new friend. There is an easiness to this. An easiness he didn't expect.

CUT TO:

INT. OUT MAGAZINE - WYATT DAWSON'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A WEEK LATER. Wyatt is sitting on his desk, his hands folded in front of him. Trisha and Xzander are sitting in front of him in silence.

WYATT

Now Xzander, I don't know what's been going on with you these past few months but...you've changed. And do you know how I know that? Because your features HAVE BEEN BOOMING!

Wyatt grabs his laptop and shows it to Trisha and Xzander excitedly.

WYATT

Eleven hundred likes and five hundred comments and *counting* on your "Open Your Heart At An Open House" article. Not to mention, your last three features have gotten so much fanfare. Tell me...what's changed?

TRISHA

Yeah Zan, tell us...what's changed?

Trisha's tone of voice hints that she knows the answer to that question.

XZANDER

I've just been...enjoying life more lately and I guess it's showing in my work.

WYATT

Awww come on now! *Somebody's* been getting poked like an acupuncture dummy.

XZANDER

That is *total* H.R. material.

TRISHA

Do you like acupuncture, Wyatt?

WYATT

It's a great stress reliever.

TRISHA

So is yoga. You should join me one day. I'm sure you could use the...stress relief.

XZANDER

Okay! If that's all then we are going to head out, Wyatt. But thank you for the accolades. I'm glad you like my turn around.

WYATT

Just make sure you keep "turning around" for whomever is behind this beautiful one eighty you've done...if you, ya know, get my drift.

XZANDER

Dear God.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUT MAGAZINE

Xzander and Trisha are walking out of the building and onto the busy NYC street.

TRISHA

So, if you didn't get *my* drift, I'm in agreement with your very hot as shit boss, something has shifted in you, and I think it has to do with the equally hot painter you've befriended.

XZANDER

Teo? Please.

TRISHA

Come on Zan, you're talking to me here. You fell asleep on his chest. You guys talk almost like, every day...I'm just saying, it sounds like you and Teo might just...I don't know...crazier things have happened.

Xzander sighs deeply, knowing he can't lie to Trisha.

XZANDER

Okay, okay! He has...become slightly more appealing and if he was gay then maybe but he's not because that? Would

be too perfect. Remember what you said, my life? Not a rom-com.

TRISHA

Could it at least be a nice softcore porn?

Xzander stares at her for a moment and then walks away.

TRISHA

What?! I need cheap thrills!

CUT TO:

INT. MUSEUM OF SEX - SEX TOY EXHIBIT - EVENING

TWO WEEKS LATER. We open on a dimly lit room only illuminated by the light fixtures surrounding ancient sexual artifacts. Mateo, Sasha, Xzander, and Brian (Xzander's date from the art gallery) are walking together checking out the exhibit.

SASHA

I *cannot* believe there is so much to learn about sex. I've always wanted to come here, thanks for bringing me.

MATEO

You should thank, Zan. I read one of his articles and he made it seem like an interesting place to come and see.

XZANDER

Well, thanks for inviting me. I haven't double dated in a long time.

MATEO

You guys are qualifying this as a...a date?

XZANDER

Well, I'm allowed to date as long as...

BRIAN

As long as we don't get married or anything. Per the rules, Xzander is *strictly* all about the fun these days.

SASHA

Rules? I am completely out of the loop.

XZANDER

I...made a resolution that this year I would only date to...enjoy being single. No commitments, nothing serious just, pure unadulterated fun.

MATEO

(surprised)

Unadulterated? You didn't tell me you and Brian...did the deed.

XZANDER

Because we haven't! Geez.

BRIAN

The most "unadulterated fun" we've had is probably being around all this sex stuff.

SASHA

Well, you guys seem really cute together, I think you should make an exception to your rule. You don't want some...resolution to be the reason you miss your happiness.

XZANDER

That is true, Sasha. But, sometimes your resolution? Can be your solution. Ever since I've committed to this whole thing, I've been...enjoying myself. I've gotten to spend time with people I probably wouldn't have if I...didn't make this change...in my life.

Mateo and Xzander share a quick glance with one another.

BRIAN

Zan, you wanna go look at some souvenirs? You said you could use one of those penis pops, right?

Xzander slaps Brian on the arm playfully.

BRIAN

You guys wanna come?

MATEO

Yeah, sure! We...

SASHA
Actually, we'll catch up to you guys.
I wanna finish seeing this exhibit.

XZANDER.
Alrighty. We'll see you in a bit.

Xzander and Brian walk off, leaving Sasha and Mateo alone.

SASHA
I'm sorry. I just...wanted us to have
a little bit of alone time.

MATEO
It's cool. I'm sure those guys wanted
some...alone time too.

SASHA
(pause)
You know...I'm really happy Lily peed
on your leg that day.

Mateo laughs, remembering the day they met.

MATEO
That was a...pretty cool "meet cute".

SASHA
You know about "meet cutes" too? You
just keep climbing that "me liking you
more" meter, huh?

MATEO
Xzander kinda gave me a tutorial.

SASHA
You and Xzander...you...seem pretty
close. Did you guys grow up together?

MATEO
Nah. I um, I met him a little before I
met you, actually. We've sorta been
helping each other out with
our..."dating issues".

SASHA
Wow. Well, remind me to send Xzander a
"thank you" card because you're not
bad at it. The dating.

MATEO

He'd probably prefer a caramel ribbon frap with mocha drizzle and cookie crumbs. You know, people always say that gay guys are all about sex parties and hook-ups but...they're pretty knowledgeable about relationships too.

Sasha sighs. There's something that's been on her mind; she decides to speak on it.

SASHA

Speaking of that...we've been seeing each other for almost...three-months now? And I...really hate to be that girl but...is...that what...we're in? A relationship?

Mateo opens his mouth to speak, he was not expecting that question at all.

XZANDER (O.S.)

And what was your response?

CUT TO BLACK:

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERS SLIDE ACROSS THE SCREEN

LESSON THREE: EXCLUSIVITY/TAKE UP A HOBBY.

CUT TO:

INT. MATEO & ANDREW'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

A WEEK LATER. Xzander and Mateo are sitting on the couch. Chinese food litters the table.

MATEO

I...I froze. Then I saw the look on her face when I didn't answer so I told her...

INTERCUT ON MATEO'S FACE AT THE MUSEUM OF SEX WITH SASHA

MATEO

(pause)

I think it's...heading that way.

CUT TO:

INT. MATEO AND ANDREW'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

XZANDER

So...you panicked.

MATEO

It felt like I needed an epi-pen.

XZANDER

Well, that was a week ago and you're still together so yay, you survived. That dreaded "What are we?" question *always* sends you men into a frenzy.

MATEO

Just because your skin is a tad bit softer than mine doesn't take you out of the "men" category.

XZANDER

Awww, thank you for noticing my moisturizing routine.

MATEO

Well, I mean it's kinda hard not to since your face practically emits a radioactive glow, it's so shiny.

XZANDER

Do you wanna keep being shady or do you wanna learn?

MATEO

My bad, my bad. Teach me oh, Great One.

XZANDER

Okay so, establishing exclusivity has three components. First? Social media declaration.

CUT TO:

BEGIN FLASH FORWARD & MONTAGE

XZANDER (V.O.)

Now when it comes to us gays, we're notorious for immediately displaying "couple visuals", basically just letting everyone know you're "taken", which means a new couple photo? Every

damn day.

QUICK CUTS

-Mateo and Sasha in various places and Sasha snapping selfies of them between the months of April and May.

XZANDER (V.O.)

"Oh, look at us on the couch, we're so cute!", "Look at us on the beach, we're so cute!", "Look at us reminding you that you're single and we? Are cute!".

-Sasha's Instagram page, filled with pictures of her and Mateo.

-Mateo's Instagram page with only a few photos of him and Sasha together.

XZANDER (V.O.)

Next? Deleting the dating apps. Say goodbye to your paramours...because they've gotta go.

-Mateo going through his phone, deleting all of his dating apps.

XZANDER (V.O.)

The last thing you want is to tell someone, "Hey, we're exclusive!" and then let them hear a Tinder notification while you're in the middle of dessert. And finally...

-Mateo walking into his mother's apartment with Sasha in tow.

XZANDER (V.O.)

Meeting the family. This tells your person that you've crossed a threshold where you feel comfortable enough to let them into your inner circle.

-Mateo and Sasha having dinner with Catalina and Andrew, laughing and talking.

XZANDER (V.O.)

It's the definitive "We are in a relationship" gesture.

END MONTAGE & FLASH FORWARD

CUT TO:

INT. MATEO & ANDREW'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

MATEO

Maybe I shoulda got a pad to write all that down.

XZANDER

It's not hard to remember! And I'm only a phone call away if you need a refresher.

MATEO

I'll be taking you up on that, I'm sure.

(pause)

So...how are things with you and Brian?

XZANDER

There are no "things" because that would imply that Brian and I are more than just friends when he is in fact just a cute little cog in my rotation clock.

MATEO

I think I might've created a monster.

Xzander laughs, he's truly been loving life lately.

XZANDER

You've just made me see a lot of new things, that's all. I always thought I *had* to find someone because I've...*never* really had someone. And that that's who I was. Xzander, "the long-haul guy" that no one wanted for the actual long haul. But...letting all that go, those...anchors of needing to be in a relationship, it's...led me to a new place.

MATEO

I know what you mean.

(pause)

It's like my paintings, ya know? I've...I've been all canvas for a long time. No color. No depth. Just...blank. And I've let women draw

what they want because it's easier...than drawing my own portrait. Cause sometimes you don't know what the end piece will look like. You have...an idea of what you want it to be but when your hand is moving, and the colors are coming together...what you end up with? Could be a masterpiece. Or...it could be a disaster. But, thanks to you...I think I'm a little closer to finishing my masterpiece.

Xzander is lost in Mateo's words. He wasn't expecting this level of openness from him. Suddenly, Xzander's phone makes a sound. Xzander checks it.

XZANDER

Oh, he's gotta be kidding me.

MATEO

What's up?

XZANDER

It's Brian. He just told me he wants to take me to a...bachata class. He thinks I can use it for my next article in "Out n' About".

MATEO

I think that's a pretty good idea.

XZANDER

I don't know the first thing about Latin American dancing. The closest thing I have knowledge on? Is salsa. And that's *only* because I know it goes on nachos.

Mateo shakes his head. He'll remedy this.

MATEO

Alexa!

He stands up and holds out his hand toward Xzander.

MATEO

Play "Rechazame" by Romeo Santos.

Music suddenly starts playing from the surround sound speakers.

XZANDER

What? You want me to...no. No. I'm not doing that.

MATEO

You have an entire Latino man in front of you whose mother used to dance with him all the time when he was young. Use me. Plus? This is part of your syllabus. Not focusing on relationships gives you the opportunity to learn a new hobby and this? Could be your new hobby. Besides, you're dainty. It'll be easy for somebody to throw you around.

Xzander sighs, looking at Mateo and thinking over his proposition. Does he really want to make a fool of himself? Apparently, yes because he takes Mateo's hand.

MATEO

Alright, see. Half the battle's over. Now bachata? It's all about sensuality, the hips...and instinct. Just do what feels natural.

Mateo places a hand on Xzander's waist. Xzander puts a hand on Mateo's shoulder. Their free hands grasp one another's as Mateo starts to move slowly to the music. Their bodies close together. Their eyes never leaving each other.

XZANDER

This isn't...*that* hard.

MATEO

Oddly? Things with you seem to be really easy.

They continue to move to the music, their bodies in sync. Mateo spins Xzander around then brings him back in close.

XZANDER

Getting fancy on me?

MATEO

Just seeing if you can keep up.

Xzander breathes in deeply. Starting to feel what he felt before when he gave Mateo a massage but it's different this time. More emotional than physical. Mateo's different...than any other guy he's ever met.

XZANDER

So, do...guys normally...dance bachata with each other? I don't want me and Brian to look outta place.

MATEO

Surprisingly? Same sex partners are some of the best routines I've seen. There's something about the energy between two guys...I guess. Salsa, merengue, bachata...it's all about the chemistry.

XZANDER

Yeah. I'm getting that.

MATEO

(pause)

You know...whenever it happens for you...whenever you find...your person...they're gonna be pretty lucky. You're not as "extra" as you think you are, Zan. Just haven't found someone to appreciate everything that you are.

Xzander is touched deeply by Mateo's words.

XZANDER

Sasha is...she's pretty lucky too. You're...you're more than what you think, Mateo. I hope you realize that.

MATEO

I'll keep it in mind.

Mateo and Xzander continue dancing, staring into each other's eyes. Taken in by the unexpected intimacy of this moment. The song ends. However, they're still holding each other in their dancing position. Something is happening, they both feel it...but who will make the move?

XZANDER

Thanks for the lesson. You're not a bad teacher.

MATEO

(pause)

Neither are you.

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - BAR - EVENING

A FEW DAYS LATER. The music is blaring. People are dancing on the dance floor, some are sitting at the bar having drinks, and others are sitting in sections smoking hookah. Mateo is pouring a drink for Andrew who is sitting at the bar. Andrew sips the drink. Mateo looks at him, waiting for a response.

MATEO

So?

ANDREW

Now *that* is the best pineapple mojito I've ever had. But...it's different than before.

MATEO

I added tajin. And soaked the pineapples in a mango flavored rum. Zan gave me some tips he learned on a trip to Mexico.

ANDREW

Well, it's pretty damn good. And it goes nicely with this bruschetta. By the way, I appreciate the vegetarian adds to the menu, this is the first time in months I haven't wanted to kill myself doing this no meat thing.

MATEO

Once again? Thank Zan.

ANDREW

You know, I keep *hearing* about Zan, but I don't ever see Zan. What is he like, the gay Tooth Fairy? Only comes around when you put a jockstrap under your pillow?

MATEO

(laughs)

Leave him alone.

ANDREW

Hey, I am not complaining about your new buddy. He's got you on the straight and narrow with Sasha, my free food is edible, your paintings have been selling...maybe he is magical.

Mateo smirks slightly, wiping down the bar. He looks over, the sunny expression on his face slowly changing, seeing something through the window of the bar. Xzander and Brian are standing outside laughing and talking, looking like they're having a great time.

MATEO

Hey um, I'll be right back.

ANDREW

Gotcha.

Mateo puts the rag in a bucket and leaves the bar. Andrew's phone rings and he answers.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOXXXY - EVENING

Xzander and Brian are in the middle of conversation, it's apparent they've been enjoying each other's company this evening. The door opens. Mateo comes outside.

MATEO

Hey! Uh, this is a surprise.

Xzander turns around, surprised.

XZANDER

Mateo. Hi! I didn't...think you were working tonight.

MATEO

Well, after you turned down my movie invitation I decided to come in for a little bit. I thought you said you were gonna be writing tonight.

XZANDER

That was the plan. And then Brian called me and invited me to go see "Little Shop of Horrors" off-Broadway.

BRIAN

And I wasn't taking no for an answer.

MATEO

Oh! Nice. Another date.

Something bubbles inside of Mateo. Something he's never really felt before.

XZANDER

A *fun* date.

BRIAN

Yeah, but don't worry, we are *still* sticking to the rules. You've taught him well.

Mateo realizes what he's feeling...jealousy. And he does his best to hide it. Before he can speak again, the door to the club burst open and out comes Andrew, his energy excited and frantic.

ANDREW

Mateo, Mateo, Mateo! You are not gonna believe this, you're *not* gonna believe this!

MATEO

What the hell's going on, Drew?

ANDREW

I just got a call, the biggest opportunity of your art career. Potential client. Saw your stuff online. They're considering some of your work.

Mateo doesn't understand Andrew's excitement or urgency.

MATEO

Okay, I mean any client is a good client but just cause they're considering a piece...

ANDREW

Not a piece. *Four*. They just moved into this new house, and they have a whole room dedicated to art and you could *possibly* be supplying them with an entire wall of Mateo Feliz originals.

MATEO

WHAT?!

ANDREW

It's between you and another artist but I am going to "manager" my ass off. They're gonna make a decision in the next couple of weeks.

XZANDER

Oh my God Mateo, this is amazing!

Xzander wraps his arms around Mateo. The two hug while Andrew and Brian look on.

XZANDER

I'm so happy for you.

MATEO

Thanks, Zan.

Mateo and Xzander break the hug.

ANDREW

Zan? As in Xzander? The gay Fairy Godmother to my best friend's "Himerella"?

XZANDER

Andrew, I presume?

ANDREW

That's me. Great job on the pineapple mojito by the way. Hopefully Mateo's giving you some of the profits.

BRIAN

Pineapple mojito? I haven't tried that yet. You wanna...?

Brian gives Xzander a look, hinting he wants to go inside the bar.

MATEO

I didn't mean to hold you guys up, um, why don't you go inside, and the first round will be on me?

XZANDER

You don't have to do that, Teo.

MATEO

It's the least I can do for my Fairy Godfather.

BRIAN

Thanks man. And I hope everything works out for you with that client.

Brian walks by Andrew and Mateo, he opens the door and holds

it, waiting for Xzander.

XZANDER

It was nice to meet you, Andrew. And Teo, I will call you for our last lesson session.

Xzander walks into the bar and Brian follows.

ANDREW

Nice guy. Now come on. We gotta go. You got shit to paint and rent money to earn.

Andrew puts his arm around Mateo's shoulder as the two walk off.

CUT TO:

WORDS IN WHITE LETTERS SLIDE ACROSS THE SCREEN

LESSON FOUR: MAKING LOVE/SEX WITH NO ATTACHMENTS.

XZANDER/MATEO (V.O.)

Final exam.

XZANDER (V.O.)

You may be a sex-ma-naut when it comes to "doing it" but...making love? There is more to it than just...making someone's toes look like curly fries.

FLASH FORWARD BEGINS

CUT TO:

INT. SASHA'S APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - EVENING

Mateo and Sasha are sitting across from each other, eating a romantic dinner. There are candles on the table, the lights are dim; a special evening is occurring.

XZANDER (V.O.)

You want to do a dinner. Nothing Doordashed or UberEats. Make whatever you're capable of cooking that won't have the fire department at your door.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NYC STREET - EVENING

Xzander is walking down the street with a handsome man he's been on a date with, conversing. Their night is coming to an end.

MATEO (V.O.)

You're gonna...know...when a guy wants to end the night with you in his bedroom...

Xzander and his date walk a few more feet, passing a convenience store. They stop in front of the door to an apartment building.

MATEO V.O.

There's gonna be something in his eyes when he looks at you and...you'll just know.

A CLOSE UP on the handsome man's face looking at Xzander. A small smile comes across his lips. He gestures towards the door, inviting Xzander upstairs. Xzander looks at the apartment door, thinking for a small moment. He's never done this before, but it is part of his resolution, and he hasn't had sex in quite a while.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SASHA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - EVENING

Mateo and Sasha are lying in the bed, kissing passionately. Sasha takes Mateo's shirt off and straddles him, taking her shirt off as well.

XZANDER (V.O.)

Your instincts are going to tell you to do one thing but...you need to do another. You need to...think about the person you're with. Who they are...and what they mean to you.

CLOSE UP on Mateo's face, looking at Sasha. Sasha bends down and begins kissing him again. Mateo responds to the kiss for a few moments but then stops. He looks Sasha in her eyes, searching for something. Something he wants to feel. A connection. Mateo maneuvers their bodies so that he ends up on top of Sasha, hovering slightly over her body. Continuing to stare at her.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. XZANDER'S DATE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Xzander and his date are on the bed, engaged in sensual touching and kissing. Xzander's back is to the man's chest, we only see Xzander in the frame. Xzander revels in the touch of another man after so long. CLOSE UPS on the MAN'S hands on Xzander's body. His lips tracing every inch of his skin.

MATEO (V.O.)

Have...fun. Sex doesn't always have to be about...feelings and...connecting on a deeper level. It can be just two people who find each other attractive...enjoying the pleasure of one another.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SASHA'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Mateo and Sasha have finished the deed. Sasha is lying beside Mateo, her head resting on his chest as Mateo looks up at the ceiling, deep in his own thoughts.

XZANDER (V.O.)

And when it's over, you...you should feel...closer to that person than you ever have. You should wanna hold them and just...take them in...they should be...the only thing on your mind.

Xzander lies in bed looking up at the ceiling as Sasha sleeps on his chest. It's obvious there are other things on his mind than the woman next to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. XZANDER'S DATE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

CLOSE UP on Xzander's face sleeping, his back facing the man he's just slept with.

MATEO (V.O.)

The morning after can go one of two ways. You can get up, get dressed, and leave without them knowing or if the sex was good? You're gonna want to go for round two. Hell, you might even have dreamt about round one.

An arm falls over Xzander's torso, pulling him a little

closer. Xzander smiles slightly, letting out a small breath of relief. Last night was amazing. He turns around...seeing Mateo's smiling face looking back at him.

MATEO

Definitely wasn't...expecting that.

XZANDER

Me either. But...I'd be lying if I said I...*hadn't* thought about it before. I mean, what it would...be like. With you.

MATEO

(scrunches nose)

Guilty.

(pauses)

I guess it's a good thing we don't have to think anymore. We can just...

XZANDER

Do it again?

Mateo laughs at Xzander's playful eagerness. Mateo moves in to kiss Xzander...

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER'S DATE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

CLOSE UP on Xzander's face as his eyes snap open. His face full of shock and awe at the dream he's just had. The feelings he's been having for Mateo, the feelings he was unsure of, are now clear as day. Xzander turns over, seeing his date sleeping peacefully and snoring. Loudly. He carefully slides out of the bed and starts to gather his things.

FLASH FORWARD ENDS

MATEO (O.S.)

Soooo, you chose option number one.

CUT TO:

EXT. RESTAURANT - NYC - AFTERNOON

JUNE 2023

A WEEK LATER. Mateo and Xzander are having lunch, seated in the outside dining area of the restaurant. We can tell

Xzander is feeling a little off from his body language.

XZANDER
(nervous laugh)
Hightailed it out of there.

MATEO
Well...at least you went through with
it. And I'm sure the guy had no
complaints. How did...you
feel...after?

Mateo's energy is also a little off. The thoughts he's been
having of Xzander playing with his entire identity.

XZANDER
(pause)
Confused. Um but...we can forget about
him, you said you wanted to have lunch
because you had something you wanted
to tell me?

MATEO
Yeah. Um, I do.
(sighs)
I haven't even told my mother yet
because I know she's probably gonna
freak but...I wanted you to...be the
first one to know...and now I...I
really don't know why it's so hard for
me to say.

Xzander can't believe it. He was on the fence about
confessing his feelings to Mateo because he assumed it would
ruin the friendship, they've built but it seems as though he
isn't alone in the way he's been feeling. Xzander breathes a
sigh of relief.

XZANDER
Oh my God, thank you Teo. I...I've
been going out of my mind thinking I
was the only one feeling this way! And
it's totally unexpected, nothing that
I was looking for and I'm positive you
weren't looking for it either but...I
think I know what you're gonna say.
And...it's okay. Because I feel it
too. I mean...I think I'm falling for
you...too.

The huge weight on his shoulders has been lifted and Xzander

smiles at Mateo, waiting to hear that he's not alone in this. Mateo's mouth is open slightly, his eyes filled with confusion, unable to process the many emotions and various thoughts going through his head at the moment. Suddenly, the words come out.

MATEO

I'm going to California for five months.

Xzander's face drops.

XZANDER

What?

MATEO

Last night, Andrew told me that client who was interested in my work chose me to do their art room and they want me to work on site. I'm flying out tomorrow, Zan.

XZANDER

(shocked)

Oh my God.

(realizes; even more shocked)

Oh my God.

The level of embarrassment Xzander feels is unimaginable. Though Mateo is feeling something else.

MATEO

Why would you...why would you tell me that, Xzander?

XZANDER

(confused)

What? I'm sorry, Teo, I thought...

MATEO

You thought that I was...that I was what? That I was...gay?

XZANDER

(pause)

Well, this woman wrote an article in my magazine about the fluidity of sexual orientation these days...

MATEO

I'm not gay, Zan.

XZANDER

(pause)

Who says you have to be?

Xzander's already let the cat out of the bag, at this point he feels, what's a little more honesty?

XZANDER

Listen, Teo...I don't know what's happening between us, but I know that it's...not just friendship. I know it because I am gay and the way you look at me, the way...the way you talk to me, it's...it's okay to feel something for another guy even if you never have before.

MATEO

This...*this* is what you do, isn't it?

XZANDER

What are you talking about?

MATEO

Your resolution. You assuming things about people without knowing what they really want? And now you're doing it to me.

XZANDER

That's not what I'm doing, Mateo...

MATEO

It is! Xzander...I'm sorry. I'm sorry you feel something that I...that I just...don't. And I don't know, maybe...maybe this distance? Is exactly what we would need right now.

Mateo puts some money on the table, grabs his bag, and leaves. Xzander is stunned in disbelief as he watches Mateo walk away.

TANNED SKINNED BOY (V.O.)

But what did I do, daddy?

TANNED SKINNED BOY'S FATHER (V.O.)

You don't kiss other boys. Boys don't do that, you hear me? You are not like that.

FLASHBACK to the film's opening as The Tanned Skinned Boy waves goodbye to the The Fair Skinned Boy waving back. The Fair Skinned Boy waves back.

Xzander takes some breaths, gathering himself as he wipes the few tears that have found their way to his cheek. He doesn't want to believe this is happening, but it is. The relationship he's built with Mateo has been destroyed...and it's all because of him.

CUT TO BLACK:

MONTAGE BEGINS ("We Weren't Done With This Yet" by William Lipton plays over monontage)

QUICK CUTS

JULY 2023

-Xzander and Brian are sitting next to each other in Xzander's apartment, laughing. Trisha is sitting across from them talking, the cause of their laughter.

-Mateo paints, focused on his new art piece. Mateo hears his phone ring. He puts down his painting supplies, running to the phone. Mateo picks up the phone.

CALLER ID SAYS "SASHA"

-Mateo looks disappointed.

AUGUST 2023

-Xzander is on his phone looking at Grindr, scrolling, very bored. Xzander looks at his inbox, 12 messages. Xzander looks unimpressed and puts the phone down.

-Mateo painting, focused. Mateo puts down his paintbrush and steps back, examining his creation. Something still isn't right.

SEPTEMBER 2023

-Xzander, Trisha, and Wyatt at Foxxxy's dancing. Xzander looks over at the bar, he sees Mateo handing out drinks. Trisha says something to Xzander, pulling his gaze away from the bar for a moment. When Xzander looks back at the bar, he sees an entirely different bartender...Mateo was only in his mind.

-Mateo is on a video call with Sasha, talking excitedly as he

shows Sasha a copy of Out magazine and displaying one of Xzander's articles. Sasha looks as though she's trying to be interested however, she's really not.

OCTOBER 2023

-Xzander is lying in bed, looking at his phone. Staring at Mateo's name in his contact list. It's been four months...he wants to call him.

-Mateo is lying in bed, looking at his phone. Staring at Xzander's name in his contact list. It's been four months since he's heard Xzander's voice or seen his face...he wants to call him.

SPLIT SCREEN

-Both Mateo and Xzander put their finger to the phone, contemplating what would happen if they did make the call...but both back out and lay their phones down on the bed. Mateo and Xzander reach over to the lights near their beds, turning them off.

MONTAGE ENDS

CUT TO:

INT. CATALINA FELIZ'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - EVENING

NOVEMBER 2023

Andrew, Catalina, and Mateo are setting the dishes on the table in preparation for Thanksgiving dinner. The table is decorated beautifully with centerpieces and fall leaves as well as delicious looking food.

CATALINA

Ugh, Teo I've missed you so much!

Catalina plants a big kiss on Teo's cheek.

MATEO

I missed you too, mom. But if you kiss me one more time, I think you're gonna burn a hole in my cheek.

CATALINA

Five months. *Five* months you were off becoming some "big-time" artist and all I had was the occasional video call, that? Is my cheek. I made that

cheek. So, I'll kiss it as much as I want.

ANDREW

She's got you there, man.

MATEO

I'm not a "big time" artist. I mean, I'm just a little more known than before.

ANDREW

Teo...that socialite changed the trajectory of your entire career after they posted your pieces on socials. Your TikTok, your Insta, the clients who have been blowing up my phone for a "Teo original"? You're hot stuff, bro.

CATALINA

But of course, as with everything in life, the good comes with the bad. I was so sorry to hear about you and Sasha.

ANDREW

Me too. You broke up with her before she could hook me up with her hot friends. Very selfish. Tis' the season for giving my friend.

MATEO

It was for the best. There was a... distance...between us. I mean...we both felt it.

ANDREW

Well, you were across the country for five months. Some people can't really deal with that in a relationship.

MATEO

Right. And also, she um...she thought there was someone else.

ANDREW

Was there? I mean five months is a long time, especially for you not to have sex.

CATALINA

Aye Teo, you were doing so good with your resolution! Don't tell me you and your little Teo went estupido in California and cheated on that poor girl.

MATEO

Mami, of course not. I wouldn't do that.

ANDREW

Then why would she think there was someone else? I mean, the only other person you've spent as time with as her is...

Andrew stops. A lightbulb going off in his head. No...that can't be right.

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - DINING ROOM - TABLE - EVENING

At the same time, Xzander is also having Thanksgiving dinner with Trisha, Brian, and Wyatt.

TRISHA

I swear I will never have anything as good in my mouth as these garlic mashed potatoes.

WYATT

(clears throat)
I beg to differ.

Trisha and Wyatt share a suggestive look.

XZANDER

Dear God, please. You two dating is still very weird to me.

WYATT

Why is that? It's not like I'm dating you. Because that would just be a sexual harassment suit waiting to happen.

TRISHA

Well, you can harass me all you want.

Trisha feeds Wyatt a forkful of mashed potatoes. Xzander drops his head, embarrassed, looking over at Brian who's sitting next to him.

XZANDER

I am...so sorry about this.

BRIAN

(laughs)

Don't be. This is better than spending Thanksgiving in Chicago at my parents' place listening to my uncle play the harmonica. With his ass.

Xzander laughs. He's been seeing Brian casually for the past few months and enjoying himself.

WYATT

Xzander, how are the Christmas party plans coming along? The staff is counting on you to bring the merry and also? The condoms and butt plugs. Because at Out magazine, we promote safe but *adventurous* sex.

TRISHA

Don't I know it.

XZANDER

Who needs a diet when I have you two cause my appetite? Gone.

(sighs)

And yes Wyatt, um everything is set, we just need a venue.

TRISHA

Why don't you have it Foxxxy's? Teo's bar.

Xzander gives Trisha a look, why would she suggest that place?

XZANDER

I mean Foxxxy's is...I don't think it's *really* the place for a holiday party.

BRIAN

Why not? It's a gay lounge and "Out" is a popular LGBTQ magazine.

XZANDER
Trisha...I forgot the pies are in the
oven, could you...

Xzander gestures towards the kitchen with his head.

CUT TO:

INT. XZANDER & TRISHA'S LOFT - KITCHEN

XZANDER
(whispering)
Why would you do that? You know me and
Mateo haven't spoken since...

TRISHA
Since you scared him away by telling
him something that was true but that
he *also* wasn't ready to hear? Yeah. I
know.

XZANDER
I can't *believe* you're still taking
his side.

TRISHA
The *only* side I'm ever on? Is yours.
Or mine when Wyatt has me positioned
that way.

XZANDER
Nope. Not engaging.

TRISHA
All I'm saying is that I believe you,
you know that. I think you and Teo did
have something. And Brian is a really
nice guy, but I *know* you, Zan.

Trisha reaches out and touches Xzander's chest.

TRISHA
I know where your heart is.

Xzander sighs, his head lowering. He can never lie to Trisha.

XZANDER
(sighs)
It doesn't matter. Because I'm *not*
supposed to be dating for *real*,
remember? Per *your* suggestion mind

you. I'm not supposed to be dating to fall in love.

Trisha's eyes go wide. Did she hear correctly?

TRISHA

Wait a minute...did you just...did you just say that...you're in love with Mateo?

Xzander is stunned into silence by his own words. Did he really just say that? Before he can answer, there's a knock at the door.

XZANDER

(confused)

All the people we know and like are already here.

Trisha walks to the front door and opens it. There's a delivery man standing there holding a square item that's wrapped in brown paper.

DELIVERY MAN

Got a package for...Xzander Skye?

TRISHA

Oh. I'll take that. Thank you.

The delivery man gives Trisha the item, she closes the door and walks back into the kitchen.

TRISHA

It's for you, apparently.

XZANDER

Me? Oh. It's probably my father sending his obligatory "I Know I Was An Ass About You Being Gay When You Were Younger But I Love You Now" gift. However...

(begins unwrapping the item)

Christmas isn't for a couple of weeks, so this is early.

Xzander finishes opening the gift and he can't believe what he sees. It's a painting of a frappuccino from Starbucks, Xzander's favorite drink. On the white sticker attached to the cup where it says "name", the words "I'm sorry" are there. This is the painting Mateo had been painting over the summer during their time apart. Trisha smiles, seeing the

gift, knowing where it came from.

TRISHA

Well...you were right about one thing...that does seem pretty clear to me.

CUT TO:

INT. CATALINA FELIZ'S APARTMENT - MATEO'S OLD BEDROOM

A LITTLE BIT LATER. Mateo walks into a bedroom. From the childish decorations and small bed, we can tell it belonged to a little boy. This is Mateo's childhood room. He looks around, seeing all the mementos his mother kept of his. There's a photo of Mateo as a young boy and his father on the dresser. He picks it up and looks at it fondly. Mateo goes to the closet, opening it. Bending down, he sees a box and picks it up, taking it out of the closet. He sits on the bed, setting the box next to him, and pulls out a comic book. A small smirk crosses his face as he puts it down. He sees something in the box and pauses. It touches something deep inside of him. Mateo reaches into the box slowly, when he pulls his hand out, he's holding a picture frame. It's a photo of The Tanned Skinned Boy and The Fair Skinned Boy smiling big. Mateo closes his eyes...remembering the day that changed his life.

TANNED SKINNED BOY (V.O.)

Can I...can I keep you?

YOUNG MATEO (V.O.)

Ummmm...sure! I can keep you too!

TANNED SKINNED BOY (V.O.)

Awesome!

We realize now the memory we've been seeing has been one from Mateo's childhood.

CATALINA (O.S.)

I was wondering why you never took that with you when you moved out.

Mateo's head snaps up, looking in the direction of his mother who's standing in the doorway.

MATEO

Mami. I...

CATALINA

You know...

Catalina walks into the room, sitting on the bed next to Mateo.

CATALINA

You cried so much that day when I told you that you wouldn't be able to hang out with Kayden anymore because of...his father. You said, "Mami, I don't understand. I liked the flower, and I liked Kayden...you kiss people you like. Right Mami?"

Mateo lets out a breath, releasing the heaviness the photo has resurrected in him.

MATEO

He was my best friend.

CATALINA

He was more than that. And I knew it. Your father knew it. To you...he was the first person you've ever cared for. Cared for in a way more than a friend. *That's* why I kept this photo.

MATEO

His...dad...his dad was so angry. And we weren't even doing anything. We just...kissed each other on the cheek, mom. It was...it was innocent. We didn't know what it meant...

CATALINA

Oh Teo, you did. You knew. *Both* of you did. And Kayden's Papi? He knew too. And he thought that by separating the two of you it would change his son in some way. But I bet you, Kayden grew up to be exactly who he was meant to be. Authentic...and *happy*. Hopefully. Because no amount of parental shame or...girls...can change...

(touches Mateo's heart)

What's in here. Or at least in a perfect world? It shouldn't.

Mateo wipes some tears from his face. It feels intensely great to be able to discuss the thing he's always hidden from everyone. Or so he thought.

MATEO

So...you've always known?

CATALINA

(sighs)

Me and your father we...we prepared ourselves. But...as you got older...you started to talk to us about girls and...we thought maybe it was just a phase. But mothers? We always know. And the fact my beautiful and talented son has never had an actual girlfriend? I've had my theories.

MATEO

I just thought that if I...did what I was supposed to...I would be...who I'm supposed to be. And I didn't wanna disappoint you and papi...

CATALINA

You could *never*, mijo. And you are. You are exactly who you're supposed to be. But I want you to know, even though you don't need it...you have my blessing...to be even more than who you already are.

MATEO

Even if...I told you there's...a guy?

CATALINA

(smiles)

Come here.

Catalina gently pulls Mateo head towards her and places it on her lap. He lays comfortably on her lap, feeling safer and more at ease than he ever has in his life.

CATALINA

So...what's his name?

MATEO

(pause)

Xzander. And he's...he's pretty amazing.

THE CAMERA PANS back as Mateo and Catalina continue to talk about Xzander, the man who's changed his life.

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - BAR - EVENING

DECEMBER 2023

Christmas music plays loudly. The lounge is decorated with lights on the walls, garland hanging from the ceiling, and a Christmas tree on the stage. The bartenders and go-go boys are dressed in Christmas attire. Staff members from the magazine are sitting and standing around the bar, drinking, ordering drinks, talking and laughing; Trisha and Wyatt are amongst them. Mateo is working behind the bar, periodically snapping glances at Xzander who is sitting in a VIP area with Brian. Mateo pulls out his phone, looking at his text messages.

XZANDER (TEXT)

THANK YOU FOR AN "ORIGINAL MATEO FELIZ". HAPPY THANKSGIVING.

MATEO (TEXT)

THANK YOU FOR THE INSPIRATION. HAPPY THANKSGIVING.

This is the most interaction they've had since June. Mateo sighs, looking back over at Xzander with Brian.

ANDREW (O.S.)

Soooo...when are you gonna tell him?

Mateo breaks his gaze, turning his head, and seeing Andrew sitting in front of him. Mateo acts clueless.

MATEO

Um...tell who what?

ANDREW

Zan. When are you gonna tell him how you feel about him?

Mateo is shocked by Andrew's straightforward question. At first, he isn't sure of what to say to his best friend...but then he realizes living in fear isn't what he wants to do anymore.

MATEO

(pause)

I sent him a painting.

ANDREW

A *painting*?! Mateo, this is *not* sixth grade, man. You gotta do a little better than that.

Mateo is relieved by Andrew's seemingly normal reaction to the news that he has feelings for a man.

MATEO

How did you know?

ANDREW

(laughs slightly)

Because for the past few months? I've never seen you happier. *Except* for when we got through hazing when we pledged that frat in college.

MATEO

(pause)

And...you're okay?

ANDREW

You're my brother. Of *course*, I am. But Mateo, it's not about *me* being okay, or anybody else for that matter...are *you* okay?

Mateo is thankful beyond words that he's finally able to confide in his best friend about the part of his life he's kept most private.

MATEO

(sighs)

I made a mistake, Drew. I've been...making the *same* mistake my whole life. Every day since I was a kid. And the one person who made me realize that...I think, I...I think I might've pushed him away.

(pause)

Too far away for him to come back.

ANDREW

Teo, listen...mistakes happen. But all that *really* matters? Is that you *got* here. You made it. That's something a lot of people can't do. But...if you've *truly* found someone you love, and you choose to love them in the dark? To hide it? That is probably the

biggest mistake you're ever gonna make.

Andrew's words hit Mateo right in the gut. His friend is utterly and completely right. Andrew stands from the bar stool, pulling Mateo into a tight, reassuring hug. Brotherly love at its finest.

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - VIP SEATING AREA

Xzander is looking off into space, swirling his straw around in his drink. Brian sits in a chair across from him, he can tell Xzander's mind is elsewhere.

BRIAN

You can't stop thinking about him, can you?

Xzander snaps out of his daze.

XZANDER

Huh?...Who?

BRIAN

Mateo. I think we both know that's where you...really are right now.

XZANDER

(pause)

No. No, I'm just...

BRIAN

Thinking about Mateo?

(sighs)

It's...it's okay, Zan. You don't have to lie to me. Listen...I didn't wanna tell you because I didn't want you to think I was a creep but...I heard you and Trisha talking on Thanksgiving.

XZANDER

(shocked)

You did? How?

BRIAN

I was going to check and see if you needed help with the pies and...I heard you. I heard you say...that you love him.

Xzander feels terrible...but Brian's words are true.

XZANDER

I really do like spending time with you, Brian. But...

BRIAN

But I'm not the person you really want. And ya know what? That's alright. You wanted to date just to date and...explore the things you've never really let yourself experience...and I'm glad I was able to be a part of that. Look...I don't know what The Universe has in store for you, Xzander, but what I do know? You deserve someone who isn't afraid to love you out loud. And I really hope you find him.

Brian stands up and bends down, kissing Xzander on the cheek and then walks away. Trisha comes over to the area, holding a drink.

TRISHA

Hey, come on! Wyatt's about to do his drunk Christmas party speech, I'm gonna go live on TikTok! Oh God, this is gonna be better than when I accidentally went live while we were doing it in the twisted pretzel yoga position.

XZANDER

And you *still* have a TikTok?

TRISHA

Ugh! Come onnnnn.

WYATT (O.S.)

Excuse me, excuse me...

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - STAGE

Trisha leads Xzander by the hand, making their way to the front of the crowd that has formed, filled with Out magazine staff members and other patrons. The club is quiet with everyone's attention on Wyatt, who is standing on the stage holding a microphone.

WYATT

Now, this is gonna be short and sweet. You beautiful people...you make the world go round. *Everything* you write. *Every* story you share. Is important and hopefully opens hearts and minds of the individuals who read what you create and I'm thankful...to have you all as my staff. Which is *why* I'm using your Christmas bonuses to pay for this open bar...because you *deserve* it.

The crowd laughs.

WYATT

Now, let's give the man who's made this party possible a big hand! Mateo Feliz get your ass up here! Come here!

Mateo's been watching Wyatt's speech, amused. Though, his smile fades when he hears his name. The crowd cheers and claps, rooting for him to go on the stage. Xzander turns around, his eyes lock with Mateo's as he's clapping. In that moment...Mateo makes a decision. He moves from the bar and walks onto the stage. Wyatt hands him the microphone.

MATEO

Thank you, Mr. Dawson. For the intro and...and well, for the business because you have given us a lot of money for tonight. Sorry bout you guys' bonuses.

The crowd laughs.

MATEO

Um...this time last year...I was...a struggling artist. You see, I'm a painter. But I was having a hard time. Finding...inspiration. And then I met someone.

MONTAGE BEGINS ("What Was I Made For" Piano Instrumental plays over montage)

QUICK CUTS

-Mateo and Xzander first meeting outside the gallery, introducing themselves to each other.

MATEO (V.O.)

And this person...they showed me pieces of myself that I had literally put in a box...because I thought those pieces...were wrong.

-Mateo in his childhood bedroom looking at the photo of himself when he was younger with his childhood best friend, Kayden.

MATEO (V.O.)

And this person...thought *they* were wrong.

-Xzander talking to Mateo at the coffee shop during their first "tutoring" session with each other.

MATEO (V.O.)

That they were the reason they were alone.

MONTAGE ENDS

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - DANCEFLOOR

Xzander has been listening intently. Trisha looks at him, seeing his eyes gloss over, a well of tears bubbling.

MATEO

But I wanna let...

Mateo takes a deep breath. It's now or never. Go big or go home.

MATEO

I wanna let you know...Xzander. You're not wrong. I was. I *always* thought I was wrong. But you...

MONTAGE BEGINS

QUICK CUTS

-Xzander asleep on Mateo's chest as Mateo looks at him...the first time he's ever felt something for a man as an adult.

MATEO (V.O.)

You make me feel right.

-Young Mateo digging in the dirt looking for earthworms. Kayden, The Tanned Skinned Boy, coming over to him with his hand behind his back.

MATEO (V.O.)

When I was a kid...I lost my best friend because of who we were. Just two little boys with...innocent crushes.

-Kayden gives Young Mateo the purple flower. Young Mateo is excited. Kayden kisses Young Mateo on the cheek.

MATEO (V.O.)

In the words of Katy Perry...I kissed a boy. And I liked it. And then...

-Kayden's father pulling him away.

MATEO (V.O.)

I lost him...but I don't wanna lose again.

-Kayden waving goodbye to Young Mateo. Young Mateo waving back.

MATEO (V.O.)

I don't wanna lose you because I understand now that...no type of love is wrong. And I know...that it's okay.

-Mateo and Xzander sharing a glance on their double date at the sex museum with Brian and Sasha.

MATEO (V.O.)

It's okay...for me to love you.
(pause)
I love you.

-Mateo and Xzander looking into each other's eyes the night Mateo taught Xzander bachata. The moment Mateo knew he had fallen for a man.

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - STAGE

MATEO

And if you let me...Xzander, I wanna show you just how much you *deserve* to be loved in this life. But *only*...if

you let me. So...
 (pause; wipes tears from his face)
 Will you let me?

The crowd murmurs, turning and talking to each other, everyone is enthralled by Mateo's declaration.

TRISHA
 (mumbling)
 That is *definitely* your cue, get your ass up there!

Xzander is literally stunned in place.

XZANDER
 (pause)
 I can't move.

TRISHA
 Oh God.
 (yelling)
 HE SAID HE CAN'T MOVE, TEO!

MATEO
 (smiles)
 Then I guess I'll have to come down there.

Mateo drops the mic and jumps off the stage. Walking through the crowd. Everyone stands back, circling around them. Xzander is stunned in silence, Mateo staring back at him, unsure of what's to come next after he's bared his soul.

MATEO
 So...Zan. Will you let me?

Xzander is silent. All he can do is look into Mateo's eyes, focus on them in order to keep his legs from buckling.

WYATT
 Well, come on, answer the man!

Xzander can't find the words. This is something he's dreamed of. Something he's wanted forever. His life isn't a rom-com but it feels like one in this moment. Almost too good to be true. Though, as he looks in Mateo's eyes...he knows it's true. This moment is real. Xzander lets out something between a cry and a laugh.

XZANDER

(pause)

Hell yeah.

A huge smile comes over Mateo's face...and he kisses Xzander, passionately. Meaningfully. Truthfully. The crowd goes wild, ripping and roaring, clapping and cheering. Trisha standing next to Wyatt and ironically, Andrew is standing next to her, both of them clapping.

ANDREW/TRISHA

That's *my* best friend!

Trisha and Andrew look at each other, surprised. Andrew continues watching Mateo and Xzander, smiling proudly. Trisha who has been recording the entire time, looks at her phone, her eyes go wide.

TRISHA

Two *hundred* thousand views? Oh my God...

(excited)

I went viral!

(sighs)

I love the gays.

CUT TO:

INT. FOXXXY - DANCEFLOOR

Mateo and Xzander break their kiss and hug tightly as the crowd continues to celebrate the beginning of something beautiful.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MATEO & TRISHA'S LOFT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

DECEMBER 31, 2023

TWO WEEKS LATER. CLOSE UP on Xzander's face, staring out the window of his loft as he was last New Year's Eve. However, as he looks out onto the New York City streets, watching the East Villagers getting ready to bring in 2024; there's a small smile on his face. A different aura than he had the previous year.

CLOSE UP ON A PAIR OF ARMS SLIDING AROUND XZANDER'S WAIST

Just as they did last New Year's Eve, the arms pull Xzander close. The camera pans up slowly...revealing that these arms

belong to Mateo. Xzander's boyfriend.

MATEO

Soooo...question.

XZANDER

As long as it's not, "What's your New Year's resolution, Xzander?"...because I will punch you.

MATEO

(laughs)

Not at all. I think I'm done with resolutions for a while.

XZANDER

(laughs)

Good cause so am I.

TRISHA (O.S.)

Ummmm, it's almost twelve o' clock you two.

Mateo and Xzander turn around, seeing Catalina, Trisha, Wyatt, and Andrew standing there looking at them in their intimate moment.

TRISHA

We are sooooo happy for you guys, *really*, but we have shots to take and you're holding us up.

CATALINA

We *also* have grapes to eat and wishes to make.

ANDREW

And oxtails to *kill*.

TRISHA/WYATT

So, let's goooo!

XZANDER

Okay, okay we're coming!

The group goes back into the living room, leaving Mateo and Xzander alone. They both sigh, watching their now blended families that have become one.

XZANDER

So...what were you gonna ask me?

Mateo turns towards Xzander, looking at him lovingly. He places his hands on Xzander's waist, taking everything in. The past twelve months. His own past. His present. His future. A future he sees with Xzander.

MATEO

(smiles)

Can I keep you?

Xzander wraps his arms around Mateo's neck. He takes a moment before he answers.

XZANDER

As long as you don't drop me. Someone once told me...

(thinks)

What was it? Oh yeah. That I'm kinda dainty and easy to throw around.

Mateo and Xzander both laugh, recalling the moment when Mateo called Xzander "dainty" during their bachata dance. They lean into each other, kissing. It's been a journey for both of them, but they've found what they've always been looking for...in each other. As the camera pulls back, lingering on Mateo and Xzander in their loving embrace.

TITLE CARD SLOWLY FADES IN

CAN I KEEP YOU?

CREDITS ROLL.