

Through a Glass Darkly
Defining Love in a World of Tolerance

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Abstract

This paper features an original one-act drama *Through a Glass Darkly* and analyzes its constructs and themes. The play, written in the contemporary style, depicts the tension between homosexuals and Christians in American culture through emphasizing the contrasting interpretations of love between both communities. It tells the story of Ben, a young gay man struggling to find fulfillment, whose new-found friendship with a Christian named Adam causes him to reevaluate his understanding of love. The play explores the variations of love in an attempt to not only answer what love truly means, but rather what form of love carries the most meaning. Deriving inspiration from 1 Corinthians 13:12, *Through a Glass Darkly* is based on the concept that the purpose of difficult situations in one's life may not be made clear until Christ's return, but until then, the most important command is to love.

Through a Glass Darkly: Defining Love in a World of Tolerance

Introduction

America might be at war outside its borders, but tremors of cultural dissention rumble from within. Despite the clambering of conservative Bible-believers, many states are beginning to recognize gay marriage as legal and sanctioned by state. While the culture is shifting toward legitimizing the gay lifestyle, churches stand strong in holding to biblical doctrine that condemns homosexuality (Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6: 9-10). The LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning) community preaches a loving respect for a person's life choices; Christians lobby in favor of obeying the laws of a loving God. Both argue for love in their favor. Consequently, can love be fought for when the very definition of love cannot be agreed upon in the first place?

Preface

"Do you love me?" asks Ben, the central character of *Through a Glass Darkly*, to his boyfriend Mark in the play's opening scene. While this question appears elementary, what Ben searches for in his question cannot be satisfied by a simple "yes." Love takes on a multitude of meanings in our culture; in the play, Ben begins his journey here. Beyond knowing what love means, he needs to know what it means to feel love.

The human brain is wired for love. In fact, love is so vital to the human brain that it exceeds simple feelings; we physically need human affection to survive. Homosexual tendencies can often stem from a past or present deprivation of love that can lead to bitterness, loneliness, or brokenness (Bergner, 1995). Receiving love in many different

forms—be that through family, friendship, or romance—is critical for a child’s development (Horstman, 2012, p. 4-6); an imbalance or disorder in these various forms of love can fray understanding of social interaction and sexuality (Bergner, 1995, p. 70). A missing or weak relationship between a child and a same-sex parent can especially confuse the child, causing them to subconsciously seek gratification of that love relationship through homosexual attraction (Mazzalongo, 1995, pp. 59-60). Regardless of religious upbringing, many children can develop homosexual tendencies out of disorder in their own perception of love.

While homosexuality is becoming more tolerated as an identity in twenty-first Century America, it can still be traumatic for any young person to accept this for themselves. Identifying as a homosexual without a community that supports this lifestyle can cause a person to feel lonely or unloved, inflicting further emotional damage to his or her self-esteem (Reynolds & Panjorgiris, 2000, p. 42). In a sense, the biggest struggle in “coming out” is more in the reaction of the community than the choice of the individual (Wink, 1999, p. 28). Claiming this identity has often been met with “religious-based oppression”; homosexual hate crimes such as the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepherd, or violent opposition from radical churches like Westboro Baptist Church are prime examples (Dallas, pp. 88-96). Many homosexuals seek love in the form of acceptance, which requires a respect for their personal struggles and life choices.

Christians are called to love others as Christ loves us; however, this love must also include guidelines. Many LGBTQ members lobby that God loves homosexuals, but while His mercy does extend love to all of sinful humanity, this mercy does not come without repentance (1 John 1:9). Because biblical love also involves correction,

Christians are often criticized for not showing love toward homosexuals. The Bible says that love is many positive things (i.e. patience, kindness, and humility among other values), though “love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:6 NIV). It is out of God’s love for His children that He warns them of harmful sexual relations (Worthen & Davies, 1996, p. 164); as “all things are permissible, but not all things are beneficial” (1 Corinthians 10:23 NIV), it is choosing act on these feelings that causes harm (Dallas, 2007, p. 123). However, God may condemn homosexual behavior, but He does not condemn those that are afflicted by temptation (i.e. Paul’s “thorn” in his flesh in 2 Corinthians 12:6-10). Homosexuals can be hurt by a Christian’s attempt to “fix” them; rather, a Christian’s duty is to share Christ through loving sacrificially, allowing God’s fulfilling love to change sinful hearts (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Christians find identity in Christ’s love for them, and it is out of this love that they are commanded to love others in action (1 John 3:18). However, developing a substantial relationship with a homosexual can be difficult to achieve because of this disagreement in the definition of love. The play *Through a Glass Darkly* chronicles my own search to not only understand what love means as a concept, but also as an action.

Strategy

Through a Glass Darkly is based on 1 Corinthians 13:12 (KJV), which states: “For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known”; until all things are made known by seeing Christ face to face, the greatest commandment is to love (v.14). Throughout the play, all of the characters attempt to identify with this command in their own way. Mark, a workaholic lawyer, loves his boyfriend Ben by working hard to maintain structure and

stability in an otherwise sexual relationship. Lesli, an avid spiritualist, believes love is an entity that changes forms—sometimes as social justice, or a force that determines destiny. Adam, an amicable Christian from a radical Baptist church, attempts to love others without boundaries. Ben, however, learns that he is unable to find a love that resonates; this struggle to identify with love is the chink in his armor, as every form he knows has failed to satisfy him.

The central relationship between Ben and Adam in the play ultimately heals Ben of his self-inflicted stigma against his own sex. Even though Ben is in a long-term relationship with Mark, the two men share very little besides a bed, leaving Ben feeling alone and underappreciated. Ben's loneliness and need to be understood is fulfilled in a close bond with Adam. However, while Adam does not struggle with the same tendencies that Ben does, he is still an imperfect being—his relationship with his ex-fiancée was destroyed by an affair, leaving him lonely in his own shame. As they grow closer in friendship, they discover a need for each other that goes deeper than sexual attraction; *agape* love. Uncharacteristic of an average male relationship, this love (which simply means “universal love”) goes beyond social boundaries, a deep personal connection that requires a willingness to be vulnerable and sacrificial (Willock, 2012, p. 96). Love is expressed through action and is best understood in the choices made toward one another (Marin, 2009, p. 108); because Adam sacrifices his reputation to stay with Ben amidst heartbreak, Ben is freed to be accepted and loved despite his mistakes. While Ben does not claim to leave his lifestyle by the play's conclusion, the final scene hints at his restored understanding of love, illuminating the greater possibility of love between homosexual and Christian communities where there has been very little before.

Style

Through a Glass Darkly is written in the contemporary style, modeling after a Naturalistic play. In writing Naturalism, I attempt to capture life as truthfully as possible for the characters so that their situations are familiar and resonant with the audience. In the book *The War Against Naturalism* (2008), author Robert Andreach notes that these “slice-of-life” dramas focus on everyday existence, allowing the audience to be an outside observer on the behavior of characters in this context (p. 1). However, different conditioning forces influence the motion of the story and the choices the characters make—natural, uncontrollable experiences such as love (p. 2). Given that these internal and external forces influence much of what the characters experience, things said and not said can appear ambiguous to the audience because the characters themselves struggle to understand what they want (p. 40).

The contemporary style diverges from the traditional framework of modern drama; contemporary playwrights strive to convey a theme or illustrate reality as opposed to following a common story structure. Much of the play highlights “uneventful” moments in the characters’ lives, leaving the audience to derive significance from simplicity (pp. 6-7). These trends are evident in the contemporary plays I used for inspiration: Neil LaBute’s *Reasons to Be Pretty*, Geoffrey Nauffts’ *Next Fall*, and David Lindsey-Abaire’s *Rabbit Hole*. Each of these plays utilizes dialogue written very true to life, often with characters overlapping each other or using filler words like “um,” “like,” or “yeah.” Also in line with the contemporary naturalistic style is the play’s open-ended conclusion (p. 82); a rather dour ending that doesn’t answer all the questions, but causes the audience to derive meaning from what they have seen.

Target Audience

My aim is for young people to see and relate to this piece in a way that provokes sympathy for a side they may not have seen. I have intentionally written both Ben and Adam with likeable qualities and relatable situations, hoping that both the Christian and LGBTQ communities might enjoy both characters without feeling pressured by an agenda. Especially because all characters in the play are in their mid-twenties, I believe each character's struggle to understand love is something many twenty-somethings can relate to. My hope for this play is to meet in the middle of these two warring sides and stir up thought on how love can be better displayed in our relationships with one another.

Summary of the Play

Through a Glass Darkly tells the story of Ben, a very out-spoken young gay man who lives with his boyfriend Mark in Middleton, Nebraska—a town influenced by an extremist Baptist church that protests all homosexual activity. Both desire to escape this suffocating setting to live out their love freely, but as Ben soon discovers frays in their relationship, he begins to see this result not from the external stresses, but because his love with Mark is not satisfying. He befriends a young maintenance worker named Adam who shares his love for cinema and art; as they both grow closer, Ben learns that Adam is a Christian and just started attending this Baptist church. Initially, this is a problem for Ben; he knows Christians to be intolerant of homosexuals, always hoping to “win people to Christ,” but Adam explains that he is new in town after a break-up and just needs a close companion. In an effort to maintain this friendship, Ben keeps his relationship with Mark a secret, but the truth is eventually spoiled. After hearing this news, Adam does not back off but instead draws closer, causing Ben to feel a strange kinship with him that he

can't define. Lesli, Ben's best friend, begin to notice this relationship growing deeper; Mark fears losing clients and his career through public humiliation if Adam's church shames his homosexuality. Soon after, Ben wonders if this intimate friendship with Adam could be anything more. He knows he must break off this relationship, but can't deny his need for Adam. He must choose what love means the most to him, even though it might end in tragedy.

Plot Synopsis:

Setting: A small, one bedroom apartment in Middleton, Nebraska.

ACT 1, SCENE 1: The play opens with the sound of a news broadcast reporting from gay teen's funeral, where a radical member of the Middleton Baptist church is heard proclaiming that "there is no love in the kingdom of God for sinners like Tyler." The lights come up on Ben watching this broadcast on TV, while Lesli is telling Mark and the distracted Ben about her time in Nicaragua with World Relief. Mark tells him to turn off the TV, but Ben rants about the hatred towards the homosexual community. After Lesli goes home for the evening, Mark tries to convince Ben to find a job to occupy his time, but Ben assures him he likes being alone and doesn't need anyone. While they talk, a pipe breaks under the sink and water sprays all over the floor. Mark becomes upset and short of breath, prompting him to take medication for his congenital heart disease to calm him down. As Ben and Mark lie on the wet floor together, they both express hope in moving to New York soon, but Ben begins to wonder if Mark truly loves him.

ACT 1, SCENE 2: It is the next morning, and while Ben is working on his film blog and talking with Mark on the phone, a plumber comes over to fix the kitchen sink. Ben gets disconnected, and starts talking to the plumber out of courtesy. Adam, the plumber, is

new to Middleton. After he and Ben find they have a lot in common, including a love for films, Adam asks if Ben would be interested in seeing a retro movie with him at the old Cineplex the next day. Mark tries calling back, but Ben ignores him. He agrees to go to a film with Adam; as Adam leaves, Ben is left bewildered by this sudden friendship.

ACT 1, SCENE 3: The next evening, Ben comes home after having seen the movie with Adam. Mark has had a difficult day at work, very stressed from a complicated client at the law firm. He asks Ben about Adam, curious about this guy and whether he might be gay. Ben assures him that he's just a nice guy, and Mark eventually heads to bed. Adam then comes over to drop off an invite to a men's barbeque at his church—Middleton Baptist. Ben gets mad at Adam, thinking that his whole play was indoctrinate Ben through a hate-filled religious group. Adam convinces Ben that he just wanted someone to go with him, since he knows no one else, and Ben reluctantly agrees to go.

THROUGH A GLASS DARKLY

By Jonathan Hogue

CHARACTERS:

- BEN** 24. Analytical, snarky, always has an opinion. An atheist, but searching for some meaning. He works from home doing blog work as an amateur film critic.
- MARK** 26. Ben's boyfriend. Serious, focused, goal-oriented. He works a full-time job at a law firm. Has heart problems and a tendency to stress.
- LESLI** 23. Ben's best friend. Tends to speak on more than she understands. Works overseas for World Relief. A Spiritualist, comes off a little strong.
- ADAM** 25. Ben's neighbor. Single. Charming, passionate, but sometimes oversteps his bounds. A Christian; lonely. A plumber for the apartment complex.

Needed also are the voices of a MALE NEWS ANCHOR, FEMALE NEWS REPORTER, and MALE PROTESTER. This should be pre-recorded with cast members or others, with sound effects to resemble a realistic newscast.

SCENE:

A small, one bedroom apartment in Middleton, Nebraska.

TIME:

Fall 2014

ACT ONE

Scene Four

AT RISE:

The lighting is dim. MARK is lighting a candle centerpiece on the table, trying to decide whether the candle light is enough light for the room. LESLI is judging while nursing a glass of wine.

MARK

What do you think?

LESLI

Nope. Still too dark.

MARK

I could leave the kitchen light on?

LESLI

You don't want fluorescents with candles—Are you kidding?

MARK

Actually, this isn't that bad when you're sitting at the table. There's enough light.

(He sits at the table to try it. Still too dark.)

MARK

Well... I could put more candles around the room. Get a bunch of those little tea candles.

LESLI

That sounds like a séance.

MARK

Or that Passover scene from *Fiddler on the Roof*. Let's just keep the lights on.

LESLI

We could have dinner in pitch darkness. That's sexy.

MARK

For serial killers.

LESLI

You are no fun.

MARK

I am so fun. I just need to see people to be so.

(MARK turns on the light in the living room. LESLI sighs.)

LESLI

Seriously, Mark. I come over here to help you set the mood. If a gay man needs help with that, the world is hopeless.

MARK

I'm not going for romance. You're here.

LESLI

Oh please. I've seen you two in just about every situation but coital.

MARK

And I hope it stays that way. Can you check on the potatoes?

LESLI

Where is the Mrs.?

MARK

I don't know. He's supposed to be back by now. He said he'd be home around five.

LESLI

Where is he?

MARK

With some guy he met in the complex. A plumber.

LESLI

Doing what?

MARK

A... barbecue thing at a park? He didn't tell me a lot.

LESLI

Ben hates barbecues.

MARK

What, are you saying maybe he didn't go?

LESLI

No. I'm just saying—he hates anything with people.

MARK

It must not be a big thing then. Can you grab some silverware? Get the nice ones.

(LESLI grabs forks and spoons from a drawer, handing them to MARK.)

LESLI

So, it's not weird to you that Ben's out with some guy you've never met?

MARK

I don't know. This is good for him. I'm gone all the time, the guy likes movies... it's good for him to, you know, get out. (MARK arranges the silverware on the table.) It's forks on the left, right? (LESLI nods.) I mean—Ben likes him. And you know Ben, he's very... picky. (LESLI checks the oven.) How are the potatoes?

LESLI

Brown. Is that good?

MARK

Oh—no. They're from a box. They're supposed to be yellow.

(MARK runs to the oven to pull out the potatoes. LESLI looks at him quizzically.)

LESLI

Well, if I were you, I wouldn't let Ben out of your sight. He's a hot commodity.

MARK

Not in Nebraska.

LESLI

I don't know. I'd go gay for him if I were a feller.

MARK

Sure you would.

LESLI

Just saying. I wouldn't keep him on a loose leash.

MARK

What's with the paranoia?

LESLI

You're lucky to have him, Mark.

MARK

I know. I'm not too worried about anyone falling in love with him.

LESLI

Well...What if Ben falls in love with this mysterious plumber?

(MARK checks on the potatoes.)

MARK

Then we let the potatoes burn.

(BEN enters through the front door.)

BEN

So sorry. Hi.

(BEN kisses LESLI on the cheek. ADAM walks in afterward.)

Hey, sorry. Adam's here to check the sink really quick.

MARK

Oh. Alright.

LESLI (to BEN)

Is this your plumber friend?

BEN

Oh. Yes. Adam, this is Lesli.

ADAM

Hi. Adam.

(He holds his hand out to shake. LESLI instead hugs him. ADAM is taken aback.)

Wow.

LESLI

I'm a hugger. I spent six months with orphans in Nicaragua—social boundaries *gone*.

ADAM

Nice to meet you.

(An uncomfortable silence.)

So, is the sink free, or—

BEN

Yeah, go ahead.

(ADAM moves to the sink.)

LESLI

Have you met Mark?

BEN

Oh, yeah. Adam, this is Mark.

(They shake hands.)

MARK

Nice to meet you. Ben talks about you a lot.

ADAM

You're the roommate, right?

(MARK laughs, thinking this is a joke. BEN winces. MARK takes notice.)

MARK

Uhhh... yeah.

ADAM

Cool. Nice meeting you.

(ADAM looks under the sink. MARK eyes BEN.)

BEN (averting the conversation)

How's the sink?

(ADAM runs water and checks to see if the disposal is working.)

ADAM

Looks fine. Seems like these new units are holding up well.

MARK

Haven't had any issues.

(Another uncomfortable pause.)

ADAM

I'm sorry. I hope I'm not catching you in the middle of dinner.

MARK

We were just starting.

LESLI

Care to join us?

MARK

Well—

BEN

It's—ummm... kind of a Saturday night thing here. You don't have to—

LESLI

Come on, we never have new people. Sit down. I want to hear about your affixation with plumbing. Anyone that well-versed with how toilets work must have a fascinating personality.

ADAM

Actually, toilets aren't really my thing.

LESLI

Oh? You'd do well in Nicaragua. Most places don't have toilets. I got really good at squatting.

BEN

Oh God.

MARK

How was the barbecue?

(BEN laughs, and ADAM chuckles.)

What?

BEN

Nothing. It was just... some very interesting guys.

ADAM

The older men are pretty blunt.

BEN

And dyslexic.

ADAM

—And dyslexic.

(They both laugh out loud, sharing a funny memory from the day. LESLI chuckles, unsure. BEN quickly stops, eyeing MARK.)

BEN

But otherwise—interesting. It was just interesting.

ADAM
Pretty dry. Men's social activities typically are.

BEN
If you're not into football.

ADAM
Yeah.

LESLI
Or men.

ADAM
Excuse me?

LESLI
You ever been to a gay bar, Adam?

BEN
—Lesli—

ADAM
Ummm... no. Haven't.

LESLI
Never wanted to check one out?

ADAM
Not really.

LESLI
If you're ever curious, there's a great one when you're driving down 183 called "The Tiger Lounge"—

BEN
—Lesli.

MARK
Okay!—we can eat now.

ADAM
Never heard of it.

LESLI
Ben can take you sometime, maybe.

(ADAM looks at BEN, to laugh. BEN darts his attention to MARK. They all go to the table to sit down for dinner.)

BEN (to ADAM)

Hey, you don't have to stay if you don't—

MARK

No, Adam, it's fine. (To BEN) There's enough food.

(They all sit down at the table. MARK brings out a bottle of champagne.)

ADAM

Wow, I didn't realize I stepped in on a big evening.

LESLI

It's our tradition. We've been doing this together since college—have a big fancy meal at the end of the week to distract us from the fact that our lives were in shambles.

BEN

Her life was in shambles. *We* were fine. Individually.

LESLI

The only non-alcoholic liquid I ever bought in college was vegetable oil, and that I only drank when I was plastered.

BEN

The first meals were mostly crying and vomiting.

LESLI

But that's when we bonded the most. Best friends since.

(LESLI turns to ADAM, hoping to get a response from him. ADAM has his eyes closed, saying a quick prayer.)

Oh. Sorry.

ADAM

You're fine.

LESLI

You religious?

ADAM

Yeah.

MARK

What are you, Jewish? Catholic?

ADAM

Christian.

MARK

Oh.

ADAM

Yeah. I go to the Baptist church down by the Cineplex—where the barbecue was today.

MARK

That was a church event?

ADAM

A men's outreach thing. For Middleton Baptist.

MARK

Oh.

(MARK looks to BEN, a bit shocked about the barbecue news. BEN lowers his gaze.)

LESLI

So, you consider yourself... rebirthed...

ADAM

A... born-again?

LESLI

Yeah, what is that? Is that like you're... reincarnated or something?

ADAM

Uhhh... Sort of. (LESLI looks at him, expecting an explanation.) Well, ummm... basically, the Bible says that everyone is born a sinful being—Adam and Eve sinned, and that put a curse on mankind. And because God is righteous, He has to punish anyone that sins. But... because God is also loving, he sent Jesus as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and so I've repented and put my faith in Him for eternal life. So, born-again is basically like accepting a new life with Christ. Like, my track record is completely clean. And it's amazing and peaceful and—

LESLI

So, you believe in Heaven then?

ADAM
Yes.

MARK
And Hell?

ADAM
Well... yeah.

MARK
So, if I'm not born-again, I don't go to Heaven, right?

ADAM
...Yes.

MARK
So, I'd go to... Hell?

BEN
Well, that's... debatable.

MARK
No, I'm curious. You believe that, right?

ADAM
Well... technically, yes.

MARK
So, what do you do if you meet someone who... you're pretty sure is going to Hell?

ADAM
I mean, I don't really like to judge it by look. It's a heart condition. It's all about how you love God.

MARK
So you love God then?

ADAM
Yes.

MARK
And God loves you back?

ADAM
I believe so.

MARK

But he doesn't love anyone that isn't born-again.

BEN

Hey, Mark, can I get more—

ADAM

He does. But that's where he uses His people to share His love with others. Sharing God's love in Jesus' name.

MARK

So, if I told you I was a Buddhist, and I was just sharing Buddha's love with you, would you accept it? Or do you believe that's not love?

ADAM

I... well, it's...

BEN

Mark, can you grab some tongs for the salad?

MARK

Yeah. Sorry, I'm just curious is all.

ADAM

That's a big question.

MARK

Sometimes you have to ask yourself those big questions. You know?

ADAM

Right.

(An uncomfortable silence.)

LESLI

Well. I think it's okay not to know everything. I mean, that's part of the fun—believing in something beyond you.

ADAM

Yeah. That's faith.

LESLI

Right. I mean, it's kind of depressing to believe humans are the only really interesting part of life. I don't know. I think it's reassuring to know that amidst all the wars and people yelling at each other, the Big Lady upstairs is watching.

ADAM

...you think God is a woman?

LESLI

Well yeah. I mean, it makes sense, right?

BEN

Hey, let's maybe take a break from the Merlot—

LESLI

—Keep your panties on. Adam, think about it. According to your Bible, God spent six whole days creating the world. Okay? Now, if God is a man, the earth would be one giant slab of wood on cinder blocks with a Metallica poster on the wall. But no—it says God spent six days designing the flowers, and the trees, making sure everything is color coordinated. Six days, flipping through color samples and making things look pretty. There is no man I've ever met that would spend that much time interior decorating.

MARK

Except Ben.

LESLI

Except Ben.

BEN

I hate you both.

ADAM

You're into interior design? You never told me that.

BEN

There's a lot I haven't told you.

MARK

More wine, Adam?

ADAM

I'm fine, thanks.

LESLI

Oh—we didn't toast.

(LESLI grabs her purse and pulls out a small book.)

BEN

No, no—it's fine. We've already eaten a lot.

—Shall I? LESLI

This is a part of the tradition. MARK

We don't have to— BEN

LESLI
Adam, this is a poem by Miss Emily Brontë. (She reads from her book:)

Love is like the wild rose-briar,
Friendship like the holly-tree—
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms
But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,
Its summer blossoms scent the air;
Yet wait till winter comes again
And who will call the wild-briar fair?

—That's beautiful. ADAM

Yes. That's great, Lesli. Let's drink. BEN

LESLI
To all of us, may we all be reminded of this love, this insatiable presence which consumes us in many different ways. Adam, I know you very little, and yet I wish you love in whatever form you find it. Mark, you are a dear love of mine, and I cherish you. And Ben. I can only hope that our 'holly-tree' love can one day be as strong as the 'rose-briar' love that you and Mark have together.

(An uncomfortable beat.)

LESLI
To love and friendship.

(Only she drinks. ADAM looks at BEN. MARK notices. BEN freezes.)

Cards on the table. BEN

BLACKOUT. END OF SCENE FOUR.

ACT 1, SCENE 5: Ben and Adam are enjoying drinks, laughing and sharing stories from their past. Adam finds Ben's old record player and plays a Carole King record. The song that plays reminds Adam of the moment when he first fell in love with his ex-girlfriend; he turns it off as it causes him to become emotional, but Ben takes notice. Ben asks Adam what he thinks about his homosexual lifestyle, knowing his church's stance. While Adam states that he hasn't been in any pickets yet, he does believe that God condemns homosexuality but His love can change people. He also reassures Ben that he still loves him, and it's not his job to fix him. Adam leaves, and Ben reflects on this note. Mark comes home from dropping off a drunken Lesli, and asks Ben about his relationship with Adam. Ben insists it's nothing; they're just friends. But, because Ben kept Adam's affiliations with Middleton Baptist a secret, Mark worries that his lifestyle with Ben will leak to the church, causing uproar that could cause him to lose clients and his career. He demands that Ben break off this friendship, then takes his heart medication to calm him down. After he leaves, Ben plays the Carole King record, listening closely.

ACT 1, SCENE 6: Lesli is visiting Ben at home a week later, where she begins to casually ask him about his relationships with Adam and Mark. She then reveals that she fell in love with Nicaraguan man she met overseas, and she's flying down to marry him in two weeks. Surprised by this sudden news, Ben asks Lesli how she's so sure she loves him. She says it's because she has no fear in what could happen; she feels she's been anointed by the spirit of love, and there's nothing she needs more than to just accept it. Ben realizes this relationship with Adam needs to end before it becomes something more.

ACT 1, SCENE 7: That evening, Ben and Adam are deep in the midst of watching *Citizen Kane* when Ben decides to tell Adam that their relationship must stop. Adam

insists it was just friendship that kept them together. Ben prods, asking him why he came over in the first place: was it friendship or to pull him over to Christianity? Adam says that he enjoys being Ben's friend and that he deeply loves him. Ben, in a fit of confused passion, kisses Adam. As he realizes what he has done, Ben apologizes and Adam is in shock. Adam yells at Ben, distraught that his plan to love Ben into the kingdom only led to more pain. Mark suddenly enters and sees Adam leave in a tense state. Ben tries to skirt what he did, but Mark eventually realizes Ben's true feelings towards Adam.

Furious, Mark begins throwing things around the house, and Ben frantically tries to calm him down. Mark starts to feel serious heart palpitations, and takes his pills to calm himself down. In his frenzy he takes more pills, losing count of how many he's taken, and collapses. Ben calls an ambulance, alone and sobbing, calling out to God.

ACT 1, SCENE 8: It is Mark's funeral, several days later. Ben shares a eulogy about Mark, telling about how he loved him. Lesli comes to comfort Ben, and Ben tells Lesli about the guilt he felt about relationship with Adam. He says he's not even sure if he ever loved Mark, as if his love suddenly began to change and lose meaning. Lesli leaves, and Ben is completely alone – no Mark, no Lesli, no Adam. He hears the picketers coming, and sees Adam appear with a picket sign, solemn and uncomfortable. Ben immediately lashes out in hurt that Adam would dare show up to picket the funeral. Adam sets down his sign and tries to talk to Ben, but Ben starts attacking him—"Did Mark go to Hell?" "Am I going to Hell for kissing you?" Adam asks Ben then if he thinks God did this; Ben isn't sure anymore, but it appears that he believes in God. As the church rioters draw closer, Ben tells Adam to go join his church; Adam, choosing love against all opposition, lays down his sign and embraces Ben while the crowd approaches.

Conclusion

Targeted Market

This play will be marketed to college groups and experimental theatres. As a theatrical piece, this play would be most effective in an intimate space for the play's "slice of life" nature to be fully realized. While the play does incorporate Christian themes, it was my intention in writing to refrain from being pandering or preachy so that the play can be appreciated regardless of the audiences' religious orientation. I hope for some Christian audiences to engage with the themes of this play, though most must have discretion with approaching the more questionable moments—these scenes are critical to the story and must not be cut. I believe a variety of audiences, especially young adults, will appreciate the play, interpreting the play's themes as it pertains to their own beliefs and definitions of love.

Why This Play Will Succeed

Through a Glass Darkly is written to be impartial toward both Christians and the homosexual community, though it does bear redemptive Christian themes. The conflict analyzed in this play is one that most Americans will have to reconcile with. The play is not about Adam trying to correct Ben's homosexual lifestyle in order to save him; rather, it is a lesson in Adam and Ben fully understanding their need for each other in *agape* love. I desire the play to instigate discussions between both parties, facilitating a bridge of understanding between two sides that once were bitterly opposed to one another. Regardless of religious identification, love is what our world needs more than anything.

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