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World Premiere at The Old Globe, San Diego, California Barry Edelstein, Artistic Director; Michael G. Murphy, Managing Director.

Originally produced in New York City by The Flea Theater, 2013.

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THE RECOMMENDATION received its world premiere at The Old Globe (Barry Edelstein, Artistic Director; Michael G. Murphy, Managing Director) in San Diego, California, on January 21, 2012. It was directed by Jonathan Munby; the set design was by Alexander Dodge; the costume design was by Linda Cho; the lighting design was by Philip S. Rosenberg; the original music and sound design were by Lindsay Jones; and the stage manager was Diana Moser. The cast was as follows:

DWIGHT BARNES	Jimonn Cole
ISKINDER IODOUKU	-
AARON FELDMAN	Evan Todd

THE RECOMMENDATION received it New York premiere at The Flea Theater (Jim Simpson, Artistic Director; Carol Ostrow, Producing Director) on September 7, 2013. It was directed by Kel Haney; the set design was by Caite Hevner Kemp; the costume design was by Sydney Maresca; the lighting design was by Nick Solyom; the original music and sound design were by Elisheba Eittoop; and the stage manager was Jacqueline Filer. The cast was as follows:

DWIGHT BARNES	Barron B. Bass
ISKINDER IODOUKU	James Fouhey
AARON FELDMAN	Austin Trow

CHARACTERS

ISKINDER IODOUKU: (Plays 18 - 30.) Also known as Izzy. First-generation middle-class American. Mixed race; from an Ethiopian father and white American mother. An intellectual, an aspiring lawyer and a habitual stoner fighting his way to the upper class.

AARON FELDMAN: (Plays 15 - 30.) Upper class, white, privileged, from a wealthy family. The world is his oyster. He's going to be rich and successful and everyone knows it. Above all else Feldman wants to be liked.

DWIGHT BARNES: (Plays 28 - 36.) Equal parts charming and menacing. Strong, charismatic and able to turn on a dime. He has a streak of violence, but just as important is his sense of humor. He is a hustler who wants to get ahead.

PLACE

This takes place in many locations; however the majority of the action takes place in Los Angeles. The set should be minimal. It should be played with 2 chairs, 2 benches, 1 table and props. If any one location should be defined, it should be the sauna.

NOTES

The actor playing Dwight will also play the role of Father and the voice of the Judge.

The actor playing Aaron Feldman will also play the voice of Shriver. This can be onstage or off.

The actor playing Iskinder will also play the roles of Guard, Crackhead and Party Marty.

This play is meant to allow transitions to happen over the direct address. However, if transitions are desired given the space of the theater, they can be added in.

It is the author's preference that all three actors remain on stage as much as possible during the direct address after the prelude. They are encouraged to listen to it while in character, much like Feldman listens to Izzy in the prelude. Our object in the construction of the state is the greatest happiness of the whole, and not that of any one class.

-Plato, The Republic

I want to nominate a man who's cool on the outside but who burns for America on the inside.

> —Bill Clinton, on endorsing Barack Obama, September 5, 2012

THE RECOMMENDATION

Prologue

Iskinder enters. Behind his mild manner is a mounting anger waiting to be released.

ISKINDER. So my first year in college, I'm at the library and I overhear the senior RA complaining about grad school. Says shit's real tough. Says he can't stand how this one kid got in totally 'cus of affirmative action. Then he looks at me and gets real quiet ... I try to keep on with my research, but it's like I can no longer focus. I read the same passage about Miranda Rights three times and none of it's retaining. He keeps going about another kid who got in 'cause of networks and nepotism: His dad is head of surgery or some such. And the tone of his voice changes to — well, it was one of *admiration*, not condescension. That's when I remember the thing my father said before he dropped me off at college: (*We hear the sound of Ethiopian strings and drums. A silhouette of a man onstage. This is Iskinder's father.*)

FATHER. Son, before I left Ethiopia a wise man told me: Be wary of the man who promises you the world. For if you accept his offer, then you must carry the weight of the world on your shoulders.

ISKINDER. Yeah, well, right now anything's better than this backpack.

FATHER. It's good backpack. Jansport! Fits many books and pencils. Now stop this library daydreaming. Remember, everything you need is in this *pocket here. (The silhouette pounds fist to heart, then darkens.)* ISKINDER. *(Emulating his father's fist to heart.)* And as I'm transported through worlds, from my heart back to this library, my father's proverb suddenly made sense. What I was looking for wasn't in any book. It wasn't in this library. What I was looking for was Aaron Feldman. (*The stage erupts with smoke and lights: a rock-star entrance fit for Aaron Feldman, late 20s, not quite the prom king, more the guy your mom quietly urges you to marry.*) Everyone who is *anyone* knows someone like *Feldman.* (*He's fresh out of the shower, a towel around his waist. He winks at an audience member and hands them his clothes.*)

FELDMAN. Hold these.

ISKINDER. Remember in first grade when you drew a sea turtle and hoped Ms. Applebaum would give you a gold star? Well, she *didn't* because she gave it to *Feldman*.

FELDMAN. Bam!

ISKINDER. Or that time in high school when the cast list was pinned to the bulletin board and you looked for your name, but all you saw — was *Feldman's?*

FELDMAN. Bam again!

ISKINDER. When Marisa Lerner broke up with Nick Kolinsky after four years of high school monogamy, you thought it could finally be your chance but somehow *Feldman* beat you to the chase. FELDMAN. In all fairness I did sit next to her in chemistry. (*Feldman drops his towel, quickly slips on a pair of turquoise American Apparel briefs. Maybe you catch a glimpse of something. The point is*

you're looking.)

ISKINDER. It's not that he's any better than the rest of us. He just knows how to seize an opportunity. And being smart, privileged and white as the sky is when you die — the opportunities were there for the taking. (*Feldman holds the phone with his shoulder while checking himself out in a mirror.*)

FELDMAN. Yo *Dee!* It's Felly. Good news. I got us on the list for the Sundance party. *(He gives a little shimmy, a signature move.)* ISKINDER. Aaron Feldman.

FELDMAN. My friend knows this girl at the door and she's saving us gift bags. I hear they have *Nanos!*

ISKINDER. This was the guy whose father managed to get Wayne Gretzky to leave a voicemail for his Bar Mitzvah.

WAYNE GRETZKY VOICE. Hey Aaron. It's Wayne. Hope thirteen is a real hat trick, buddy. Keep on skating.

ISKINDER. And you *like* Feldman because he laughs at your jokes. He makes you feel welcome at social gatherings. He sends thank-you cards.

THE RECOMMENDATION by Jonathan Caren

3M

Aaron is smart, charming and over-privileged. Iskinder, his new college roommate, comes from a middle-class immigrant family and is under-connected. Aaron takes Iskinder under his wing, sharing his world of favors and fortune. But the safe haven of college only lasts so long. After a chance encounter with an accused felon sets off a chain of events that puts Aaron's life at risk, the two men are forced to rethink the meaning of friendship. THE RECOMMENDATION is a bold and candid look at modern friendship from an exciting new theatrical voice.

"How this complicated saga plays out is a lesson not just in class warfare but also in the furtive resentment that's born from personal favors. No one likes to be in anyone's debt, but can generosity lead indirectly to violence?" —The Los Angeles Times

"... rousing RECOMMENDATION ... This is one show about connections that really does connect." —U-T San Diego

"... terrific ... drama that will keep you guessing from its exhilarating start to its suspenseful finish ... A rollercoaster ride of a play." —StageSceneLA.com

"Tautly written ... it's a chilling, often thrilling piece of theater." —KSDS JAZZ 88 (San Diego)

Also by Jonathan Caren CATCH THE FISH



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