

ASKING AND TELLING

by

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A short play in response to Wikileaks

Cast of Characters

Male, 20's.

BRADLEY: Bradley Manning, the man who allegedly leaked hundreds of thousands of confidential U.S. government documents to Wikileaks.

Male, 40's.

DAD: Bradley's father.

SERGEANT: Bradley's superior in the army.

COUNSELOR: Bradley's personal counselor.

Female, 40's

MOM: Bradley's mother.

Male, 20's.

STUDENT: Schoolmate to Bradley in his younger years.

TYLER: Bradley's first boyfriend.

LAMAS: Computer hacker. He eventually turned Bradley in to the authorities.

All the characters should have American accents.

Time and setting

The play takes place at various times and in various locations leading up to Bradley's leaking of the documents to Wikileaks in 2009. The locations should be subtly suggested with minimal props and furniture. The changes in time and location should be smooth and not interrupt the flow of the story.

"ASKING AND TELLING"

BRADLEY

(TO AUDIENCE) A hypothetical question: if you had free reign over the classified networks of the United States for long periods of time ... say, 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, over a period of 8 or 9 months ... and you saw incredible things, awful things ... things that belonged in the public domain, and not on some server stored in a dark room in Washington DC ... what would you do?

WE'RE IN BRADLEY'S CHILDHOOD HOME. HE IS 13.

DAD

Faggot.

BRADLEY

Shut up.

DAD

Faggot.

BRADLEY

Shut up!

DAD

FAGGOT!

BRADLEY

Shut the fuck up!... Dad.

DAD

You're a little fucking fag and you always will be.

BRADLEY

Just get the fuck out. Me and mom'll be better off without you.

DAD

You're never gonna amount to anything, you hear me, you little faggy bag of shit?

BRADLEY

Fuck off!

DAD

Never gonna amount to anything!

BRADLEY

Fuck off!

DAD

Faggot!

BRADLEY

Get the fuck OUT! (TO AUDIENCE) We really were better off

without him. But then came the worst of it. School.

AT BRADLEY'S NEW SCHOOL AFTER THE DIVORCE.

STUDENT
Look, it's the new kid.

BRADLEY
What do you want?

STUDENT
Look, he's a little queer.

BRADLEY
(QUIET) Fuck off.

STUDENT
What did you say to me?

BRADLEY
(QUIET) Fuck off.

STUDENT
What did you say you little queer?

BRADLEY
I said FUCK OFF!

STUDENT
That's it!

STUDENT BEATS UP BRADLEY. STUDENT EXITS

BRADLEY
And don't you come back! Shit. Fucking hate school. (TO AUDIENCE) When I finally graduated and got a job testing videos games, life was starting to look good. For a little while at least.

BRADLEY IS A YOUNG ADULT NOW. AT HOME WITH HIS MOTHER.

MOM
Bradley honey, I'm worried about you.

BRADLEY
I'm fine mom.

MOM
No, you're not darling. Ever since you got laid off you've been...

BRADLEY
What? I've been what?

MOM
Well...

BRADLEY
What mom? Say it!

MOM
Sad.

BRADLEY
Sad? You're on my fucking case because I'm sad I got laid off?

MOM
No.

BRADLEY
Laid off from the best job in the entire world?

MOM
No, hon. I think it's more than that.

BRADLEY
More than what?

MOM
More than sad.

BRADLEY
More than sad?

MOM
You know. Depressed.

BRADLEY
Get off my case mom.

MOM
Hon, you need to get help. You need professional help.

BRADLEY
Get off my fucking case, mom!

MOM
Hon, you've got no degree, you're poor, unemployed and you don't have much hope for a bright future. You either go into therapy or join the army.

AT THE ARMY BASE.

BRADLEY
(TO AUDIENCE) And that was it. Uncle Sam came calling. Or rather, I went running.

SERGEANT
Company, halt! Good morning ladies. Yes, you're all a bunch of fucking women to me. Women until you prove you're men. Women until you prove you're worth something.

BRADLEY
(TO AUDIENCE) Don't be fooled. This was still a huge improvement on my previous situation.

SERGEANT
Now march, faggots. March!

BRADLEY
(TO AUDIENCE) Sort of.

SERGEANT
Just where the fuck do you think you're going, Manning?

BRADLEY
I'm going off base, Sir.

SERGEANT
Off base. Why?

BRADLEY
I'm going to, uh, see a friend.

SERGEANT
A friend?

BRADLEY
Yes. A friend. A friend is a person who is nice to you and doesn't yell at you.

SERGEANT
Don't get smart with me, soldier.

BRADLEY
Sorry, Sir.

SERGEANT
What kind of friend is this, Manning?

BRADLEY
What do you mean what kind of friend, Sir?

SERGEANT
Are you... I mean, are you...

BRADLEY
Sir, are you "asking"? You can't ask, Sir.

SERGEANT
Fucking "Don't ask, don't tell". FUCK!

BRADLEY
Good evening, Sir.

SERGEANT
Fuck off, Manning.

BRADLEY
(TO AUDIENCE) But he was right. I was off to see my first serious boyfriend. Tyler.

SEATED AT A RESTAURANT WITH TYLER.

TYLER
You mean he just flat out asked you?

BRADLEY
Yeah. Just like that.

TYLER
That's totally wrong.

BRADLEY
No shit.

TYLER
You've got to say something.

BRADLEY
Are you out of your mind? It'll be like waving a rainbow flag over my head.

TYLER
But they can't ask you and single you out like that.

BRADLEY
That's the way things are. No use in trying to change them.

TYLER
That's bullshit, Brad. You have to say something. You have to tell someone.

BRADLEY
I can't. "Don't ask, don't tell". It cuts both ways. You don't ask and you sure as hell don't tell. Anyone. Ever.

TYLER
I'm worried about you, Brad.

BRADLEY
I'm fine.

TYLER
No you're not. This life, it's getting to you.

BRADLEY
I said I'm fine.

TYLER
You're not meant to be a soldier.

BRADLEY
Why the hell not?

TYLER
For starters, you suck at taking orders.

BRADLEY
Well, you got that right.

TYLER

And you don't believe in what you're doing.

BRADLEY

I wake up every morning and do my job. That's all they ask me to do. My job. Security analyst.

TYLER

You can do something else.

BRADLEY

I can't. I need to stay two more years before I can get any money for college.

TYLER

There are other ways to pay for college.

BRADLEY

Not where I come from. Not all our parents pay our tuition.

TYLER

That's not fair.

BRADLEY

Damn right it's not fair.

TYLER

That's not what I meant.

BRADLEY

It doesn't matter.

TYLER

Let's change the subject.

BRADLEY

Sure. I'm being shipped to Iraq.

TYLER

Oh my God.

BRADLEY

I told you this would happen.

TYLER

Oh my God.

BRADLEY

It's what I signed up for.

TYLER

Brad, soldiers die there every day.

BRADLEY

It's what I signed up for.

TYLER

Can't you get out of it?

BRADLEY
No.

TYLER
Have you spoken to the counselor?

BRADLEY
I can't.

TYLER
Brad, you've got to.

BRADLEY
I can't.

TYLER
They might let you stay.

BRADLEY
I can't!

TYLER
Brad, please-

BRADLEY
I fucking can't, just leave me the fuck alone!

AT THE COUNSELOR'S OFFICE.

COUNSELOR
How long have you felt this way?

BRADLEY
Since before I can remember.

COUNSELOR
How has this manifested in the past?

BRADLEY
I wear dresses.

COUNSELOR
Do you do this often?

BRADLEY
I'm in the army. So no. Not often.

COUNSELOR
Who else have you told about this?

BRADLEY
Nobody. Just my boyfriend.

COUNSELOR
You seem to be in crisis, Bradley.

BRADLEY
No shit.

END OF SAMPLE

If you'd like to read the full short play (15 pages) please contact German Munoz at g@germanmunoz.com

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