

Normal

Written by: **Tom Stevenson**

Synopsis: *A one-man one-act comedy play about performed sexuality, in a world where it's okay to be gay, one actor is struggling with what it means to 'act gay'.*

Set: *A single chair on a stage*

A small section of the stage is lit. The main character is sitting in a chair in a 'waiting room'.

VOICE (V/O) :

Evan Marshall? The casting team will see you now.

The main character looks up and shuffles in his chair, nervously.

VOICE (V/O) :

You're next, cupcake.

MAIN:

Thanks. I'm at an audition, they always hold them in empty dance studios, it's quiet, every noise you make echoes and amplifies, so an ill timed chair squeak will make the other auditionees think you've performed a mega-fart. Three quarters of the walls are mirrored so dancers can watch themselves perform, but the sheeting has warped over time like a fairground madhouse, so when I sit bolt upright, reacting to the farting chair, my expression is personified and my guilt - unavoidable.

I won't get the part, I'm not 'gay enough'. But my agent insists on putting me forward for these parts since I came out to her. It's for TV though, which makes a change. A character called Sebastian, gay name. He's the token gay best friend - the B story to add a bit of camp comedy for the fag-hag main character. If the show runs for more than one season they may even toy with him having a love interest - very noughties sitcom.

Main looks around the room scouting the other actors, fixating on one in particular.

He looks gay. He's got a gay face. High cheekbones, a pinched smile and enviously perfect eyebrows. Plus he's good looking, tall and thin.

Main reacts in a mixture of Envy and Lust.

He'll get cast. The audition room isn't new to me, I've done a couple of theatre shows and a national television campaign for a sofa company, all playing a *straight* man. I'm not a feminine man, I think a lot of gay people struggle because they're 'too camp'... That said, hamming up the sexuality might do me good here. I'm yet to get a gay part, I think it's mostly down to how hetro directors think homosexuality should be played. They want someone who looks like - I notice I've been staring at him.

Like a horny hawk, he is very good looking.

Main looks back to the audience.

He catches me glaring at him and shoots me back an almost apathetic look of disgust.

Main contemplates for a second. Realisation hits.

He's not gay. I reach for my phone and load one of the plethora of gay dating apps to confirm. I use Grindr a lot, it's like an online bathhouse. One perk of being a millennial gay is just how easy it is to hook up with someone. I'm immediately overwhelmed by the pings of messages from the local bears. That's bears as in old hairy men, not the ones at the Zoo, though bears, *[Growl with hands]* bears can be gay, loads of animals can. Penguins are very gay. I think I'd much prefer cuddling up to a *[Growl with hands]* bear to a... *[camp growl]*.

Main is 'scrolling' through his phone.

Grindr is such an unusual app, it's like a gay PokemonGO, except instead of digital monsters, you catch STI's. It's a dating app, so confident it can achieve its intentions that the majority of the adverts on it are for self masturbatory aids! Wanking machines.

There's a couple of blank profiles nearby, usually that means the person is not out or they're in a relationship... scandal! I click the closest person, no name, just a topless action-man as his main picture, I find myself reading the bio of the worst person, possibly ever... "Not in fems or fat guys. If I don't reply it's because you're over 30. I block more Asians than the great wall of china"... Arsehole. If you were under the pretense that queers were a close community, you were wrong. Because the Daddies want the twink, but the twink want the Jocks, where the Jocks are into leather. The Rugged, Bears and Otters are playing nicely with the Geeks. The Queens, Fairies and Fems want someone to indulge in their kinks, whilst the Trans want to be dommed by the Mascs.

There's a lot of masculine gays online, they don't feel intimidated by the flamboyance of a gay bar, or the glittery parade of pride. It does beg the question though, How masculine are you with a dick in your ass? Cheekbones photo doesn't come up.

I get a message from a 54 year old called Dwayne, gay name. A greying man with a receding hairline, baggy eyes, drooping nose, all round quite saggy.

"Hey hot stuff"

cringe

"Are you looking for a daddy?"

'The only dad I'm looking for is Papa Johns'

Main giggles at his own joke. Then realises where he is.

"So you like pizza, I'd prefer to eat your ass"

[whispers] Sweet Jesus, no. I don't reply, I'm too busy trying to find a bin to be sick into. He then sends me a picture of - what I assume is - his penis, lost in a thatch of grey pubes.

"Wanna Trade".

I toy with replying with a witty remark about trading a Pikachu for his little Digglet. Instead I told him he was a disgusting old pervert and blocked him. I spend hours on this app, it's always the same, I don't know why I bother.

VOICE (V/O) :

They're ready for you now.

MAIN:

I'm quite nervous going in, I rehearse the script over and over in my head, each step I take I forget more and more. *[awkward pause]* Shit. Hello. Sorry for saying shit just now. Shit, I said it again. I'm auditioning for the part of Sebastian.

MAIN looks to the side and mouths 'gay name'

There's three very important but very intimidating men behind a table taking notes and judging me. I look each one of them in the eye with a smile, the third I recognise, probably from a past casting. They each introduce themselves and their role in the production,

"I'm Kevin, I'm the assistant director of the

show"...

"I'm Jeremy, I deal with Equality and Diversity for the Channel"

I instantly remember where I know the third man from, when he introduces himself as

'the casting director' and his name is 'Dwayne'. A man I have just called a disgusting old pervert, now has my career progression in his hands. Great. I take a deep breath.

KEVIN (V/O) :

Start whenever you're ready.

MAIN walks to the back of the stage and takes a breath... A BEAT

Lighting change

MAIN:

A few weeks ago I was dragged along to pride to see a parade of 'my people', my culture expressed best by a big gay party. Where do they get their energy? You really experience the full spectrum of the community at pride, people who identify as gay or lesbian, people who identify as transgender or gender neutral, me, I identify as... overwhelmed.

I make a b-line for one of the many pop up bars, converting a horse box into bar used to be quite a quirky hipster thing, for people who get married in fields with no shoes on - but 12 of them in close proximity with names like 'dirty dicks' and 'The glory hole in the wall' turns quirky into tacky very quickly. The bejewelled barman greets me saying "The only thing straight is the tequila shots", so I rather aggressively elect for a *pint of lager*. The only beer on draught is Carling. Carling! A drink I've seen exclusively drunk by tradesmen. The only gay thing about Carling is its old slogan, which could be used as a euphemism for a gay man "Ooo, I bet he drinks Carling Black Label." With the amount of promiscuous bottoms walking around, I'm not sure drinking the larger equivalent of laxatives is the best choice.

MAIN flashes back.

Luke never drank lager, He's my ex, we still fuck

all the time, but, there's no love anymore. Amaretto and cranberry juice was his choice, failing that anything *fruity*. He loved pride, anything that meant he could be the centre of attention, the loudest, proudest boy I'd ever known. At home, silent, normal, not Hoovering like it's a Queen music video. Then we get outside a club and he would psych himself up into his performance.

MAIN returns his mind to pride

Next to me at the bar is a petite blond girl in a red halter neck dress with a pearl necklace... Her hair and make-up is... she must be one of the performers, you know because nothing says political **Page 5 of 18** protest march like a pop concert. I fall in love with strangers on an hourly basis, but this is different, she's... she's a girl. I find this courage inside me I don't usually have with people, and I say to her "Jesus, you're beautiful"

MAIN looks longingly into the girl's eye. Then replies in the deepest bloke's voice imaginable.

"Cheers mate"

MAIN clutches his heart in relief

Oh thank god! Still gay. His name is George, he's a drag queen, he invites me to watch him perform on the Playstation stage [*aside*] I don't know why they sponsor it either. He's a pageant queen, he's lip syncing, and dancing and is very feminine. When his set is done I find him in the crowd and congratulate him with a slightly back handed "I've never enjoyed drag before". His off stage persona is far less feminine, he's gone from being mistaken for an actual woman, to the sort of bloke who pops a newspaper under his arm when he goes for a shit... with the door open.

We grab a drink from the nearest horse box, 'The Swallowing Seamen', two Carling, £15. We talk for ages, and he's so sweet and it turns out very successful at being a professional gay. I tell him I'm an actor, I left out the part time bar work that actually pays the bills. How did you get into drag?

"When I was younger, I was bullied because I was the shy weird kid who wore his mums neck scarf"

[*aside*] I never did anything like that.