

INTIMATE RESEARCH

HARRY - A spry young poet, in his late teens. He wears a rainbow bracelet on his left arm and a jean jacket.

TICKETMAN - A tired man in his late forties, donning a grey-ish brown-ish beard and a hat. Unenthusiastic. Masculine. Husky.

BOBBY - Tall man in his late thirties. Has a drunken tone in his voice, which gets stronger as he drinks more. Professional when working but comes to the theater and gets drunk on weekends.

GERTRUDE - Woman in her mid-thirties. Blonde.

Note: Beats are **short** (only a second or two at most). Pauses are longer.

We are at a gay “adult” theater, in 80’s Manhattan. The ticket booth is on the front left of the stage, where TICKETMAN sits. The interior of the theater takes up the rest of the stage, oriented in the center-right. HARRY walks from the left to TICKETMAN. He almost walks past before TICKETMAN stops him.

TICKETMAN

You know you have to pay, right?

HARRY

Um. Yeah. Sorry.

HARRY reaches for money in his pocket. It’s taking him a bit to fumble for it.

TICKETMAN

Nice bracelet.

HARRY

Thanks.

He gives TICKETMAN the money. TICKETMAN counts it, and HARRY begins walking in, but TICKETMAN stops him.

TICKETMAN

(stopping him)
Mm.

No response from HARRY, who is too awkward to verbally ask what’s going on.

TICKETMAN

What’s your name?

HARRY

Um. Harry.

TICKETMAN

Cute.

HARRY gives him a smile.

TICKETMAN

Where ya from?

HARRY

Portland.

TICKETMAN

Portland? What'cha doing all the way out here?

HARRY

Job.

TICKETMAN

What kind of job?

HARRY

Publishing.

TICKETMAN nods approvingly.

TICKETMAN

You publish gay stuff...or?

HARRY

No, no. Kids' books.

TICKETMAN

(raising eyebrows)

Aaaah.

Beat.

What about *gay* kids' books?

HARRY

I'm sorry, what?

TICKETMAN

Gay kids' books? I mean, they have straight kids' books, fallin' in love with princes and princesses and all that. I don't see why we can't have-

HARRY

No gay kids' books. Sorry.

Pause.

I... don't think my boss would like that.

TICKETMAN

Shame.

Pause. HARRY is still waiting to go in but TICKETMAN insists on continuing to make conversation.

I mean, you are *here*, so you *could* probably make a good gay kids' book.

HARRY

Maybe. I'm more here to write poetry.

TICKETMAN

Hm.

Beat.

(suspiciously)

Seems like a, uh, weird place to write poems, but to each his own, I guess.

HARRY

Well, I write about, uh...desire...and stuff like that, so.

TICKETMAN

(approvingly)

Hm.

Can I read some?

HARRY

Oh. Ummmm...Not yet.

TICKETMAN

Aw, why not?

HARRY

Maybe if this one gets finished, you can take a look.

TICKETMAN

Fine. Go. Be inspired.

HARRY enters the theater, sits down at a seat and takes out his notebook and pen. It's empty except for him. He starts watching the movie, but it only takes a few seconds before someone joins him, sitting in the seat to his right. This someone is BOBBY.

They sit in silence for a moment, watching the film, until—CLICK!--a short circuit. The theater goes black.

The stage is lit so that the audience is able to see the two, but only their silhouettes. They, however, cannot see each other.

BOBBY

It broke again?

HARRY

Again?

BOBBY

Yeah, this happens every week.

HARRY

Oh. I'm new here, so I wouldn't know.

BOBBY

You're not a regular?

HARRY shakes his head. BOBBY can't see him. It takes a second or two of awkward silence for HARRY to remember BOBBY can't see him.

HARRY

I'm shaking my head. Sorry, I forgot about the whole-

BOBBY

Don't worry about it.

BOBBY takes a flask out of his pocket, and puts it toward HARRY so he can feel it touching his hand.

Whiskey?

HARRY

Oh, no. I don't drink that / much.

BOBBY

(playfully)
Come onnnn!

HARRY

Okay, okay.

He takes a swig before handing it back to BOBBY.

Only to help my creative juices flow.

BOBBY

Say what about juices flowing?

HARRY

Creative juices. Not, like, actual juices.

BOBBY

Well, that's the only reason people come here. Juices and stuff.

HARRY doesn't respond. BOBBY takes another swig.

Pause.

BOBBY (Cont'd.)

(flirtatiously grabbing HARRY's shoulder, massaging it)
So. What's your name?

HARRY
Harry.

BOBBY
Nice to meet you. I'm Bobby.

Beat.
Where ya from? If you're not a regular.

HARRY
Originally, Portland, but I moved here a year ago.

BOBBY
Portland?
(impressed, nodding head)
Wowwww.

Beat.
That's far.
And what do you-
He reaches for HARRY's hand and feels the notepad.

What's this?
HARRY
Notepad. I write poetry.

BOBBY
(skeptical)
You came *here* to write *poetry*?

HARRY
Mhm.

Beat. BOBBY drinks more.

BOBBY

Look, I'm no scholar. Hell, I didn't even pass geometry. But isn't poetry supposed to be about flowers and leaves and meadows and *pretty* things?

HARRY

I mean, it can be about whatever you want it to be.

BOBBY

Yeah, but you could write about *anything in the world*, and you choose...?

He makes motions with his hands, as if he physically can't say the words to finish his sentence.

HARRY

Well, personally, I see it as desire. I write a lot about desire.

BOBBY

(processing)

Hm.

Beat.

Well, I guess it's technically desire, but there's a good desire and a bad desire. And the good desire is the one we should be writin' poems about. Not *this*.

BOBBY takes a chug of whiskey as HARRY speaks.

HARRY

I think there's something beautiful in *all* desire.

BOBBY

(inquisitive, almost defensive)

Beautiful?

Beat as he comes up with how to articulate what he wants to say.

A lady and a guy—a *man*—falling in love, gettin' married. Havin' kids. Enjoying life together, going through things together. *That's* beautiful.

The dude the guy comes to when he feels like shit, when he's gotta really just *fuck* it all out of him, this *hellhole*?

Beat.

Nah, this ain't beautiful.

HARRY isn't sure if he should respond so he stays silent.

BOBBY (Cont'd.)

But I guess you've never had a wife, huh.

HARRY

Nope.

BOBBY

Hm. You young people, you've got it all figured out. You've got the flags, the magazines, the "coming out" shit. It's like we've forgotten what's right and what's wrong. *You* people have no shame. *I* practically *drown* myself in it.

Beat. He takes another swig. His tone changes to something more calm, though he is still drunk.

You ever had a boyfriend?

HARRY

Um, I was seeing this guy back in Portland.

BOBBY

What's his name?

Beat.

HARRY

Peter.

BOBBY

What'd he look like?

HARRY

Umm, he was tall, *really* tall. And blonde. And he had freckles all over his face. And when he smiled, it was, like, the kind of smile you think about for the rest of the day.

BOBBY

(genuine but softly)
Sounds nice.

Pause.

HARRY

What about you?

BOBBY

Well, I come here every weekend, and I guess I find a new “boyfriend” for the night, and then I go home.

Beat.

(chuckling at himself but still somber)
Means I’ve had a *lot* of boyfriends.

HARRY

How many do you think?

BOBBY

I dunno. Couldn’t even put a number on it.

Beat.

(slower, to self, disappointed in himself)
Couldn’t even put a number on it.

Silence.

You believe in God?

HARRY

Maybe. I don’t really think about it.

BOBBY

Do you think he sees when we come here?

HARRY

Well, this is my first time-

BOBBY

But do you think he sees it?

Beat.

HARRY

Like I said, I don't think about God too often, but isn't, like, his whole deal that he sees *everything* and knows *everything*?

BOBBY

(looking down, shameful)

Mm.

HARRY

I don't think he cares, though.

*Pause. He waits for a response from BOBBY, but he gets none.
BOBBY takes another swig.*

(quietly)

If he even is real.

*Pause. BOBBY still stares at his toes, ashamed by HARRY's
presumption that God can see him.*

I mean, there's like, so many other things he has to worry about. Genocide, war crimes, rape...

(softly)

I don't really think he cares about this stuff.

BOBBY

Hm.

Pause.

See, I was raised Christian.

(waving hands)

They don't...they don't like any of this stuff.

God doesn't like any of this stuff.

Beat.

Maybe, maybe with all you and yer flags and chants and riots, God will change his opinion one day, but.

Beat.

(chuckling in a sad way, quietly, almost mumbling)

I don't think that'll be in my time.

Pause.

(turning to HARRY)

So what's your poem?

HARRY

Oh, I haven't written it yet.

He holds up the notepad to show HARRY, before remembering he can't see it.

It's blank.

BOBBY

Oh.

HARRY

Why, you want to try?

BOBBY

(shooing motion)

No, I'm not good at words.

HARRY

Sure you are.

BOBBY

Nah, I'm-

HARRY gives him the notepad, forcing the pen into his hand.

HARRY

C'mon, try it.

BOBBY

I-

HARRY

It doesn't have to be sophisticated or anything.

BOBBY

I don't even know what that means.

HARRY

Okay. Just close your eyes and think about what's on your mind.

BOBBY

Do I have to close my eyes? It's already da-

HARRY

Yes. It's the principle of it.

BOBBY

I can't see what I'm wri-

HARRY

(excitedly, playfully shaking him)
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND!! /

BOBBY

GOD! DICKS! DARKNESS! UM, SHAKING!

Yes!

HARRY

WIFE!

BOBBY

Great!

HARRY

BOYFRIENDS!

BOBBY

Keep going!

HARRY

DICKS AGAIN!

BOBBY

Yes! Okay, now channel all of that, think about *all of it* at once...

HARRY

Mhm...

BOBBY

And turn it into something else. However you feel. Find a sound, an image, something that represents how you feel.

HARRY

Beat.

A big, mushy mess.

BOBBY

Great, write that down.

HARRY

BOBBY writes it down.

HARRY (cont'd.)

What else?

BOBBY

There's God. He's laughing at me.

HARRY

(gesturing toward notebook)

New line. Write it.

BOBBY now writes while he talks.

BOBBY

He's calling me names.

HARRY

(approvingly)

Mhm...

BOBBY

He's shoving dicks in my face and calling me names.

Beat.

Now I'm just thinking about dicks again.

HARRY

That's fine. If it's what you're actually thinking and feeling, that's all that matters.

BOBBY

(trying to think of something else to add)

Umm...Uhh...

HARRY

Use your other senses. What does it sound like? What does it taste like?

BOBBY

God? Or dicks?

HARRY

Whatever you want.

BOBBY

Okay. Um. God sounds *evil*. When he laughs at me.

HARRY

Like what? Give me a comparison.

BOBBY

Like a... like a...

Beat while he comes up with the right word.

Dog. Growling.

HARRY

What kind of dog?

BOBBY

A big one. Like a Rottweiler.

HARRY

Perfect.

BOBBY

And he has teeth like one too. I see it when he laughs.

Beat.

I think he's gonna *eat* me.

HARRY

What does it feel like when he eats you?

BOBBY

He's actually eating me?

HARRY

Well, your brain came up with it, not mine. What does it feel like?

BOBBY

I mean, I don't know, I've never been eaten.

HARRY

Well, in this situation. Try to imagine.

BOBBY

I would think...it would hurt pretty bad?

HARRY

Probably, but there's different types of pain. Is it a scratching kind of pain, or a stabbing kind of pain, or a stub-your-toe, or-?

BOBBY

Stab. And he's doing it over and over again.

Pause.

He's looking more like Satan than God, actually.

Pause.

And my wife is there. She's crying.

Pause.

But not because God is *eating me alive*. She's crying because of the *dicks*. Because she knows what I do with them, here.

Pause.

And then I become tiny pieces, 'cause God *ate* me. And he swallows me, but instead of ending up in his stomach, or Hell, or wherever I'm supposed to go...

Beat.

...I'm here.

BOBBY writes the last few lines of his poem before giving the notepad back to HARRY.

HARRY

Thanks. I'd read it now but, obviously, the lights-

BOBBY

Mhm.

HARRY

-so I'll just read it when I get home. I'm sure it's great.

BOBBY

Don't get your hopes up.

Pause.

HARRY starts to get up to leave.

HARRY

(stretching)

Welp, I'd better get going.

(tapping his notebook)

I've got my poem, so.

BOBBY

Okay.

BOBBY gets up so HARRY can leave.

BOBBY (cont'd.)

So we're not gonna...?

HARRY

(confused)

Hm?

BOBBY

Like, you don't wanna...?

HARRY

Oh! Sorry. No.

BOBBY

Oh, okay.

HARRY starts walking out of the theater.

BOBBY (cont'd.)

Nice meeting you.

HARRY

You too.

He gets to the entrance and sees TICKETMAN. TICKETMAN is talking to a woman. She looks distressed. Her name is GERTRUDE. TICKETMAN seems over whatever conversation they're having.

GERTRUDE

But he *is* here, right?

TICKETMAN

Yup. Just saw him go in twenty minutes ago.

GERTRUDE

And I can't-?

TICKETMAN

Sorry. Like I said, can't let you in. You're welcome to wait, though.

When TICKETMAN sees HARRY, he diverts his attention away from GERTRUDE to talk to him. She stays, listening to their conversation.

TICKETMAN

You again! Write any gay kids' books yet?

HARRY

(a tad annoyed)

No, I already told you, I don't-

TICKETMAN

I'm kidding. No gay books. I know.

(to GERTRUDE, gesturing toward HARRY)

This guy came here to write *poetry*.

GERTRUDE

(confused)

Oh?

TICKETMAN

I am excited for this poem, though.

(head nod toward notebook)

Lemme see.

HARRY

Oh, right.

He opens the notebook to the poem and gives it to TICKETMAN.

TICKETMAN

Alright, Edgar Allen Poe. Show me what'cha got.

TICKETMAN adjusts his eyes trying to read it.

TICKETMAN (cont'd.)

(to HARRY)

You got some *interesting* handwriting, bud.

(reading)

"A big, mushy mess.

God is laughing at me"

Pause. TICKETMAN makes sure he's reading it right.

"Dicks in my face"...?

He looks up at HARRY before continuing to read.

"They're everywhere

Rottweiler growling
Sharp teeth stabbing
Over and over again
I think he's Satan but he's not
My wife is crying because she knows
About me and the dicks
I'm in tiny pieces
And he swallows what's left of me, the pieces,
I end up here
in the theater."

TICKETMAN shrugs, impressed.

TICKETMAN

(handing HARRY the notebook back)

Not bad, not bad. I like the...uh...repetition.

Beat.

Though you look a little young to have a wife.

HARRY

Oh, I don't-It's told from the perspective of someone else.

TICKETMAN

(approvingly)

Mmm.

Real person? Or-

HARRY

Fictional.

TICKETMAN nods in response.

TICKETMAN

Well, I liked it. Hope you enjoyed the, uh, *inspirational* environment.

HARRY

Thanks.

HARRY puts the notebook in his pocket and prepares to leave, when he is interrupted by GERTRUDE.

GERTRUDE

Excuse me? I'm not suggesting you *did* something, or anything like that. Like, you look *young*, but, did you see a man in there who was tall? Deep voice?

TICKETMAN

Lady, it's *dark* in there. No one's gonna know what-

GERTRUDE

His name is Bobby, he's got a-

HARRY is paralyzed by his own anxiety. He couldn't bring words to his mouth even if he wanted to.

TICKETMAN

(scolding, annoyed)

Lady.

GERTRUDE

Again, I don't think he'd *do* anything with you. You're young and small and that would be-

TICKETMAN

Ma'am, for the last time. You're just gonna have to wait. He's *in* there. You're *gonna* see him.

GERTRUDE

Sorry. Sorry. Guess I just figured I'd ask.

(to HARRY)

You have a nice night.

HARRY shoots her a fake smile in response. It's all he can muster up.

Good poem, by the way. I found it very moving.

HARRY leaves. Lights out.